

# **ROCK-SOLID FAITH— HOW TO DEFEND IT**

**BERT THOMPSON, PH.D.**

**APOLOGETICS PRESS, INC.  
230 Landmark Drive  
Montgomery, Alabama 36117-2752**

© Copyright 2004  
ISBN: 0-932859-68-2

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in articles or critical reviews.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE</b>	.....	<b>v</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	<b>ROCK-SOLID FAITH: HOW TO DEFEND IT.....</b>	<b>1</b>
	Defending the Faith—Why? .....	3
	We Are Commanded to Defend the Faith.....	4
	The Faith Needs Defending .....	5
	Biblical Apologists and Apologetics in Action.....	6
	The Example of Early Christians .....	7
	Our Task Today .....	8
	Defending the Faith—How? .....	9
	A Word of Caution.....	10
	Defending the Faith—What? .....	10
	Conclusion.....	13
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	<b>EVIL, PAIN, AND SUFFERING—THE CASE AGAINST GOD? ...</b>	<b>15</b>
	From an Unbeliever’s Standpoint, Can “Evil” Really Exist?.....	17
	Why Do Evil, Pain, and Suffering Exist?.....	21
	A Response to Epicurus .....	21
	God’s Love; Man’s Free Will .....	21
	Our Personal Wrong Choices.....	23
	The Personal Wrong Choices of Others.....	23
	Personal Wrong Choices of Former Generations.....	24
	Our World of Natural Law .....	26
	The “Why” Question.....	27
	Our Once-Perfect-But-Now-Flawed Planet .....	27
	Natural Disasters and a Benevolent God .....	29
	The Sovereignty of God .....	31
	The Purpose and Benefits of Pain and Suffering .....	32
	Conclusion.....	35
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<b>JESUS CHRIST—HISTORICAL FACT OR FICTIONAL MYTH? ...</b>	<b>37</b>
	Hostile Roman Testimony about Jesus .....	38
	Hostile Jewish Testimony about Jesus .....	39
	Testimony of the Patristic Writers .....	42
	Reliability of the New Testament Records.....	43
	Early Antagonists of Christianity.....	44
	Art of the Roman Catacombs .....	45
	The Impact of Christianity on History .....	45
	Conclusion.....	46
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>JESUS CHRIST—UNIQUE SAVIOR OR AVERAGE FRAUD? ....</b>	<b>49</b>
	Who Are These Other “Unique Saviors”? .....	49
	Why an Unoriginal Jesus?.....	52
	Man’s Religious Faculty and “Savior Similarities” .....	53
	Independent Nature of Similar Stories.....	54
	Mankind’s Religious Instinct.....	55
	The Perfect Sacrifice .....	55
	Jesus—Unique Savior of Mankind .....	57
	Christ Was Unique in His Teachings.....	59

	Christ Was Unique in His Fulfillment of Prophecy .....	61
	What Would You Expect?.....	64
	Conclusion.....	65
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARD THE BIBLE.....</b>	<b>69</b>
	The Opposition Fights—And Loses.....	69
	Inerrancy and the Lutheran Denomination .....	69
	Inerrancy and the Baptist Denomination.....	70
	The Battle among Churches of Christ .....	71
	Where Does All of This Eventually Lead? .....	76
	Conclusion.....	79
<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	<b>ANSWERING ALLEGED BIBLE DISCREPANCIES</b>	
	<b>AND CONTRADICTIONS [PART I] .....</b>	<b>81</b>
	Introduction .....	81
	Principles for Dealing with Alleged Contradictions .....	82
	Innocent Until Proven Guilty .....	82
	Possibilities Will Suffice.....	83
	What is a Contradiction?.....	84
	Same Person, Place, or Thing .....	84
	Same Time Reference .....	85
	Same Sense .....	85
	Supplementation does not Equal Contradiction.....	86
	Look Who’s Talking .....	86
	The Golden Rule .....	87
	The Reality of Copyists’ Errors .....	87
	Examples of Copyists’ Errors .....	89
	Is the Old Testament Still Reliable?.....	91
	What about the Reliability of The New Testament? .....	92
<b>CHAPTER 7</b>	<b>ANSWERING ALLEGED BIBLE DISCREPANCIES</b>	
	<b>AND CONTRADICTIONS [PART II].....</b>	<b>95</b>
	Conclusion.....	102
<b>CHAPTER 8</b>	<b>DEFENDING THE GENESIS ACCOUNT OF CREATION</b>	
	<b>[PART I].....</b>	<b>103</b>
	Organic Evolution Defined .....	103
	Why do People Believe in Evolution? .....	105
	The Freedom to Believe.....	106
	Reason #1 .....	107
	Reason #2.....	108
	Reason #3.....	108
	Reason #4.....	108
	Reason #5.....	109
	Reason #6.....	110
	Reason #7 .....	110
	“Logical Illiterates, Scientific Simpletons, Fools, and Menaces” .....	111
	“I do not Want to be a Fool” .....	112
	“Consensual Validation” .....	113
	“Thou Shalt not Follow a Multitude to do Evil” .....	114

<b>CHAPTER 9</b>	<b>DEFENDING THE GENESIS ACCOUNT OF CREATION</b>	
	<b>[PART II]</b> .....	<b>117</b>
	Science and Origin Models .....	117
	What is Science? .....	117
	Science versus Scientism .....	119
	How Does Science Work?.....	120
	The Scientific Method.....	121
	The Limitations of Science .....	122
	Is Evolution a Fact?.....	125
	The Origin of Life.....	132
	The Origin of Sex.....	135
	The Origin of Language and Speech.....	135
	Conclusion—What do the Data Say?.....	135
<b>CHAPTER 10</b>	<b>DEFENDING THE GENESIS ACCOUNT OF CREATION</b>	
	<b>[PART III]</b> .....	<b>137</b>
	Natural Selection.....	137
	Genetic Mutations .....	139
	Comparative Arguments and the Case from Homology .....	145
	The Creationist Response to Homology.....	146
	Homology and the “Rest of the Story” .....	147
	Homology, Genes, and Chromosomes.....	149
	A Word about Comparative Embryology .....	150
<b>CHAPTER 11</b>	<b>DEFENDING THE GENESIS ACCOUNT OF CREATION</b>	
	<b>[PART IV]</b> .....	<b>157</b>
	The Fossil Record .....	157
	The Fossil Record and Human Evolution .....	162
	The Geologic Timetable and the Age of the Earth.....	165
	Old Earth/Young Earth.....	166
	Out-of-Place Fossils.....	166
	Polystrate Fossils .....	170
	The Bible and the Age of the Earth.....	170
	Time <i>Before</i> the Creation Week: The Gap Theory .....	171
	Time <i>During</i> the Creation Week: The Day-Age Theory .....	172
	Time <i>After</i> the Creation Week .....	173
<b>CHAPTER 12</b>	<b>DEFENDING THE GENESIS ACCOUNT OF CREATION</b>	
	<b>[PART V]</b> .....	<b>175</b>
	The Implications of Evolution.....	175
	“I Sometimes Wish I had a Belief System” .....	179
	Years Later.....	179
	Oh, for a Belief System! .....	181
	Why Won’t People Believe?.....	183
	“Where’s the Evidence?”.....	184
	“Feeble Souls” .....	184
	“Who Needs God?” .....	185
	“Science Makes God Unnecessary”.....	186
	“If There is a God, Why is the World in Such a Mess?” .....	188
	“I’m Afraid...” .....	188
	“Boring Eternal Happiness?” .....	189

<b>CHAPTER 13</b>	<b>DEFENDING THE GENESIS ACCOUNT OF CREATION</b>	
	<b>[PART VI]</b> .....	<b>191</b>
	The Benefits of Belief .....	191
	Belief in God and His Word Allows Us to Understand Sin, Its Effects, and Its Cure, and to be Free from the Guilt Associated with It .....	191
	Belief in God and His Word Provides a Legitimate Basis for Morality.....	193
	Belief in God and His Word Inspires Us, Gives Us Vision, and Allows Us to Trust .....	195
	Belief in God and His Word Helps Us Cope with Evil, Pain, and Suffering .....	196
	Belief in God and His Word Provides Us with the Benefits of Being a Part of the “Body of Believers” .....	197
	Belief in God and His Word Helps Us Avoid the Fear of Death, and Promises Us Eternal Life .....	198
	Conclusion.....	200
<b>REFERENCES</b>	.....	<b>203</b>

## PREFACE

More than three millennia ago, Moses and his brother Aaron—armed with Divine credentials—walked into the stately presence of Pharaoh, the exalted king of Egypt (who himself was viewed as deity) to verbally spar with the rancorous ruler over the release of the Hebrew slaves from their onerous bondage. When these two men—God’s hand-selected ambassadors—arrived at Pharaoh’s court to demand the release of the enslaved Israelites, Moses told the pagan potentate: “Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go.’” Pharaoh’s response, preserved in Scripture for posterity, foreshadowed the arrogant attitude of millions of unbelievers who, throughout the course of human history, would imitate the militant monarch’s demeanor of disbelief: “Who is Jehovah, that I should hearken unto his voice to let Israel go? **I know not Jehovah**, and moreover I will not let Israel go” (Exodus 5:1-2, emp. added).

There are numerous souls in this day and age who proudly bear the marks of being the spiritual descendants of that ancient corrupt king. To them, unbelief is a mark of intellectual sophistication in a world enamored of philosophy and science. Some boldly proclaim that faith in an Almighty God should be relegated to the realm of myth and superstition—something that makes for intriguing fairy tales, but is good for little else. In our day of ever-increasing animosity toward God specifically, and religion in general, it is deemed in some circles as poor judgment at best, and outright foolishness at worst, to proclaim—much less defend—any belief whatsoever in the Judeo-Christian God, Christ as His Son, and the Bible as His inspired Word. And this attitude has taken quite a toll.

Who among us, for example, could ever even begin to imagine the numbers of people who have either completely lost their faith in God, or who have been prevented from coming to Him in humble obedience in the first place, because of the seeds of unbelief planted at a tender young age, watered by the fountains of infidelity, and fertilized by the false theories of a disillusioned generation? Would we ever have believed that in America, where eighty years ago the teaching of evolution was forbidden in public schools, the teaching of creation would be prohibited? Would we ever have believed that we would be losing 60-80% of our young people after we send them out of the home and into the workaday world or to college? Would we ever have believed that America, which once was referred to as a “Christian nation,” would be murdering by abortion more than a million innocent, unborn children every year? Yet all of this, and much more, has indeed come to pass.

Surely, if there was ever a time when the Truth of God’s Word needed defending, **this** is that time! The question is: Will we as Christians rise to the challenge? If we are as unashamed of biblical Truth as Paul was (Romans 1:16), and if we truly believe that it is “the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe,” then our proclamation and defense of it must be as fervent, and as effectual, as that presented in Scripture.

Christian apologetics is the academic discipline that is concerned with offering a reasoned defense of Christianity. The English word “apology” derives from the Greek *apologia*, meaning to “defend” or “make a defense.” The New Testament itself employs the word in this manner. Two examples are noteworthy. Peter stressed the importance of a rational foundation upon which to build saving faith when he exhorted Christians: “But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: being ready always **to give answer** [Greek *apologian*; derived from the verb *apologoumai*] to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15, emp. added). Paul recognized this obligation, and said that he was “set for the defense of the Gospel” (Philippians 1:16-17). His epistles teem with sound arguments that provide a rational undergirding for his readers’ faith.

The Christian Faith is not a vague, emotionally based belief structure designed for uncritical simpletons. It is a logical system of thought that may be both accepted and defended by analytical minds. This should not be taken to mean that one must be formally trained in logic to understand the Gospel (for even children can understand its basic premises), but, rather, that Christianity is capable of rational defense. A reasoned (and reasonable) defense of Christianity involves sound argumentation for the existence of God, the inspiration of the Bible, the deity of Jesus Christ, the truthfulness of the Genesis account of creation, and the uniqueness of Christianity as the one true religion of the one true God.

Christians cannot afford to sit by idly and allow the “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4) to win the day. Rather, there is something that each of us can, and must, do. When Paul stated that he was “set for the defense of the gospel,” he definitely implied that **the Gospel can be defended!** And we **must** defend it, for it is most assuredly under attack. Of primary importance in this battle are these facts: (1) We, as Christians, are God’s people. If we do not proclaim and defend His Word, who will? (2) God has given us the tools for this defense. Those tools reside both in His Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and in His creation (Romans 1:20-21). Proper use of these tools, however, is ultimately our responsibility. (3) If we do not adequately employ the various evidences that provide the proof of God’s existence as Creator and Sustainer of the Universe (Genesis 1:1ff.), men will continue in their unbelief, and as a result will reject His Son and the salvation He came to offer (Romans 6:23). Unbelief, then, will breed infidelity. And infidelity, in turn, will breed more unbelief. It is a vicious cycle that must be broken.

That is what the *Rock-Solid Faith* trilogy is all about. The first volume in this three-volume series, *Rock-Solid Faith: How to Build It*, explains how a person can **build** a biblical faith exactly like that of the people in the Bible (Abraham, Moses, Esther, Elijah, Hannah, Paul, Peter, Lydia, Timothy, and so many others) whose names are synonymous with an unshakable, unbending faith in their Creator, His Son, and His Word. The second volume, *Rock-Solid Faith: How to Sustain It*, concentrates on how, once a person has built such a faith, he or she can **sustain** it amidst the vicissitudes of life.

The volume you now hold in your hand, *Rock-Solid Faith: How to Defend It*, is the third and final volume in the trilogy. Its goal is to provide the ammunition that Christians can use to **defend** The Faith against the attacks made upon it by a society that all too often is becoming increasingly unbelieving—and frequently hostile. It is my hope that reading and applying the concepts found in each book in the *Rock-Solid Faith* trilogy will help you build a foundation upon which you can construct, sustain, and defend a genuine, abiding, personal faith in God, His Word, and His Son. If, along the way, I may be of any assistance to you in attaining that goal, please call on me. I gladly will do whatever I can to help.

Bert Thompson  
December 1, 2004





## CHAPTER 1

### ROCK-SOLID FAITH: HOW TO DEFEND IT

When the apostle Paul penned his epistle to the Galatians, he made the following observation: “But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son...” (4:4). For generations, scholars have offered insightful opinions on all that they believe to be entailed in this short-but-powerful verse. Some have suggested that Christ arrived when He did because Greek had become practically a universal language that afforded ease in communicating the Gospel. Others have commented that the spiritual state of the Jewish nation was such that “the fulness of time” had come for their redemption. Still others have concluded that the peaceful conditions ushered in by the universal government of Rome (known as the *Pax Romana*—the “Peace of Rome”), combined with the efficient system of roads instituted by the Romans, made it the perfect time for Christ to appear in order to facilitate the spread of the “Good News” about Him.

While we may not presume to know with certainty all that the apostle Paul had in mind when he spoke of “the fulness of time,” one thing is certain: the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ left this planet and its inhabitants reeling. Christianity did not come into the world with a whimper, but a bang. For millennia, Old Testament prophets sent forth their predictions about a coming Messiah. Suddenly, a multitude of those predictions was being fulfilled—before the eyes, and within earshot, of the common man. Christ, and His Gospel message, turned the world of the first century “upside down” (Acts 17:6). By the time the apostle Paul penned his epistle to the Christians in Colossae (around A.D. 60), he was able to report that the Gospel had been preached to “every creature under heaven” (Colossians 1:23). [Paul, in making such a statement, was using what we refer to as phenomenal language (i.e., everyday language that describes things as they appear) to make a hyperbolic (overly emphatic) claim within a specific context—namely, that the then-known world (what “appeared” to be the whole world) had heard the Gospel. A few years earlier, when Paul wrote to the Romans, he was aware that the Gospel had not yet gone to Spain (Romans 15:20-24). We have no record that he or anyone else had gone there before he wrote to the Colossians. So it seems that Paul was under no illusion regarding the extent to which the Gospel had gone. His emphasis appears to be on the great strides that had been made in such a short time (due to the faithful efforts of Paul and his colleagues) to win the world for Christ.]

The fact is, within a few generations of the death of Christ, the Gospel message had spread across the world—from Britain in the west to India in the east (see Kane, 1975, pp. 11-12). This is not to say that Christians dominated the population of the lands in which they dwelt. Origen, writing in the third century A.D. (c. 185-284), noted that Christians were “very inconsiderable when compared with the multitude of the unbelieving world” (*Contra Celsum*, 1[8]:424). Nevertheless, within a relatively short time span, their number went from virtually nothing on that historic Pentecost recorded in Acts 2, to many millions over much of Europe, Asia Minor, and northern Africa.

While there were those who were willing to accept the Gospel message, there likewise were many who were not. Those who ignored or opposed that message, however, nevertheless recognized the impact it was having. Even Christ’s worst enemies found it impossible to discount the effect of Jesus and His teaching—and for good reason. When the Pharisees and chief priests sent their officers to seize Christ on one occasion, those officers returned empty-handed. When asked by their superiors why they had failed in their quest, the only answer they could offer was, “Never man so spake” (John 7:46).

Some of Christ’s most hateful enemies were the Jewish chief priests and scribes. The Pharisees and Sadducees also belonged to that infamous crowd; they wanted no part of the “good news” that shed the floodlight of Truth on their manifold errors. And it was not just groups who opposed the Lord. Even individuals became disenchanted with the Lord’s message. Acts 19 records the efforts of Demetrius the silversmith to incite a riot in an attempt to discredit Paul—because of the impact he was having on the trade of making idols dedicated to the Greek goddess Diana.

From the first to the last of His earthly ministry, Jesus admonished those who would be His disciples, explaining that they would be both controversial and persecuted. Christ alerted His followers to the pressures that would be brought to bear upon them by other religions (Matthew 10:17), civil governments (Mat-

thew 10:18), and even some of their own (2 Thessalonians 1:4ff.). [In the kingdom parables of Matthew 13, Jesus taught His disciples that only a small proportion of the world would receive the Gospel willingly (19-22). Of these converts, some would depart from the faith or, even worse, some would become a corrupting influence in the church (38-39).] He warned: “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake” (Matthew 10:22). And He cautioned:

Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law: and a man’s foes shall be they of his own household (Matthew 10:34-36).

Jesus wanted no misunderstanding about the trials and tribulations that His faithful followers would endure. He constantly reminded them of such (Matthew 10:16,39; 16:24; 24:9; John 15:18,20; 16:1-2; 21:18-19). Early Christians not only had to vie with the Jews who rejected Christ as the Messiah, but also with the Gentiles who had little or no concept of Jehovah, yet who constituted by far the greatest number of people in the world. Then, of course, there was the Roman government with which they had to contend on a daily basis.

History records that Christ’s words accurately depicted what was to befall those early saints, because as Christianity spread, its enemies no longer were content merely to object to its central tenets or those who espoused them. Eventually, **vocal disagreement** gave way to **physical violence**. The efforts of the Roman emperor Nero to obliterate Christ’s message by charging His followers with all manner of falsehoods, and killing them by the thousands, are well documented. Later, the Roman emperor Domitian was even more hostile in his attempts to destroy Christianity. As James O. Baird has noted: “In actuality, Christianity was opposed more vigorously than any other religion in the long history of Rome” (1978, p. 29). The attacks made upon Christianity, and the deaths of those who had become its faithful adherents, became innumerable (see Revelation 6:9-11).

Persecution against the church was, and is, rooted in the nature and work of Christ: “But me it hateth, because I testify of it, that its works are evil” (John 7:7). The world hated Christ because of the judgment He brought against what the world is, does, and loves. It will hate those in the church who remind it—by word and by deed—of this judgment. Jesus lamented: “If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before it hated you” (John 15:18). Hatred often results in persecution. The church, if true to its mission, will be opposed. While He desired that men be at peace with men, Christ’s primary goal was to bring men to a peaceful, covenant relationship with God. In addressing the Christians at Rome, Paul wrote:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:35,37-39).

Try as they might, however, Christ’s enemies could not accomplish their ill-fated goal. While its foes consigned it to die a thousand deaths, the “corpse” of Christianity never remained in the grave. With each persecution, it grew stronger and spread farther. Eventually, Christ’s enemies began to realize that the tactics they were using were not working. Instead of eradicating Christianity, they somehow were infusing it with new growth. It became apparent that new methods of opposition would have to be found. Violence had exacerbated the problem, not solved it.

Christianity had flourished, even amidst persecution, because it had been based on matters of the head and the heart—not of the bow and sword. Thus, its enemies reasoned that perhaps the best weapon would be to address those “head and heart” matters, not with violence, but with something stronger that appealed to both the head and the heart—admonishing the intellect. Wasn’t it Christianity’s **teaching** that had caused it to be so successful in the first place? Contradict that teaching, show it to be erroneous, disprove it, and then supplant it with other information—and what could not be accomplished through violence could be accomplished through instruction. Ultimately, the pen is mightier than the sword.

And so, eventually a new phase of opposition to Christianity was born. No longer were the prison, the cross, or the sword the instruments of choice. What Christianity's opponents had been unable to accomplish by bloodshed, they now hoped to accomplish by the written word. Through the millennia that followed, Christianity's opponents were enlisted from the world's intelligentsia—a list that has been both lengthy and impressive. While I do not have the space here to discuss in an individual fashion many of Christianity's enemies, I have done so elsewhere (see Thompson, 1994b). Such a study is both interesting and profitable. It is interesting because it highlights the *modus operandi* of many of Christianity's most vicious and determined enemies. It is profitable because it underscores—in a most forceful “in-your-face” manner—the **need** for a reasoned defense of The Faith, as well as the **methodology** that faithful Christians can (and should!) employ in such a defense. The simple fact is, Christianity has been, and remains, under attack. An admission of that fact raises three important questions: (1) **Why** should we be involved in defending The Faith?; (2) **How** should we go about engaging in such a defense?; and (3) **What** should be the content of our defense? I would like to examine each of these in turn.

### DEFENDING THE FAITH—WHY?

Surely, the mere fact that the attacks upon Christianity have been so frequent, and so vicious, would be reason enough for its adherents to defend it. (The discussion presented above is proof enough, is it not, that such attacks have occurred in the past, are occurring in the present, and no doubt will continue to occur in the future?) And, surely, the successful nature of those attacks corroborates beyond doubt the fact that whatever defense we offer needs to be—and must be!—as measured and as forceful as the attacks themselves. One does not respond to an invading army with a BB-gun, and expect to come out the other side of that battle as the victor. Successful is, as successful does.

But some—even in the Lord's church—apparently do not understand **why** there is a need for such a defense. I therefore would like to explain why a reasoned, forceful defense of Christianity is essential. And to do that, I would like to offer the following example (one among many that could be employed).

From time to time, Christians may be afflicted with either an attitude of indifference or spiritual myopia (shortsightedness). Both critically impair effectiveness in spreading and defending the Gospel. A Christian's attitude of indifference may result from any number of factors, including such things as a person's own spiritual weakness, a downtrodden spirit, a lack of serious Bible study, etc. Spiritual myopia, on the other hand, often is the end product of either not having an adequate understanding of the Gospel message itself, or not wishing to engage in the controversy that sometimes is necessary to propagate and defend that message.

One such example of spiritual myopia afflicting some Christians today centers on the Bible's teaching—contained in Genesis 1-11—regarding the Creation account and the events surrounding it. Because no one is particularly fond of either controversy or playing the part of the controversialist, it is not uncommon nowadays to hear a person say, “Why get involved in controversial ‘peripheral’ issues like creation and evolution? Just preach the Gospel.” Or, one might hear it said that “since the Bible is not a textbook of science, and since it is the Rock of Ages which is important, and not the age of rocks, we should just ‘preach Christ.’ ” The attitude of some seems to be that if we “just preach the Gospel,” the rest somehow will take care of itself.

Such statements and attitudes are clear and compelling evidence of spiritual shortsightedness, and belie a basic misunderstanding of the seriousness of the Bible's teachings on one of its most important topics, and how that teaching plays into “the Gospel.” First, in order to avoid the offense that may come from preaching the **complete** Gospel, some simply would regard the Bible's teaching on Creation as unimportant. God, however, considered it so important that it was the topic of His first revelation. The first chapter of Genesis is the very foundation of the rest of the biblical record. If the foundation is undermined, it will not be long until the superstructure built upon it collapses as well.

Second, those who advise us to simply “emphasize saving faith, not faith in creation,” apparently have forgotten that the most magnificent chapter in all the Bible on the topic of faith (Hebrews 11) begins by stressing the importance of faith in the *ex nihilo* creation of all things by God (verse 3) as preliminary to

any kind of meaningful faith in His promises. Those who suggest that we not concern ourselves with “peripheral” topics such as creation and evolution, and that we instead “just preach the Gospel,” fail to realize that the Gospel **includes creation**. The problem, as I see it, is that people who hold such sentiments do not seem to understand what “the Gospel” is. And so, I would like to ask, what, exactly, does it mean to “just preach the Gospel?”

To begin with, the Gospel should not be confined unnecessarily to some artificially narrow spectrum of teachings. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul explained that the Gospel (Greek *euangelion*, “good news”) can be explained as follows: “that Christ died for our sins...that he was buried, and that he hath been raised on the third day” all “according to the scriptures.” But the inspired apostle did not stop there. He went on to proclaim: “For since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (15:21-22). Because of man’s sin, spiritual and physical death entered the world; but through Christ, man can be made alive in Him (Ephesians 2:5). The basis of—the reason for—Christ’s death, therefore, is the sin of Adam and Eve and all those who followed after them. Now, watch how all of this fits together (noticing, specifically, the implications regarding what “the Gospel” actually ends up including).

Paul’s point in 1 Corinthians 15 was nothing short of this: remove the historical nature of Genesis, and the death of Christ becomes meaningless. If the story from Genesis 1-3 about Adam and Eve turns out to be nothing more than an etiological myth (i.e., a myth about origins) that was concocted by the Hebrews to try to explain their own shortcomings (sin), then there was no theological point whatsoever to the very **real** suffering of Christ and His very **real**, historically verifiable death. Why should **imaginary sin** be covered by **real blood**? As Ken Ham has explained:

It is important to realize that the Gospel consists of the foundational aspects as well as the other elements. ...Therefore, to preach the Gospel without the message of Christ as Creator and the entrance of sin and death is to preach a Gospel without foundation. To preach a Gospel without the message of Christ and His crucifixion and resurrection is to preach a Gospel without power (1987, p. 99).

The whole purpose of the Bible is to present God’s redemptive plan (i.e., the Gospel) to humanity—all of which means nothing without the basis provided in the much-maligned First Book of Moses. The Gospel cannot be preached without including principles established in the creation account; true Christian faith cannot exclude faith in the *ex nihilo* creation of the Universe by God (Hebrews 11:3), and preaching Christ as Savior cannot be accomplished without also regarding Him as Creator (John 1:1-4) [see Morris, 1980, p. 66, for a good discussion of this point].

## **We Are Commanded to Defend the Faith**

**Why** must we, as Christians, defend The Faith? The truth is, we must defend Christianity because—**we are commanded to do so!** Peter recorded by inspiration: “But sanctify Christ as Lord: being ready always **to give an answer** to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15, emp. added). The phrase “to give an answer” (Greek *apologian*; derived from the verb *apologoumai*) followed by a dative (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:3) means any kind of answer or justification, whether formally before a judge or informally before everyone. Many adults no doubt have heard of the “Apology of Socrates”—the famous Platonic dialogue that was designed to tell the story of Socrates’ defense of himself at his trial. The New Testament employs the word in this way. [The use of *panti* (“every man”) makes clear that the second usage is intended here, while not necessarily excluding the first. *Logon aitein* (“asketh a reason,” or “provide a rational account of”) refers to the fact that every cultivated man was expected by the Greeks to be prepared to discuss questions of opinion or conduct in a rational, temperate fashion—i.e., to give and receive a reason or justification.]

From this family of Greek words (*apologoumai*, *apologia*, *apologian*, etc.) came the English term “apology,” which originally denoted a speech given in defense of something. Peter lays this obligation of “rational belief” upon every child of God. Christians must “make defense” by giving “a rational account of” the hope they have in God, Christ, the Bible as the Word of God, the church, the plan of salvation, etc. Sproul and his co-authors appropriately observed:

By divine example and divine command, apologetics is a mandate God gives to His people. If God Himself provides evidence for what He declares to be truth, it is calumnious to repudiate the value of evidence. If God commands us to do the work of apologetics, it is disobedience to refuse the task (1984, p. 20).

A formal branch of religious studies—"Christian apologetics"—eventually arose, which had as its purpose the task of offering a defense of Christianity. The study of apologetics is concerned with "the systematic scientific defense of the Christian faith in all its aspects against the intellectual attacks of its adversaries" (Morris, 1974a, p. 1). By "scientific," we mean that a defense is presented that is rational, logical, and reasonable. "Christian evidences" may be viewed as a subset of apologetics that seeks, in particular, to set forth "concrete reasons for accepting the Bible as God's Word and Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour" (Morris, pp. 1-2). In short, apologetics is the proclamation and defense of Christianity, regardless of whenever, wherever, and by whomever it is challenged. [It is somewhat ironic that, today, the word "apology" usually denotes an expression of regret, since Christian apologetics has nothing to do with a Christian saying he is "sorry" for his faith.]

In the Preface of this book, I made the point that a person does not necessarily have to possess special schooling and/or training in order to understand the basic thrust and content of the Christian Faith. I likewise noted that Christianity is not some sort of emotion-based system for simple-minded people, but is instead a logical system of thought that may be both accepted and defended by analytical minds. The "case for Christianity" involves arguing for the existence of God, the inspiration of the Bible, the deity of Jesus Christ, and the uniqueness of Christianity, which is the religion of **rational belief**. Alexander Campbell understood that point, and the apologetic task, exceptionally well. Writing in the *Christian Baptist* in 1827, he remarked:

We have learned one lesson of great importance in the pursuit of truth—one that acts as a pioneer to prepare the way of knowledge—one that cannot be adopted and acted upon but the result must be salutary. It is this: **Never to hold any sentiment or proposition as more certain than the evidence on which it rests; or, in other words, that our assent to any proposition should be precisely proportioned to the evidence on which it rests. All beyond this we esteem enthusiasm—all short of it incredulity** (1:viii-ix, emp. in orig.).

The Law of Rationality (one of the foundational laws of human thought) states that one should draw only those conclusions for which there is adequate and justifiable evidence. Campbell urged that all Christians—and all people—hold to that law. It is the Christian's task, using the avenue of apologetics, to present "adequate and justifiable evidence" that leads to a rational belief in the Christian Faith.

### **The Faith Needs Defending**

We also must defend the Christian Faith because—**it is under attack and needs defending!** As I also noted in the Preface, Christians are not to simply sit by idly and allow Satan, as the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4), to have free rein. We must **do** something! Paul, in Philippians 1:16-17, specifically stated that he was "set for the **defense** [*apologian*] of the gospel"—which certainly implies that the Gospel **can** be defended. Paul's epistles, in fact, teem with sound arguments that provide a rational undergirding for his readers' faith. In his speech in Acts 22, the apostle said: "Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my **defense**, which I make now unto you" (vs. 1). And, as Paul was tried before Felix, he said: "For as much as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully **answer** for myself" (Acts 24:10). I will have more to say about Paul's use of apologetics later in this chapter.

For the present, however, the following observations are of primary importance: (1) Christians are God's people. If **we** are unwilling to proclaim and defend His Word, **who will?** (2) God has given us the tools for this defense. Those tools reside both in His Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and in His creation (Romans 1:20-21). Proper use of these tools, however, is ultimately our responsibility. (3) If we do not adequately employ the various evidences that provide proof of God's existence as Creator and Sustainer of the Universe (Genesis 1:1ff.), men will continue in their unbelief, and as a result, will reject His Son and the salvation He came to offer (Romans 6:23).

## Biblical Apologists and Apologetics in Action

While some may deny that Christians should have to “prove” or “defend” anything pertaining to their faith (despite definite scriptural instructions to the contrary), the Bible contains numerous examples of various apologists in action on behalf of their God and their faith. For example, Isaiah challenged the idolaters of his day to

“Produce your cause,” saith Jehovah; “bring forth your strong reasons,” saith the King of Jacob. “Let them bring them forth, and declare unto us what shall happen: declare ye the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or show us things to come” (41:21-22).

Isaiah’s point was that only the one true God could give verifiable reasons why anybody should believe in Him, and only Jehovah can predict the future (or reveal hidden truths about the past and the present). Isaiah thus rightly concluded that the idols and their worshipers “are of nothing, and your work is of nought; an abomination is he that chooseth you” (41:24). Later, God spoke to the children of Israel, and said:

I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My name to graven images. Behold, the former things have come to pass, now I declare new things; Before they spring forth I proclaim them to you (Isaiah 42:8-9, NASV).

Even God Himself does not shrink from the necessity of authentic credentials for the Gospel message. In other words, whether God exists, Who God is, and what He says, are questions to be settled on the basis of adequate evidence. Such issues are not merely **assumed**; rather, they are **argued**! In this particular case, the evidence is predictive prophecy, and God Himself indicated that such evidence is sufficient to produce knowledge of the truth (Isaiah 41:23).

Another example of apologetics in action can be seen in the gospel of John, where Jesus made a case for His divine purpose: “For the works which the Father hath given me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me” (5:36b). Notice that while Christ came to save the world (John 12:47) by preaching “the good tidings [Gospel] of the kingdom of God” (Luke 4:43), in the process He performed many signs or miracles for the purpose of demonstrating His deity. Certainly He preached the Truth, and demonstrated His kindness and compassion toward humanity, but Christ further established His claims by the power of His Father through evidences. John wrote: “Many other **signs** therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, **that ye may believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31, emp. added).

Later, when Christ sent His apostles to evangelize the world, they were given miraculous powers (Acts 1:4,5,8; 2:1-4) so that they could influence men who were not yet in possession of sufficient truth (Mark 16:15-18). The New Testament teaches that miracles were performed to authenticate the divine origin of the speaker’s message and/or identity (see Miller, 2003). The message, in turn, generated faith in the hearer (cf. Romans 10:17). In addition, several examples are found in the New Testament where the apostles themselves gave lessons of a specific evidential nature.

1. In Acts 2 when he spoke to the Jews assembled in Jerusalem on Pentecost on the day the church of Christ began, Peter offered—in what is arguably the most powerful sermon on Christian evidences that has ever been preached—three different “layers” of proof as documentation for the things he was saying to that initially skeptical audience. First, the apostle established the fulfillment of prophecy (Acts 2:16-21,25-28) when he said of the events the Jews were witnessing that very day with their own eyes: “This is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel” (referring to Joel 2:28-32). Second, he established the proof of Christ’s deity when he reminded the people in that crowd of the many miracles that Jesus had performed in their midst, which established that the Lord was “approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs” (2:22). And, third, Peter established the historical validity of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection from the dead (23-24,29-36). One of the most impressive pieces of evidence regarding Jesus’ deity was His resurrection—the subject on which the whole of Christianity depends (1 Corinthians 15). Not only did it occur precisely as predicted by David (cf. Acts 2:22-36; Psalm 16:8-11), and by Jesus Himself (e.g., Matthew 20:18-19), but over five hundred witnesses saw Him after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:4-8)! By this miracle, Christ’s deity was demonstrated with power (Romans 1:4).

2. Among the heathens of Lystra, Paul and Barnabas not only performed a miracle, but also appealed to the Gentile audience to look at the Creator through the creation (Acts 14:8-17)—a tactic that Paul would employ again in the first chapter of his letter to the Romans. Any defense (*apologia*) we offer of Christianity is automatically conjoined with, and inseparable from, the concept of creation at the hand of Almighty God. We hardly can defend the Gospel without acknowledging (and simultaneously defending) God's sovereignty in His creation. We cannot proclaim that man fell from a covenant relationship with his Creator, and therefore is desperately in need of salvation from sin, until the fact is first established that there was a Creation and a Fall.

While I will have more to say about this point later in this book, I would like to mention here that the inspired writers of the New Testament frequently made doctrinal arguments that depended upon the historical validity of the Genesis account of creation. Paul clearly stated, for example, that "the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness" (2 Corinthians 11:3). Referring back to that event, Paul then commented in Romans 5:12 that "through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned." Who, exactly, was that "one man" through whom sin entered the world? It was Adam—the **historical** Adam of Genesis 1-3 (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:45; 1 Timothy 2:13). When men attempt to dismiss Adam as merely a fictional character, they place Jesus in an exceedingly unfavorable light. Indeed, Adam and Christ stand or fall together, for the Lord said: "If ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:46-47).

3. In Athens (Acts 17), as Paul faced the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers and the polytheism of the people, he established God as Creator, Savior, and Judge, and declared himself a witness of Christ's resurrection.

4. In Ephesus, Paul could be found preaching to the Jews in the synagogue, "reasoning and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 19:8). But when some Jews of the synagogue rebelled against the Gospel, Paul moved his ministry to more neutral ground, and began "reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus, ...so that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (19:9,10). His "reasoning" was Paul's *apologia* (defense!) of the Christian Faith.

5. As noted earlier, Paul offered an extensive apologetic on the resurrection to the Christians in Corinth (1 Corinthians 15). Thus, Paul can be seen as one who traveled all over the world, presenting a defense of the Gospel to anyone who would listen. If anybody requires proof that apologetics has a legitimate place in the Christian Faith, they only need examine the pattern set by Christ and His disciples.

### The Example of Early Christians

The example of early Christians provides a valuable insight into the practices and attitudes of those who were separated by only a few years (or generations) from Christ and the apostles. Note the response of the early church to the religious environment in which it existed.

Early Christians faced no less difficult a task than modern believers when it came to defending and promoting the Gospel. As I already have noted, attacks on Christianity occurred on many fronts. Jews denied the resurrection, and simultaneously refused to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ Who had been prophesied by Scripture. Greek philosophers maintained materialistic views on the origin of life and the Universe. The refusal by Christians to worship Roman emperors and pagan gods brought them into conflict with civil authorities (see Myers, 1988). Heresies arose among Christians who, among other things, denied the deity of Christ. All of these confrontations engendered lengthy debates between defenders of The Faith and its detractors (see Lavalley, 1986). The situation has not changed all that much over the last almost 2,000 years, has it?

Other defenders of Christianity included "Clement of Rome, Hermas, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Eusebius, Augustine, and others" (Lavalley, note 11, p. iv). Theophilus demonstrated the foolishness of concordant theories (such as theistic evolution) long before it became popular to compromise the Genesis record with evolutionary theories. Basil defended the 24-hour concept of the creation day, while Theophilus, Origen, Augustine, and others be-



lied the Earth to be relatively young (as opposed to “myriads of years” as taught by the Greeks). These apologists also defended the Christian system in general, and in this task were assisted by other capable men such as Quadratus, Aristades, Taitian, and Melito (see Myers, p. 19).

Many of these Christian apologists were once Greek philosophers (or at least had been trained in Greek thought) yet they converted to Christianity—fully rejecting such manmade concepts, accepting God as Creator, and refuting the false ideologies of their infidelic peers. [How desperately such individuals are needed in today’s apologetics efforts!]

What gave the infant church its power to survive the onslaughts against it, not only from political harassment, but also from attacks on The Faith by Jews, pagans, unbelievers and even heretical teachers wearing the name of Christ? How did first-century Christians endure? Or, for that matter, how have Christians of **any** century sustained their faith? No doubt there are multiple answers to these types of questions. But one of those answers centers on the fact that early Christians knew **what** they believed, knew **why** they believed it, and were able to **defend** their belief system.

Christianity differs from all the major religions of the world in that it is based on **historical fact**. It is not merely a system of moral directives, and it does not depend upon nebulous philosophies or a self-derived system of gods. Instead, Bible doctrine has its foundation on the truth of particular events in world history—from the Creation account of Genesis to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It hardly is surprising, therefore, to find that the Christians who composed the early church used these historical facts in defense of their faith. Quite the contrary. It would be surprising if they did **not** defend that faith with all the weapons available to them via their apologetic arsenal!

### **Our Task Today**

It should be no less surprising if those of us who are Christians in the twenty-first century choose to defend **our** faith with the same types of weapons from the same apologetic arsenal. Unfortunately, there are some in the church today who are not adequately acquainted with the fields of Christian apologetics and Christian evidences, and the great good that can be accomplished through the proper use of these marvelous tools. Some preachers, teachers, and parents wonder whether there is a proper place for such instruction within the teaching framework of the local congregation or family unit. Some, not knowing how valuable training in this area can be, have assumed it is of interest only to the “intellectually elite.” Yet nothing could be farther from the truth. Studies in Christian apologetics and Christian evidences concentrate on an examination of the many evidences upon which Christianity is based, and help ground the Christian’s faith in fact by providing logical, sound, defensible answers to questions that so often arise—especially in the minds of young people. There are a number of valid reasons why we today should use these fields to defend The Faith.

First, we should study and employ Christian apologetics and Christian evidences in order to demonstrate the validity of the Christian system. Truth does not shrink from exhaustive examination, for it has nothing to fear. Rather, truth welcomes the searchlight of the severest scrutiny, unfailingly confident that it cannot be disproved. As Jesus Himself said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). A religion that discourages logical examination of its claims is tacitly admitting the doubtfulness of its position. Christianity has no fear of submitting its beliefs to the critical examination of skeptics. Nor does Christianity fear having its proponents study the claims of other religions (or no religion at all). Truth will neither bend nor break beneath the onslaught. A faith that cannot withstand a terse, critical examination is a faith not worth having. As people see the manifold evidences that prove God’s existence, Jesus’ Sonship, and the Bible’s inspiration—and as they examine other claims (atheism, agnosticism, skepticism, etc.) under the dissecting microscope of God’s Word—eventually they will come to accept, and likewise be able to defend, the one true religion of the one true God.

Second, we should employ Christian apologetics and Christian evidences in our defense of The Faith for the simple reason that, in doing so, it will strengthen us personally. Through a study of the evidences upon which Christianity is based, we will come to see that Christianity is not a “pie-in-the-sky,” “I-hope-so-by-and-by” kind of religion. On the contrary, Christianity is grounded in history. Its roots are deep, and its precepts are provable. Via a reasoned defense, we can document that it is possible to: (a) **know** that

God exists, (b) **know** that Jesus is God's Son; and (c) **know** that the Bible is God's inspired, inerrant, authoritative word. In so doing, we can give people a clear view of their God, His Son, His Word, and their potential home in heaven.

Third, we should become familiar with Christian apologetics and Christian evidences because by doing so, we can save not only our own souls, but also the souls of others. One thing is certain: we cannot teach what we do not know (Hebrews 5:12). Our goal is heaven (Hebrews 11:13-16). Our mission is not only to get there ourselves, but also to take as many others with us as possible (Matthew 28:18-20). It is our task to learn God's Word (Psalm 119:11), and then to convey that Word to others for their ultimate salvation (Mark 16:15-16; John 3:16). Our society today is a questioning one. Rightly so! Religion cannot and must not rest on presumptive grounds or traditional heritage. People must investigate the claims of Christianity, and then see for themselves that those claims are legitimate, factual, and above all, true.

Fourth (and probably most obviously), we should employ Christian apologetics and Christian evidences so that we can properly defend Christianity against the attacks made upon it by its enemies. From the philosopher who claims it is impossible to know anything at all, to the scientist who claims that we are little more than "naked apes," attacks upon Christianity never cease. The atheist says he **knows** God does not exist, the agnostic says that neither he nor anyone else **can know** God exists, the skeptic says that he **doubts** that God exists, the infidel says that **if** God exists, it is **not** the God of the Bible, and so on. These erroneous philosophies have kept many people from becoming Christians in the first place. And, sadly, various forms of these same philosophies have crept into the church in some places, and have caused the untaught and the unstable to fall away. As I asked in the Preface, who could begin to imagine the numbers of people who have either lost their faith in God, or who have been prevented from coming to Him in humble obedience, because the seeds of unbelief were planted at a tender age, watered by infidelity, and fertilized by a disbelieving generation?

### DEFENDING THE FAITH—HOW?

In his book, *Set Forth Your Case*, Clark Pinnock provided remarkable insight into the use of Christian evidences when he wrote:

The aim of apologetics is not to trick a person into becoming a Christian against his will. It strives rather at laying the evidence for the Christian gospel before men in an intelligent fashion so that they can make a meaningful commitment... The heart cannot delight in what the mind rejects as false. Apologetics presents compelling reasons to the mind for receiving Christ as Savior into the total man. Faith is based upon credible evidence which people can recognize as trustworthy in accord with proper criteria for truth (1971, p. 11).

An essential function of Christian evidences is to show that Christianity is based on truth-claims that an unbeliever can study and accept. Another essential function of Christian evidences is to provide the believer with a firm foundation for his own belief, so that his faith may be grounded and rooted in the knowledge of God's truth. The Christian system is not now, nor was it ever intended to be, based on fiction or myth. Instead, it is anchored in the most credible of realities.

The question then becomes: How do we go about properly **using** the information we have gleaned via a study of Christian apologetics and Christian evidences? First and foremost, **we must begin in the home**. We must encourage parents and children alike to become daily Bible readers. It may be difficult—busy schedules being what they are—but it is not impossible. And it is important! Each parent must show himself or herself to be a Christian who is "approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). We must be like the Bereans of old who Paul said "received the word with all readiness of the mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). We can begin by selecting short groups of verses or single chapters. Choose passages that emphasize the use of evidences by biblical writers in their discussions with first-century people (e.g., Acts 2; Acts 17; Romans 1; et al.). Also emphasize passages that stress God's commands in this regard (Jude 3; 1 Peter 3:15; etc.). Continually reinforce two main points: (a) God has commanded us to be ready to defend The Faith; and (b) the inspired writers did exactly that in their writings and teachings.

Second, we need to emphasize the need to study apologetics and evidences in Bible class settings. And in so doing, we also must emphasize the importance of securing the very best teachers—people who either already are familiar with these fields, or who have the determination and devotion to prepare themselves adequately so they can handle the subject matter. Teaching (and answering questions about) such things as the existence of God, the inspiration of His Word, and the deity of His Son is not something to be approached lightly.

Third, we should choose biblically sound and scientifically accurate materials for use in such classes, so that the students (whether adults or young people) not only have at their disposal additional information besides that covered in class, but so they have a ready, reliable source to which they can turn in for answers to questions that may arise later. Teachers should provide students with diagrams, charts, reprints from journals and magazines, tracts, pamphlets, synopses of major arguments—anything that will provide a “mini-library” that the students can use for further study in years to come. I cannot overemphasize the need to select good, sound materials. We must realize that souls are at stake—not just the souls of the people attending the class, but also the souls of the people they may influence through their teaching of the information they have gleaned as a result of their study of Christian apologetics and Christian evidences.

### A Word of Caution

I believe that a word of caution is in order at this point. First, the tendency exists for some to think that the apologetics is an **end within itself**. We must not fall into this trap. Christian apologetics is a **tool**; it is a **means** to an end—not the end itself. The judicious use of Christian apologetics and Christian evidences can help people see that Christianity is a religion based on historical, verifiable fact. However, a person must possess a seeking attitude (Proverbs 8:17) because without such, little is likely to be accomplished. Be forewarned, therefore, that apologetics does have limitations. As the old adage suggests, “A man convinced against his will, is of the same opinion still.”

Second, unfortunately there are those working in the field of Christian evidences whose teachings are filled with error. They produce books, tapes, films, etc. that are scripturally unsound and scientifically inaccurate. They speak about such things as the “probability of God’s existence,” the “leap of faith” necessary to be a Christian, the suggestion that one “cannot **know** God exists,” the idea that “evolution and the Bible show almost complete agreement,” and so on. I have dealt with these erroneous concepts (and others like them), and the false teachers who promote them, on a number of occasions in the past (see Jackson and Thompson, 1992; Thompson; 1994a; 1999; 2000a; 2000b; 2002a; Thompson, et al., 2003). **The faithful Christian must not sanction errors such as these!** We must exercise extreme caution in choosing the materials and/or speakers to which we are exposed, or to which we expose others (especially young people). Paul warned his young protégé Timothy: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). That time **did** come—even in Paul’s own lifetime. And it has remained with us even to this very hour. We must not fall victim to such false teaching. Vigilance on our part is required if we are to remain faithful to God’s Word, and if we are to teach others to do likewise.

### DEFENDING THE FAITH—WHAT?

Is the Christian Faith an irrational belief based on a god who does not exist in the first place? Is Christianity built upon a mere human who claimed to be the divine son of this god, but was not? Is the Bible just a book that contains “good moral teachings,” yet is not the written word of any omniscient god? Is the Christian religion established upon little more than the ancient traditions of sincere-but-deluded people? Or, in the end, is The Way (Acts 24:14) simply the result of some sort of religious fanaticism?

Hardly! Genuine biblical faith stands firmly planted upon adequate evidence. After the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the newly appointed apostle entered the Jewish synagogues and “proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20). That message continually amazed those who heard it. It seemed incredible

that one who had so opposed the Christian Way could now be one of its most zealous advocates. Yet Luke informed his readers that Saul increased in strength, and “confounded the Jews that lived in Damascus, **proving** that this is the Christ” (Acts 9:22, emp. added).

Of interest in this passage is the term “proving,” which is a translation of the Greek word *sumbibazon*—a present-tense participle form denoting that Paul’s preaching was characterized consistently by a demonstrative line of argumentation. The original term, from an etymological viewpoint, means “to bring together,” as when, for example, parts of the body are brought together (i.e., tied together) by sinew, ligament, etc. (see Ephesians 4:16). In the context of Acts 9:22, the word connotes bringing together pieces of information from which a logical conclusion can be drawn—which is exactly how the first-century disciples were able to document that Christ was Who He claimed to be! In similar fashion, Paul urged others to use this same line of reasoning to “**prove** all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21, emp. added).

“Proving all things” is where Christian apologetics and Christian evidences come into play. First, the proof for God’s existence is an important part of defending The Faith. Belief in God’s existence is warranted by a simple acknowledgment of the principle of causation. Every effect has an adequate, antecedent cause. And the effect never is quantitatively greater than, nor qualitatively superior to, the cause. The Universe is here—what is its cause? Since it is a truism that no material thing can create itself, the Universe must have had an adequate antecedent cause. Similarly, an examination of the world around us reveals intelligent and intricate design. Design demands a designer. The Bible argues from cause to effect in revealing that Designer: “For every house is builded by someone; but he that built all things is God” (Hebrews 3:4). Nature’s testimony alone is sufficient to lead one to belief in a Creator (Psalm 19:1-2; 14:1). In fact, the evidence is so compelling that man has no excuse for unbelief (Romans 1:19-20). Furthermore, the moral faculty of man is an effect that requires a cause. Since among Earth’s life forms man alone is a moral creature, there must be a cause that resides beyond the reach of this material world; hence God must exist.

God’s existence is both **provable** and **knowable**. Man can know that God exists, and he can know that he knows it. This is a crucial point. If man cannot know that God exists, then he cannot know (i.e., with certainty) that the Bible is God’s Word. If he cannot know that the Bible is God’s Word, then he cannot **know** that Jesus is the Son of God. If he cannot **know** that Jesus is the Son of God, then he cannot **know** that he is saved. Yet this is in direct conflict with 1 John 5:13 (“These things have I written unto you, that you may **know** that ye have eternal life...”). If the Christian cannot know that God exists what, then, distinguishes him from the agnostic? Christians are not agnostics.

Amazingly, some today claim that God’s existence is neither knowable nor provable. Instead, they suggest, it is **more probable** that God exists than that He does not. Why cannot those who advocate this idea see the logical results of such a concept? If it merely is **more probable** that God exists than that He does not, **there nevertheless remains a probability** (however small) **that God does not exist!** This notion is false. God’s existence is not a matter of probability. Certainly, God’s existence cannot be proved **scientifically** (i.e., like one would prove that a sack of potatoes weighs five pounds), but direct, empirical, scientific proof is not the only kind of proof available. We must not yield to the false concept which suggests that God’s existence is unknowable. As the psalmist wrote, “Be still, and know that I am God” (46:10, emp. added).

Second, the proof of the deity and Sonship of Jesus Christ forms an important part of our defense of The Faith. Belief in the deity of Jesus Christ is mandated by an impressive array of evidence. Some of this proof comes in the form of fulfilled messianic prophecies (over three hundred, in fact). Much of Christ’s biography was written by the prophets hundreds of years before He was born in Bethlehem. This proves He was, and remains, all He claimed. The miracles of Christ also confirm His deity. John wrote: “Many other signs [i.e., miraculous works—BT] therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples...but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God” (John 20:30-31). As I noted earlier in this chapter, perhaps the singularly most impressive miracle involving Christ was His resurrection. The timing was predicted by David (cf. Psalm 16:8-11; Acts 2:22-36), and even by Jesus Himself (Matthew 20:18-19). Plus, after His resurrection, Christ was seen by over 500 witnesses (1 Corinthians 15:4-8)! Christ’s deity was demonstrated via a miracle, and with great power (Romans 1:4; see Butt, 2002).

Any study of Jesus' deity and Sonship, then, would include an in-depth examination of the Old Testament prophecies that pertain to Him, His virgin birth, His life, His teachings, His miracles, His bodily resurrection from the dead, etc. In proving to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ (i.e., the promised Messiah), the apostle Paul frequently introduced specific Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming Messiah (there are over 300 of them—see McDowell, 1999), and compared those predictions with factual data that pertained to Jesus of Nazareth. From such tangible evidence, he then proceeded to draw irresistible conclusions that no rational, open-minded person could deny.

In Acts 8:35, when the text says that Philip, in speaking to the Ethiopian eunuch, “preached unto him Jesus,” and no more, it is because **there is no more**. Christianity without Christ is no Christianity at all. If the deity of Jesus somehow is negated, all of Christianity falls with it. We must impress upon everyone with whom we come in contact that Jesus was Who He claimed to be—and that the proofs to support His claim of deity are irrefutable! The historical, philosophical, and biblical evidences supporting Jesus' deity are multitudinous, and are able to prove to any open-minded person that He is Who He claimed to be. We must not fall prey to false ideas which assert that Jesus was merely a “good teacher” or “revered prophet.” Those are not options that Christ left open to us. Either He is Who He claimed to be—the Son of God—or He is worse than the devil of hell, since He claimed to be Deity incarnate, but was not. That would make him both a liar and a hypocrite, because He told men to trust their eternal salvation to Him when, in fact, He had no power to save anyone. People everywhere need to know that Christ was not just a “good teacher” or “revered prophet.” Rather, **Jesus is the risen Lord!**

Third, the proof of the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible forms an important part of the study of Christian evidences. Accepting that God exists, leads one to inquire as to whether or not God would communicate with mankind. If God has any information to which mankind needs access (a credible concept, to be sure), it stands to reason that He would reveal it in the form of a permanent communication to humans (e.g., through the written word). This being true, it is appropriate to examine the Bible to see if it qualifies as a book from God. There are several things that we reasonably might expect of such a divine volume. The Bible not only **meets** such expectations (e.g., it claims divine authorship, it exhibits miraculous unity, it is flawless and timeless, etc.), but actually **exceeds** them. The Bible is replete with examples of fulfilled prophecy and scientific foreknowledge—factors that elevate it far above any book of mere human invention. Paul said, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God [literally “God breathed”—BT], and is profitable...” (2 Timothy 3:16). When investigated honestly, the truth of this claim is obviated.

Convince a person that the Bible is not fully inspired, and he or she quickly will realize that: (a) God makes mistakes, and therefore is not to be trusted; and (b) if the Bible is not what it claims to be, then in actuality there is no objective moral standard to be followed in this life. There is no need to dwell on the fruits of this kind of thinking. Evil trees produce evil fruits (Matthew 7:17). With no perfect, pure, trustworthy God—and, therefore, no objective standard of right and wrong—each man ends up doing what is right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6). As the prophet Jeremiah correctly observed: “It is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).

Fourth, the proof of humankind's creation at the hand of an Almighty God forms an important part of the defense of the Christian Faith. There are basically just two views of origins: (1) God created everything; or (2) life evolved naturalistically from nonliving matter, and continues to evolve into varied life forms. These views are locked in an incredible struggle, and illustrate the critical dichotomy between theism and atheism. No compromise between the two is possible. Theistic evolution and its counterparts (progressive creationism, threshold evolution, etc.) are illegitimate children rejected by both parents. Evolution knows nothing of God, and Christians cannot accept a theory that calls upon God only temporarily to fill gaps until they can be filled with data gleaned from empirical inquiry. Additionally, God told us **that** He created everything (“in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”—Genesis 1:1), **how** He did it (“he spoke and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast”—Psalm 33:9), and **when** He did it (the biblical evidence for a young Earth is both obvious and overwhelming; see Thompson, 2003). To accept evolution, or any compromise position, is to reject God's testimony and count His Word as untrue. If a man cannot believe God's Word concerning creation, how can he be sure it is telling the truth concerning salvation?

We must not buy into the false concept which suggests that we owe our ultimate origin to the blind, random, naturalistic processes of organic evolution that allegedly provided us with an ancestry rooted in ape-like creatures millions of years ago. Instead, we must ground ourselves in the truth contained within Genesis 1 (and hundreds of other biblical passages) that speak(s) of the lofty creation of mankind by God. We must learn that there is an incredibly significant difference in having evolved by accident from the primordial slime on some primeval seashore, as opposed to having been created “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:26-27). **If people have a false concept of their origin, they likewise will have a false concept of their purpose and destiny!**

## CONCLUSION

A study of Christian apologetics and Christian evidences is an excellent way to provide the “strength of faith” that people so desperately need in this day and age. It is a first-rate tool for use in evangelism that should form an important part of the repertoire of knowledge used by every Christian to help convert the lost. And it is an important device that Christians can use to keep their souls from apostasy and to defend their faith against the assaults that inevitably will come. Let us, like Paul, never be ashamed of the Gospel, recognizing that it is indeed the “power of God unto that salvation” (Romans 1:16). Let us study diligently, learn it well, and then, in turn, teach it to as many others as we possibly can.



## CHAPTER 2

### EVIL, PAIN, AND SUFFERING—THE CASE AGAINST GOD?

It was a sad time for Israel. Absalom, King David's own son, had mounted a coup against his father. When word reached the king, and he finally realized the futility of remaining in Jerusalem, he marched out of the city toward the brook Kidron with the ragtag band of subjects still faithful to him. As he and his entourage approached the brook, Ittai the Gittite and those loyal to him began to follow after David in order to join him on his pilgrimage. The king implored Ittai to count the cost of such a decision and turn back. But Ittai demurred, and asked that he and those with him be allowed to stay the course in their dedication to their lord. As David, Ittai, and their followers crossed the brook Kidron to leave Jerusalem, the Bible poignantly records: "And all the country wept with a loud voice" (2 Samuel 15:23). Sad times, those.

Sad times, these. On Tuesday, September 11, 2001, America found herself under siege by foreign terrorists. The images, it is safe to say, have been forever etched into the recesses of our minds. Four planes were hijacked, the first of which was crashed deliberately into the north tower of the World Trade Center in New York City. A few moments later, the second was flown premeditatedly into the south tower. Before we even had time to catch our breath or fully comprehend what was happening, both towers imploded and careened toward the ground—leaving everything for miles around covered in a morose gray ash. The third jet was slammed intentionally into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., our nation's capital. The fourth fell to earth in a forested area near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. All 266 passengers onboard the four planes perished. Property damage was measured in the billions of dollars. The number of innocent people killed in the flaming rubble reached almost 3,000. In the blink of an eye, countless individuals lost their lives (some actually **choosing** to do so in their attempt to cripple the United States). But the majority were innocent men, women, and children—men, women, and children who started that fateful day with their normal routine, never expecting to take their final step into eternity on that tragic day of September 11, 2001. **"And all the country wept with a loud voice."**

As news crews scrambled to provide us with the most shocking images and the most heart-rending stories some of us had ever seen or heard, we were reminded once again that, all too frequently, life is not fair. In truth, every day, in hundreds of ways, this fact makes itself abundantly clear to us. But September 11, 2001, marked a day when the unfairness of this physical life became especially apparent in a very real, very gruesome way. Billions of people encircling the globe stood with mouth agape as they watched the four hijacked commercial airplanes used as weapons against our unsuspecting nation. Within a matter of minutes, the World Trade Center had been completely destroyed, and the Pentagon had been ravaged, by the impact of those planes. Fires burned, smoke billowed, and the loss of innocent human life shocked us all. Precious freedoms that we held dear had been attacked. Our previously unfettered manner of life had been threatened. Our lives had been placed in peril. And our beloved fellow citizens were murdered in cold blood before our very eyes. Evil, in what surely must be one of its most incomprehensible forms—the unprovoked, unwarranted slaughter of innocents—had reared its ugly head among us. Amidst its sorrow, America not only wept with a loud, collective voice, but also asked through the tears and groanings—**why?**

Then, slowly but surely, a quiet-yet-detectable uncertainty began to ripple throughout communities all over the country. As television stations played and replayed the video footage documenting the sheer horror and immense destruction associated with the attacks, countless witnesses, survivors, and their families asked the remaining inevitable questions: "Why did God allow this to happen?"; "Where was God when we needed Him?"; "Has He forgotten us—or does He even exist at all?"

Such questions are easy enough to understand: "If there really is a God, why did He allow so many people to die?" A semblance of these questions was echoed thousands of years ago by King David, who desperately asked: "Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" (Psalm 10:1). The Israelite Gideon lamented to an angelic messenger in the midst of defeat at the hands of a hated and feared enemy: "Oh my lord, if Jehovah is with us, why then is all this befallen us?" (Judges 6:13).



During tragedies like those of September 11, or the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing carried out by Timothy McVeigh, questions similar to these are heralded from street corners in front of news cameras, or whispered through sobs and tears in the dark recesses of private bedroom closets. To be human is to deal with emotional and physical pain on a day-to-day basis. None of us—if we live long enough—escapes that pain, or the suffering that frequently attends it. Even Christians, who confess a living God (Matthew 16:16), sometimes are left to wonder: Where is this God when we need Him? Why doesn't He **do** something? These questions, left unanswered, can lead to doubt—and then to disbelief. Evil, pain, and suffering often become stumbling blocks for many individuals who, as a result, subsequently drift quietly away from the God in Whom they formerly believed, or else make a conscientious decision to no longer believe in that God. My contention here is that if I can help those people understand the **intellectual** problem of suffering, then they will have a better prospect of coming through the **emotional** side of the issue.

Atheists see only vindication in events like Oklahoma City and New York City. They hear a mother on the evening news proclaiming, "It's a 'miracle' that my child survived," and ask: Would it have been much more bothersome for God to have done the same for everyone else? Without a doubt, the problem of evil, pain, and suffering is the strongest single weapon in the entire arsenal of the atheist against the existence of the Judeo-Christian God. Across the millennia, unbelievers of all stripes have wielded that weapon with devastating effect. Their basic argument—set forth many millennia ago by the Greek philosopher Epicurus (342-270 B.C.)—goes something like this.

If God can prevent evil, but will not, then He is not good.

If He wants to prevent evil, but cannot, then He is not all-powerful.

If God wants to prevent evil, and if He can prevent evil, then why is there evil pain and suffering in the world today?

The conclusion that one is supposed to draw, of course, is that since evil, pain, and suffering **do** exist (something few rational human beings would deny), then **God does not!**

The atheist, agnostic, skeptic, or infidel, of course, does not really believe in the first two premises. He rejects the idea that there is a God Who could do something about suffering if He had the power, and he rejects that there is a God Who would do something about suffering if He had the inclination. He does not, however, deny that suffering exists. Like every other human being, he is forced to face, on a firsthand basis, the problem of suffering. But as far as he is concerned, suffering "just is"; that is to say, it is part of our unplanned, purposeless existence. We live, we die—end of story. Only for the sake of presenting the argument of evil—as it militates against God's existence—does he allow the theist the first two premises. His purpose in doing so, naturally, is to force the theist to try to reconcile or justify suffering—given the assumption that God is supposed to be an all-loving and all-powerful Being.

What should be the response of the Christian theist to all of this? How are we to answer when we are asked how an infinitely good, all-powerful God can allow evil, pain, and suffering to exist? Do not these things, by necessity, negate the benevolence of God, and thereby strike at His very existence? \*

Some have tried to sidestep the problem by denying one or more of the premises listed above. This was the approach taken by Jewish rabbi Harold Kushner in his immensely popular book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (1981). Kushner, who lost his son at an early age to a cruel and debilitating disease, decided to deal with the problem by actually altering the characteristics of the Judeo-Christian God. Jehovah, said Kushner, **is** infinitely good, but He is **not** all-powerful.

The Bible does indeed describe God as the very essence of a loving Being (1 John 4:8,16), and as such, He is infinitely good, as love demands. However, the Bible is equally clear in its teachings that God is all-powerful (Matthew 19:26; Revelation 4:8). While the unbeliever may not agree with the Bible's teachings on these points, even he nevertheless admits the obvious: the Bible **does** attribute to God such traits. Ignoring them does not somehow make them go away. Kushner's solution turns out to be acceptable to neither the faithful theist nor the accusing unbeliever.

---

\* I would like to acknowledge my use in this chapter of portions of an article, "The Problem of Suffering," by Trevor Major, published in the July 1998 issue of *Reason & Revelation*, the monthly journal on Christian evidences published by Apologetics Press, for which Trevor and I served as co-editors during that time period.

Others have suggested that God is neither infinitely powerful nor infinitely good. Rather, He is in the process of **acquiring** these attributes. So it is understandable that there should be imperfections in our world because God, while great, likewise is imperfect or incomplete. Like Kushner's proposed "solution," this proposal abandons the God of conventional theism (see Edwards, 1972, p. 213). Unfortunately, as John M. Frame has observed, such a finite, impotent god offers no "sure hope for the overcoming of evil" (1994, p. 157). In the end, this god is not the God that the Christian theist is defending, for such a god is not the God of the Bible.

Finally, someone might wish to suggest that suffering itself is not real. What we call "suffering," they might say, is merely an illusion. This is the position of Eastern mysticism, but it is not the position of theism. Benedict Spinoza, a radical Jewish philosopher, maintained that evil was simply "deprivation." When we think we are suffering, all we are doing is acting like small children who have been denied playthings or goodies to eat. If only we had a **complete** picture of reality, Spinoza suggested, then we would know God, and nothing would appear imperfect. For Spinoza, nature and God were one and the same, which, however convenient for answering the argument of suffering, does not depict the God of Christian theism. Most Christians, like most atheists, readily acknowledge that suffering is all too real. Indeed, that Jesus suffered for the sake of mankind is a vital element of the Christian faith (Matthew 16:21; Luke 24:26; Acts 17:3; Philippians 3:10; 1 Peter 2:20-25; 4:12-19; etc.). Again, ignoring the problem of evil, pain, and suffering will not make it go away.

### FROM AN UNBELIEVER'S STANDPOINT, CAN "EVIL" *REALLY* EXIST?

As I begin my investigation into this most serious of matters, I would like to point out that when an unbeliever raises the question of "evil" in his attempt to disprove the existence of God, he—whether he actually realizes it or not—is automatically appealing to some universal, recognizable, non-subjective system of justice that evil allegedly "violates." But if there is no God, hence no collective system of "rightness," how could there be any such thing as "evil"? Does not the word "evil" suggest the violation of some objective and identifiable standard? Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky, in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), had one of his characters (Ivan) say that, in the absence of God, everything is allowed. French existential philosopher Jean Paul Sartre wrote:

Everything is indeed permitted if God does not exist, and man is in consequence forlorn, for he cannot find anything to depend upon either within or outside himself.... Nor, on the other hand, if God does not exist, are we provided with any values or commands that could legitimize our behavior (1961, p. 485).

Sartre contended that **whatever** one chooses to do is right; value is attached to the choice itself so that "...we can never choose evil" (1966, p. 279). These men are correct about one thing. If there is no God, "anything goes." Let unbelief, therefore, define that standard by which—in the absence of an absolutely moral God—certain things are, in fact, "evil." No atheist, agnostic, skeptic, or infidel—consistent with his own philosophy—can even introduce the problem of evil.

Adding to the complexity of this issue is the unbeliever's bias against God. Bias is a difficult thing to admit. It also is a difficult thing to overcome. Some would even say impossible. Renowned paleontologist Donald Johanson, in his now-famous book, *Lucy: The Beginnings of Humankind* (which discusses *Australopithecus afarensis*, arguably the world's most famous "hominid" fossil), addressed this subject in an admirably candid manner when he wrote: "There is no such thing as a total lack of bias. I have it; everybody has it." But Dr. Johanson did not stop there. He went on to note: "**The insidious thing about bias is that it does make one deaf to the cries of other evidence**" (Johanson and Edey, 1981, p. 277, emp. added).

Oh, how true. And the veracity of this assessment is especially evident when the bias involves an intractable determination to live without God. Will Durant was a self-proclaimed humanist and avowed atheist, yet he nevertheless wrote: "The greatest question of our time is not communism vs. individualism, not Europe vs. America, not even the East vs. the West; it is whether men can bear to live without God" (1932, p. 23). The steely resolve "to live without God" has become the mantra of many scientists and philosophers. Sir Julian Huxley, himself an atheist, compared God to the disappearing act performed by the Cheshire cat in

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* when he wrote: "The supernatural is being swept out of the universe.... God is beginning to resemble not a ruler, but the last fading smile of a cosmic Cheshire cat" (1957, p. 59). To Huxley, and thousands of others like him, "the God argument" has been effectively routed.

Disbelief in God, though, is an *a priori* decision that **is not based on evidence!** Time and again, eminent atheists, agnostics, skeptics, and infidels have made their positions in this regard crystal clear. The widely published comments of the late biochemist and science writer, Isaac Asimov, are an excellent example. In a thought-provoking interview with the editor of *The Humanist*, Paul Kurtz, Dr. Asimov was asked how he would classify himself. He responded: "Emotionally, I am an atheist. I don't have the evidence to prove that God doesn't exist, but I so strongly suspect he doesn't that I don't want to waste my time" (Asimov, 1982, 2[2]:9).

Once a person comes to the decision that he "strongly suspects" that God does not exist, where does that leave him? With God out of the picture, two facts become prominent—and problematic—very quickly. First, a naturalistic system of origins (i.e., organic evolution) **must** be invoked to explain, not just man's origin, but **everything!** As Huxley went on to say three years after he made the above statement: "The earth was not created; it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind and soul as well as brain and body. So did religion" (1960c, pp. 252-253).

Harvard's eminent paleontologist, George Gaylord Simpson, wrote that evolution "achieves the aspect of purpose without the intervention of a purposer, and has produced a vast plan without the action of a planner" (1947, p. 489). In a strictly reductionist scheme, the idea that organisms deliberately pursue goals must be rejected, since "purpose" cannot be reduced to the laws of physics. Biologist Alex Novikoff wrote in *Science* some years ago: "Only when purpose was excluded from descriptions of all biological activity... could biological problems be properly formulated and analyzed" (1945, 101:212-213). Another scientist from Harvard, E.O. Wilson (the "father of sociobiology"), weighed in on this same theme in his book, *On Human Nature*, when he commented on the very first page: "If humankind evolved by Darwinian natural selection, genetic chance and environmental necessity, not God, made the species" (1978, p. 1). Or, as Brown University evolutionist Kenneth Miller put it in his 1999 volume, *Finding Darwin's God*:

My particular religious beliefs or yours notwithstanding, **it is a fact that in the scientific world of the late twentieth century, the displacement of God by Darwinian forces is almost complete.** This view is not always articulated openly, perhaps for fear of offending the faithful, but the literature of science is not a good place to keep secrets. Scientific writing, especially on evolution, shows this displacement clearly (p. 15, emp. added).

Second, with God having been "displaced," like it or not, man is on his own. Simpson remarked in his book, *Life of the Past*:

**Man stands alone in the universe**, a unique product of a long, unconscious, impersonal material process with unique understanding and potentialities. **These he owes to no one** but himself, and it is to himself that he is responsible. He is not the creature of uncontrollable and undeterminable forces, but is his own master. He can and must decide and manage his own destiny (1953, p. 155, emp. added).

Nobel laureate Jacques Monod, in his dismally depressing *magnum opus*, *Chance and Necessity*, concluded: "Man at least knows he is alone in the unfeeling immensity of the universe, out of which he has emerged only by chance" (1971, p. 180). Or, as Richard Leakey and Roger Lewin put it in their book, *Origins*: "There is no law that declares the human animal to be different, as seen in this broad biological perspective, from any other animal" (1977, p. 256). A bleak thought, to be sure—but from an evolutionist's self-imposed view, inescapably true nevertheless.

Perhaps now is the time to ask: **Where does all of this inevitably lead?** Actions have consequences, and beliefs have implications. In a chapter titled "Scientific Humanism" in his book, *The Humanist Alternative*, Paul Kurtz concluded:

To adopt such a scientific approach unreservedly is to accept as **ultimate in all matters of fact and real existence the appeal to the evidence of experience alone—a court subordinate to no higher authority**, to be over-ridden by no prejudice however comfortable (1973, p. 109, emp. added).

That “higher authority” must be avoided at all cost. Herman J. Eckelmann, in an article titled “Some Concluding Thoughts on Evolutionary Belief,” echoed an interesting refrain when he asked: “Is it possible that one can have too high an emotional stake in wanting to have a God-less universe?” (1991, p. 345). That “emotional stake” is a driving force behind the refusal to submit to that “higher authority.” If you doubt that, then listen to the admission of Harvard geneticist Richard Lewontin.

Our willingness to accept scientific claims against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science *in spite* of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, *in spite* of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, *in spite* of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because **we have a prior commitment, a commitment to naturalism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes** to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door (1997, p. 31, italics in orig., emp. added).

That “divine foot in the door” is something that must be avoided at all costs! Man **must** be viewed as **solely** a product of naturalistic forces. The late Nobel laureate Sir Francis Crick, in his book, *The Astonishing Hypothesis*, provided what may well be the most complete and well-thought-out statement of the scientific materialists’ view of man ever to be put into print.

You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules. As Lewis Carroll’s Alice might have phrased it: “You are nothing but a packet of neurons” (1994, p. 3).

Or, as Robert Wesson put it in *Beyond Natural Selection*: “The mind is no more independent of the body than living creatures are independent of their physiology” (1997, p. 277). E.O. Wilson intoned: “Virtually all contemporary scientists and philosophers expert on the subject agree that the mind, which comprises consciousness and rational process, is the brain at work” (1998, p. 98). Crick even went so far as to suggest that, eventually, all mind processes will be explicable as nothing more than the firing of neurons—i.e., in terms of interactions between atoms and molecules. Steven Pinker, the eminent psychologist of Harvard (and former director of the Center of Cognitive Neuroscience at MIT), is on record as stating: “**Nothing in the mind exists except as neural activity**” (1997b, emp. added).

Think for a moment about the implications of what you have just read. Beliefs have consequences! If what we experience as feelings (good or bad) are, at the cellular level, no more than a complex interaction of chemicals and electrical activity, if the mind is nothing but a electrochemical property of the body, if the mind is a purely manmade concept, and if “nothing in the mind exists except as neural activity”—**what does all of this mean?**

Let Pinker explain. He believes (as noted above) that “nothing in the mind exists except as neural activity.” Would it surprise you to learn, then, that in a *New York Times* article, he suggested that women who murder their newborn babies may not be either mad or evil, but simply unconsciously obeying “primeval instincts to sacrifice their children for the good of the tribe”? (see Blanchard, 2000, p. 382). [On March 16, 2001, Randy Thornhill, a biology professor of the University of New Mexico, delivered a lecture at Simon Fraser University at Harbour Centre in Vancouver. His transcript stated that “rape is evolutionary, biological, and natural.” He further argued that “rape itself is an adaptation, a product of direct selection for rape in the past. Our male ancestors became ancestors in part because they conditionally used rape” (Thornhill, 2001). A year earlier, in his book, *A Natural History of Rape* (co-authored with Craig T. Palmer), Thornhill characterized rape as an “adaptive reproductive strategy” (2000). The authors contended that rape is a sexual act that has its origins in what could be called the “Darwinist imperative”—i.e., the desire to reproduce and pass on one’s genes.] John Blanchard, in his fascinating book, *Does God Believe in Atheists?*, addressed Dr. Pinker’s suggestion: “This is the logical outworking of materialism, **but if reducing the brain’s activity to electrical impulses can sanction murder, what can it condemn?**” (p. 382, emp. in orig.).

What indeed? Atheistic philosopher Michael Ruse admitted that if evolution is accepted as true, then **“morality is no more...than an adaptation**, and as such has the same status as such things as teeth and eyes and noses” (1995, p. 241, emp. added). And if, as Ruse went on to say, “morality is a creation of the genes” (p. 290), then by what criterion, or group of criteria, do humans make moral decisions? Have we no option but to do whatever our genes have programmed us to do? In other words, how can the materialist escape from the stranglehold of determinism—the idea which suggests that, as its name implies, everything we do is “determined,” and that we, in essence, have no free will.

In the now-famous text of his Compton Lectures, *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach*, British philosopher Sir Karl Popper made the point that even if determinism **were** true, it could not be argued since any argument is itself presumably predetermined by purely physical conditions—as would be any opposing arguments. As Popper put it:

[A]ccording to determinism, any such theories—such as, say, determinism—are held because of a certain physical structure of the holder (perhaps of his brain). Accordingly, we are deceiving ourselves (and are physically so determined as to deceive ourselves) whenever we believe that there are such things as arguments or reasons which make us accept determinism. Or in other words, physical determinism is a theory which, if it is true, is not arguable, since it must explain all our reactions, including what appear to us as beliefs based on arguments, as due to **purely physical conditions**. Purely physical conditions, including our physical environment, make us say or accept whatever we say or accept... (1972, pp. 223-224, emp. in orig.).

In their book, *The Wonder of Being Human: Our Brain and Our Mind*, Sir John Eccles and his co-author Daniel Robinson commented on the correctness of Popper’s assessment (and the absurd nature ) of determinism when they observed: “This is an effective *reductio ad absurdum*” [reduction to the absurd—BT]. They then went on to state: “This stricture applies to all of the materialist theories” (1984, p. 38; cf. also Eccles, 1992, p. 21). Indeed, it **is** absurd. And yes, it **does** apply to “all of the materialist theories.”

A good illustration of this is the life, teachings, and actions of the French novelist commonly known as the Marquis de Sade (1740-1814) who gave his name to sadism, in which a person derives sexual satisfaction from inflicting pain and humiliation on others. De Sade argued that, since everything is chemically determined, whatever is, is right. The distinguished microbiologist, Lynn Margulis, and her co-author/son Dorion Sagan, discussed this very point in their book, *What is Life?*

The high-born Frenchman Donatien Alphonse Francois de Sade (1740-1814) keenly felt the vanishing basis for morality. If Nature was a self-perpetuating machine and no longer a purveyor of divine authority, then it did not matter what he, as the infamous marquis de Sade, did or wrote (1995, p. 40, emp. added).

Or, as Ravi Zacharias put it: “Thinking atoms discussing morality is absurd” (1990, p. 138).

In his book, *In the Blood: God, Genes and Destiny*, Steve Jones suggested that criminal behavior was determined largely by genetic make-up (1996, pp. 207-220). In discussing Jones’ book, one writer, Janet Daley, insisted that if genetics is indeed ultimately responsible for “bad” traits, it also must account for “good” ones. She correctly observed: “If we can never be truly guilty, then we can never be truly virtuous either.” Daley went on to say:

Human beings are only capable of being moral insofar as they are free to choose how they behave. If they have no power to make real choices—if their freedom to decide how to act is severely limited by forces outside their control—then it is nonsense to make any ethical judgements about them. It would be wrong, as well, to base a judicial system on the assumption that people are free to choose how they will act. The idea of putting anyone on trial for anything at all becomes absurd (1996).

In fact, attempting to locate a “basis for morality” in the blind outworkings of nature is futile. As Ruse put it: **“There is no justification for morality in the ultimate sense”** (as quoted in O’Hear, 1997, p. 140, emp. added). In Dave Hunt’s words, “There are no morals in nature. Try to find a compassionate crow or an honest eagle—or a sympathetic hurricane” (1996, p. 41). Are those who advocate the idea that “nothing in the mind exists except as neural activity,” willing to accept the consequences of their belief? When you reject that “divine foot in the door,” explaining evil, pain, suffering, and immorality becomes a pointless exercise. In such a world view, evil, as such, **does not really exist** (or, at the very best, even if it does, **it does not really matter!**).

## WHY DO EVIL, PAIN, AND SUFFERING EXIST?

If we grant the existence of evil, pain, and suffering (and we do!), the question eventually will have to be asked: **Why** do they exist? As is often the case, Genesis—the Book of Beginnings—is the best place to start in dealing with fundamental questions such as this. The first book of the English Bible informs us that God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and gave them unfettered access to the Tree of Life. They would have lived forever—so long as they could continue to eat from this tree (Genesis 3:22). But they were not immortal. God told them not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, else they would surely die (Genesis 2:17).

At some point (apparently not too long after the Creation week; see Thompson, 2000a, pp. 258-264), Satan tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, and she, in turn, convinced Adam to do the same. This brought judgment from God. He separated them from the Tree of Life, promised that people would suffer, and foretold that Satan eventually would be defeated (Genesis 3:14-19).

It is difficult to grasp the enormity of this situation. We suffer—even innocent children suffer—because of the sin of two people in the great long ago. “If there is a God, why was my baby stillborn?” “If there is a God, why have I been afflicted with incurable cancer?” “If there is a God, why was my wife killed in a car wreck?” “If there is a God, why is my child mentally retarded?” These poignant appeals—and innumerable others just like them—have been echoed countless times across the centuries by those who are languishing under the sufferings to which humanity has become the heir. Such questions grip the human heart, and cry out for an answer. How could God allow so much suffering to exist for so long?

### A Response to Epicurus

Epicurus (and those who have parroted his argument ever since) suggested that if God **can** prevent evil, but **will not**, then He is not good. If He **wants** to prevent evil, but **cannot**, then He is not all-powerful. If God **wants** to prevent evil, and if He **can** prevent evil, then why is there evil pain and suffering in the world today? The conclusion that is supposed to follow is that since evil, pain, and suffering **do** exist, then God must not. How does the Christian theist respond to such an argument?

I suspect that by now, you have spotted an important fallacy in Epicurus’ argument. That fallacy, of course, lies in Epicurus’ dual **assumptions** that: (a) no good purpose can be served by the allowance of evil, pain, and suffering in the world; and (b) God therefore desires to prevent such. Neither of the assumptions is correct. Nor is Epicurus’ argument, which is based on them. Consider the following in this regard.

Likely, no one would be so presumptuous as to assert that mankind can understand completely the problem of **all** forms of evil, pain, and suffering. Other than what He has revealed in His inspired Word, the mind and purposes of God are unknown to man. Paul addressed this point when he wrote in Romans 11:33: “How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out.” Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 29:29: “The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.” However, enough of the answers **are** suggested in the Bible to allow us to work through the problem, trusting in the loving God Who always does “that which is right” (Genesis 18:25). The truth of the matter is that pain and suffering—when viewed in their proper perspective—do not militate against God’s existence. Consider, if you will, the following points.

### God’s Love; Man’s Free Will

As we consider the existence of the Judeo-Christian God, and the problem of evil, pain, and suffering as it relates to the existence of that God, it is appropriate to note something of the nature of God, and how He has constituted mankind. One of the first questions to come to mind is this: “Why did God create man in the first place?”

As every astute Bible student knows, the Scriptures are basically silent on the reason (or reasons) behind God’s creation of mankind. Except for passages like Isaiah 43:7 which suggest that man was created for God’s glory, the Word of God does not address this issue in a specific fashion. That, however, has not prevented some writers from offering their own speculations on the subject. Consider, for example, the concept suggested by John N. Clayton in his book, *Evidences of God, Volume I*, which contains a chapter titled “The Origin of Satan.” In that article, Clayton wrote:

It is at this point that we can see the purpose in creating man. God now **needed a means of demonstrating to his whole spiritual creation that his way was superior and that He was mightier than Satan**. To simply destroy Satan would not have proved anything about His system. A vehicle was needed to clearly show the fallacy of following evil's way (1977, pp. 154-155, emp. added).

As we investigate the issue of why God created man, I would like to ask you to reflect seriously on this line of reasoning. First, Clayton is speaking where God has not spoken. God nowhere in His Word explains what you have just read. Second, think of how utterly degrading this concept is to man. If Mr. Clayton is correct, mankind is to be viewed as little more than a human guinea pig in some great "cosmic experiment" designed to prove that God is mightier than His adversary, Satan. Third, Clayton suggests that God "needed" a means of demonstrating His superiority, and that to simply have destroyed Satan would not have "proved" anything. Surely the thoughtful reader will think to ask: (a) why, exactly, did God **need** to demonstrate His superiority; and (b) **to whom did he need to "prove" anything?** In Paul's stirring sermon on Mars Hill, he specifically spoke of the God Who is "not served by men's hands, as though he **needed** anything" (Acts 17:25). I strongly recommend that the line of thinking set forth by John Clayton be rejected as unscriptural in both its content and its intent.

Then we are back to the original question: Why did God create man? In order to answer such a question, even tangentially, we must know something about the nature of God. Fortunately, God's nature is set forth progressively in His verbally inspired revelation, the Bible. One of the most prominent traits of Jehovah is His **love**. The Scriptures affirm, for example, that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). God's creation of man, therefore, was an expression of His love. Love, as we all readily admit, allows free will. It is not surprising, then, that Heaven's love was demonstrated by God endowing humanity with **free will**—that is to say, we were granted what we often refer to as "freedom of choice."

The Scriptures speak frequently to that point. When the aged Joshua knew that he was about to die, he assembled the Israelite nation and presented an impassioned plea to the people whom he had led so faithfully for so long. "**Choose** you this day," he said, "whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah" (Joshua 24:15, emp. added). Notice Joshua's admonition to the people to "choose." The obvious implication is that they had the ability to do so—indicating that they had been endowed with freedom of choice.

John 5:39-40 records a conversation that Jesus had with the Pharisees of His day, in which He sternly rebuked them by saying: "Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye **will not** come to me, that ye may have life" (emp. added). Notice that they **could** have come to Christ, because they were creatures of personal volition. But they freely **chose** not to. Additional passages within the Bible offer additional elucidation on this principle (cf. Genesis 2:16-17; Isaiah 7:15; John 7:17; Revelation 22:17).

Could anyone conceive of a **loving** God Who created intelligent beings, but then programmed them to slavishly serve Him without any personal willpower? Hardly! Accordingly, the facts suggest the following inescapable conclusion:

- (1) God is love.
- (2) But love allows freedom of choice.
- (3) Thus, God allows freedom of choice.

Acknowledging that God has endowed mankind with personal volition, clarifies significantly the so-called "problem" of evil, pain, and suffering as they relate to the existence of God. Why so? Where freedom of choice is permitted, **there is the possibility that finite creatures will make wrong choices**. And wrong choices frequently entail some type of adverse consequences. Think about this: if **all** actions (choices)—both good and bad—produced **exactly** the same effect, how would one ever learn from practical experience to choose the good and reject the bad? It is evident, therefore, that finite beings with personal willpower must be allowed to suffer the consequences of their wrong choices if they are to learn that the good is to be valued over the bad. In light of this, I would like to suggest several reasons why evil, pain, and suffering can, and do, exist—without militating against the existence of God.

## Our Personal Wrong Choices

Let's face it. Because we are creatures of freedom of choice—because we have personal volition—we frequently bring suffering upon ourselves as a direct result of the bad decisions we make. Earlier, I mentioned that the Israelites had suffered defeat at the hands of hated and feared enemies (the Amalekites and Midianites, Judges 6). One of those Israelites, Gideon, asked: “Oh my lord, if Jehovah is with us, why then is all this befallen us?” (6:13). The Bible provides the answer to his question: “The children of Israel **did that which was evil** in the sight of Jehovah: and Jehovah delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years” (6:1, emp. added).

The New Testament contains the same principle. The apostle Peter admonished: “Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evildoer, or as a meddler in other men's matters” (1 Peter 4:15). If a man steals and goes to prison, is there a likelihood that he will suffer? Yes. If a man murders, will there be unwanted consequences and a price to pay? Yes. But is it **God's fault** if a man becomes a thief, and then suffers as a result of his thievery? Does **God bear the blame** if one person murders another, and ends up being sent to the electric chair for that crime? The answer to both questions is a resounding “No!” You see, God did not give man **just** freedom of choice—any more than loving parents give to their children **just** freedom of choice. Do parents love their children, and as a result of that love, allow them a modicum of freedom of choice? Of course they do. But along with that freedom of choice, parents also provide rules and regulations for its proper use. God has done no less for humanity. He did indeed endow us with what we frequently refer to as “free moral agency.” But along with that free moral agency, He also provided rules and regulations—via His Holy Word, the Bible—to guide us in our use of our use of that free moral agency. What was it the psalmist wrote?—“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105; cf. 2 Peter 1:3; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). If we extinguish the lamp, subsequently leave the path, and then err—is it somehow God's fault? Hardly. God is guiltless, and does not bear the blame (1 John 1:5; cf. 3:5).

God loves us dearly (John 3:16), and wants only the best for us (2 Chronicles 7:14; 1 Timothy 2:4). If we, for whatever reason, seem unable to “find God,” we must realize that **it is not God Who has moved!** He is forever the same—the One “with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning” (James 1:17). From the moment He created mankind (Genesis 1:26), until the instant each of our souls returns to Him (Ecclesiastes 12:7), He is our God. Let us remember Moses' words on His behalf: “When thou art in tribulation and all these things are come upon thee, in the latter days thou shalt return to Jehovah thy God, and hearken unto his voice; for Jehovah thy God is a merciful God; he will not fail thee” (Deuteronomy 4:30-31). Let all of us make up our minds to “return unto Jehovah.”

Someone might argue, of course, that God could prevent the misuse of freedom of choice, hence, the suffering that accompanies it. No, He could not—if **He wanted to preserve man's freedom of choice!** This was the very point I was making earlier, when I suggested that if God were to eliminate evil “insofar as He could,” it still might mean that we would be left with a lot of evil in the world, because to reduce it any further could violate one of God's other divine attributes. Here is a case in point. God limits His own activity (in this case, His omnipotence) by granting man freedom of choice in order to exercise two of His other attributes (His omnibenevolence, and His love).

## The Personal Wrong Choices of Others

To our credit, we, personally, are not always to blame for the suffering that sometimes comes our way. A considerable amount of evil, pain, and suffering is the result of the bad choices of our fellows. The evidence of that is all around us, is it not? American-born-and-bred terrorists blow up a federal office building in Oklahoma City, and 168 people die (including numerous children who were housed in the facility's day-care center). Foreign-born-and-bred terrorists fly hijacked jets into the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon, killing over 2,000 people.

Had any of the people in the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995 ever done anything, personally, to infuriate Timothy McVeigh, providing him with some sort of “reason” for ending their lives? No, they had not. To him, they were nameless faces whom he relegated to the status of “collateral damage” in a private war between Timothy McVeigh and the United States government.



Had any of the people in New York City or Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001, ever done anything, personally, to infuriate 19 terrorists from the Middle East, providing them with some sort of “reason” for ending over 2,000 lives? No, they had not. To those terrorists, those people were, once again, nameless faces who became more “collateral damage” in a private war between Osama Bin Laden and the United States of America.

Why, then, did the 168 people die in Oklahoma City? Why did the over 2,000 people die on September 11, 2001? So far as we are able to tell, did any of those people die because of something **they** did wrong? No. As much as we dislike having to admit it, they died because **someone else** did something wrong. Timothy McVeigh broke the law, committed mass murder, and killed 168 innocent men, women, and children in the process. Nineteen foreign terrorists broke the law, committed mass murder, and killed almost 3,000 innocent men, women, and children in the process. These are the facts in evidence; no one disputes them.

As our anger wells up within us, we want answers, do we not? We not only want to know **why** this happened, but also **how we can prevent it from happening again**. The answer to the first question (which I have been examining in this section of the discussion) does not fall into the same category as the answer to the second one. So how **do** we prevent such atrocities? How **do** we avoid future episodes of this magnitude—and the pain and suffering that go along with them?

Wouldn't it be nice—wouldn't it be convenient—if we simply had a way to revoke the personal volition of all the “bad” people, while simultaneously granting it in unlimited measure to all those we deem to be “good”? Naturally, **I** would fall into the category of the “good.” And so would **you**—right? But who, exactly, do we endow with the power to rescind the freedom of choice of all the “bad” people “out there”? And what, exactly, would be their standard? And if we could come up with some criteria that somehow half-way made sense, how would they be universally (and fairly) applied?

See the point? We cannot argue that **we** are responsible and trustworthy enough to be permitted freedom of choice, but **others** are not (and therefore will have it denied to them). And that is a perfectly biblical principle. The fact is, God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11). God has given **everyone** freedom of choice. Why? John 3:16 answers that: “For God so loved **the world**....” Because He is love, because love allows freedom of choice, and because He loves the whole world, every human being is endowed with personal volition.

And so, an innocent party may be killed in a wreck involving a drunken driver. In time of war, many may be killed as a consequence of the evil decisions of a few leaders. And yes, terrorists may misuse their freedom of choice and kill blameless individuals. The truth is, sometime we pay the price for others' freedom of choice.

That, of course, brings to mind the question: How, then, do we protect ourselves, our children, our grandchildren, or others whom we love? The answer to such a question, of course, is that we look beyond the provincial and beyond the temporal. In short, we should do exactly what the apostle Paul commanded—“live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:12). These are not mere “preachers' platitudes.” Rather, they are words that represent an eternal principle by which we should live, and, more important, a principle by which we should die. We must live—and teach our children and grandchildren to live—so that we, and they, always are (to use the words of the well-known old song) “safe in the arms of Jesus.”

Christians always have served God in an anti-Christian environment. That was true in the first century, and it is true in the twenty-first. Similarly, parents always have had to rear children in such an environment. While parents taught one thing, the world taught (and did!) another. The key to success always has been, and still is, understanding that while we as Christians exist and function **in** the world, we are not **of** the world (Romans 12:2; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15). Blurring that distinction, or losing it altogether, can have disastrous results. We can be, however (and are intended to be), “more than conquerors” (Romans 8:37). That, ultimately, is our protection.

### **Personal Wrong Choices of Former Generations**

As you read this book, it may be that you are sitting comfortably in your own home, or in a building somewhere else (e.g., a church building, hotel room, office area, etc.). Very likely, however, regardless of

where you are, I suspect that, probably without giving the matter much (or any!) thought, you are enjoying certain amenities such as central heat or air-conditioning, electric lights, carpeted flooring, water that runs freely from a tap, and so on. But **do** stop and think about these things for a moment. Whence have most of these blessings come? Is it not true to say that, for the most part, they are “gifts” to us from previous generations? Our forebears, or others like them, worked at inventing, developing, and perfecting many of the things we today take for granted. We understand, do we not, that **good things from the past** have come down through the ages to bless our lives in the here and now?

What about the **bad things of the past**? Are we to expect that, somehow, all of the mistakes, errors, and sins of those who have gone before us will fade, be forgotten, and trouble us no more? Hardly. We all recognize that while we are the recipients of the fruits of the labors of previous generations, we also bear the brunt of past mistakes, errors in judgment, or evil actions. Decades ago, we did not know that spreading DDT into the environment as an insecticide could cause genetic mutations in the human gene pool—but it can. We did not know, in the 1960s when we dumped Agent Orange onto foreign forests to defoliate them so soldiers could see to fight the enemy, that Agent Orange would cause genetic mutations—but it did. We did not understand, when we fed women thalidomide as a tranquilizer, that it had the capacity to cause serious birth defects—but it does. We did not realize, when we filled the walls and ceilings of our factories, hospitals, schools, and office buildings with asbestos, that the chemical had the potential to endanger the human genome, but it did. We meant well—but we erred. The fact is, much of the world’s suffering is the direct result of the misuse or abuse of freedom of choice by past generations. Sometimes the actions of the past were accidental or unintentional. Sometimes (as in the case of wars), they were carried out on purpose. As much as we do not like to think about it, we do indeed bear the brunt of past mistakes, errors in judgment, or evil actions.

That same principle also is true in the spiritual realm. God warned, for example, that rejection of Him would affect generations yet unborn. As He was in the midst of giving the Israelites the Ten Commandments through Moses, He warned: “I, Jehovah thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me” (Exodus 20:5-6). [Do not overlook the point that it is the **consequences** of the sin that shall be visited upon future generations, **not the sin itself**. Ezekiel made that clear when he wrote: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him” (Ezekiel 18:20).] Moses often warned the Israelites of the horrible effects of apostasy (see Deuteronomy 8:11-14; 4:9; 28:62). God was willing to help them possess the land of Canaan (Exodus 23:30; Deuteronomy 10:22). But more than once their sins reversed God’s promised blessings. Eventually their apostasy caused God to allow them to be dispersed. In fact, no nation has ever been disseminated so completely. The Northern Kingdom was captured and taken from Canaan by the Assyrians c. 722 B.C. These people never would return to Israel as a group, and eventually were scattered around the world. The Southern Kingdom, Judah, was taken into captivity by the Babylonians, and despite the vast number of people exiled, only a remnant would return 70 years later. The Israelites saw their children and grandchildren grow up in captivity under wicked, vengeful foreign rulers. Ignoring, abandoning, or disobeying God carries heavy penalties—not just for the current generation, but also for those even yet unborn.

Consider examples on a timeline closer to us. Vast famines in countries like Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere, have caused the deaths of thousands and thousands of tiny children in our lifetimes. Why? On occasion, those famines resulted from corrupt people in positions of power who traded away their country’s foodstuffs in order to purchase weapons with which to fight internal civil wars. While government leaders bickered, their posterity died. At times, innocent children starve to death because their ancestors long ago turned from worshiping God and began worshiping animals—animals that their parents will not use for food because they believe in the false doctrine of reincarnation. Animals that could be used to feed an entire nation, walk through the streets of cities with utter impunity because people wrongly believe they are some long-dead-but-now-reincarnated ancestor. God’s Word has made His position on this matter clear. Speaking for Him, the writer of Hebrews wrote: “It is appointed unto men **once to die, and after this cometh judgment**” (9:27, emp. added). Paul said that by the time he wrote his epistle to the Colossian Christians, the Gospel had been preached “in all creation under heaven” (Colossians 1:23). The ancestors of the

tiny children—children who today are starving to death—were a part of that “creation.” Those people of old spurned the Gospel of Christ, and turned instead to far-eastern mystic religions that advocate the erroneous concept of reincarnation. As a result, precious children—generations removed from those events—now perish by one of the most horrible means imaginable: starvation.

Consider the female “crack” addict who becomes pregnant, continues to “do drugs,” and eventually gives birth to a baby—only to find that the child, too, already is addicted to the drug. Ponder the woman who drinks heavily during her pregnancy, and gives birth to a child with fetal alcohol syndrome. Or, contemplate the woman who, as a result of illicit extramarital sexual activity, contracts the viral venereal disease caused by the Herpes simplex II virus, gets pregnant, is in the midst of an active, ongoing case of the disease during the routine delivery of the baby, and sees her child live to be three or four years old, become retarded, and die—because of the disease with which she had infected that precious, innocent newborn.

From the beginning to the end of this pilgrimage we call “life,” we interact socially with those around us. Although at times we wish they did not, the truth of the matter is that more often than not, the decisions we make, and the actions that stem from those decisions, inevitably affect those around us. Peter noted, for example, that the effects of a godly wife upon her husband might be responsible for bringing his soul to the Lord. “In like manner, ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands; that, even if any obey not the word, they may without a word be gained by the behavior of their wives, beholding your chaste behavior coupled with fear” (1 Peter 3:1-2). What a sobering thought—that one person, through behavior tempered by a reverent fear of God, ultimately might influence a sinner to come to salvation. Yet what is the corollary to this concept? If **faithfulness** produces such wonderful results, what results might **unfaithfulness** produce? Does not practical experience answer that question in a thousand different ways? Actions have consequences. And those consequences are not always limited to just a single generation. Sometimes we suffer because of the wrong actions of those who have gone before, and who have erred in their personal choices.

### **Our World of Natural Law**

September 21, 1989—Hurricane Hugo strikes the southeastern coast of the United States. Over 25 people are killed, and over \$10 billion worth of damage results. One month later—October 17, 1989—an earthquake registering 7.1 on the Richter scale strikes the San Francisco Bay area in California. At least 62 people are killed, and damage estimates are placed at well over \$1 billion. August 24, 1992—Hurricane Andrew hits three counties in southern Florida. More than a dozen people lose their lives, and damage estimates are set at over \$20 billion. A year later, on September 11, 1992, Hurricane Iniki devastates the Hawaiian Islands. At least four people die, and damage is set at over \$1 billion. In June 1993, huge portions of numerous states along the Mississippi River and its tributaries experienced the worst flooding in their history. Entire cities stood covered with water measured not in inches, but in feet. At least 47 people died, and more than 25,000 were evacuated from their homes. The United States Congress appropriated approximately \$3 billion in an attempt to cope with the tragedy. In March 1997, huge portions of numerous states along the Ohio River and its tributaries experienced some of the worst flooding in their history. Portions of many cities—indeed, whole counties—stood covered with water measured not in inches, but in feet. Thousands of people had to be evacuated from their homes; numerous others lost both their property and their lives. President Bill Clinton declared certain sections of the country as disaster areas, thereby making available immediate federal assistance for the thousands of people who sustained incredible losses. In August and September of 2004, Hurricanes Charley and Frances devastated the state of Florida, causing a total of over \$15 billion worth of damage in less than a sixty-day period. Governor Jeb Bush declared the entire state a disaster area, and President George W. Bush quickly followed suit in order to ensure federal aid for the affected Floridians.

Do these types of natural disasters represent merely isolated, infrequent events? Hardly. Throughout history, man has recorded many such tragedies. In 526, an earthquake hit the country now known as Turkey and left 250,000 dead. A similar earthquake in China in 1556 killed over 830,000 people. Another quake in India in 1737 annihilated 300,000, and quakes in Central China in 1920, 1927, and 1932 killed 200,000, 200,000, and 70,000 people, respectively. In 1889, the famous “Johnstown Flood” occurred in Pennsylvania. The dam of the South Fork Reservoir, twelve miles east of the city, burst during heavy rains. Over 2,000 peo-

ple were killed, and property damage was estimated to be over \$10 million. In 1969, Hurricane Camille killed more than 250 people in seven states from Louisiana to Virginia, leaving behind over \$1.5 billion in damage. In 1983, Hurricane Alicia struck near Galveston, killing 21 and causing over \$2 billion in damage.

It is rare, indeed, so it seems, for a single generation in a given locale to be spared at least some kind of natural disaster. Without warning, tornadoes sweep down from the afternoon sky and destroy in a moment's fury what took decades or centuries to build. Floods cover "old home places," and remove forever any vestige of what were once storehouses of hallowed memories. In a matter of seconds, earthquakes irreparably alter once-familiar landscapes. Hurricanes come from the sea, demolish practically everything in their paths, and then dissipate as if they had never existed. Each time, humanity suffers. And each time there are those who ask "**Why?**"

### The "Why" Question

In the face of disasters such as those described above, there is hardly any question likely to be asked more routinely than "why?" But the question is not always asked in the same way, or with the same intent. Some stand on the charred remains of what was once their home and ask, "Why me?"—and mean exactly that. Why **them** and why **now**? All they want is to **understand** the physical events that have changed their lives, and to learn what they can do to correct the situation and avoid a repeat of it. They are not looking to assign blame; they merely want an explanation of the prevailing circumstances.

Others view the destruction around them and ask "Why?," but their inquiry is brief and their response immediate. They correctly view the Earth as a once-perfect-but-now-flawed home for mankind. Rather than their faith in God being diminished by the ravages of ongoing natural phenomena, it is strengthened because they: (a) know that there are rational biblical and scientific explanations for such events; (b) understand that after all is said and done, "the Judge of all the Earth will do that which is right" (Genesis 18:25); and (c) put their faith into action as they work to help themselves, or those around them whose lives have been affected by a disaster.

Still others view natural disasters and ask "Why?," when what they really mean is: "If a benevolent God exists, why did He allow these things to happen?" The implication of their statement is clear. Since these things **did** happen, God must not exist.

It is not my purpose here to address the "Why me, why now?" question that seeks a **physical** explanation as to what kind of swirling wind current spawns a tornado, or what kind of geological phenomena may be responsible for an earthquake. Much has been written on these and similar topics, and can provide adequate answers for those willing to research the problem. Instead, I would like to answer the more pressing **philosophical** questions of why the Earth experiences natural disasters in the first place, and why such disasters are not incompatible with a benevolent God.

### Our Once-Perfect-But-Now-Flawed Planet

At the end of His six days of creation (Genesis 1:31), God surveyed everything that He had made, and proclaimed it "very good"—Hebrew terminology representing that which was both complete and perfect. Rivers were running, fish were swimming, and birds were flying. Pestilence, disease, and human death were unknown. Man existed in an idyllic paradise of happiness and beauty where he shared such an intimate and blissful covenant relationship with his Maker that God came to the garden "in the cool of the day" to commune with its human inhabitants (Genesis 3:8). Additionally, Genesis 3:22 records that Adam and Eve had continual access to the Tree of Life that stood in the garden, the fruit of which would allow them to live forever.

The peacefulness and tranquility of the first days of humanity were not to prevail, however. In Genesis 3—in fewer words than an average sportswriter would use to discuss a Friday night high school football game—Moses, through inspiration, discussed the breaking of the covenant relationship between man and God, the entrance of sin into the world, and the curse(s) that resulted therefrom (the theme that would occupy the rest of the Bible).

The matter of man's personal volition—or "free moral agency" as we have come to call it—has much to do with Moses' discussion. Various scriptures speak to the fact that since God is love, and since love allows freedom of choice, God created mankind with freedom of choice (cf. 1 John 4:8, Joshua 24:14, and John 5:39-40). God did not create men and women as robots to serve Him slavishly, without any freedom of choice on their part. Even angels were endowed with personal volition (Jude 6). When our original parents revolted against their Creator, evil entered the world. Moses stated that as a direct consequence of human sin, the Earth was "cursed" (Genesis 3:17). Paul, in Romans 8:19-20, declared that the entire creation was subjected to "vanity" and the "bondage of corruption" as a result of the sinful events that took place in Eden on that occasion. Things apparently deteriorated rapidly, and nothing has been the same since. Mankind now reaps the consequences of the misuse of that freedom of choice (i.e., sin) by previous generations. Surely one of the lessons to be learned here is that it does not pay to disobey the Creator, because just three chapters later in Genesis 6, Moses wrote:

And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And Jehovah said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man and beast, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens... (Genesis 6:5-7).

Genesis 6-8 records the global destruction resulting from the Great Flood sent by God as His instrument of judgment. The text indicates that the waters which caused the Flood derived from two sources: (a) "the fountains of the great deep"; and (b) "the windows of heaven" (Genesis 7:11). Water fell for forty days and nights (Genesis 7:12,17), and eventually covered "all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven" (Genesis 7:19). We may only surmise the changes that the Flood wrought upon the Earth. Local floods can cause tremendous damage in very brief periods. Imagine, then, the damage that water covering every mountain fifteen cubits (Genesis 7:20; approximately 22½ feet) must have caused. As one writer has suggested:

The destructive power of flood-waters is evident from what flood waters in recent years have done. They moved blocks of granite weighing 350 tons more than a hundred yards. Boulders weighing 75 to 210 tons have been moved by flood waters only 15 to 20 feet deep.... What vast devastation must have been created when all those forces of the earth worked together; rain gushing down from the canopy above the firmament, earthquakes shaking the earth, many volcanoes erupting and exploding at one time, continents shifting, mountains lifting up, tornados, hurricanes and wild windstorms raging, gigantic tidal waves with cross-currents and whirlpools raising havoc.... Truly, the Flood was the greatest and most violent catastrophe in the history of the world, with total destruction of all forms of life and of the entire surface of the earth (Sippert, 1989, pp. 78-79).

What were conditions like on the Earth prior to the Great Flood? Numerous biblical scholars have suggested that conditions were radically different than those we see today, and that the Earth was devoid of the many natural disasters that it presently experiences (see Rehwinkel, 1951; Whitcomb and Morris, 1961; Dillow, 1982). Whitcomb and Morris have stated, for example:

This is inferred from the fact that the "breaking-up of the fountains of the great deep" (Genesis 7:11), which implies this sort of activity, was one of the immediate causes of the Deluge; therefore it must have been restrained previously.... Thus the Biblical record implies that the age between the fall of man and the resultant Deluge was one of comparative quiescence geologically. The waters both above and below the firmament were in large measure restrained, temperatures were equably warm, there were no heavy rains nor winds and probably no earthquakes nor volcanic emissions (1961, pp. 242,243).

It is not unreasonable to suggest, knowing the changes which local floods cause, that the global Flood of Genesis 6-8 not only radically altered the face of the Earth, but simultaneously produced circumstances that are responsible for many of the natural disasters experienced since that time. New, higher mountains and lower valleys were produced by God after the Flood (Psalm 104:6-10). Approximately 71.9% of the Earth's surface remained covered with water. Temperature changes occurred, producing seasonal variations unlike any before. No doubt other factors were involved as well.

What causes natural disasters on the Earth today? One cause is the vastly different geological and meteorological phenomena now present. Tall mountains and deep valleys may be conducive to localized extremes in weather. The drastically changed components of the Earth's crust (e.g., fault lines, etc.) give rise to earthquakes. Vast bodies of water, and large global climatic variations, spawn hurricanes and/or tropical storms.

Taken at face value, then, the wickedness of mankind in Noah's day, which precipitated the Flood, is responsible **ultimately** for the changes that now produce various natural disasters. As one writer observed:

While we may never know with precision what conditions prevailed between the Edenic period and the Flood, it seems that the weather systems with which we are familiar were largely absent at that time. The fossil record bespeaks a period when the entire Earth enjoyed a temperate climate. This storm-free era most certainly predates the Flood. Since that event, man has been imperiled by tornadoes, blizzards, monsoons, and hurricanes.... Upon whom should we heap blame for the suffering resultant from such weather? Is it fair to accuse God, when He created man's home free from such things (Genesis 1:31)? In all honesty, the answer is no. Sin robbed us of our original garden paradise, and sin was responsible for the global deluge (Genesis 3:24; 6:7) [Bromling, 1992, 4:17].

Walter Porter concluded: "...the cause of all that is wrong with the earth is **not** godliness but rather **ungodliness**" (1974, p. 467, emp. in orig.). The apostle Peter, in his second epistle, made a clear reference to "the world that then was," and its destruction by the Flood (3:6). That world no longer exists. Today we inhabit a once-perfect-but-now-flawed planet. Man—not God—bears the blame.

### Natural Disasters and a Benevolent God

The Bible teaches that God is both all-powerful and loving; thus He is benevolent, as love demands. How, then, can He allow natural disasters to occur? Do not natural disasters negate the benevolence of God, and strike at His very existence? In addition to the reasons listed in the section above, I would like to suggest the following reasons why they do not.

First, God created a world ruled by natural laws established at the Creation. If a man steps off the roof of a five-story building, gravity will pull him to the pavement beneath. If a boy steps in front of a moving freight train, since two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time, the train will strike the child and likely kill him. The same laws that govern gravity, matter in motion, or similar phenomena also govern weather patterns, water movement, and other geological/meteorological conditions. **All** of nature is regulated by these laws—not just the parts that we find convenient.

Second, some disasters may be the by-product of something which itself is good. In addressing this point, Norman Geisler has noted:

In a physical world where there is water for boating and swimming, some will drown. If there are mountains to climb, there must also be valleys into which one may fall. If there are cars to drive, collisions can also occur. It may be said that tornadoes, lightning, hurricanes, and other natural disasters are likewise by-products of a good physical world. For instance, the **purpose** of rain is not to flood or drown, but the result of rain may include these disasters. Likewise, hot and cold air are an essential and purposeful part of the physical world, but under certain conditions they may combine to form tornadoes (1978, p. 72, emp. in orig.).

The natural laws that God created, allow man to produce fire. But the same laws that enable him to cook his food also allow him to destroy entire forests. Laws that make it possible to have things **constructive** to human life also introduce the possibility that things **destructive** to human life may occur. How can it be otherwise? A car is matter in motion, and takes us where we wish to go. But if someone steps in front of that car, the same natural laws that operated to our benefit will similarly operate to our detriment. We routinely teach students in school that water seeks its own level. That fact works to our benefit when we place our boat on the lake; essentially, the water of the lake will be level. But if we dam a river, and the dam breaks, water will seek its own level, and in so doing may flood surrounding areas. The same law that operates for our pleasure during a sunny afternoon fishing expedition, works for our displeasure during a dam break and the flood that subsequently follows.

Third, natural laws are both inviolate and non-selective. Everyone must obey them or suffer the consequences. In Luke 13:2-5, Jesus told the story of eighteen men who perished when the tower of Siloam collapsed. Had these men perished because of their sin? No, they were no worse sinners than their peers. They died because a natural law was in force. Fortunately, natural laws work continually, so that we can understand and benefit from them. We are not left to sort out some kind of haphazard system that works one day, but not the next. Those who rail against God because of natural disasters are often overheard to ask, "But why can't God 'selectively intervene' to prevent disasters?" Bruce Reichenbach has addressed this question:

Thus, in a world which operates according to divine miraculous intervention, there would be no necessary relation between phenomena, and in particular between cause and effect. In some instances one event would follow from a certain set of conditions, another time a different event, and so on, such that ultimately an uncountable variety of events would follow a given set of conditions. There would be no regularity of consequence, no natural production of effects.... Hence, we could not know or even suppose what course of action to take to accomplish a certain rationally conceived goal. Thus, we could neither propose action nor act ourselves (1976, 16:187).

If God suspended natural laws every time His creatures were in a dangerous situation, chaos would corrupt the cosmos, arguing more for a world of **atheism** than a world of **theism**! Further, as Geisler has remarked:

First, evil men do not really want God to intercept **every** evil act or thought. No one wants to get a headache every time he thinks against God. One does not want God to fill his mouth with cotton when he speaks evil of God, nor does he really desire God to explode his pen as he writes against God or destroy his books before they come off the press. At best, people really want God to intercept **some** evil actions.... Second, continual interference would disrupt the regularity of natural law and make life impossible. Everyday living depends on physical laws such as inertia or gravity. Regular interruption of these would make everyday life impossible and a human being extremely edgy! Third, it is probable that chaos would result from continued miraculous intervention. Imagine children throwing knives at parents because they know they will be turned to rubber, and parents driving through stop signs, knowing God will create crash-protection air shields to avert any ensuing collisions. The necessary intervention would finally grow in proportions that would effectively remove human freedom and responsibility (1978, p. 75, emp. in orig.).

How, then, exactly, would the unbeliever suggest that an understandable, dependable world be created, and operated, other than the way ours presently is? How could natural disasters be prevented, while maintaining natural laws and human freedom? Those who suggest that the existence of a benevolent God is impossible as a result of "natural evil" often call for a better world than this one. Yet they cannot describe the details necessary for its creation and maintenance. When—in an attempt to "improve" it—they begin to "tinker" with the actual world around them, they invariably find themselves worse off.

Consider the following example. Mankind is blighted with numerous diseases caused by microorganisms. "Why," someone might ask, "did God create deadly germs? Wouldn't we be much better off without these 'tiny intruders'?"

This, admittedly, is a highly complex area. But it is profitable to note the following. First, we once again need to be reminded that, regardless of the number or variety of diseases and afflictions we endure, they are not God's fault. Ultimately, diseases (of whatever kind) are related to mankind's personal wrong choices (sin). Before their transgression, Adam and Eve were unaffected by disease and death. When they rebelled, however, they were deprived of the "tree of life" (Genesis 3:22-23)—and we have become the heirs to the sad conditions they introduced into the world (cf. Romans 5:12; 8:29ff.).

Second, many microorganisms that we routinely think of as "bad," also have their beneficial side. For example, certain types of bacteria are responsible for the foods we enjoy (yogurt, cheese, etc.). They also facilitate digestion, and aid in the decomposition of waste materials. Without the *Penicillium* mold, we would not possess the "miracle antibiotic" penicillin—which has saved millions of lives since its discovery several decades ago. Let's face it: were it not for our friends the microorganisms, this Earth would be one huge, stinking garbage dump—and we would be a whole lot sicker than we already are! Things we sometimes label as "bad"—**aren't!**

## THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

But there is another important area that we must explore in our study of evil, pain, and suffering—the sovereignty of God. The Old Testament character, Job, provides a good case study as we attempt to deal with these issues. The faithful patriarch accused God of all kinds of unseemly attitudes and actions, including: (a) judging him falsely (9:20); (b) wronging him (19:6); (c) persecuting him (19:22); (d) not sending appropriate judgment upon the wicked (24:1-12); and (e) ignoring all of Job's good works (31:1ff.). In essence, Job's cry, like our own today on so many occasions, seems to have been, "Why, God? Why?"

God's response was to ask Job some probing questions: "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it.... Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified?" (40:2,8). In his questioning, Job incorrectly assumed that **God** was at fault. Job's three friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—incorrectly assumed that **Job** was at fault for some great sin that he must have committed (an erroneous presumption, by the way, for which they received the chastisement of God, 42:7ff.).

Although he incorrectly criticized Job, the levelheaded Elihu nevertheless got one point right. He unhesitatingly affirmed the sovereignty of God when he asked: "Why do you contend with Him, for He does not give an accounting of any of His words?" (33:13). Elihu's assessment should not be minimized. The truth of the matter is that God can, and will, do whatever He wants. The psalmist wrote: "Our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever he pleased.... Whatsoever Jehovah pleased, that hath he done, in heaven and in earth" (Psalm 115:3; 135:6). Isaiah recorded:

I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.... Who hath directed the Spirit of Jehovah, or being his counsellor hath taught him? (46:9-10; 40:13).

These are expressions of the sovereignty of God. By the phrase, "sovereignty of God," we mean that God is God. He is in complete control. He is the "God of gods, and Lord of lords, the great God" (Deuteronomy 10:17). He is the eternal "I Am" (Exodus 6:3; cf. Genesis 21:33). He is the "Alpha and the Omega ...who is and who was and who is to come" (Revelation 1:8). He is the Almighty (Genesis 17:1; Revelation 1:8), whose purposes cannot be restrained (Job 42:2). He is "from everlasting to everlasting" (Psalm 90:2). He is the Potter; we are the clay (Isaiah 64:8). He is infinitely wise (Romans 11:33-36), and His loving, benevolent disposition is breathtaking (1 John 4:8; Ephesians 2:4; James 1:17). He is the Creator; we are the created (Genesis 1:26-27).

Certain associations carry with them intrinsic responsibilities. One of those is that of the Creator/creature relationship. The "created" thing sustains a subordinate status to that which created it. Paul argued this very point in his letter to the Romans. "Hath not a potter a right over the clay?," he asked rhetorically (Romans 9:21). In the Greek text, the query implies an affirmative answer, as suggested by the particle *ouk* (cf. Matthew 13:55). The term rendered "right" in our English versions is the Greek *exousia*, meaning literally "authority." The potter, by virtue of his status, has authority over the vessel he has fashioned.

The historical facts are these. "Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7; cf. 3:19). The inspired writers of both testaments affirmed that the Lord is our "Creator" (Ecclesiastes 12:1; Isaiah 40:28; Romans 1:25), or our "Maker" (Psalm 95:6; Proverbs 14:31; Isaiah 17:7; Hosea 8:14). Hence, by virtue of this Creator/creature relationship, Jehovah has a right to commission human loyalty. Rahab—a prostitute from a pagan background—understood this, and humbled herself before the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When she cried out, "I know that...the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath" (Joshua 2:9,11), she confessed her willingness to acknowledge both His existence and His sovereignty. Should we today—who have access to His inspired Word—do any less?

But there always has been a propensity in man to repudiate the Creator/creature relationship in order to justify human self-centeredness. More than anything else, some people want to be **their own** "God." Seven centuries before the birth of Christ, Isaiah wrote regarding the rebels of his day: "Ye turn things upside down! Shall the potter be esteemed as clay; that the thing made should say of him that made it, 'He made me not'";



or the thing formed say of him that formed it, 'He hath no understanding'?" (Isaiah 29:16). Of this arrogant claim, "He made me not," Edward J. Young rightly observed: "Words more wrong, more foolish, more soul-destroying have never been uttered by human lips" (1969, 2:325). May we be chastened by the inspired writer: "Know that the Lord Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves" (Psalm 100:3, NASV). Truly, "the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

Paul followed the same theme in Romans 9. The apostle was responding to a "not fair" claim on the part of Jewish Christians. Apparently, some of them felt that, as descendants of Abraham, they surely merited a greater share in the inheritance of God's kingdom. But, as Paul pointed out in verse 8 of that chapter, it is the children of **the promise**, not the children of **the flesh**, who were to be the children of God and, therefore, heirs of salvation. The apostle illustrated this principle by using the example of Jacob and Esau. Some might feel that Jacob's having a higher place than his older brother was somewhat of an injustice, but God had a plan that did not take into account manmade customs of inheritance. To anyone who would accuse God of being "unfair" in this case (vs. 14), Paul reminded them of God's sovereignty: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (vs. 15).

While he was at it, Paul dealt with another familiar accusation: "You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?' " (vs. 19). In other words, "If the things that happen in my life are God's will, then surely they are out of my control, and if my life is not my own, then why should God hold me responsible for the things I do? It's not fair for us to suffer if God is supposed to be in control." Once more Paul responded with a countercharge: "Who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, 'Why have you made me like this?' " (vs. 20). Our duty is to do what is right, not to worry about what God is doing, or why He is doing it.

When we hurt, suffer, or are surrounded by evil, and we want to scream out as did Job of old, "Why, Lord? Why?!", we need to recall Elihu's gentle chastisement of the man from Uz when, in speaking of God, he asked the old patriarch, "Why do you contend with Him?" Whatever happens, God is sovereign.

### THE PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF PAIN AND SUFFERING

Finally, young Elihu recognized that, on occasion, **suffering can (and often does!) have a purpose**. In addressing this point, Franklin E. Payne Jr. observed:

Numerous Bible verses demonstrate the New Testament emphasis that God is more concerned about eternal values that are determined by the Christian's handling of such situations in life, than His concern for physical comfort. **Ultimately, the purpose of suffering is the believer's reflection of the glory of God.** His glory results when the person shows His power to overcome and His deliverance of His people through trying circumstances (Job 42:1-6; Ezek. 20:9,14,22,33,39; 2 Cor. 11:24-33) [1985, p. 189, emp. added].

If we can take whatever circumstances come our way and use them to "reflect the glory of God," then we, and those around us, will be better for it.

As strange as it may sound at first, pain and suffering also can have benefits—if we permit it to be so. It has been said that there is no greater education than matriculating through the University of Hard Knocks. One thing is certain: many who have passed through the crucible of suffering and affliction readily acknowledge that they have found themselves infinitely better for the experience—bitter though it may have been. Robert Browning Hamilton wonderfully expressed this thought in verse when he wrote:

I walked a mile with Pleasure, She chatted all the way,  
But left me none the wiser, For all she had to say.  
I walked a mile with Sorrow, And ne'er a word said she;  
But oh, the things I learned from her,  
When Sorrow walked with me!

Evil, pain, and suffering actually can be of intrinsic value to the human family. In fact, in the April 1997 issue of *Reason & Revelation*, the monthly journal on Christian evidences published by Apologetics Press, and for which Wayne Jackson and I were serving as co-editors at the time, we ran an article (au-

thored by Wayne) titled “The Value of Human Suffering,” in which we examined a number of benefits that humans derive from suffering. Much of the discussion that follows is taken from that article (see Jackson, 1997).

First, pain and suffering highlight the fact that we are frail human beings who are utterly dependent upon God. When we suffer, we are forced to focus upon our personal limitations and weaknesses. And, similarly, we are forced to admit that there is no remedy to be found within us (see Job 6:13). Let’s face it: it is hard to be haughty when you are hurting! Presidents or paupers both look the same in a hospital bed or wheelchair. Pain can be humbling; it also can open our hearts to greater vistas—but only if we let it.

Second, being forced to endure pain and suffering can serve to help us get our priorities straight, cause us to see the real worth of things, and draw us closer to God. Pain and suffering generally have little trouble getting our full attention! Pain and suffering can provide a sharper vision of what is truly important in life. When one is in a state of anguish that offers little respite, the natural human inclination is to turn toward a higher power for help. Only a deliberate and forced stubbornness can quench such an urge. When we are hurting, the “God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3) is waiting to help. King David once wrote: “In my distress I called upon Jehovah, and cried unto my God” (Psalm 18:6). When one passes through an experience of intense pain or suffering, the entire world takes on new meaning. A purple, gold, and magenta sunset lights up a far-away sky in a way never before noticed. The dew on the grass is more vivid than it has ever been. A gorgeous autumn day puts a smile on our face and a bounce in our step. Family and friends become all the more precious. As the poet John Dryden expressed it in *Astraea Redux*: “We, by our suff’rings, learn to prize our bliss.” We would do well to listen to what pain and suffering are whispering to our souls.

Third, suffering enhances our ability to pray. Just as it is a natural human inclination to turn toward a higher power for help, so, too, is praying an instinctive human response to severe hardship. The lyrics of one oft’-used song suggest: “Pray when you’re happy; pray when in sorrow.” One should pray frequently, and in all circumstances (“pray without ceasing”—1 Thessalonians 5:17). As one struggles under the burden of evil, pain, or suffering, however, he likely will learn how to pray as he never has prayed before. But effective prayer is a learned exercise. On one occasion during His earthly ministry, after Jesus had finished praying, one of His disciples requested: “Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1). These Hebrew disciples probably had prayed their entire lives; yet, they observed something in the intensity of Christ’s prayers that caused them to realize there was perhaps more to prayer than they had realized. As Calvary loomed before Him, Christ Himself plumbed the depths of prayer. “And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground” (Luke 22:44). [For an in-depth examination of the medical evidence relating to the hematidrosis (“sweat becoming as great drops of blood”) that Christ experienced in Gethsemane, and the effects of the torture that He endured during the time of His crucifixion and subsequent death, see Harrub and Thompson, 2002.] While we may never see our own sweat mingled with blood during prayer, knowing that God hears, and responds to, the prayer of the righteous (Proverbs 15:8-9,29; Psalm 34:15-16), affords a degree of consolation that no unbeliever will ever experience or understand.

Fourth, I think that even an atheist would agree that suffering makes us more compassionate toward others. There is much truth to the old adage, “Don’t judge a man until you’ve walked a mile in his shoes.” It is so much easier to comfort another effectively if we have lain in the bed of suffering ourselves. In the second chapter of the book of Hebrews, the writer argued that Jesus Christ, as our High Priest, is qualified to “succor” (ASV) or “aid” (NASV) those who are tempted. Why so? “For **in that He Himself has suffered**, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18, NKJV, emp. added). The timeworn song lyric, “Are you weary? Are you heavyhearted? Tell it to Jesus; tell it to Jesus,” takes on fresh meaning in light of this passage. It has been said that the difference between “sympathy” (from the Greek *syn*—with, and *pathos*—feeling) and “empathy” (*en*—in, and *pathos*) is that in the former instance one “feels with” (i.e., has feelings of tenderness for) those who suffer, whereas in “empathy” one almost is able to “get inside” the friend who suffers—because the one doing the comforting has “been there, done that”!

Fifth, suffering can assist us in seeing sin in all of its ghastly gruesomeness. The Bible clearly teaches that this planet has been heir to suffering as a consequence of man's sin. Paul elucidated this principle in his letter to the Roman saints when he affirmed that "through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death through sin, so that death passed to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). At the beginning of human history, sin, in a manner of speaking, was "crouching at the door" (see Genesis 4:7; cf. 1 Peter 5:8). When Eve (and subsequently her husband) opened that door, devastating effects descended upon the first couple and their offspring (Genesis 3:22). Death—with all its attendant evils—entered the human environment as a result of man's rebellion against his Creator. When we suffer, it ought to be a sober reminder of how terrible sin is. As we begin to comprehend both the hideous nature of sin, and the alienation from God that results from it, we should exhibit a fervent desire to save ourselves "from this crooked generation" (Acts 2:40). While we cannot escape the physical consequences of sin's high price, we can refresh our souls in divine forgiveness. When we do that, life becomes immeasurably easier, and suffering somewhat more bearable. Only the faithful Christian has access to the "peace of God which surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7, NKJV).

Sixth, suffering should sharpen our awareness that this Earth is not our permanent home. Peter sought to encourage early Christians (who were being severely persecuted) not to despair, by reminding them that they were but "sojourners and pilgrims" upon this Earth (1 Peter 2:11). The ancient patriarchs "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" and so they looked for "a better country, that is a heavenly [one]" (Hebrews 11:13-16). Writing in the book of Revelation, the apostle John described in unforgettable language the destiny of the righteous when this world finally comes to an end: "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them" (21:3, RSV). Thousands of years earlier, God's pledge to Abraham had foreshadowed just such a covenant relationship. Moses recorded: "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you" (Genesis 17:7, NKJV). Paul spoke of the fact that "if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Galatians 3:29), and referred to those who serve Christ faithfully as "heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7). James rejoiced in the fact that those who were "rich in faith" would be "heirs of the kingdom that he promised to them who love him" (James 2:5). The writer of the book of Hebrews spoke of Christ as having become "unto all them that obey him, the author of eternal salvation" (5:9).

No doubt that is exactly what John had in mind when he went on to say in Revelation 21: "He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (vs. 7). God will be Father to the man or woman who demonstrates faith in Him, perseveres to the end, and lives in humble obedience to His divine will. Such is the promise of sonship to believers. God will welcome those who believe in and obey His Son as "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17), and will—according to His promise—bestow upon them all the riches and blessings of heaven. It is not the will of God that men live upon this evil-plagued planet forever. We never will be "at home" until we are with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). Evil, pain, and suffering should serve to make us "home sick." Henry Ward Beecher once wrote that "God washes the eyes by tears until they can behold the invisible land where tears shall come no more."

Seventh, suffering tempers the soul, and helps prepare it for eternity. Paul reminded us that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward" (Romans 8:18). Peter wrote:

[N]ow for a little while, if necessary, ye have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:6-7).

Just as the intense heat of a fire purifies and thus strengthens precious metals, so life's trials in general, and suffering for Christ in particular, purify and build strength into the soul. Jesus Himself said: "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:11-12). Character does

not happen by accident, but is instead the result of intense effort on the part of the one who works conscientiously (sometimes against all odds) to build that character. Out of the fires of suffering, the human spirit may emerge as precious a gold and as strong as steel.

Eighth, suffering nurtures the noblest virtues of which mankind is capable. Reflect for a moment upon the quality we know as “courage.” Civilizations universally perceive “courage” to be one of the prime traits of humanity (by way of contrast, cowardice is considered to be utterly reprehensible). Courage may be defined as the ability to act rationally in the face of fear. If, however, the human family were immune to hardship, danger, suffering, etc., there could be no “facing” it, hence, no courage. When we sit down to a delicious dinner with friends and loved ones on a balmy autumn evening, we do not need courage. Courage arises in the presence of danger. There are certain qualities that we simply cannot possess in the absence of hardship. Ralph Sockman wrote: “Without danger there would be no adventure. Without friction our cars would not start and our spirits would not soar. Without tears, eyes would not shine with the richest expressions” (1961, p. 66). And what of “patience”? John Chrysostom (347-407), one of the most influential figures among the “church fathers” of the post-apostolic period, described patience as “the mother of piety, fruit that never withers, a fortress that is never taken, a harbour that knows no storms” (as quoted in Barclay, 1974, p. 145). But could there ever be “patience” in the absence of difficulty?

Ninth, suffering separates the superficial from the stable. Paul cautioned the Corinthian saints against building up the church superficially. Some folks are of the “wood, hay, [and] stubble” variety, while others exhibit those qualities of “gold, silver [and] costly stones” (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). Saints of the latter category endure; those of the former do not. Why so? It simply is because the two groups are tested by “fire” (hardships), and that testing fire separates quality converts from those who really are not serious about their Christian commitment. Jesus once spoke of those who receive the Gospel impulsively, and, for a while, endure. Eventually, though, “tribulation and persecution” arise, and rather quickly the superficial fades away (see Matthew 13:20-21). Truth be told, evil, pain, and suffering actually can help us build and sustain a rock-solid faith that will endure until called upon to carry us to our heavenly reward. While no one actively seeks suffering in his or her life, honesty compels us to admit that hardships do have intrinsic value. Certainly, the existence of evil, pain, and suffering is not a valid reason for rejecting the Creator. God sometimes uses pain and suffering for His own purposes, be that to judge the wicked, strengthen the faithful, aid the oppressed, or bless the righteous.

## CONCLUSION

Instead of blaming God when tragedies strike, or when evil, pain, and suffering befall us, we need to turn to Him for strength, and let tragedies, of whatever nature, remind us that this world never was intended to be our permanent abode. Our time here is temporary (James 4:14), and with God’s help, we are able to overcome whatever comes our way (Romans 8:35-39; Psalm 46:1-3). Unfortunately, it is often during times of pain and suffering that we forget that God is in the same place—heaven—He was when His own Son was being maliciously nailed to that old rugged cross almost two thousand years ago. Fortunately, on that grim day God remained in heaven as the sin of all humanity was placed on His Son’s back and nailed to that cross. As a result, the apostle Paul was able to admonish us with these words:

Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

In the end, the most important question is not, “Why did this happen to me?,” but instead, “How can I understand what has happened, and how am I going to react to it?” With Peter, the faithful Christian can echo the sentiment that God, “who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall himself perfect, establish, strengthen you. To him be the dominion for ever and ever” (1 Peter 5:10-11).



## CHAPTER 3

### JESUS CHRIST—HISTORICAL FACT OR FICTIONAL MYTH?

Most children and adults easily recognize the name of Jesus Christ. Many even can recount the story of His life. Also easily recognizable are the names of Peter Pan and Rumpelstiltskin. And most people can relate the “facts” of these fairy tales as well. Is Jesus of Nazareth a fictional character who deserves to be included in a list containing mystifying magicians, daring dragon slayers, and flying boy heroes?

In the nineteenth century, German historian Bruno Baur alleged that Jesus was the mental invention of a few second-century Christians who had been influenced by Græco-Roman philosophy. The world-famous medical missionary and lifelong critic of Christianity, Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), although acknowledging the existence of “a” Jesus, nevertheless asserted that the “real” Jesus of history was so different from the Christ revered by Christians, that the Jesus of the New Testament had little if any historical credibility. He wrote:

The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give His work its final consecration, never had any existence. He is a figure designed by rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in an historical garb (1964, p. 398).

In more modern times, national attention was drawn in 1991 to a small-but-vocal group of self-proclaimed atheists in McDonough, Georgia, who publicly displayed a large banner that bore the bold inscription: “**JESUS CHRIST IS A MYTH!**” [Interestingly, the McDonough City Council ruled the sign to be “obscene.”] A year later, former-preacher-turned-atheist Dan Barker suggested that “the New Testament Jesus is a myth” (1992, p. 378). Apparently, it is becoming increasingly popular to deny the historical existence of Jesus. Perhaps dismissing the Messiah as a myth is easier than confronting the proofs of His existence and His deity.

The question may linger in the minds of some, however, as to whether the skeptics are right. Was Jesus Christ a real person whose feet got dirty and whose body grew tired just like the rest of humanity? Or was He simply a mythical character? Was He a figment conjured up in the minds of some first- or second-century religious fanatics? If so, then Christianity is a sham, and man is utterly alone in this dark world. The religion of Jesus Christ stands or falls upon the events of history. Did Jesus of Nazareth ever live? And are the New Testament data regarding Him reliable? These are crucial issues.

Fortunately, such questions can be answered by an honest appeal to the available evidence. Jesus’ existence is historically verifiable, as I will document here. Clearly, it is only the uninformed (or, as much as we may not like to think about it, the intellectually dishonest) person who willingly denies the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth.

But first, perhaps it is in order to ask, what, exactly, is a “historical” person? Martin Kahler suggested: “Is it not the person who originates and bequeaths a permanent influence? He is one of those dynamic individuals who intervene in the course of events” (1896, p. 63). The question then becomes: Do any records exist to document the claim that Jesus Christ “intervened in the course of events” known as world history? Indeed they do!

Records of Jesus’ life come to modern man with impressive force. Several lines of evidence converge to establish the historical reality of the founder of the Christian religion: (1) ancient Roman writings; (2) ancient Jewish sources; (3) testimony of the patristic writers; (4) the New Testament documents themselves; (5) early antagonists of Christianity; (6) art of the Roman catacombs; and (7) the impact of Christianity in history. Some of these (e.g., Jewish and Roman sources) may be termed “hostile” witnesses, since they have virtually nothing positive to say about Christ. Thus, far from being a fantasy of fanatics, Jesus Christ is undeniably a figure of history Who was mentioned by friend and foe alike. His teachings have shaped and molded Western thought and civilization like those of no other person—man or woman, before or since.

## HOSTILE ROMAN TESTIMONY ABOUT JESUS

One of the most powerful types of testimony concerning Christ's historicity comes from what are known as "hostile" sources—writers who mentioned Jesus in a negative light or derogatory fashion. Such penmen certainly were not predisposed to further the cause of Christ or otherwise to add credence to His existence. In fact, quite the opposite is true. They rejected His teachings and often reviled Him as well. Thus, one can appeal to them without the charge of built-in bias.

Truth be told, the real thorn in the skeptic's side is the mention of Jesus in secular Roman sources (see Bettenson, 1961, pp. 3-7). That a religious teacher (who died at a young age) from a small, despised country called Judea should be mentioned in Roman documents is a wonder in itself. An obscure carpenter with few friends from a remote town hardly would make front-page news in the capital city of the world! Even His death was unremarkable in that age of extreme cruelty and vicious gladiatorial games. Nevertheless, some references to Jesus do appear in ancient Roman literature. In his book, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, E.P. Sanders stated:

Most of the first-century literature that survives was written by members of the very small elite class of the Roman Empire. To them, Jesus (if they heard of him at all) was merely a troublesome rabble-rouser and magician in a small, backward part of the world (1993, p. 49, parenthetical comment in orig.).

It is now to this "small elite class of the Roman Empire" that we turn our attention for documentation of Christ's existence.

Tacitus (c. A.D. 56-117) should be among the first of several hostile witnesses called to the stand. He was a member of the Roman provincial upper class with a formal education who held several high positions under different emperors such as Nerva and Trajan (see Tacitus, 1952, p. 7). His famous work, *Annals*, was a history of Rome written in approximately A.D. 115. In the *Annals*, he told of the Great Fire of Rome that occurred in A.D. 64. Nero, the Roman emperor in office at the time, was suspected by many of having ordered the city set on fire. Tacitus wrote:

Nero fabricated scapegoats—and punished with every refinement the notoriously depraved Christians (as they were popularly called). Their originator, Christ, had been executed in Tiberius' reign by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilatus. But in spite of this temporary setback the deadly superstition had broken out afresh, not only in Judea (where the mischief had started) but even in Rome (1952, 15.44, parenthetical items in orig.; cf. McDowell and Wilson, 1988, p. 49).

Later in that same passage, Tacitus went on to mention the horrid forms of mockery and execution suffered by Christians for their faith. Significantly, this persecution occurred only about 31 years after the death of Christ. These pious people obviously believed that Jesus was much more than a mythical Messiah.

Tacitus hated both Christians and their namesake, Christ. He therefore had nothing positive to say about what he referred to as a "deadly superstition." **He did, however, have something to say about it.** His testimony establishes beyond any reasonable doubt that the Christian religion not only was relevant historically, but that Christ, as its originator, was a verifiable historical figure of such prominence that He even attracted the attention of the Roman emperor himself!

Additional hostile testimony originated from Suetonius, who wrote around A.D. 120. Robert Graves, as translator of Suetonius' work, *The Twelve Caesars*, declared:

Suetonius was fortunate in having ready access to the Imperial and Senatorial archives and to a great body of contemporary memoirs and public documents, and in having himself lived nearly thirty years under the Caesars. Much of his information about Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero comes from eye-witnesses of the events described (Suetonius, 1957, p. 7).

The testimony of Suetonius is a reliable piece of historical evidence. Twice in his history, Suetonius specifically mentioned Christ or His followers. He wrote, for example: "Because the Jews at Rome caused continuous disturbance at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius—BT] expelled them from the city" (*Via Claudii*, 25:4). This doubtless refers to the Jewish persecution of Christians (note that in Acts 18:2, Luke mentioned this expulsion by Claudius). Sanders noted that *Chrestus* is a misspelling of *Christos*, "the Greek word that translates the Hebrew 'Messiah'" (1993, pp. 49-50). Suetonius further commented: "Punishments

were also inflicted on the Christians, a sect professing a new and mischievous religious belief” (*Nero*, 16: 2). Again, it is evident that Suetonius and the Roman government had feelings of hatred toward Christ and His alleged mischievous band of rebels. It is equally evident that Suetonius (and, in fact, most of Rome) recognized that Christ was the noteworthy founder of a historically significant new religion.

Along with Tacitus and Suetonius, Pliny the Younger must be allowed to take a seat among hostile Roman witnesses. In approximately A.D. 110-111, Pliny was sent by the Roman emperor Trajan to serve as the governor of Bithynia. From this region, Pliny corresponded with the emperor concerning a problem he viewed as quite serious. Around A.D. 112, Pliny wrote a letter to Trajan, asking advice about how he should deal with Christians who made it a practice to meet on a certain day to sing hymns “to Christ as if to God” (*Epistles*, X.96). He also wrote: “I was never present at any trial of Christians; therefore I do not know the customary penalties or investigations and what limits are observed,” and then went on to state:

This is the course that I have adopted in the case of those brought before me as Christians. I ask them if they are Christians. If they admit it, I repeat the question a second and a third time, threatening capital punishment; if they persist, I sentence them to death (as quoted in Wilken, 1990, p. 4).

Pliny used the term “Christian” or “Christians” seven times in his letter, thereby corroborating it as a generally accepted term that was recognized by both the Roman Empire and its emperor. Pliny also used the name “Christ” three times to refer to the originator of the “sect.” It is undeniably the case that Christians, with Christ as their founder, had multiplied in such a way as to draw the attention of the emperor and his magistrates by the time of Pliny’s letter to Trajan. In light of this evidence, it is impossible to deny the fact that Jesus Christ existed and was recognized by the highest officials within the Roman government as an actual, historical person.

Some have attempted to negate the testimony of these hostile Roman witnesses to Christ’s historicity by suggesting that the “Roman sources that mention him are all dependent on Christian reports” (Sanders, 1993, p. 49). For example, in his book, *The Earliest Records of Jesus*, Francis Beare lamented:

Everything that has been recorded of the Jesus of history was recorded for us by men to whom he was Christ the Lord; and we cannot expunge their faith from the records without making the records themselves virtually worthless. There is no Jesus known to history except him who is depicted by his followers as the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour to the World (1962, p. 19).

Such a suggestion is as outlandish as it is outrageous. Not only is there no evidence to support such a claim, but all of the available evidence militates against it. Furthermore, it is an untenable position to suggest that such upper-class Roman historians would submit for inclusion in the official annals of Roman history (to be preserved for posterity) facts that were related to them by a notorious tribe of “mischievous,” “depraved,” “superstitious” misfits.

Even a casual reader who glances over the testimony of the hostile Roman witnesses who bore testimony to the historicity of Christ will be struck by the fact that these ancient men depicted Christ as neither the Son of God nor the Savior of the world. They verbally stripped Him of His Sonship, denied His glory, and belittled His magnificence. They described Him to their contemporaries, and for posterity, as a mere man. Yet even though they were wide of the mark in regard to the truth of **Who** He was, through their caustic diatribes they nevertheless documented **that** He was. And for that we are indebted to them.

### HOSTILE JEWISH TESTIMONY ABOUT JESUS

Even though much of the hostile testimony regarding the existence of Jesus originated from witnesses within the Roman Empire, such testimony is not the only kind of hostile historical evidence available. Anyone familiar with Jewish history will recognize immediately the *Mishnah* and the *Talmud*. The *Mishnah* was a book of Jewish law traditions codified by Rabbi Judah around the year A.D. 200 and known to the Jews as the “whole code of religious jurisprudence” (Bruce, 1953, p. 101). Jewish rabbis studied the *Mishnah*, and even wrote a body of commentary based upon it known as the *Gemares*. The *Mishnah* and *Gemares* are referred to collectively as the *Talmud* (Bruce, 1953, p. 101). The complete *Talmud* surfaced around A.D. 300. If a person as influential as Jesus had existed in the land of Palestine during the first cen-



tury, surely the rabbis would have had something to say about him. Undoubtedly, a man who supposedly confronted the most astute religious leaders of His day—and won!—would be named among the opinions of those who shared His rabbinical title.

Interestingly, the *Talmud* **does** take note of the Lord's existence. And its testimony to Christ's existence is all the more valuable since it is extremely hostile. It charges, for example, that Christ (who is called Ben Pandera) was born out of wedlock after his mother was seduced by a Roman soldier named Pandera, or Panthera. Concerning this, scholar Bruce Metzger declared: "The defamatory account of his birth seems to reflect a knowledge of the Christian tradition that Jesus was the son of the virgin Mary, the Greek word for virgin, *parthenos*, being distorted into the name Pandera" (1965, p. 76). The *Talmud* refers to Jesus' miracles as "magic," as F.F. Bruce observed:

According to the earlier Rabbis whose opinions are recorded in these writings, Jesus of Nazareth was a transgressor in Israel, who practised magic, scorned the words of the wise, led the people astray, and said that he had not come to destroy the law but to add to it. He was hanged on Passover Eve for heresy and misleading the people. His disciples, of whom five are named, healed the sick in his name (1953, p. 102).

The *Talmud* also records that Christ claimed to be God, and even mentions His execution on the eve of the Passover.

First-century Judaism, in large part, refused to accept Jesus Christ as the Son of the God. Yet it did not refuse to accept Him as a historical man from a literal city known as Nazareth, or to record for posterity crucial facts about His life and death.

Josephus is another important Jewish witness. The son of Mattathias, he was born into a Jewish upper class priestly family around A.D. 37. His education in biblical law and history stood among the best of his day (Sanders, 1993, p. 15). At age nineteen, he became a Pharisee. When Jerusalem rebelled against the Roman authorities, he was given command of the Jewish forces in Galilee. After losing most of his men, he surrendered to the Romans. He found favor in the man who commanded the Roman army, Vespasian, by predicting that Vespasian soon would be elevated to the position of emperor. Josephus' prediction came true in A.D. 69 at Vespasian's inauguration. After the fall of Jerusalem, Josephus assumed the family name of the emperor (Flavius) and settled down to live a life as a government pensioner. It was during these latter years (between September 93 and September 94) that he wrote *Antiquities* of the Jews (Bruce, 1953, pp. 103-104). Josephus himself gave the date as the thirteenth year of Domitian (Rajak, 1984, p. 237). His contemporaries viewed his career indignantly as one of traitorous rebellion to the Jewish nation (Bruce, 1953, p. 104). Twice in *Antiquities*, Jesus' name flowed from Josephus' pen. *Antiquities* 18:3:3 reads as follows:

And there arose about this time Jesus, a wise man, **if indeed we should call him a man**; for he was a doer of marvelous deeds, a teacher of men who receive the truth with pleasure. He led away many Jews, and also Greeks. **This man was the Christ.** And when Pilate had condemned him to the cross on his impeachment by the chief men among us, those who had loved him at first did not cease; for **he appeared to them on the third day alive again, the divine prophets having spoken these and thousands of other wonderful things about him**: and even now the tribe of Christians, so named after him, has not yet died out (emp. added).

Certain historians regard the segments of the section in bold type as "Christian interpolation." There is, however, no evidence from textual criticism that would warrant such an opinion (see Bruce, 1953, p. 110). In fact, every extant Greek manuscript contains the disputed portions. The passage also exists in both Hebrew and Arabic versions. And although the Arabic version is slightly different, it still exhibits knowledge of the disputed sections (see Chapman, 1981, p. 29; Habermas, 1984, pp. 91-92; 1996, pp. 193-196).

There are several reasons generally offered for rejecting the passage as genuine. First, early Christian writers like Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Origen did not use Josephus' statement in their defense of Christ's deity. Habermas observed that Origen, in fact, documented the fact that Josephus (although himself a Jew) did not believe Christ to be the Messiah (1996, p. 192; cf. Origen's *Contra Celsum*, 1:47). However, as Habermas also pointed out, the fourth-century writer Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History* (1:11), quoted Josephus' statement about Christ, including the disputed words. And he undoubtedly had access to much more ancient sources than those now available.

Furthermore, it should not be all that surprising that such early Christian apologists did not appeal to Josephus in their writings. Wayne Jackson has suggested:

Josephus' writings may not have been in extensive circulation at that point in time. His *Antiquities* was not completed until about 93 A.D. Too, in view of the fact that Josephus was not respected by the Jews, his works may not have been valued as an apologetic tool (1991, 11:29).

Such a suggestion possesses merit. Professor Bruce Metzger commented: "Because Josephus was deemed a renegade to Judaism, Jewish scribes were not interested in preserving his writings for posterity" (1965, p. 75). Thomas H. Horne, in his *Critical Introduction to the Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures* referred to the fact that the main source of evidence frequently used by the so-called "church fathers" was an appeal to the Old Testament rather than to human sources (1841, 1:463-464). The evidence substantiates Horne's conclusion. For example, a survey of the index to the eight volumes of the multi-volume set, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, reveals only eleven references to Josephus in the entire set.

The second reason sometimes offered as to why the disputed passage in Josephus' *Antiquities* might be due to "Christian interpolation" is the fact that it seems unlikely that a non-Christian writer would include such statements as "this man was the Christ" or "if indeed we should call him a man." But while such might be unlikely, it certainly is not beyond the realm of possibility. Any number of reasons could explain why Josephus would write what he did. For example, Bruce allowed for the possibility that Josephus might have been speaking sarcastically (1953, p. 110). Howard Key suggested:

If we assume that in making explicit statements about Jesus as Messiah and about the resurrection Josephus is merely conveying what Jesus' followers claimed on his behalf, then there would be no reason to deny that he wrote them [i.e., the supposed interpolated phrases—BT] (1970, p. 33).

It also should be noted that Josephus hardly qualifies as the sole author of such statements made about Christ by those who rejected His deity. Ernest Renan, for example, was a nineteenth-century French historian whose book, *The Life of Jesus*, was a frontal assault on Christ's deity that received major attention throughout Europe (see Thompson, 1994b, 14:5). Yet in that very volume, Renan wrote: "It is allowable to call Divine this sublime person who, each day, still presides over the destinies of the world" (as quoted in Schaff and Roussel, 1868, pp. 116-117).

Furthermore, even if the material containing the alleged Christian interpolation is removed, the vocabulary and grammar of the section "cohere well with Josephus' style and language" (Meier, 1990, p. 90). In fact, almost every word (omitting for the moment the supposed interpolations) is found elsewhere in Josephus (Meier, p. 90). Were the disputed material to be expunged, the testimony of Josephus still would verify the fact that Jesus Christ actually lived. Habermas therefore concluded:

There are good indications that the majority of the text is genuine. There is no textual evidence against it, and, conversely, there is very good manuscript evidence for this statement about Jesus, thus making it difficult to ignore. Additionally, leading scholars on the works of Josephus [Daniel-Rops, 1962, p. 21; Bruce, 1967, p. 108; Anderson, 1969, p. 20] have testified that this portion is written in the style of this Jewish historian (1996, p. 193).

In addition, Josephus did not remain mute regarding Christ in his later sections. *Antiquities* 20:9:1 relates that Ananus brought before the Sanhedrin "a man named James, the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ, and certain others. He accused them of having transgressed the law, and condemned them to be stoned to death." Bruce observed that this quote from Josephus "is chiefly important because he calls James 'the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ,' in such a way as to suggest that he has already made reference to Jesus. And we do find reference to him in all extant copies of Josephus" (1953, p. 109). Meier, in an article titled "Jesus in Josephus," made it clear that rejecting this passage as actually having been written by Josephus defies accurate assessment of the text (pp. 79-81). Meier also added another emphatic defense of the historical reliability of the text in *Antiquities* concerning Christ.

Practically no one is astounded or refuses to believe that in the same book 18 of *The Jewish Antiquities* Josephus also chose to write a longer sketch of another marginal Jew, another peculiar religious leader in Palestine, "John surnamed the Baptist" (Ant. 18.5.2). Fortunately for us, Josephus had more than a passing interest in marginal Jews (p. 99).

Regardless of what one believes about the writings of Josephus, the simple fact is that this well-educated Jewish historian wrote about a man named Jesus Who actually existed in the first century. Yamauchi summarized quite well the findings of the secular sources regarding Christ:

Even if we did not have the New Testament or Christian writings, we would be able to conclude from such non-Christian writings as Josephus, the Talmud, Tacitus and Pliny the Younger that: (1) Jesus was a Jewish teacher; (2) many people believed that he performed healings and exorcisms; (3) he was rejected by the Jewish leaders; (4) he was crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius; (5) despite this shameful death, his followers, who believed that he was still alive, spread beyond Palestine so that there were multitudes of them in Rome by 64 A.D.; (6) all kinds of people from the cities and countryside—men and women, slave and free—worshiped him as God by the beginning of the second century (1995, p. 222).

### TESTIMONY OF THE PATRISTIC WRITERS

The patristic writers authored significant works between the end of the first and the eighth centuries A.D. These so-called “church fathers” (*patres*) produced volumes that are important to a proper understanding of the changes that took place in the Christian religion during the post-apostolic age, and that testify profusely to the historical Christ (see Bettenson, 1956). There were a number of writers in this group who gave credence to the existence of Christ.

Polycarp (c. A.D. 69-155), for example, lived in the city of Smyrna in Asia Minor. He spoke passionately of Christ, and wrote against certain heretics of his day. Another patristic writer, Irenaeus (c. A.D. 130-200), acknowledged that Polycarp had personal association with the apostle John, and with several others who “had seen the Lord” (*Eusebius*, V.XX). He died a martyr, having served Jesus Christ for eighty-six years (suggesting that almost his entire life was dedicated to the Savior).

One of the patristic writers, Irenaeus (A.D. 120-202), produced a work titled *Against Heresies* that has been called “one of the most precious remains of early Christian antiquity...devoted, on the one hand, to an account and refutation of those multiform Gnostic heresies which prevailed in the latter half of the second century; and, on the other hand, to an exposition and defence of the faith” (Roberts and Donaldson, n.d., p. 311). In that volume, Irenaeus mentioned Christ by name on several occasions. In Book I, he spoke of “Jesus,” Who “they also speak of under the name of Saviour, and Christ, and patronymically, Logos...” (I:2:6). In Book V, he wrote compellingly of how important it was to follow “the only true and steadfast Teacher, the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself” (V: Preface).

Justin Martyr (A.D. c. 110-165) was a Gentile who had been born in Samaria. Apparently, he was both well educated and widely traveled, and became a follower of Christ as a result of his study of Christianity’s teachings. He lived in both Ephesus and Rome, and, according to history was martyred during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. His writings have been referred to as “among the most important that have come down to us from the second century” (Robertson and Donaldson, p. 160). In his *First Apology*, he wrote of “all these things [that] should come to pass, I say, our Teacher foretold, He who is both Son and Apostle of God the Father of all and the Ruler, Jesus Christ; from whom also we have the name of Christians” (Chapter 12). He also wrote of the “Logos,” Who “took shape, and became man, and was called Jesus Christ” (Chapter 5). In his *Second Apology*, he spoke of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate” (Chapter 6).

Ignatius (A.D. 30-107) wrote an *Epistle to the Ephesians*, in which he said to his fellow Christians in the city of Ephesus: “I have become acquainted with your name, much-beloved in God, which ye have acquired by the habit of righteousness, according to the faith and love in Jesus Christ our Saviour” (Chapter 1). In his *Epistle to the Magnesians*, he wrote:

As therefore the Lord did nothing without the Father, being united to Him, neither by Himself nor by the apostles, so neither do ye anything without the bishop and presbyters. Neither endeavour that anything appear reasonable and proper to yourselves apart; but being come together into the same place, let there be one prayer, one supplication, one mind, one hope, in love and in joy undefiled. There is one Jesus Christ, than whom nothing is more excellent. Do ye therefore all run together as into one temple of God, as to one altar, as to one Jesus Christ, who came forth from one Father, and is with and has gone to one (Chapter 7).

Clement (A.D. 30-100) of Rome was a Gentile Christian. He addressed his *First Epistle to the Corinthians* to

the Church of God which sojourns at Rome, to the Church of God sojourning at Corinth, to them that are called and sanctified by the will of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, from Almighty God through Jesus Christ, be multiplied (Chapter 1).

In his *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, he stated:

If, moreover, it chance that we go to a place in which there are no Christians, and it be important for us to stay there a few days, let us be “wise as serpents, and harmless as doves;” and let us “not be as the foolish, but as the wise,” in all the self-restraint of the fear of God, that God may be glorified in everything through our Lord Jesus Christ, through our chaste and holy behaviour (Chapter 6).

The testimony of the “church fathers” is compelling evidence to the existence of Jesus of Nazareth, and certainly speakers louder than the trifling objections of biased critics who are twenty centuries removed from the facts.

### RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT RECORDS

Although the above list of hostile and Jewish witnesses proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that Jesus actually lived, it is by no means the only historical evidence available to those interested in this topic. The four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), and the other twenty-three books that form the New Testament, provide more information about Jesus than any other source(s) available. But may these records be viewed as historical evidence, or are they instead writings whose reliability pales in comparison to other types of historical documentation? Blomberg has explained why the historical question of the gospels, for example, must be considered.

Many who have never studied the gospels in a scholarly context believe that biblical criticism has virtually disproved the existence [of Christ—BT]. An examination of the gospels’ historical reliability must therefore precede a credible assessment of who Jesus was (1987, p. xx).

All of the New Testament narratives were completed within sixty years or so of the Lord’s death, and of the twenty-seven New Testament books, no less than ten were penned by personal companions of Jesus, while Paul, an eyewitness of Christ, wrote at least thirteen of the remainder. It used to be fashionable in liberal circles to ascribe most New Testament books to the second century A.D., but interestingly, even liberal critics are now admitting that the New Testament documents are first-century sources of information. For example, modernistic theologian John A.T. Robinson of England, in his book, *Redating The New Testament* (1977), conceded that all of the New Testament books were written within seventy years of the death of Jesus—and by the men whose names they bear! The New Testament documents as a whole provide a valuable and credible witness to the dominating presence of Christ in first-century Palestine.

But how well do the New Testament documents compare with additional ancient, historical documents? F.F. Bruce examined much of the evidence surrounding this question in his book, *The New Testament Documents—Are They Reliable?* As he and other writers (e.g., Metzger, 1968, p. 36; Geisler and Brooks, 1990, p. 159) have noted, there are 5,366 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament in existence today, in whole or in part, that serve to corroborate the accuracy of the New Testament. The best manuscripts of the New Testament are dated at roughly A.D. 350, with perhaps one of the most important of these being the Codex Vaticanus, “the chief treasure of the Vatican Library in Rome,” and the Codex Sinaiticus, which was purchased by the British from the Soviet Government in 1933 (Bruce, 1953, p. 20). Additionally, the Chester Beatty papyri, made public in 1931, contain eleven codices, three of which contain most of the New Testament (including the gospels). Two of these codices boast of a date in the first half of the third century, while the third slides in a little later, being dated in the last half of the same century (Bruce, p. 21). The John Rylands Library boasts of even earlier evidence. A papyrus codex containing parts of John 18 dates to the time of the Roman emperor Hadrian, who reigned from A.D. 117 to 138 (Bruce, p. 21).

Other attestation to the accuracy of the New Testament documents can be found in the writings of the so-called “apostolic fathers”—men who wrote primarily from A.D. 90 to 160 (Bruce, p. 22). Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Tatian, Clement of Rome, and Ignatius (writing before the close of the second century) all provided citations from one or more of the gospels (Guthrie, 1990, p. 24). Other witnesses to the early authenticity of the New Testament are the Ancient Versions, which consist of the text of the New Testament translated into different languages. The Old Latin and the Old Syriac are the most ancient, being dated from the middle of the second century (Bruce, p. 23).

The available evidence makes it clear that the gospels were accepted as authentic by the close of the second century (Guthrie, p. 24). They were complete (or substantially complete) before A.D. 100, with many of the writings circulating twenty to forty years before the close of the first century (Bruce, p. 16). Hence, the things written could have been challenged by those who knew the facts. Linton remarked concerning the gospels:

A fact known to all who have given any study at all to this subject is that these books were quoted, listed, catalogued, harmonized, cited as authority by different writers, Christian and Pagan, right back to the time of the apostles (1943, p. 39).

Such an assessment is absolutely correct. In fact, the New Testament enjoys far more historical documentation than any other volume ever known. There are only 643 copies of Homer’s *Iliad*, which is undeniably the most famous book of ancient Greece. No one doubts the text of Julius Caesar’s *Gallic Wars*, but we have only ten copies of it, the earliest of which was made 1,000 years after it was written. To have such an abundance of copies for the New Testament from within seventy years of their writing is nothing short of amazing (see Geisler and Brooks, 1990, pp. 159-160).

Someone might allege that the New Testament documents cannot be trusted because the writers “had an agenda.” But this in itself does not render what they said untruthful, especially in the light of corroborating evidence from hostile witnesses. There are other histories that are accepted despite their authors’ agendas. An “agenda” does not nullify the possibility of accurate historical knowledge.

In his work, *The New Testament Documents—Are They Reliable?*, Bruce offered more astounding comparisons. Livy wrote 142 books of Roman history, of which a mere 35 survive. The 35 known books are made manifest due to some 20 manuscripts, only one of which is as old as the fourth century. We have only two manuscripts of Tacitus’ *Histories* and *Annals*, one from the ninth century and one from the eleventh. *The History of Thucydides*, another well-known ancient work, is dependent upon only eight manuscripts, the oldest of these being dated about A.D. 900 (along with a few papyrus scraps dated at the beginning of the Christian era). *The History of Herodotus* finds itself in a similar situation. “Yet no classical scholar would listen to an argument that the authenticity of Herodotus or Thucydides is in doubt because the earliest MSS [manuscripts—BT] of their works which are of any use to us are over 1,300 years later than the originals” (Bruce, 1953, pp. 20-21). Bruce thus declared: “It is a curious fact that historians have often been much readier to trust the New Testament records than have many theologians (p. 19). As Linton put it: “There is no room for question that the records of the words and acts of Jesus of Galilee came from the pens of the men who, with John, wrote what they had ‘heard’ and ‘seen’ and their hands had ‘handled of the Word of life’ ” (1943, pp. 39-40).

## EARLY ANTAGONISTS OF CHRISTIANITY

Another line of evidence establishing the historicity of Jesus is the fact that the earliest enemies of the Christian faith did not deny that Christ actually lived (see Hurst, 1897, 1:180-189). Celsus, a pagan philosopher of the second century A.D., produced the oldest extant literary attack against Christianity. His *True Discourse* (c. A.D. 178) was a bitter assault upon Christ. In that vile document, Celsus argued that Jesus was born in low circumstances, and owed his existence to the result of fornication between Mary and a Roman soldier named Panthera. As he matured, Jesus began to call himself God—an action, said Celsus, that caused his Jewish brethren to kill him. Yet as denigrating as his attack was, Celsus never went so far as to suggest that Christ did not exist.

Lucian of Samosata (c. A.D. 115-200) has been called “the Voltaire of Grecian literature.” He wrote against Christianity—more with patronizing contempt than volatile hostility. He stated that Christians worshiped the well-known “sophist” Who was crucified in Palestine because He introduced “new mysteries.” Hostile though he was, he never once denied the existence of Jesus.

Porphyry of Tyre was born about A.D. 233, studied philosophy in Greece, and lived in Sicily, where he wrote fifteen books opposing the Christian faith. In one of his books, *Life of Pythagoras*, he contended that magicians of the pagan world exhibited greater powers than Jesus. His argument, as it turns out, was an inadvertent concession of Christ’s existence and power.

### ART OF THE ROMAN CATACOMBS

Beneath Rome there exists a maze of galleries that served, from the second to the fifth centuries A.D., as tombs (and secret places of worship during persecution) for early Christians. It has been estimated that there are some six hundred miles of these subterranean passages, representing 1,175,000 to 4,000,000 graves (Blaklock, 1970, p. 159). The catacomb vaults are filled with artwork—a fact that testifies to the deep faith in Christ that was embraced by many within the capital of the Roman Empire. Common among these inscriptions was the figure of a fish, frequently containing the word *ichthus* (Greek for “fish”; Boyd, 1969, p. 203). The letters, however, were an acrostic for the declaration, *Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Savior*. Did millions, living in the shadows of the first century, die for a “myth”? Such a theory makes no sense.

### THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON HISTORY

Finally, the impact of the Christian movement is powerful testimony to the reality of its Founder. The series of events that began with the birth of Christ in Bethlehem, and that culminated in His death, burial, and resurrection outside Jerusalem approximately thirty-three years later, stirred a whirlwind of controversy in the first century. Christianity did not come into the world with a whimper, but a bang. It was not something “done in a corner” (Acts 26:26). Instead, it arrived like a trumpet’s clarion call.

Christ spent three-and-a-half years teaching in order to make disciples. When finally He was ready to call them to action, it was not for a quiet retreat into the peaceful, nearby hills. He never intended that they be “holy men” who set themselves apart to spend each hour of every day in serene meditation. Rather, they were to be soldiers—fit for a spiritual battle against the forces of evil (Ephesians 6:10-17). Jesus called for action, self-denial, uncompromising love for truth, and zeal coupled with knowledge. His words to those who would follow Him were: “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34). And many did.

The teaching did not stop when Christ left to return to His home in heaven. He had trained others—apostles and disciples—to continue the task He had begun. They were sent to the uttermost parts of the Earth with the mandate to proclaim the Gospel boldly via preaching and teaching (Matthew 28:18-20). This they did daily (Acts 5:42). The result was additional, new disciples. They, too, were instructed and grounded in the fundamentals of God’s Word (Acts 2:42), and sent on their way to teach still others.

The results were extraordinary indeed. In a single day, in a single city, over 3,000 constituted the original church as a result of the teaching they had heard from Christ’s apostles (see Acts 2:41). In fact, so effective was this kind of instruction that the enemies of Christianity attempted to prohibit any further public teaching (Acts 4:18; 5:28), yet to no avail. Twenty centuries later, the theme of the Cross still is alive, vibrant, and forceful. Christianity’s central message, the manner in which that message was taught, and the dedication of those into whose hands it had been placed, were too powerful for even its bitterest foes to abate or defeat. That Christianity continues to be taught, and continues to thrive, is evidence aplenty of this fact.

It is inconceivable that a non-existent figure could have generated a societal force as world-shaking as Christianity. There is no logical way to explain how the Christian system began, and grew so rapidly, except for the fact that its adherents knew of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Christianity itself is a monument to the vibrant presence of God’s Son in history. The cause we espouse is not grounded in a wispy vapor of antiquity, but on unshakable historical facts.

## CONCLUSION

When someone asks the question, “Is the life of Jesus Christ a historic event?,” he or she must remember that “If we maintain that the life of our Lord is not a historical event, we are landed in hopeless difficulties; in consistency, we shall have to give up all ancient history and deny that there ever was such an event as the assassination of Julius Caesar” (Monser, 1961, p. 377). Scholars thus have been forced to acknowledge the historicity of the Lord. German historian Adolf Harnack (1851-1930) declared that Jesus was so imposing that He was “far beyond the power of men to invent” and that those who treat Him as a myth are bereft of “the capacity to distinguish between fiction and the documentary evidence...” (as quoted in Harrison, 1968, p. 3). Joseph Klausner, the famous Jewish scholar of Hebrew University (who did not accept Christ as the Son of God) conceded that Jesus lived and exerted a powerful influence, both in the first century and all centuries thereafter (1989, pp. 17-62).

Even rabid skeptics have had to bow bloody heads to the blows of solid historical evidence. Faced with such overwhelming evidence, they have learned that is unwise to reject the position that Jesus Christ actually walked the streets of Jerusalem in the first century. As A.E. Harvey remarked in his book, *Jesus and the Constraints of History*, there are certain facts about Jesus that “are attested by at least as much reliable evidence as are countless others taken for granted as historical facts known to us from the ancient world.” [But lest I be accused of misquoting him, let me quickly point out that Harvey went on to say: “It can still be argued that we can have no reliable historical knowledge about Jesus with regard to anything that really matters” (1982, p. 6).]

Harvey could not deny the fact that Jesus lived on this Earth. In the end, all that a person such as Harvey could suggest was that the facts of history “do not really matter.” I contend that the facts that establish the existence of Jesus Christ of Nazareth **do** matter. Critics certainly do not like having to admit it, but they cannot successfully deny the fact that Jesus existed, and that He had a greater impact on the world than any single life before or after. Consider several examples.

H.G. Wells was an internationally known British author. Likely, his most prominent work was his *Outline of History* (1920—with numerous subsequent revisions). This volume contained an entire chapter titled “The Rise of Christianity and the Fall of the Western Empire.” Within that chapter, Mr. Wells (who certainly was no believer in the divine origin of the Christian system) had some very interesting things to say concerning Jesus of Nazareth. For example, Wells wrote: “In the reign of Tiberius Caesar a great teacher arose out of Judea who was to liberate the intense realization of the righteousness and unchallengeable oneness of God, and of man’s moral obligation to God...” (1920, p. 527). Without hesitation Wells accepted the historical existence of Jesus Christ. He was confident that Jesus was no mythical character. As Wells put it: “In spite of miraculous and incredible additions, one is obliged to say, ‘Here was a man. This part of the tale could not have been invented’” (p. 528). In fact, Wells actually had many complimentary things to say about Christ. He declared, for example, that Jesus was

very earnest and passionate, capable of swift anger, and teaching a new and simple and profound doctrine—namely, the universal, loving Fatherhood of God and the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven. He was clearly a person—to use a common phrase—of intense personal magnetism. He attracted followers and filled them with love and courage. Weak and ailing people were heartened, and healed by his presence (p. 529).

In one place Wells asked: “Is it any wonder that to this day this Galilean is too much for our small hearts?” (p. 536). And, in the 1931 edition of *The Outline of History*, Wells referred to Jesus as “a prophet of unprecedented power” (p. 270). No one who knew Wells would ever accuse his account of being flawed by some sort of “Christian interpolation.”

But where did this celebrated author obtain his information concerning the existence, character, and teaching of Jesus Christ? From the record of the New Testament! Note the following significant admission by Wells.

Almost our only resources of information about the personality of Jesus are derived from the four Gospels, all of which were certainly in existence a few decades after his death, and from allusions to his life in the letters (epistles) of the early Christian propagandists (1920, p. 528, parenthetical item in orig.).

Now here is an intriguing question. Why would Wells willingly accept the New Testament documents as reliable records of history—even going so far as to acknowledge that Jesus was “crucified together with two thieves” (p. 529)—yet refuse to accept the testimony of those same records, which establishes that the Lord was raised from the grave? If one is scholastically fair, there must be some justification, beyond mere personal prejudice, to warrant such a “selective” procedure. The simple fact is, of course, that Wells possessed a bias toward the supernatural in general, and toward Deity specifically. While he was willing to accede to the fact that Christ did live, he was not willing to accept Him as the Son of God. His comments did document the fact, however, that on occasion, even unbelievers have written convincingly about the historicity of Christ. And H.G. Wells is not alone.

Steve Allen was an accomplished composer who had written more than 4,000 songs. He was a comedian (having hosted the NBC *Tonight Show* and *The Steve Allen Comedy Hour*). Finally, he was a humanistic philosopher of sorts who expressed an extreme antagonism toward the Bible. One of his books was titled *Steve Allen on the Bible, Religion & Morality* (1990). His knowledge of religion was minimal, his understanding of morality was grossly flawed, and his acquaintance with the Bible was both limited and distorted. The bibliography in his hostile composition revealed that he had read widely in works promoting skepticism, but that he knew almost nothing of conservative scholarship.

Allen was reared a Roman Catholic. However, in his early thirties he was excommunicated from that association because of a second marriage. He claimed, though, that in his mid-twenties he began to have doubts about Catholicism/Christianity. Those doubts eventually led to his book, *Steve Allen on the Bible, Religion & Morality*. [In 1993, he produced a second volume, *More Steve Allen on the Bible, Religion & Morality*.]

Apparently, Allen was not an atheist, although it is difficult to figure out exactly what he was. For instance, he confessed: “There are time-honored, creative, and intellectually respectable arguments for the existence of God...” (1990, p. 179). Yet, elsewhere, he alleged: “...both the existence and non-existence of God seem in some respect preposterous. I accept the probability that there is some kind of divine force, however, because that appears to me the least preposterous assumption of the two” (p. xxix; cf. p. 183). According to Allen’s own admission, he considered his faith in a “God” significantly “preposterous,” and yet to such he clung. [The reader will have to use his or her own judgment as to whether or not this is an intellectually respectable viewpoint.]

Allen made it perfectly clear, however, that he had no regard for the God of the Bible. In fact, he expressed his hatred for Him when he wrote that “... the God of the Old Testament is a jealous, vengeful God...” (p. 180). Allen could not understand how a “God” could be both virtuous and yet a Being Who punishes the rebellious (Allen constantly harped on the various judgments inflicted by the Lord in Old Testament times). Allen’s conclusion thus would seem to be that virtue allows wickedness to reign supreme.

Some of Steve Allen’s unbelieving kinsmen no doubt would be terribly disappointed that the illustrious entertainer/philosopher was willing to concede the historical existence of Jesus of Nazareth. While people such as Dan Barker allege that “the New Testament Jesus is a myth,” Allen confessed his conviction that Christ was real: “My own belief is that he did indeed live in the time of Augustus Caesar...” (p. 229). But Allen went even farther when he wrote:

Heroic figures invariably embody ideals, but among human heroes, Jesus is supreme. For he not only preached but apparently demonstrated the virtues of compassion, charity, love, courage, faith, and intelligence. To millions he seems perfection in human form (p. 229).

In fact, Allen conceded that Christ “approached the ideal of perfection more closely than anyone else who has ever lived” (p. 229). Yet Allen stubbornly repudiated the concept that the Lord was the Son of God (pp. 226-236).

But again, I ask: Where did Allen obtain his information regarding Christ’s “virtues of compassion, charity, love, courage, faith, and intelligence”? How did he know that Jesus “approached the ideal of perfection more closely than anyone else who has ever lived”? He certainly did not glean such assessments from secular, historical sources, for those sources are wholly silent regarding the **character** of Jesus (albeit conceding His **existence**). Allen was forced to rely on the very book—the New Testament—that he so



strenuously attempted to discredit throughout his entire adult life. Yet, interestingly, elsewhere he alleged in a self-contradictory fashion that it cannot be asserted that any of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament “is true history” (p. 320). So, on the one hand, the New Testament speaks correctly about the “true history” of Christ, yet they do not contain “true history.” Obviously, such reasoning does not commend itself to an intelligent, rational person.

The fact is, men like Wells and Allen can be characterized as having an extreme anti-supernatural bias. In a most unscholarly fashion, such infidel critics of the Bible do not hesitate to roam through the sacred Scriptures—clipping and gluing here and there, in order to fashion a narrative consistent with their personal view of history—all the while rejecting what they find to be unpalatable or discomforting. But is such a procedure academically honest? It is not.

The unconscious concessions of people like Wells and Allen, however, say much more than they intended. The truth is, such concessions serve as an **unwitting witness**. Jesus Christ is a historical Force with Whom all men must reckon. He cannot be explained away in the frivolous fashion attempted by many of His critics. As Bruce stated: “The earliest propagators of Christianity welcomed the fullest examination of the credentials of their message” (1953, p. 122). E.F. Harrison wrote: “Some religions, both ancient and modern, require no historical basis, for they depend upon ideas rather than events. Christianity is not one of these” (1968, p. 11). While Paul was on trial before King Agrippa, he said to Festus: “For the king knoweth of these things, unto whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things is hidden from him; for this hath not been done in a corner” (Acts 26:26). As the earliest apologists of Christianity welcomed a full examination of the credentials of the message that they preached, so do we today. These credentials have been weighed in the balance and **not** found wanting. The truth of the matter is that Jesus Christ did exist and live among men. His existence was recorded by both friend and foe. Jesus Christ is an incontestable figure of history. That fact stands.\*

---

\* I would like to gratefully acknowledge the contribution of Kyle Butt at Apologetics Press in the research and writing of portions of the material contained in this chapter, some of which derives from an article (“The Historical Christ—Fact or Fiction?”) that he authored at my request for the January 2000 issue of *Reason & Revelation*, the monthly journal on Christian evidences published by Apologetics Press for which I served as editor.

## CHAPTER 4

### JESUS CHRIST—UNIQUE SAVIOR OR AVERAGE FRAUD?

The freshman college student walked into his first class of *Comparative Religions 101*. He had come to the university prepared—or so he thought—for whatever college might throw at him. After all, he was a faithful Christian, and had been reared by dedicated Christian parents who, throughout his upbringing, had taught him about the unique, heaven-sent, virgin-born, miracle-working, resurrected-from-the-dead Son of God that he revered, served, and loved. His Bible class teachers, and the ministers to whose sermons he had listened for the past eighteen years, similarly had reinforced in his mind the concept that there was **no one** in the entire history of the world quite like Jesus Christ. In fact, truth be told, the young student had grown up thinking that no one even came close to resembling, or imitating, the carpenter's son from Nazareth.

This young student, however, was about to receive the shock of his life. Practically the first day of class, the professor began to recite a slew of similar stories about various “saviors” of other religions from the past—many of whom, supposedly, also were born of virgins, were able to perform miracles, were crucified to save mankind, and were resurrected after their deaths. This freshman was ill prepared to hear his professor suggest that **the story of Jesus Christ as the Savior of mankind is not totally unique**. In fact, he was completely astonished as he watched the professor document the fact that stories with similar heroes had circulated decades—and even centuries—before Jesus of Nazareth was born. As he saw what he believed to be the uniqueness of His Lord evaporate before his very eyes, the young man began to wonder: Had he been taught incorrectly? Was Jesus **really** the unique Son of God, or was He simply one among many characters of the past who **claimed** to be a unique, personal savior but who, in the end, was not? Who were these other allegedly “unique saviors”? Were they as distinctive as they, or their followers, claimed? And how do such claims impact the Bible's teachings about, and a person's individual faith in, Jesus Christ as the Son of God?

During his struggle to cope with the new information that was being presented so eloquently (and so forcefully!) by his professor, this young man encountered what is known as “cognitive dissonance”—the confusion one experiences when presented with new information that contradicts what he or she believes to be true. As he struggled for consistency, the young man realized that he either had to abandon what he believed to be true, or somehow disprove (and thereby discount) the new, challenging information.

The more he pored over the matter, the more likely—and unsettling—the first option seemed to become. And the more impossible the second seemed to appear. Left unchecked, his struggle would reach the level of full-blown doubt, and his confidence in the singular uniqueness of the Savior he had loved and obeyed for so long would disappear completely. How could he be helped—or could he? Was the material to which he was being exposed trustworthy? Or could it be refuted—thus leaving his personal faith in Christ intact? The answers to these questions form the basis of this chapter.

### WHO ARE THESE OTHER “UNIQUE SAVIORS”?

History is filled with examples of those whose lives—real or imagined—share certain traits with the well-documented life of Jesus of Nazareth. Such accounts often compose a portion of the curriculum in college-level comparative religion courses, and provide a fine starting point for any study about the uniqueness of Jesus.

Consider, for example, Dionysus, a well-known, mythological god. The usual story of his birth explains that he was the offspring of Zeus, the immortal leader of the Greek gods who impregnated a human female by the name of Semele, the daughter of Cadmus, King of Thebes (see Graves, 1960, p. 56). Dionysus is said to have descended to the underworld and conquered death, ultimately bringing his dead mother back to the land of the living. He also is said to have died and been raised again. His followers called him Lysios or Redeemer, and grape juice commonly was used to symbolize his blood. As Philip Brown noted, “Many Christians would be horrified to think that Jesus is in some way a manifestation of Dionysus, but the parallels are complex and deep.... Like Jesus, Dionysus is a god whose tragic passion is re-enacted by eating his flesh and drinking his blood” (2000). The Dionysus cult reached Rome in 496 B.C., but had been around long be-

fore that. The similarities in the accounts of Dionysus and Jesus (as well as in that of Osiris, the Egyptian god of fertility and ruler of the underworld, discussed below)—from their unique births, to their resurrections, to their lives being commemorated in a similar fashion by their followers—are striking indeed. In fact, in their 1999 book, *The Jesus Mysteries*, Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy discussed at length such similarities in support of the idea that the Jesus of Christianity never existed, but in fact was little more than a mythological character of antiquity. They wrote:

The more we studied the various versions of the myth of Osiris-Dionysus, the more it became obvious that the story of Jesus had all the characteristics of this perennial tale. Event by event, we found we were able to construct Jesus' supposed biography from mythic motifs previously related to Osiris-Dionysus:

Osiris-Dionysus is God made flesh, the savior and "Son of God."

His father is God and his mother is a mortal virgin.

He is born in a cave or humble cowshed on December 25 before three shepherds.

He offers his followers the chance to be born again through the rites of baptism.

He miraculously turns water into wine at a marriage ceremony.

He rides triumphantly into town on a donkey while people wave palm leaves to honor him.

He dies at Eastertime as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

After his death he descends to hell, then on the third day he rises from the dead and ascends to heaven in glory.

His followers await his return as the judge during the Last Days.

His death and resurrection are celebrated by a ritual meal of bread and wine, which symbolize his body and blood.

These are just some of the motifs shared between the tales of Osiris-Dionysus and the biography of Jesus. Why are these remarkable similarities not common knowledge? (p. 5).

However, Dionysus hardly is the only character from the past whose life parallels that of Jesus. Prometheus is another legendary, mythological god who experienced a death similar to that of Christ. The following poem describes his purported death.

"Lo! Streaming from the fatal tree,  
His all atoning blood.  
Is this the Infinite?—Yes, 'tis he,  
Prometheus, and a God!  
Well might the sun in darkness hide,  
And veil his glories in,  
When God, the great Prometheus, died  
For man the creature's sin."

The fact that Prometheus is called a "God" who died for "man the creature's sin" is similar enough to the New Testament account about Christ's atoning visit to Earth to raise eyebrows. But the fact that the story first circulated around 547 B.C. could well cast a shadow of a doubt on the claim that Christ is the unique, one-of-a-kind Savior-God.

Or, consider Krishna, the ancient Hindu deity who is alleged to have shared a doom similar to Christ's. He has been portrayed as hanging on a cross, with holes through his hands and his feet. His title?—"Our Lord and Savior." Krishna supposedly "rose from the dead" and then "ascended bodily into heaven" (Doane, 1882, p. 215). He even is purported to have said: "Do good for its own sake, and expect not your reward for it on Earth" (Graves, 1875, p. 112). Christ employed the same idea in Matthew 6. But Krishna's story dates to 1200 B.C.

The parallels continue. In the Egyptian *Papyrus of Ani* (also known as *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*), which is dated between 1450 and 1400 B.C. (see Budge, 1960, p. 220), the god Osiris commands the titles of King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and Prince of Princes (Budge, p. 352). In his intriguing book, *Bible Myths and Their Parallels in Other Religions*, T.W. Doane observed: “Osiris, the Egyptian Saviour, after being put to death, **rose from the dead**, and bore the title of ‘**The Resurrected One**’ ” (p. 221, emp. in orig.). Osiris’ scribe, Ani, is described as one “whose word is truth” (Budge, p. 384). In the latter part of the papyrus, a specific creed is provided that supposedly is capable of providing justification for the person who recites it upon his or her entrance into eternity. That creed reads as follows: “I have given bread to the hungry man, and water to him that was athirst, and apparel to the naked man, and a ferry-boat to him that had no boat” (Budge, p. 587). The writer of this papyrus could have copied the words of Jesus as found in Matthew 25:31-46—except for one small fact: the *Papyrus of Ani* dates to 1400 B.C.—over a thousand years **before** Christ made His earthly appearance.

Furthermore, in 550 B.C., Confucius said: “Do not to another what you would not want done to yourself.” Christ uttered an almost identical statement approximately 600 years **after** Confucius when He said: “And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise” (Luke 6:31).

Similarities also exist between the stories of Buddha and Jesus. In the cover story article he authored for the March 27, 2000, issue of *Newsweek* on “The Other Jesus,” Kenneth L. Woodward commented that “the life stories of Jesus and Buddha are strikingly similar,” and then went on to note that both of these religious leaders challenged the religious teachings of their day, allegedly were born of virgins, and were supposed to have worked miracles (135[13]:58-59).

Some Bible critics have suggested that it would be a simple matter to cite stories with similarities such as these by the dozen. In fact, in a public debate with theist Norman Geisler (held at Columbus College in Columbus, Georgia, on March 29, 1994), Farrell Till, a former-Christian-turned-skeptic, stated exactly that when he said to the audience: “People, I want you to stop and think seriously for just a moment. I know how much emotionalism is involved in this, but please understand this. Crucified, resurrected savior-gods, who had been born of virgins, were a dime a dozen at this time” (1994). Stephen Franklin—although an avid defender of Christ’s uniqueness—corroborated Till’s statement in an article in the *Evangelical Review of Theology* when he wrote: “Incarnation, far from being unique to Christianity, seems to be a universal possession of the religious heritage of mankind” (1993, p. 32).

Christ’s critics have used such parallels time and again in an attempt to establish their contention that Jesus of Nazareth is neither a unique character nor a worthy, personal savior. For example, three weeks after Kenneth Woodward’s article on Jesus was published in *Newsweek*, a letter to the editor from Don Zomberg of Wyoming, Michigan, appeared in the April 20 edition of the magazine. In response to a quotation from Woodward’s article which suggested that “Christ is absolutely original and absolutely unique,” Mr. Zomberg wrote to dissent when he said: “Nothing could be further from the truth. The legend of Jesus is little more than a variant of older religions common to the Middle East thousands of years ago” (2000, 135 [16]:17). Such an attitude—which stems from the fact that historical and mythological parallels between Jesus and other religious personalities **do** exist—likely is much more prevalent than many people realize. And while it is true that none of these historical/mythological parallels is **exact**, it is true that they are close enough to elicit serious investigation on the part of those who believe Jesus Christ to be the unique Son of God.

Of course, contemporary skeptics who use such an argument in attempts to debunk the uniqueness and deity of Christ cannot take credit as its originators. History records that almost two thousand years ago the early Christian apologists were busily engaged in responding to the exact same argument. For example, Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-426) stated in his *Christian Doctrine*:

The readers and admirers of Plato dared calumniously to assert that our Lord Jesus Christ learnt all those sayings of His, which they are compelled to admire and praise, from the books of Plato—because (they urged) it cannot be denied that Plato lived long before the coming of our Lord (2:28, parenthetical item in orig.).

Augustine refuted the argument by suggesting that Plato had read the prophet Jeremiah and then conveniently incorporated Jeremiah's teachings into his own. The point, however, is clear: as early as A.D. 400, skeptics and enemies of the Cross were launching fiery darts of alleged plagiarism at both Christ and His followers.

Further investigation into the history of Christian apologetics manifests something even more startling. The earliest apologists not only recognized that the story and teachings of Jesus bore striking similarities to ancient mythological accounts, but even **emphasized** these similarities in an attempt to get pagans to understand more about Jesus and His mission. Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165) set forth an argument in his *First Apology* that was intended to put Christ at least on an equal playing field with earlier mythological gods.

And if we assert that the Word of God was born of God in a peculiar manner, different from ordinary generation, let this, as said above, be no extraordinary thing to you, who say that Mercury is the angelic word of God. But if any one objects that He was crucified, in this also He is on a par with those reputed sons of Jupiter of yours.... And if we even affirm that He was born of a virgin, accept this in common with what you accept of Ferseus. And in that we say that He made whole the lame, the paralytic, and those born blind, we seem to say what is very similar to the deeds said to have been done by Æsculapius (Chapter 22).

Tertullian (c. A.D. 160-220) observed that the story of Romulus, another character from ancient Greek mythology who was seen after his death, was quite similar to the story of Christ being seen after His death. However, Tertullian went on to note that the stories of Christ were much more certain because they were documented by historical evidence (*Apology*, 21).

While ancient pagans saw, and modern skeptics still see, such similarities as militating against the originality and uniqueness of Christ, the writings of such men as Augustine, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and others document the fact that early Christians could see obvious—yes, even welcome—similarities between the story of Jesus and the accounts of mythological, pagan gods. Furthermore, some of those early Christians even seized upon those very similarities to defend Jesus' position as the unique Son of God. The apologists' point, of course, was two-fold: (1) men of the past **had** searched for a unique savior-god and, finding none, resorted to inventing him and bestowing upon him certain distinct characteristics; and (2) that Savior—who, although in the past had been endowed with unique traits of their own feeble creation—actually **had come!**

Christians need to recognize as an undeniable fact—a fact confirmed by mythology, history, and even early Christian apologists—that ancient documents reveal that the story of Christ is not the first story ever told of a virgin-born, crucified, resurrected, miracle-working savior-god who supposedly died for the sins of humanity. These documents further reveal that many of Christ's teachings can be gleaned—at times almost verbatim—from sources that were in circulation hundreds or thousands of years before Jesus was born. Early apologists acknowledged these facts because they were, and are, quite indisputable.

And that leads us back to the issue that plagued the college freshman mentioned earlier. How, in light of such facts, can we affirm that Jesus Christ is the unique, authentic Son of God—when stories similar to His circulated decades or millennia before He ever came to Earth? What response can we offer to the Bible critics' charges? And what assurance may we offer to the young student about the genuineness of his faith?

### WHY AN UNORIGINAL JESUS?

Before I address the question that forms the title of this chapter, the obvious question must be asked: Why would anyone **want** to claim that the story of Jesus is unoriginal or plagiaristic? There probably are several answers that could be offered to such an inquiry. Due to space restrictions, however, I would like to concentrate on only two. First, it is a simple fact that those who do not believe in God, and who consequently accept a completely naturalistic view of the origin of the Universe and its inhabitants, must find **some** way to explain the uniqueness of Christ and the uniqueness of the system of religion He instituted. In addressing this point, the late James Bales wrote:

If one accepts a naturalistic and evolutionary account of the origin of religion, he will believe that Christianity can be explained naturally. His very approach has ruled out the possibility of the supernatural revelation of God in Jesus Christ (n.d.-b, p. 7).

Eminent British evolutionist Sir Julian Huxley asserted:

In the evolutionary pattern of thought there is no longer need or room for the supernatural. The earth was not created; it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind, and soul as well as brain and body. **So did religion** (1960c, pp. 252-253, emp. added).

Those who believe that the Universe and life within it evolved in a purely naturalistic fashion likewise must find a totally naturalistic cause for **every** facet of life. Religion itself is one of those facets, and therefore, according to the naturalist, also must have evolved—exactly as Huxley suggested it did. It is not difficult to see why an evolutionist would believe it to be inevitable that the story of Jesus originated from earlier, primitive stories. In fact, to say that the story of Jesus “evolved” from older, more primitive stories is to assert nothing more than what the theory of evolution already teaches in every other area of human existence. Atheist Joseph McCabe explained: “What we see, in fact, is **evolution in religion**. The ideas pass on from age to age, a mind here and a mind there adding or refining a little. The slow river of human evolution had entered its rapids” (1993, p. 72, emp. added).

Second, while some may be motivated by a search for a purely naturalistic origin of religion, others teach that the story of Jesus is derived from earlier Jewish and/or pagan myths and legends. As Bales went on to observe, some have suggested that “Christ and Christianity are viewed as natural developments out of Judaism and paganism” (n.d.-b, p. 7). That very position has been defended by former-believers-turned-apostates, Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy, in *The Jesus Mysteries* (which is an all-out, frontal assault on the divinity of Christ).

We had both been raised as Christians and were surprised to find that, despite years of open-minded spiritual exploration, it still felt somehow dangerous to even dare think such thoughts. Early indoctrination reaches very deep. We were in effect saying that Jesus was a Pagan god and that Christianity was a heretical product of Paganism! It seemed outrageous. Yet this theory explained the similarities between the stories of Osiris-Dionysus and Jesus Christ in a simple and elegant way. They are parts of one developing mythos....

The Jesus story does have all the hallmarks of a myth, so could it be that that is exactly what it is.... Why should we consider the stories of Osiris, Dionysus, Adonis, Attis, Mithras, and the other Pagan Mystery saviors as fables, yet come across essentially the same story told in a Jewish context and believe it to be the biography of a carpenter from Bethlehem?...

We have become convinced that the story of Jesus is not the biography of a historical Messiah, but a myth based on perennial Pagan stories. Christianity was not a new and unique revelation but actually a Jewish adaptation of the ancient Pagan Mystery religion. This is what we have called **The Jesus Mysteries Thesis**....

The obvious explanation is that as early Christianity became the dominant power in the previously Pagan world, popular motifs from Pagan mythology became grafted onto the biography of Jesus.... Such motifs were “borrowed” from Paganism in the same way that Pagan festivals were adopted as Christian saints’ days.... The Jesus story is a perennial myth... not merely a history of events that happened to someone 2,000 years ago (1999, pp. 9-10,2,6,13, emp. in orig.).

And so, while there actually may have been a literal person known as “Jesus Christ,” he was nothing more than that—a literal person. The traits claimed for him by his followers (e.g., unusual entrance into the world, unusual activities during his pilgrimage on Earth, unusual exit from this world, etc.) arose “after the fact” as a result of having been derived or plagiarized from ancient pagan and/or Jewish sources.

It is not Christ’s historicity that is at stake here, as I have shown in the previous chapter. Unbelievers and infidels of every stripe have long acknowledged His existence. Rather, the issue has to do with whether or not Jesus of Nazareth was Who He claimed to be—the unique, “only begotten,” incarnate Son of God.

### MAN’S RELIGIOUS FACULTY AND “SAVIOR SIMILARITIES”

The truth of the matter is that many stories over the course of history resemble that of Jesus of Nazareth in one way or another. And why should this surprise us? After Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, man became keenly aware of both the presence and the consequences of sin. From the time of Cain and Abel, God had established sacrifices and decreed specific rules regarding those sacrifices. Since that time, all humans have had at least some perception—however slight or flawed—that they needed to “do something” to stand justified once again before their Creator. One way to do that was to invent a “stand-in”—someone who could take their place—as the epitome of sinless perfection to plead their case before the Righteous Judge of all the Earth (cf. Genesis 18:25).

Additionally, however, it can be argued that the similarities we have listed (and, indeed, many others just like them) are **only similarities**, not exact parallels. It further can be argued that Jesus' story, even though it seems similar to some others, is not exactly the same and, in fact, differs substantially in the minute details. For example, Krishna allegedly was crucified via an arrow through his arms, while Jesus was nailed to the cross. Confucius offered the negative form of the so-called "golden rule" ("**Do not** do to others"), while Jesus stated the positive ("**Do** unto others"). Dionysus' mother, Persophone, reportedly had intercourse with Zeus, while Mary was a virgin. This line of reasoning possesses some merit, because it certainly is true that none of the ancient stories sounds **exactly** like Christ's.

A closer look at the Egyptian legend of Osiris provides a good example of the many important differences between the account of Jesus and other stories. Legend says that Osiris was killed by his evil brother Seth, who tore Osiris' body into fourteen pieces and scattered them throughout Egypt. Isis, the goddess-consort of Osiris, collected the pieces and buried them, thus giving life to Osiris in the underworld. Afterward, she used magical arts to revive Osiris and to conceive a child (Horus) by him. After fathering Horus, Osiris remained in the underworld, not really ever rising from the dead ("Osiris," 1997, 8:1026-1027). This legend, taken as a whole, provides few (if any) real parallels to the story of Jesus. Furthermore, when all the stories about characters who supposedly were similar to Christ are told in their entirety, it is obvious that each of them contains only a few characteristics that come anywhere close to resembling those contained in the life story of Jesus.

However, there are some common threads that weave their way through many of the various legends: a superhuman hero does miraculous things, is killed to save mankind (sometimes even by crucifixion), and is brought back to life in some form or another, thereby defeating death. Although the minute details are quite different, the general similarities are close enough to demand scrutiny—and an explanation. It is not enough for Christians to claim that the story of Jesus did not originate from one (or more) of the hundreds of ancient stories simply by saying that the minute details of His particular life are different from the others. We must offer a better, more thorough, and more convincing argument than this if the story of Jesus Christ is to be defended as genuinely unique.

### Independent Nature of Similar Stories

In the early part of the twentieth century, Joseph McCabe, one of the most outspoken atheists of his day, published several works, including *The Myth of the Resurrection* (1925), *Did Jesus Ever Live?* (1926), and *How Christianity "Triumphed"* (1926). In 1993, Prometheus Publishing Company (note that the title of this secular publishing organization is the name of one of the Greek gods supposedly similar to Jesus) republished these works in a book titled *The Myth of the Resurrection and Other Essays*. McCabe painstakingly documented the similarities between the story of Jesus and pagan stories such as those of Osiris, Adonis, Tammuz, and Attis, yet specifically noted: "It is a most important feature of our story that this legend of a slain and resurrected god **arose in quite different parts of the old civilized world**. Tammuz, Attis, and Osiris are three **separate and independent creations** of the myth-making imagination" (1993, p. 45, emp. added). McCabe thus acknowledged that these pagan stories with similar themes did not copy either one another or some earlier, predominant story. Rather, they arose separately—and even independently—of each other. McCabe admitted:

For some reason...the mind of man came in most parts of the world to conceive a legend of death and resurrection.... In fact, in one form or other there was almost a **worldwide belief** that the god, or a representative [king, prisoner, effigy, etc.] of the god, died, or had to die every year (pp. 52,53, emp. added, bracketed material in orig.).

In his conclusion, McCabe wrote: "In sum, I should say that the **universal belief in a slain and resurrected god** throws light upon the Christian belief by showing us a universal frame of mind which quite easily, in many places, made a resurrection myth" (p. 63, emp. added). McCabe—even as an infidel—willingly acknowledged that numerous (but different) resurrection myths arose from various regions around the globe, each similar in its facts yet original in its derivation. These stories apparently arose because of what he referred to as a "universal frame of mind." And yet in spite of such evidence, on page 69 of his book, McCabe concluded: "**Man has no religious instinct.**"

## Mankind's Religious Instinct

People around the world—due to a “universal frame of mind”—independently concocted stories that revolved around a god dying and then rising again. These stories span both time barriers and geographical limits; they are—in a very literal sense—“worldwide” and “universal.” Yet we are asked to believe that the people from different countries and cultures who concocted these stories possessed “no religious instinct”? How McCabe could make the concessions he did, yet reach such a conclusion, defies rational explanation.

In truth, man **does** have a religious instinct—one that is keener than even many theologians would like to admit. In speaking of God, the writer of Ecclesiastes remarked: “He hath made everything beautiful in its time: **also he hath set eternity in their heart**” (3:11). Paul said that mankind always has been able to understand God’s “everlasting power and divinity” (Romans 1:20). God did not place man on Earth to abandon him. Instead:

He made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should **seek** God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us: for in him we live, and move and have our being; **as certain of your own poets have said**, for we are also his offspring (Acts 17:26-28, emp. added).

God has indeed “set eternity” in the hearts of men and given them a universal instinct that is intended to cause them to seek Him.

In his book, *Why We Believe the Bible*, the late George DeHoff commented: “No nation or tribe has been found which did not believe in a Supreme Being of some kind and practice religion in some form” (1944, p. 42). He is absolutely right. But it is not just believers who have presented and documented this kind of information. Even nonbelievers have been forced to such a conclusion by the historical and scientific evidence.

Over seventy years ago, Clarence Darrow and Wallace Rice joined forces to edit a book titled *Infidels and Heretics: An Agnostic's Anthology*. On the inside cover, a description of the book's contents suggested that it contained “the best gleanings from the most important works of the great agnostics, skeptics, infidels and heretics of the world.” On page 146, the compilers quoted the famous skeptic, John Tyndall:

Religion lives not by the force and aid of dogma, but because it is ingrained in the nature of man. To draw a metaphor from metallurgy, the moulds have been broken and reconstructed over and over again, but the molten ore abides in the ladle of humanity. An influence so deep and permanent is not likely soon to disappear... (1929).

Approximately fifty years later, Edward O. Wilson of Harvard University penned a book titled *On Human Nature*. The inside front cover boasted that Wilson's ultimate goal was “nothing less than the completion of the Darwinian revolution by bringing biological thought into the center of the social sciences and the humanities.” Wilson wrote: “The predisposition to religious belief is the most complex and powerful force in the human mind and in all probability an ineradicable part of human nature” (1978, p. 167). He went on to say that “skeptics continue to nourish the belief that science and learning will banish religion, which they consider to be no more than a tissue of illusions,” yet the idea that increased learning and technology will strip mankind of his religious nature “has never seemed so futile as today” (p. 170).

## THE PERFECT SACRIFICE

How, then, did the instinct to worship God lead to the concoction of numerous stories about a virgin-born savior-god who dies as a sacrifice for mankind's wrongdoings? First, it started with the idea of sacrifice. From the moment Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden, man was acutely aware that he was a sinful being in need of redemption. Humans also understood that some type of atoning sacrifice was required to absolve them of sin. The writer of the book of Hebrews observed that “by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain” (11:4). Oddly, skeptics seem to understand this point quite well. In the late eighteenth century, T.W. Doane caustically attacked the doctrines of Christ and the Bible. His work, *Bible Myths and Their Parallels in Other Religions* (1882), gnawed at every mooring of Christian doctrine. Yet even he understood that mankind always has realized its own sinfulness and its need for an



atonement sacrifice. He wrote: "The doctrine of atonement for sin had been preached long before the doctrine was deduced from the Christian Scriptures, long before these Scriptures are pretended to have been written" (p. 181). Bible scholar R.C. Trench commented:

Nations (which is impossible) could have learned it from one another, nations the most diverse in culture, the highest in the scale and well nigh the lowest, differing in everything besides, have yet agreed in this one thing, namely, in the offering of things which have life to God,—or, where the idea of the one God has been lost,—to the "gods many" of heathenism—the essential feature of that offering in every case being that the life of the victim was rendered up (n.d., p. 177).

Those who might wish to challenge Trench's assessment can examine any book on world history or world religions and see that he is correct. Abel offered the first of his flock, and from that day forward, humanity began offering live sacrifices to a deity in the hope of absolving anger and forgiving sin. In fact, mankind has sacrificed living things to a deity from the beginning of time. But which **particular** sacrifices did humanity think possessed the power to forgive sins? The general rule for the atonement value of a sacrifice was: **the more costly and perfect the sacrifice, the more sins it would absolve.**

When God initiated the ritual sacrifice of animals for the religious ceremonies of His chosen people, He laid down strict rules. In Leviticus 22:19-20, God told the Jews: "You shall offer of your own free will a male without blemish from the cattle, from the sheep, or from the goats. But whatever has a defect, you shall not offer, for it shall not be acceptable on your behalf" (NKJV). The Lord **always** has demanded that blood be shed for the remission of sins. Hebrews 9:22 reiterates that point: "And according to the law...all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission." This should not be at all surprising, since "the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life" (Leviticus 17:11).

Men and women of ages past knew all too well God's commandments regarding atonement by blood. It began with Cain and Abel, was reaffirmed by Noah (Genesis 9:1-6), was regulated by Old Testament law, and was carried through to fulfillment by Jesus. When God instituted the Law of Moses, He did not introduce animal sacrifices as an innovation never before seen by the Israelites. Rather, He showed the Israelites the proper manner in which to sacrifice such animals, until the time that the fulfilling sacrifice of His Son would bring to a halt the need for any further blood atonement via animal sacrifices. In showing them the proper way, God made strict provisions to keep the children of Israel from turning from God-approved sacrifices to sacrificing their own innocent children like the pagans around them. In Leviticus 18:21, God told the children of Israel: "And thou shalt not give any of thy seed to make them pass through the fire to Molech; neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am Jehovah." God went to great lengths to warn the Israelites against offering their children as sacrifices because it was well known that the nations around them took part in such infanticide. The question arises, "What in this world could convince a mother or father to offer their children to a god?" I would like to investigate this matter further.

Wendy Davis writes for *Widdershins*, a self-proclaimed journal of unadulterated paganism. In an article on the World Wide Web, *As Old as the Moon: Sacrifice in History*, she stated: "The act of ritual murder is probably as old as we [humans—BT] are. Throughout the ages, people sacrificed when they needed something. Our ancestors often **gave the best they had, their first-born**, to save themselves" (1995, emp. added). The most precious possession of a mother or father would be their first-born child. That child, however, would be not only precious, but also sinless. Sacrifice of anything less than that which is spotless and pure diminishes the inherent value of the sacrifice. Thus, it was believed that a sinless and pure sacrifice of such magnitude could wash away the sins of the parents (or, for that matter, the sins of an entire village!). Therefore, corrupt, perverse religions sprang up around the sacrifice of children, one of the most famous of which was that of Molech (see 2 Kings 23:10).

Yet even though the sacrifice of infants fulfilled the **sinless** aspect of a perfect sacrifice, it was lacking in other areas. For example, an "ordinary" infant born of peasant parents was not the most costly sacrifice available; a royal child of a king would be even better. Thus, as Davis went on to observe, kings ultimately sacrificed their own children to appease "the gods."

But the sacrifice of a king's child still did not represent the perfect sacrifice, because the child did not go of his (or her) own free will. A free-will sacrifice of royal blood would come closest to the perfect offering. In an article titled *No Greater Sacrifice*, which appeared in *Widdershins*, one writer suggested: "Willing sacrifice is more interesting. Why does someone want to sacrifice himself or herself for what they believe in? Historically speaking, we must consider the sacred kings who sacrificed themselves for the Land" (see Andy, 1998). Yes, a king who offered himself of his own free will would be **almost** the perfect sacrifice. The only problem with such a concept was the fact that no king ever had lived a perfect life. As the *Widdershins* writer correctly observed, in an attempt to solve this, "Finally someone came up with the idea of one final sacrifice. One sacrifice to count for all the rest for all time. But who could be offered? It had to be someone very important; even kings were not good enough. Clearly, only a god was important enough to count as the last one" (Andy, 1998). Thus, it becomes clear why even the pagan world demanded a sacrifice that was sinless, royal, and higher in stature than other humans. Doane stated: "The belief of redemption from sin by the sufferings of a Divine Incarnation, whether by death on the cross or otherwise, was general and popular among the heathen, centuries before the time of Jesus of Nazareth" (1882, pp. 183-185).

Once we comprehend the need for the death of the savior-god, it is not difficult to see why humanity would want (and need) to see him defeat death. The writer of the book of Hebrews addressed this very point when he wrote that Christ allowed Himself to be sacrificed so that He "might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (2:15). Death holds more terror for man than perhaps anything else on Earth. It was for this reason that the Greeks invented Hercules—half man and half god—to conquer the Underworld, and the Egyptians formulated Osiris. Surely a savior-god who offered himself voluntarily as the sacrifice for all humanity could defeat mankind's dreaded enemy—Death. So, the idea of a sacrificial savior-god who victoriously defeats death through his resurrection came easily to the minds of people who knew that they needed forgiveness, and who desperately wanted to live past the grave.

And so, from a "universal frame of mind" different tribes and religions—spanning thousands of years—formulated their personal versions of what they thought a resurrected savior-god should be and do. Some said he was torn into fourteen pieces and scattered throughout the land of Egypt (e.g., Osiris). Others said he would look like a man but would possess superhuman physical strength and descend to the underworld to conquer Hades (e.g., Hercules). Yet one thing is certain: tales about a hero who saved mankind were on the lips of almost every storyteller. Trench stated correctly:

No thoughtful student of the past records of mankind can refuse to acknowledge that through all its history there has run the hope of a redemption from the evil which oppresses it; and as little can deny that this hope has continually attached itself to some single man (n.d., p. 149).

But how can it be maintained, then, that the one savior for whom all humanity waited was, and is, Jesus?

### JESUS—UNIQUE SAVIOR OF MANKIND

One important fact that cannot be ignored is that Jesus is the only **historical** figure Who fulfills the criteria necessary to justify, sanctify, and redeem mankind. Paul informed us that Jesus is the Redeemer "in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins" (Colossians 1:14; cf. vss. 20-23). The term "redemption" conveys the idea that a ransom price was paid to buy another's freedom from bondage. The Bible has much to say on this point; in fact, its very theme is the redemption of mankind from the slavery of sin (cf. Romans 3:23; 6:16-23). Without Jesus, there is no redemption! In this regard, Jesus fills two offices: He is the sacrificial lamb that was slain as a sin offering; and He is the high priest assigned by God to offer the blood of that sacrifice (John 1:29; Hebrews 4:15). Jesus paid the only acceptable price to secure man's freedom from sin—His pure blood (1 Peter 1:18-19). Any description of Jesus that misses His redemptive mission is inadequate. And no other savior-god meets these requirements.

No human mind concocted the narrative of Jesus of Nazareth. Human eyes saw Him, and human ears heard Him. He walked and talked—lived and loved—on the streets of real cities and in the houses of real people. His life is the only life of any "savior-god" that can be (and has been) thoroughly documented. As Stephen Franklin remarked: "[T]he specific character of Biblical religion and, thus, of Christianity stems from the priority given to the historical-factual dimension of the Bible's basic teachings and doctrines"

(1993, 17[1]:40). Thus, the story of Jesus Christ does not occupy a place amidst the pages of Greek mythology or ancient religious legend. But oh, how the skeptics wish that it did! As Freke and Gandy observed in *The Jesus Mysteries*:

Early Literalist Christians mistakenly believed that the Jesus story was different from other stories of Osiris-Dionysus because Jesus alone had been a **historical** rather than a mythical figure. This has left Christians feeling that their faith is in opposition to all others, which it is not (1999, p. 13, emp. added).

Indeed, skeptics would delight in being able to place the story of Jesus on the same playing field as the stories of other legendary savior-gods, because then the parallel stories easily could be relegated to myth, due to the fact that the stories cannot be verified historically. Trench wrote of such skeptics:

Proving, as it is not hard to prove, those parallels to be groundless and mythical, to rest on no true historic basis, they hope that the great facts of the Christian's belief will be concluded to be as weak, will be involved in a common discredit (n.d., p. 135).

If infidels were able to create a straw man that could not stand up to the test of historical verifiability (like, for example, pagan legends and myths), and if they could place the story of Jesus in the same category as their tenuous straw man, then both supposedly would fall together. However, the story of Jesus of Nazareth refuses to fall. The stories of other savior-gods are admitted to be—even by those who invented them—nothing but fables (e.g., the Greeks realized that their fictitious stories were merely untrue legends that were totally unverifiable; see McCabe, 1993, p. 59). But the story of Jesus demands its rightful place in the annals of human history. Osiris, Krishna, Hercules, Dionysus, and the other mythological savior-gods stumble back into the shadows of fiction when compared to the documented life of Jesus of Nazareth. If the skeptic wishes to challenge the uniqueness of Jesus by comparing Him with other alleged savior-gods, he first must produce evidence that one of these savior-gods truly walked on the Earth, commingled with humanity, and impacted people's lives via both a sinless existence and incomparable teachings. Humanity always has desired a real-life savior-god; but can any of the alleged savior-gods that have been invented boast of a historical existence any more thoroughly documented than that of Christ?

In addition, Jesus has a monopoly on being perfectly flawless. He lived life by the same moral rules that govern all humans, yet He never once made a mistake. The writer of Hebrews recorded: "For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (4:15; cf. also 1 Peter 2:21-22). Renowned religious historian Philip Schaff wrote:

In vain do we look through the entire biography of Jesus for a single stain or the slightest shadow of his moral character. There never lived a more harmless being on earth. He injured nobody, he took advantage of nobody. He never wrote an improper word. He never committed a wrong action (1913, pp. 32-33).

Bernard Ramm commented in a similar vein when he stated of Christ:

There He stands, **sinless**. Whatever men may claim for being great, this is one thing they cannot. They may be brilliant or strong, fast or clever, creative or inspired, but not sinless. Sinless perfection and perfect sinlessness is what we would expect of God incarnate. The hypothesis and the facts concur (1953, p. 169, emp. in orig.).

Examine the stories of other savior-gods. See if they subjected themselves to the same rules as humans. See if they learned human nature and suffered unjustly, all the while never sinning with either their lips or their hearts. Try to find a savior like Christ who lived 30+ years on the Earth and yet never committed one shameful act. Norman Geisler summarized the situation as follows: "All men are sinners; God knows it and so do we. If a man lives an impeccable life and offers as the truth about himself that he is God incarnate we must take his claim seriously" (1976, p. 344). Jesus did "offer as the truth about himself that he is God incarnate." As John Stott noted:

The most striking feature of the teaching of Jesus is that He was constantly talking about Himself.... This self-centeredness of the teaching of Jesus immediately sets Him apart from the other great religious teachers of the world. They were self-effacing. He was self-advancing. They pointed men away from themselves, saying, "That is the truth, so far as I perceive it; follow that." Jesus said, "I am the truth; follow me." The founders of the ethnic religions never dared say such a thing (1971, p. 23).

There is another important point to be considered, however. Who better to deny the fact that Jesus was perfect than those who spent the most time with Him? There is a grain of truth to the adage that “familiarity often breeds contempt.” Surely His closest friends would have observed some small demerit. Yet when we read the comments of His closest followers, we find that even they lauded Him as the only sinless man. The apostle Peter, who was rebuked publicly by Jesus, nevertheless called Him “a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). One chapter later in the same epistle, Peter said that Jesus “did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth” (2:22). Indeed, Christ even went so far as to invite anyone who dared, to convict Him of sin when He said: “Which of you convicteth me of sin” (John 8:46). No one alive in His day could convict the Lord of sin; neither can anyone today. However, when one begins to examine the lives of the other alleged savior-gods, it soon becomes evident that these “heroes” committed fornication with humans, allowed their sinful tempers to flare, and raged with overt jealousy. Every supposed savior of mankind besides Jesus had an Achilles heal. If any such “savior” existed (other than Jesus) who did not have a vice or a sin, his life certainly cannot be documented historically. And if any savior-god besides Jesus could be documented historically, his life easily could be proven to be laden with sin.

### Christ Was Unique in His Teachings

Not only have the specific details of Christ’s life come under allegations of plagiarism, but His teachings also have undergone intense scrutiny. Some have complained, for example, that Jesus’ teachings were little more than warmed over Old Testament concepts. In the feature article he authored on Christ for the March 29, 1999 issue of *Newsweek* (the cover of which was titled “2000 Years of Jesus”), Kenneth Woodward suggested: “As scholars have long realized, there was little in the teachings of Jesus that cannot be found in the Hebrew Scriptures he expounded” (135[13]:54). The non-Christian Jew and the skeptic frequently view Jesus as an ancient teacher Who borrowed much of His material from the Hebrew text that had been in existence hundreds of years before He entered the global picture, since many of His sayings can be traced back centuries to the Jewish psalmist David, the prophet Isaiah, and a host of other ancient Hebrew writers. Others have complained that Christ’s teachings had their origin in ancient pagan lore. Freke and Gandy suggested:

...[W]e discovered that even Jesus’ teachings were not original, but had been anticipated by the Pagan sages.... Pagan critics of Christianity, such as the satirist Celsus, complained that this recent religion was nothing more than a pale reflection of their own ancient teachings (1999, pp. 6,5).

Thus, if it is to be argued successfully that Jesus truly is unique in His teachings, the incontrovertible fact that He used a considerable amount of ancient Hebrew literature must be explained, and certain important dissimilarities must be made manifest (between either Old Testament material or that from previous pagan sources). Otherwise, we have merely another Jewish rabbi who knew both heathen sources and the Scriptures well—just as a host of other Jewish rabbis did.

In order to explain why Jesus employed so much Hebrew literature, we must understand His relationship with that literature. A statement from Peter’s first epistle is quite helpful in this regard:

Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what time or what manner of time the **Spirit of Christ** which was in them did point unto (1 Peter 1:10-11, emp. added).

Peter’s point of emphasis was that Christ was not just an interested **reader** of ancient Hebrew scripture; rather, He was its **Author**. He wrote the Jewish Old Testament through His Spirit that worked through the prophets. When He quoted Isaiah or Jeremiah, He neither copied their material nor plagiarized their truths. Quite the contrary, in fact. He simply quoted the texts that He personally had inspired and published through the ancient holy men. As the famous “church father” Tertullian wrote in his *Apology*, “There is nothing so old as the truth” (chapter 47). To suggest that Christ’s teachings were not unique because He quoted passages from the Old Testament would be like saying that the author of a particular book could not quote from that book in later lectures or publications, lest he be charged with plagiarism of his own material.

There are those, of course, who will discount the above argument by claiming that the New Testament has no authority to answer such questions. Thus, they will continue to claim that Jesus “borrowed” His ideas from the pages of Israel’s texts. If they wish to defend such a viewpoint, then let them find in the

Old Testament any description of eternal punishment comparable to the one Jesus provided in Mark 9:42. Where in the Old Testament Scriptures do we find that it is more difficult for a rich person to enter heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle? Where in the Old Testament is the idea of loving one's neighbor developed to the extent that Christ described in the parable of the Good Samaritan? Jesus of Nazareth did not merely regurgitate Old Testament passages, adding jots and tittles as He went along. Instead, He came to fulfill the Old Law, and to instigate a New Law with distinctive concepts and commands—a point the writer of Hebrews made quite clear when he stated: “In that he saith, ‘a new covenant,’ he hath made the first old. But that which waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away” (8:13).

Even though it can be proven that Jesus did not plagiarize the Old Testament, the battle for the uniqueness of His teachings does not end there. Traces of concepts that predate Christ's earthly existence also can be found in His teachings. Earlier, we quoted from Augustine, who noted that Plato's followers claimed that Christ had copied their philosophical hero (except, they opined, that Christ was not nearly as eloquent). Further, rabbi Hillel, who lived approximately fifty years before Jesus, taught: “What thou wouldest not have done to thee, do not that to others” (see Bales, n.d.-b, p. 7). Confucius (and a host of other ancient writers) taught things that Jesus also taught. From China to Egypt, a steady stream of pagans uttered things that Christ, centuries later, likewise would say. How, then, can the teachings of Christ be considered unique if they had been surfacing in different cultures and civilizations for hundreds of years before His visit to Earth? Perhaps this would be a good place to ask: What is the alternative? As Bales noted:

If Christ had been **completely original**, He would have had to omit every truth which had been revealed in the Old Testament, or which had been discerned by the reason of man. If He had done this, His teaching would have been inadequate, for it would have omitted many moral and spiritual truths (p. 21, emp. added).

Jesus came not to reiterate ancient truths, but rather to synthesize those truths into a complete unit. He embodied every spiritual truth the world had ever seen or ever would see. As Bales commented: “Christ embodies all the moral good which is found in other religions, and He omits their errors” (p. 7). In his letter to the Christians in Colossae, Paul described Christ as the one “in whom are **all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge** hidden” (2:3, emp. added). Christ's teachings are like gold; tiny amounts can be found in almost every area of the world—from ocean water to the human body. However, in order for that gold to be usable, it must be collected into a mass large enough to refine. Christ is the “refining pot” of all knowledge and wisdom, wherein the dross of error is purged from the precious metal of divine truth. While tiny specks of His teachings emerge from practically every religion, they can be refined only when collected as a whole in the essence of Jesus the Nazarene. Stephen Franklin put it like this:

By providing echoes of Christian themes in every culture and in every religion, he [God—BT] has given the entire human race some “handle” that allows them at least a preliminary understanding of the gospel when it is preached (1993, p. 51).

Furthermore, consider both the power and the authority evident in Christ's teachings. Even His enemies were unable to refute what He taught. When the Jewish Sanhedrin decided to take action against Him and dispatched its security force to seize Him, those officers returned empty handed and admitted: “No man **ever** spoke like this Man!” (John 7:46, NKJV, emp. added). When He was only twelve years old and His parents accidentally left Him behind in Jerusalem, they returned to find Him in a discussion of religious matters with the learned scribes, “and all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers” (Luke 2:47).

The Jews had long yearned for a Messiah (“Christ”) Who would save and deliver them. The Samaritan woman Christ met at the well spoke of this very fact, to which He replied: “I that speak unto thee am he” (John 4:26). When Jesus was on trial before the Sanhedrin, Caiaphas the high priest asked: “Are you the Christ?” His reply was firm: “It is as you said” (Matthew 26:63-64). He spoke with authority regarding the pre-human **past**, because He was there. In Genesis 1:26 we are given the first hint of this, for there we are told: “And God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness....’ ” Although God is a Being Who certainly defies a complete comprehension by finite minds, He has given us a few glimpses into His character, one of which is that there are three personages involved in the Godhead (Matthew 28:19). It is with this understanding that readers of Scripture must come to John 1:1-3.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made (John 1:1ff.).

In Colossians 1:16-17, Paul wrote:

...for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist.

This means that not only was Jesus the active agent in Creation, but that He is Himself God. The deity of Jesus is loudly proclaimed in the Scriptures.

As the Jews correctly perceived, when Jesus called Himself the Son of God, He meant a great deal more than did Luke when he called Adam the son of God (Luke 3:38). Christ (uniquely) taught that **He was equal with God** (John 5:18), and for this reason they “sought the more to kill him.” Further, Jesus is not only the Originator of the creation, but He is also its Maintainer. The word “consist” in Colossians 1:17 inheres the idea of “hold together.” This is the same thought expressed in Hebrews 1:3 where the writer says that Jesus is “upholding all things by the word of his power....” Here is an impressive statement of Jesus’ divine power: He simply “spoke” the Universe into existence (Psalm 33:9), and by His very “words” the Universe continues to operate. Any description that fails to recognize Jesus’ unique teachings, and the deity inherent in those teachings, fails to describe the Jesus of the Bible.

In the **present**, “there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Hebrews 4:13). And He knows the **future**, as is evident from even a cursory reading of His prophecies about the building of His church (Matthew 16:18), the sending of the Holy Spirit to the apostles (John 14:26), and His many descriptions of His ultimate return and the Day of Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46, et al.). All of this, and more, explains why Paul referred to Him as “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Timothy 6:15). No one ever possessed, or spoke with, the kind of authority with which Christ was endowed, which is why He taught: “All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18). Fraudulent saviors never claimed such, nor had their own enemies confirm such. Perhaps this is one reason why, in the feature article from *Time* magazine’s December 6, 1999, cover story (“Jesus at 2000”), author Reynolds Price wrote:

It would require much exotic calculation, however, to deny that the single most powerful figure—not merely in these two millennia but in all human history—has been Jesus of Nazareth.... [A] serious argument can be made that no one else’s life has proved remotely as powerful and enduring as that of Jesus. It’s an astonishing conclusion in light of the fact that Jesus was a man who lived a short life in a rural backwater of the Roman Empire [and] who died in agony as a convicted criminal... (154[23]:86).

Mythical saviors never had such an assessment made of their lives.

### **Christ Was Unique in His Fulfillment of Prophecy**

Surely, one of the most undeniable traits of Christ’s uniqueness was His fulfillment of prophecy. In his book, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Josh McDowell discussed the fact that “the Old Testament contains over three hundred references to the Messiah that were fulfilled in Jesus” (1999, p. 168). Hugo McCord observed: “Testimony about Jesus was the chief purpose of prophecy. To him all the prophets gave witness (Acts 10:43)” [1979, p. 332]. Every prophecy in the Old Testament had to have been written at least 250 years before Christ appeared on the earthly scene. Why?

[The] Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures—was initiated in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.). It is sure that if you have a Greek translation initiated in 250 B.C., then you had to have the Hebrew text from which it was written (McDowell, p. 168).

Indeed, the Old Testament—which had been written hundreds of years before Christ actually lived—foretold the minutest details of His life. The Prophesied One would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22-23), from the family of Abraham (Genesis 22:18; Luke 3:34), of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10; Hebrews 7:14), of the royal line of David (2 Samuel 7:12; Luke 1:32), in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), in order to bruise the head of Satan (Genesis 3:15; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 2:12).

The prophets had foretold His Galilean ministry (Isaiah 9:1-2), as well as the fact that a precursor would proclaim His arrival (Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:1-3). He would appear during the time of the Roman Empire (Daniel 2:44; Luke 2:1), while Judah still possessed her own king (Genesis 49:10; Matthew 2:22). He would be murdered about 490 years after the command to restore Jerusalem at the end of the Babylonian captivity (457 B.C.), i.e., A.D. 30 (Daniel 9:24ff.). He was to be both human and divine; though born, He was eternal (Micah 5:2; John 1:1,14); though a man, He was Jehovah's "fellow" (Zechariah 13:7; John 10:30; Philipians 2:6). He was to be kind and sympathetic in His dealings with mankind (Isaiah 42:1-4; Matthew 12:15-21).

He would submit willingly to His heavenly Father (Psalm 40:8; Isaiah 53:11; John 8:29; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22). He would be abandoned and know grief (Isaiah 53:3), and be betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9) for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12). He was so betrayed (John 13:18; Matthew 26:15). He would be spit upon and beaten (Isaiah 50:6; 53:5), and in death both His hands and His feet would be pierced (Psalm 22:16). This is precisely what occurred (Matthew 27:30; Luke 24:39). The Scriptures foretold that He would be numbered among criminals (Isaiah 53:12), which He was (Matthew 27:38). He would be mocked, not only with scornful words (Psalm 22:7-8), but also with bitter wine (Psalm 69:21). And so He was (Matthew 27:48). Although He would die and be buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57), His bones would not be broken (Psalm 34:20; John 19:33) and His flesh would not see corruption, because He was to be raised from the dead (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:22ff.) and then ascend into heaven (Psalm 110:1-3; Acts 1:9-10).

The previous paragraphs present an overview of just a fraction of the numerous predictions fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Time and again biblical prophecies are presented, and fulfilled, with exacting detail. Jeremiah wrote: "When the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that Jehovah hath truly sent him" (28:9). Thomas Horne was correct when he said:

The book which contains these predictions is stamped with the seal of heaven: a rich vein of evidence runs through the volume of the Old Testament; the Bible is true; infidelity is confounded forever; and we may address its patrons in the language of Saint Paul, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish!" (1970, 1:291).

On Tuesday, prior to Christ's crucifixion the following Friday, Jesus engaged in a discussion with the Pharisees, who made no secret of their hatred for Him. When Matthew recorded the scene in his Gospel, he first commented on an earlier skirmish the Lord had with the Sadducees: "But the Pharisees, when they heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, gathered themselves together" (22:34). Jesus—with penetrating logic and an incomparable knowledge of Old Testament Scripture—had routed the Sadducees completely. No doubt the Pharisees thought they could do better. Yet they were about to endure the same embarrassing treatment. In the midst of His discussion with the Pharisees, Jesus asked: "What think ye of the Christ? Whose son is he?" (Matthew 22:42). They were unable to answer the questions satisfactorily because their hypocrisy prevented them from comprehending both Jesus' nature and His mission. The questions the Lord asked on that day, however, are ones that every rational, sane person must answer eventually.

Both questions were intended to **raise** the matter of Christ's deity. The answers—had the Pharisees' spiritual myopia not prevented them from responding correctly—were intended to **confirm** it. Today, these questions still raise the issue of Christ's identity. Who is Jesus? Is He, as He claimed to be, the Son of God? Was He, as many who knew Him claimed, God incarnate? Is He, as the word "deity" implies, of divine nature and rank?

The series of events that would lead to Jesus' becoming the world's best-known historical figure began in first-century Palestine. There are four primary indicators of this fact. First, when Daniel was asked by King Nebuchadnezzar to interpret his wildly imaginative dream, the prophet revealed that God would establish the Messianic kingdom during the time of the Roman Empire (viz., the fourth kingdom represented in the king's dream; see Daniel 2:24-45). Roman domination of Palestine began in 63 B.C., and continued until A.D. 476.

Second, the Messiah was to appear before “the scepter” departed from Judah (Genesis 49:10). Bible students recognize that this prophecy has reference to the Messiah (“Shiloh” of Old Testament fame) arriving before the Jews lost their national sovereignty and judicial power (the “scepter” of Genesis 49). Thus, Christ had to have come prior to the Jews’ losing their power to execute capital punishment (John 18:31). When Rome deposed Archelaus in A.D. 6, Coponius was installed as Judea’s first procurator. Interestingly, “the...procurator held the power of jurisdiction with regard to capital punishment” (Solomon, 1972, 13:117). Hence, Christ was predicted to come sometime prior to A.D. 6 (see also McDowell, 1999, pp. 195-202).

Third, Daniel predicted that the Messiah would bring an end to “sacrifice and offering” before the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70; cf. Daniel 9:24-27 and Matthew 24:15). When the Lord died, the Mosaic Law was “nailed to the cross” (Colossians 2:14).

Fourth, the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem of Judea (Micah 5:2). It is a matter of record that Jesus was born in Bethlehem while Palestine was under Roman rule, before Judah lost her judicial power, and before the destruction of Jerusalem (see also Matthew 2:3-6; Luke 2:2-6).

The Old and New Testaments paint a portrait of Christ that offers valuable evidence for the person desiring to answer the questions, “What think ye of the Christ?,” and “Whose son is he?” In Isaiah 7:14, for example, the prophet declared that a virgin would conceive, bear a son, and name him “Immanuel,” which means “God with us” (a prophecy that was fulfilled in the birth of Christ; Matthew 1:22-23). Later, Isaiah referred to this son as “Mighty God” (9:6). In fact, in the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah said he saw “the Lord” sitting upon a throne (see Isaiah 6:1ff.). Overpowered by the scene, God’s servant exclaimed: “Woe is me,...for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts” (6:5). In the New Testament, John wrote: “These things said Isaiah, because he saw His [Christ’s] glory; and he spake of him” (John 12:41).

Isaiah urged God’s people to sanctify “Jehovah of hosts” (8:12-14), a command later applied to Jesus by Peter (1 Peter 3:14-15). Furthermore, Isaiah’s “Jehovah” was to become a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense (8:14), a description that New Testament writers applied to Christ (cf. Romans 9:33, 1 Peter 2:8). Isaiah foretold that John the Baptizer would prepare the way for the coming of **Jehovah** (40:3). It is well known that John was the forerunner of **Christ** (cf. Matthew 3:3, John 1:23). Isaiah pictured Christ as not only a silent “lamb” (53:7), but also as One Who “a bruised reed will he not break, and a dimly burning wick will he not quench” (42:3; cf. Matthew 12:20). Various biblical scholars have suggested that this imagery was intended to portray a leader Who,

wherever he finds men wounded and bruised by the harshness of life’s experience, or wherever he finds wounded and bruised consciences, whether among the Gentiles or in Israel, there he is most tender and delicate in the gentle handling of these souls (Leupold, 1971, 2:62; see also Oswalt, 1998, pp. 111-112; McGarvey, 1875, p. 106).

Other Old Testament writers illuminated Christ in their writings as well. The psalmist suggested He would be known as zealous for righteousness (Psalm 69:9), that He would be hated without cause (Psalm 22), and that He would triumph over death (Psalm 16:8-11). Daniel referred to His coming kingdom as one that would “stand forever” (2:44). The prophets’ portrait of Christ was intended not only to foreshadow His coming, but to make Him all the more visible to people in New Testament times as well (see Bromling, 1991).

The prophets had said that He would be raised from the dead so that He could sit upon the throne of David (Isaiah 9:7). This occurred, as Peter attested in his sermon on Pentecost following the resurrection (Acts 2:30). He would rule, not Judah, but the most powerful kingdom ever known. As King, Christ was to rule (from heaven) the kingdom that “shall never be destroyed” and “shall break in pieces and consume all these [earthly] kingdoms, and...shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44). The New Testament establishes the legitimacy of His kingdom (Colossians 1:13; 1 Corinthians 15:24-25). The subjects of this royal realm were to be from every nation on Earth (Isaiah 2:2), and were prophesied to enjoy a life of peace and harmony that ignores any and all human distinctions, prejudices, or biases (cf. Isaiah 2:4 and Galatians 3:28). This King would be arrayed, not in the regal purple of a carnal king, but in the reverential garments of a holy priest (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:6). Like Melchizedek, the Messiah was to be both Priest and King (Genesis



14:18), guaranteeing that His subjects could approach God without the interference of a clergy class. Instead, as the New Testament affirms, Christians offer their petitions directly to God through their King—Who mediates on their behalf (cf. Matthew 6:9; John 14:13-14; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 10:12,19-22). It would be impossible for the New Testament writers to provide any clearer answers than they did to the questions that Christ asked the Pharisees. Furthermore, no similar “savior” from mythology ever had his entire life prophesied, or personally fulfilled predictive prophecy (in whole or in part), like Jesus.

### WHAT WOULD YOU EXPECT?

In his fascinating book, *What If Christ Had Never Been Born?*, D. James Kennedy discussed at length both the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and His singular impact on the Earth’s inhabitants. In assessing that impact, Dr. Kennedy wrote:

...Jesus Christ has had an enormous impact—more than anybody else—on history. Had He never come, the hole would be a canyon about the size of a continent. Christ’s influence on the world is immeasurable.... Whatever Jesus touched or whatever He did transformed that aspect of human life. Many people will read about the innumerable small incidents in the life of Christ while never dreaming that those casually mentioned “little” things were to transform the history of mankind (1994, p. 4).

Philip Schaff discussed Christ’s influence when he wrote in his book, *The Person of Christ: The Miracle of History*:

This Jesus of Nazareth, without money or arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, He shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools, He spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, He set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise, than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times (1913, p. 33).

It has been said that Christ changed the course of the River of History and lifted the centuries off their hinges—a stirring verbal tribute that is quite apropos, considering the evidence. When unbelievers write books to challenge His deity, even they (albeit inadvertently) acknowledge not only His existence, but also His uniqueness, when they place the copyright date in the frontispiece of their tomes, admitting that the volume was published in, say, A.D. 2004. That “A.D.” stands for *Anno Domini*—in the year of the Lord. No one dates time from Osiris, Dionysus, Hillel, or Confucius. But the entire inhabited world recognizes the designations of “B.C.” (before Christ) and “A.D.”

In *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Josh McDowell listed seven things that people could (and should!) expect from the Savior of the world: (1) an utterly unique entrance into human history (prophecy and virgin birth); (2) the ability to live a sinless life—none of the Jewish heroes was presented as perfect, nor were the mythological heroes presented as viceless; (3) control over all the forces of nature—“Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him” (Mark 4:41); (4) the capability to speak the greatest words ever uttered by human lips; (5) a lasting and universal influence on humanity; (6) the power to satisfy the spiritual hunger of mankind (see Matthew 5:6, John 7:37, 4:14, 6:35, 10:10); and (7) the ability to defeat both death and sin.

The simple fact is, Jehovah left no stone unturned in preparing the world for the coming of the One Who would save mankind. Through a variety of avenues, He alerted the inhabitants of planet Earth regarding the singular nature of the One Who was yet to come, as well as the importance of believing in and obeying Him. Humanity’s sins can be forgiven only by a sinless Savior. A mythological sacrifice can forgive only mythological sins, but Jesus truly is the Lamb of God “that taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). As Norman Geisler put it:

It is one thing to claim deity and quite another to have the credentials to support that claim. Christ did both. He offered three unique and miraculous facts as evidence of his claim: the fulfillment of prophecy, a uniquely miraculous life, and the resurrection from the dead. All of these are historically provable and unique to Jesus of Nazareth. We argue, therefore, that Jesus alone claims to be and proves to be God (1976, p. 339).

## CONCLUSION

Who, then, is Jesus Christ? Is He a unique Savior or an average fraud? The choices actually are quite limited—a fact reiterated by Josh McDowell when he titled one of the chapters in his *New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*: “Significance of Deity: The Trilemma—Lord, Liar, or Lunatic?” His purpose was to point out that, considering the incredibly grandiose nature of Christ’s claims, He had to be one of the three. As McDowell began his discussion, he presented for the reader’s consideration a quotation from the famous British apologist of Cambridge University, C.S. Lewis, who wrote:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: “I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to (1952, pp. 40-41).

Lewis’ point needs to be explored. Consider, for example, the cover story of the March 27, 2000, issue of *Newsweek*, “Visions of Jesus.” In that issue, staff writer Kenneth Woodward penned the feature article, “The Other Jesus,” in which he defended the idea that the Jesus of the Gospels may not be the “real” Jesus. In fact, Woodward said, “the lack of extra-Biblical evidence for the existence of Jesus has led more than one critic to conclude that he is a Christian fiction created by the early church” (2000, 135[13]:53). But, Woodward admitted, “the Christ of the Gospels is certainly the best-known Jesus in the world. For Christians, he is utterly unique—the only Son of God” (p. 52).

One month later, in its April 17, 2000, issue, *Newsweek’s* editors ran in the “Letters” section a sampling of responses from readers. One letter was from a young lady by the name of Jennifer Rawlings of Gaithersburg, Maryland, who wrote:

I am a 17-year-old student, and I was disappointed by your cover story “Visions of Jesus.” It seems that *Newsweek* attempted to find a middle ground in presenting a view of Jesus as a character who could appeal to all people. But that is impossible. Either Jesus was in fact the son of God, as he claimed, or he was a lunatic. No one who claims to be the Son of God is simply a “good teacher!” Other great religions will never accept Jesus to be who he said he was. If they do, then they are not Jewish, Muslim or Buddhist. They are Christian (2000, 135[16]:17).

Apparently one does not have to be a distinguished Cambridge University professor (like C.S. Lewis) to understand what 17-year-old Miss Rawlings so eloquently stated in her simple-but-accurate reply to *Newsweek’s* “scholarly” approach. Jesus not only existed as a historical character, but also claimed to be God incarnate (John 5:17-18; 8:42; 10:30; 12:45; 14:7,10-11; 17:21-23; 19:7). He therefore cannot be viewed merely as a “good teacher” since, if His claim were false, He would have been either a liar or a lunatic. In Mark 10, the account is recorded concerning a rich young ruler who, in speaking to Christ, addressed Him as “good teacher.” Upon hearing this reference, Jesus asked: “Why callest thou me good? None is good save one, even God” (Mark 10:18). So, is Christ God?

On at least one occasion, Jesus asked His friends two searching questions: “Who do men say that I am?” and “Who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:13,15). The first query was met with a variety of answers—all of which were wrong. When He asked His closest followers to report what the populace was saying of Him, they responded: “Some say John the Immerser; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets” (vs. 14).

Virtually everything imaginable has been said in regard to Christ’s actual identity. The cumulative force of this has been utter confusion in the world regarding the true nature of Jesus. Whereas His enemies have maliciously accused Him of being many unholy things, His “friends” have assumed Him to possess other (equally erroneous) identities. While some thought He was simply a carpenter, others, with anger, proposed that He was possessed of a devil (Mark 6:3; John 7:20). Nor did this confusion dissipate after His triumph over the powers of death: the Docetics of the second century taught that He was all God and no man; the

Ebionites taught that He was all man and no God; the Jehovah's Witnesses say Jesus was simply a perfect man; the reincarnationists believe He was one of them; the Muslims believe that He was just one among many good teachers; and the atheists of today allege that Jesus was insane!

The second question—"Who do you say that I am?"—was answered by Peter who, with apparent boldness, retorted to Jesus: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). This evaluation of the Nazarene was praised then, and will be forever the only acceptable answer. It is upon this eternal truth that the church of Christ—His Kingdom—is built (vs. 18). Jesus is Ruler: Paul wrote in Colossians 1:18, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (vs. 18; cf. vss. 10,13). This facet of Jesus' character is shown by Paul's use of two figures of speech. First, Paul referred to the church as Christ's Kingdom: "[God] delivered us out of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love" (vs. 13). This figure implies that Jesus is a king, and as such He has complete authority over His subjects (Matthew 28:18; John 12:48). As our Monarch, Jesus does not merely preside over a democracy (as an American president might). Instead, what He says is law! This is the meaning of Peter's statement, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both **Lord** and Christ, this Jesus Whom ye crucified" (Acts 2:36). Second, Paul referred to the church as the body of which Christ is the head (Colossians 1:18). A human body that is functioning correctly is in complete submission to the will of its brain. What the head thinks determines the attitude, posture, direction and well-being of the whole body. Just so, Christ demands the same influence over His church: "And [God] put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22, 23). Any answer to the question, "Who is Jesus?," that contradicts or fails to consider the Lordship of Christ is both unbiblical and useless.

Peter's response to Jesus' question regarding His identity—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"—was, admittedly, the minority view in the first century. Two thousand years later, it still is. The sadness of this is underscored by the abundance of data that supports Peter's response. As Christians who are charged with the obligation to "be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks" for an explanation of the hope we possess (1 Peter 3:15), we must be prepared to defend the deity of Christ against any and all attacks, and lead seeking souls to the knowledge of the Savior. How do we prove to modern man that Jesus is Who He said He was?

Initially, two foundational stones must be laid before one may erect an argument concerning Jesus' deity: God's existence must be established, and the Bible as His inspired Word must be proved. That is why, in volume one of this trilogy (*Rock-Solid Faith: How to Built It*), I spent so much time and effort providing the documentation for both.

Regarding His existence, God has left such an overwhelming amount of evidence in the world that only a fool could reject it (Psalm 14:1). No one will be able to stand before the throne of judgment and legitimately affirm, "I never knew there was a God!" (Romans 1:20). The inspiration of the Scriptures is also strongly supported. The law of cause and effect demands that the Bible be explained. It is such an amazing **effect** that only God can be its **adequate cause**. Its unity, prophetic accuracy, and scientific foreknowledge provide powerful witnesses to its divine origin. Though it was written through the course of 1,600 years of human history, by more than 40 men from differing backgrounds, languages, and locations, the Bible is unerringly harmonious. This fact alone (not to mention the many other evidences that attends its inspiration) should lead one to conclude that the Bible is from God.

Upon the bedrock of these truths, the case for the deity of Christ may be carefully and believably built. To Peter's confession Jesus responded: "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is heaven" (Matthew 16:17). The apostle had deduced his conviction from divine revelation, rather than from the uncertain ideas of men. Use of this method will lead men today to reach the same conclusion. Such revelation encompasses the myriad of fulfilled Old Testament prophecies, Christ's miracles, and the Lord's resurrection from the dead.

Unlike most men who have their biographies written after they are dead, much of Jesus' life was reported hundreds of years before He was born. Over three hundred prophecies relating to the Messiah have been isolated; this number alone is nothing short of astounding. From Genesis to Malachi, the history of

Jesus is foretold in minute detail. Not only are the major facets of His life predicted, but seemingly trivial things (e.g., men would gamble for His clothing—Psalm 22:18) also are foretold. The Lord had every right to expect the Jews to know Him when He arrived on the scene. His specific lineage was exactly as it should have been (Genesis 12; Galatians 3; etc.). He was born where and when He was supposed to be (Micah 5:2; Genesis 49:10). He died and was raised—exactly as God had predicted hundreds of years before (Isaiah 53; Psalm 16:8-11). By the word of prophecy He was even called Jehovah—the special name reserved only for God (Isaiah 40:3). The notions that Jesus either met the prophetic requirements accidentally, or that He was a charlatan who set out to conform to them intentionally, defy all logic. He was all He was predicted to be!

Jesus was a miracle worker. Although God empowered other men to perform miracles, this man was different. Their works confirmed that they were **from** God; His works proved **He is God** (John 10:37-38). Hence, John wrote: “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31). Even the antagonistic Jews understood the meaning of the term “Son of God.” Notice their reaction when Jesus referred to God as His Father: “...the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God” (John 5:18).

Likely, the two most impressive miracles involving Jesus were His birth and resurrection. Seven hundred years after the prediction was given, the Lord was born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1). Had Jesus been born of solely human parentage, He would have been merely human. Had He not been born of a human mother, He could never have been human. But, because of the virgin birth, He may be correctly described as God in the flesh. Just as He promised, the Lord came forth from the tomb three days after His brutal crucifixion (Matthew 12:40; 16:21). His resurrection was witnessed by the soldiers who guarded His tomb—soldiers who had to be bribed to change their story (Matthew 28:11-15). It is a matter of history that Jesus’ tomb was empty on Sunday morning. If Jesus were not raised from the dead, how came His guarded and sealed tomb to be empty? For those who reject the resurrection, the vacant tomb will forever stand as eternity’s greatest mystery. There is no mystery, however, since more than 500 witnesses saw the resurrected Christ (1 Corinthians 15:4-8). Seeing the living, breathing Jesus again was irrefutable proof! Little wonder, then, that when Thomas so saw Jesus he exclaimed: “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).

As these and other lines of evidence show, Christians need not fear those who libel the Lord, and who so readily dismiss His deity. Far beyond being just a man of history, Jesus of Nazareth is God, Who pre-dates, and will outlast, time itself (Philippians 2:5-11). \*

---

\* I would like to gratefully acknowledge the contribution of Kyle Butt at Apologetics Press in the research and writing of the material contained in this chapter, which represents the text of a two-part series (“Jesus Christ—Unique Savior or Average Fraud?”) that he and I co-authored for the February and March 2001 issues of *Reason & Revelation*, the monthly journal on Christian evidences published by Apologetics Press, and for which I served as editor.



## CHAPTER 5

### CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARD THE BIBLE

During the 1920s, and the three decades that followed, a “quiet revolution” took place in the minds of many American Bible-believing people. The revolution was subtle, and well orchestrated. Its proponents knew exactly what to do, and exactly how to do it. They were intent upon succeeding. And they did.

The seeds for the revolution had been planted years earlier, when denominational theologians like Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) suggested that while the Bible could rightly be viewed as **containing** the Word of God, it should not be viewed as **being** the Word of God. Their teachings influenced many, including a number of other denominational ministers who were influential in their own right. Among those was Harry Emerson Fosdick, an American Baptist preacher who authored more than thirty books. Two volumes from this collection, *The Modern Use of the Bible* (1924) and *A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (1938), provided the impetus for the “quiet revolution” that was to follow.

In *The Modern Use of the Bible*, Fosdick penned a chapter titled “The New Approach to the Bible,” which set the stage for the liberal movement that was to ravage Protestantism. Fourteen years later, when he wrote *A Guide to Understanding the Bible*, he said: “Obviously any idea of inspiration which implies equal value in the teachings of Scripture, or inerrancy in its statements, or conclusive infallibility in its ideas, is irreconcilable with such facts as this book presents” (1938, p. xiv).

From the late 1920s through the mid-1960s, the revolution was in full swing. Its advocates’ goals, simply put, were to eradicate any belief by the populace in the Bible as the inspired, inerrant Word of God. One by one, various denominations abandoned any real belief in the concept of inerrancy, with Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and others being among the first victims. Popular theologian Reinhold Niebuhr wrote: “The Christian truth is presented as a ‘dated’ bit of religious fantasy which is credible only to the credulous and which may be easily dismissed by modern man” (1949, p. 34). With the mind-set in place among many Bible-believing people that the truths of the Scriptures were “religious fantasy,” the abandonment of inerrancy was, to many, a foregone conclusion. The “quiet revolution” had been a smashing success. No clanging symbols, waving flags, or flashing lights served to alarm the populace. Rather, slow, deliberate changes were set in place that took years to accomplish, and that would last years into the future.

### THE OPPOSITION FIGHTS—AND LOSES

As in every revolution, there were opposing forces. When the liberals denounced inerrancy, formidable opponents arose, referring to themselves as “orthodox theologians.” Condoning denominationalism, yet all the while stoutly defending the Bible as the inerrant Word of God, they were not about to give up without a fight. And so fight they did!

#### **Inerrancy and the Lutheran Denomination**

One of the most vocal supporters of the doctrine of biblical inerrancy was Lutheran writer, Herman J. Otten, the highly respected editor of *Christian News* (a paper he began in 1962, and at whose helm he has remained for more than forty years). Otten was the author of *Baal or God*, an amazing book that: (a) documented the abandonment of inerrancy by a number of denominations during the previous forty years; (b) surveyed the resulting damage; and (c) acted as a clarion call to defenders of biblical inerrancy. In that volume, Otten wrote:

Historic Christianity has always maintained that the Bible is the Word of God: that it is a God-given revelation which God gave in propositions, in statements, in human words to the recipients; and that it is entirely without error and contradictions in all matters of which it treats. Modern liberalism contends that the Bible is merely a record, witness, and medium of revelation, since revelation cannot be put into any simple sentence or proposition using a form of human words. The Bible, according to the modern liberal, merely **contains** or **becomes** the Word of God (1965, p. 131, emp. added).

Otten knew that if an error was plaguing other denominations, it was only a matter of time until it attacked his own. Prior to the publication of *Baal or God*, Lutherans had had skirmishes with those who opposed inerrancy, and certain segments of the denomination (e.g., the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church of America) had shown signs of compromise. But the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod had remained solidly committed to inerrancy. Otten also possessed the insight to forewarn his Lutheran brethren about what would befall them, were they to become victims of the revolution of the past forty years. Yet as insightful as he was, and as incisive as his arguments were, he was not able to prevent the inevitable drift—even among the conservative Missouri Synod—away from the view of the Bible as God’s inspired Word.

Eleven years after Otten published *Baal or God*, another Lutheran wrote in a similar vein. While serving as editor of *Christianity Today*, Harold Lindsell authored *The Battle for the Bible*, in which he documented the trend among Lutherans away from the idea of an inerrant Bible. In referring to theologian W.A. Maier, Lindsell said: “He knew that in every denomination where this battle had been fought, believers in inerrancy had lost” (1976, p. 87). Little did Dr. Lindsell know how prescient his comment was. Shortly after his book was published, his own beloved Missouri Synod split over this very topic. The liberal segment ended up with most of the people, most of the property, and most of the treasury.

### **Inerrancy and the Baptist Denomination**

In *The Battle for the Bible*, Lindsell not only warned the Lutherans about the apostasy taking place in their midst, but also simultaneously congratulated the Southern Baptists for their advocacy of inerrancy. He observed that while certain religious groups had fought this battle and lost, Baptists had remained above the fracas, due to a number of important factors. But, said Lindsell, “significant changes have taken place in recent years that suggest that what happened to other denominations decades ago can happen to Southern Baptists. Seeds of dissent have been planted, and are sprouting in many places among them” (1976, p. 90).

Indeed, the “seeds of dissent” had been planted—a decade-and-a-half earlier. In 1961, Ralph Elliott, a professor at the Baptists’ Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City, had written *The Message of Genesis*. In this commentary, Elliott lambasted the historicity of the Genesis record, and attacked the accounts of Adam and Eve, the Fall, the Noahic flood, the Tower of Babel, and others as “...stories which aren’t to be taken as literally true...” (1961, p. 15). James Hefley, one of the Southern Baptist Convention’s premier historians, wrote of this landmark event:

In July of 1961 the Sunday School Board’s Broadman Press began shipping to Baptist Book Stores the first of 4,000 copies of an innocent looking tan book with *The Message of Genesis* engraved in purple letters on the spine. It was a book that would become a time bomb to disrupt the unity of the SBC and set the stage for the crisis which is shaking the denomination today (1986, p. 49).

Several observations are in order. First, Elliott’s book opened a floodgate of liberalism among the Baptists. In *The Battle for the Bible*, Lindsell documented numerous examples (1976, pp. 89-105). Second, Dr. Lindsell was right in saying, in 1976, that the carnage tearing apart the Lutheran’s Missouri Synod had “**not yet**” happened in the Southern Baptist Convention. But he was equally correct when he suggested that if the Baptists failed to act, “the infection will spread.” In fact, it did just that. In 1986, Hefley wrote of “the crisis which is shaking the denomination **today**.” Third, the matter has only worsened since he penned those words.

In the December 31, 1990/January 7, 1991 (combined) issue of *U.S. News & World Report*, Jeffery L. Sheler wrote an article titled, “A Rift Over the Book,” which detailed the battle taking place in the Southern Baptist Convention over biblical inerrancy. He wrote that “even those who feel most at home in the convention concede that things have gone so far that to prevent the church from splitting now would take a ‘miracle of reconciliation from God Himself’” (p. 64). Nine years later, almost to the day, Sheler wrote a second article in the November 13, 2000 issue of *U.S. News & World Report* that dealt with what he referred to as “a battle for the Baptists’ soul.” Sheler wrote of “a dramatic resurgence of moderates in the 15.7 million-member church that some leaders predict will spark uprisings in other states and hasten a splintering of the nation’s largest Protestant denomination.” And what was the subject that sparked the “uprising”?

Sheler continued: “Behind the turmoil is a theological dispute over Biblical ‘inerrancy’—a belief in the literal accuracy of the Bible. Conservatives have demanded, and moderates have resisted, allegiance to inerrancy among church leaders and faculty at the denomination’s six seminaries” (2000, 129[19]:34).

Those familiar with the situation suggest that Sheler’s reports could not have been more accurate. It appears, from all available evidence, that a split among the Southern Baptists over the doctrine of biblical inerrancy is unavoidable. In his six-volume series, *The Truth in Crisis*, Hefley covered the controversy from its beginnings in 1961 to its modern-day roots (see Hefley, 1986-1991). Those desiring additional information may also wish to examine the following books, which provide in-depth documentation of the problems within the Baptist denomination over inerrancy: (1) *Authority and Interpretation—A Baptist Perspective* by D.A. Garrett and R.R. Melick (1987); (2) *Baptist Battles—Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention* by N.T. Ammerman (1990); (3) *God’s Last & Only Hope—The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention* by Bill J. Leonard (1990); and (4) *Beyond the Impasse?—Scripture, Interpretation, & Theology in Baptist Life* by R.B. James and D.S. Dockery (1992).

### THE BATTLE AMONG CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Few religious groups have clung as tenaciously to the doctrine of biblical inerrancy as the churches of Christ. During the Restoration period of the former century, men who wanted to be called only by the name “Christian,” and who wanted no authority in religion but the Bible, employed the phrase, “We speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent.” This was no mere slogan; rather, it represented the concept of verbal, plenary inspiration that was the backbone of New Testament Christianity. It expressed the idea that the Bible was not the word of a single man, or any group of men, but was instead **God’s Word**. Those in the churches of Christ have long recognized that any denial—theoretical or practical—of verbal inspiration relegates the **objective and perfect** to little more than the **subjective and imperfect**. Our beliefs, practices, and hopes are all based on the inerrancy of Scripture.

While the churches of Christ certainly have experienced their share of controversy through the centuries, those involved generally agreed that, at least potentially, a settlement of whatever problem(s) had arisen could be reached through an appeal to the Bible as the inspired, inerrant Word of God. Advocates of the fallibility of Scripture were few and far between, and rarely remained in the fellowship of the churches of Christ for long because their position made them uncomfortable among other Christians who accepted inerrancy. Furthermore, their new position regarding biblical inerrancy ultimately led them to advocate ideas or actions that were neither taught nor tolerated by the church as a whole. For these reasons, and others, it was rare indeed to find those among the churches of Christ who openly disavowed inspiration and inerrancy. William Woodson summarized the matter as follows:

These exercises in and expressions of false doctrine, digression, compromise, and extremism have come and mostly they have gone, though vestiges of some of them remain. The churches have known, and, therefore, are well aware of those who have recommended change and renewal of various sorts and have urged sure-fire solutions to this or that problem in earlier days as well as in the present. They have heard the carefully worded pleas of many other advocates as they sought to lead them away from the legacy and heritage they have learned and cherished. Earlier proposals for alleged improvement have been artfully presented by this or that new-risen change agent who claimed he only wanted to lead them from their purported confusion and failure. Indeed, these pleas for the new versus the old, the directing of churches to the just-discovered road which will lead to success, these and many more siren calls have been heard, evaluated, and firmly rejected by churches of Christ.

The reasons for the rejection of such notions are not hard to find. These reasons were, simply stated, that parents, teachers, preachers, elders, and individual Christians studied Scripture, learned the truth, compared the new proposals with that truth, accepted what is in keeping with the truth, refused the error and the errant spokesmen, insisted that the church must be kept pure, refused to engage in endless wrangles with proponents of every new fad in the brotherhood, respected the autonomy of the churches, continued with their work in righteousness, and declined to confer on the “plains of Ono” with those who would compromise and remake the church after another gospel (1994, p. 36).



But, as the old saying goes, “that was then; this is now.” When Harold Lindsell suggested in regard to the Southern Baptists that “significant changes have taken place in recent years,” and that “seeds of dissent have been planted and are sprouting in many places among them,” he just as easily (and just as accurately!) could have been speaking of the churches of Christ. Currently, for example, the idea is being set forth that we have erred in accepting the New Testament as God’s **law** to be used as His **pattern** for our lives. In their 2001 volume, *The Crux of the Matter*, three Abilene Christian University professors (Jeff Childers, Douglas Foster, and Jack Reese) suggested:

A **patternistic** hermeneutic tends to blind us to these dimensions of the Bible’s teaching for the church. As we mean it hear, patternism assumes that the Bible is an assortment of specific rules dictating belief and practice in select areas, mainly the institutional topics of church polity, public procedure, and membership requirements. The acts of the New Testament church instruct us in important ways, and the desire to attend to those precedents in Scripture is a good one, but patternistic reading is inconsistent with the Bible’s full aims and goals.

[R]ule of law has never provoked the deepest motivation. In fact, searching Scripture only to find what is “necessary for salvation” is a minimalist approach that causes us to misconstrue much of Scripture’s intent and cheats us of the abundant meaning of biblical doctrines.... Our obedience to rules is not at the core. God’s saving acts are (pp. 158-159, 176, 208, emp. in orig.).

One year later, three more ACU professors wrote in agreement in their book, *God’s Holy Fire*.

While the Bible does shed light on issues of church organization and other issues that have attracted the attention of many of us, **it does not provide a constitution or pattern for church organization**, focusing instead on the much more important issues of spiritual and moral life, justice, peace, and reverence before God.... The Bible does not save us: Jesus does. Scripture is not a rulebook covering every imaginable situation, if we only know how to decode it correctly. Reading it that way has led us into deep sectarianism (Cukrowski, Hamilton, and Thompson, 2002, pp. 48, 67, emp. added).

There can be no doubt that some among us are teaching that the New Testament is neither a law nor a pattern (a concept known as the “constitutional view”), but rather is a love letter from God (the so-called “epistolary view”) that contains a “Christocentric” message of good news, not a strict set of rules (see Armour, 1989; Fenter, 1989; McNichol, 1989). The “quiet revolution” that once affected denominations—even “conservative” denominations like the Lutherans and Southern Baptists—is now affecting the churches of Christ. There are those—known collectively as “change agents”—at work in a concentrated effort to cast off the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, and the authority that accompanies it, and to replace it with what they refer to as a “new hermeneutic” (i.e., a new way of interpreting the Scriptures). In essence, the mind-set of those involved in this revolt is to fashion a new religion based on human desire, not God’s Word.

There are at least two ways that such a revolution could succeed: (1) Somehow convince Christians to take an entirely new tact, boldly “move forward,” set aside decades of past training, and unflinchingly affirm that, simply put, the Bible is **not** the inerrant Word of God they once thought it was. Theological “moderates” (read that as “liberals”) realize that this is not likely to happen. As the authors of *God’s Holy Fire* admitted:

For most groups, some combination of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience functions as the source of authority. Almost all Christian groups value Scripture. However, for some groups Scripture does not rank at the top, or it has equal status with other sources of authority. For Churches of Christ, Scripture has ranked at the top with the power to trump any of the other three. In other words, if tradition conflicts with Scripture, we follow Scripture; if reason conflicts with Scripture, we still follow Scripture (p. 161).

Thus, a second option by necessity becomes more realistic, and presents a much more workable solution. (2) Give Christians a “new vocabulary”—one that is subtle enough not to cause immediate spiritual discomfort, yet daring enough to affect their perception of the Bible as inerrant.

Not surprisingly, it is this second option that is being employed. Change agents have suggested that Christians are in desperate need of a radically different terminology to help them “better understand” what God “really meant” (the implication being that, before this new vocabulary arrived, Christians did **not** un-

derstand what God's Word **really** meant). The end result, of course, is to alter the view of biblical inerrancy that has been long held (and frequently defended) by "the person in the pew." Suddenly, questions vastly outnumber answers. Problems greatly exceed solutions. Theories increasingly eclipse facts. Doubts routinely overshadow certainties. Perception becomes reality. Nothing is what it seems. And, eventually, a faith that once was rock solid, withers and dies.

As evidence of this, I offer the following examples. Some years ago, *Mission* magazine published an article by Warren Lewis, stating that the gospels are filled with what can only be seen as irreconcilable contradictions. Lewis wrote:

Each of the Gospel writers paints a picture of Jesus which cannot be forced to agree with the other three pictures. The clashes in their stories which we have already pointed to are just a few of the large number of other such clashes which a wide-awake reader could find for himself in the Gospels. We finally must say that there is a "Matthew Jesus," a "Mark Jesus," a "Luke Jesus," and a "John Jesus." One is left in the dark as to who the "real Jesus" might be, what he did, and what his thoughts and feelings were. Yes, they all point to a Jesus; but, one wonders which Jesus to believe in (1972).

Such statements are a frontal assault on biblical inerrancy (not to mention the deity of Christ). If the Scriptures are filled with such contradictions, then, quite obviously, God's Word is neither inspired nor inerrant.

In the March 1987 issue of the *Restoration Review*, Leroy Garrett penned an article titled "In What Way is the Bible Authoritative?," in which he wrote:

We cannot equate the authority of the Bible with the authority of God as we can the authority of Christ and God, for the Bible is an earthen vessel. God is perfect, infallible, and infinite. The Bible as a human product is not.... If the Bible was brought to us by an angel directly from heaven, having been dictated word-for-word by God himself, so that its contents would be nothing less and nothing more than the actual words of God, then we could equate the authority of the Bible and the authority of God. But the Bible is clearly not that kind of book (1987, 29:43).

God may be perfect, says Garrett, but His Word is not. Four years later, Garrett penned another article for the *Restoration Review*, in which he wrote: "These facts, once acknowledged, not only liberate us from an impossible patternistic hermeneutic, but they also allow for adjustments to be made in what the church believes and practices down through the centuries" (1991, p. 135).

John Clayton, a geologist from South Bend, Indiana, has, for more than thirty-five years, presented seminars around the country under the title of *Does God Exist?* In a book he wrote to accompany those seminars (*The Source*), Clayton went on record as suggesting that it is impossible to **prove** the Bible's inspiration.

**I do not contend that it can be conclusively proven to 20<sup>th</sup> Century Americans that the Bible is inspired**, because the Bible writings have been written over a period of 4,000 years, in at least three languages and several cultures. This variability of background leads to cultural and linguistic difficulties that allow differences of opinion to creep in. There are countless such difficulties (1976, p. 89; cf. also Clayton 1978, p. 79, emp. added).

When Paul wrote his second epistle to Timothy, he stated that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16). Speaking of that apostolic statement, the authors of *God's Holy Fire* wrote:

The focus of the passage is on the *usefulness* of Scripture for transforming and equipping the person, not on the divine origin of Scripture.... **Because the Bible has come to us through human beings, our view of the divine origin of Scripture is not a matter of mathematical certainty**, but ultimately an affirmation of faith (2002, pp. 37,45, italics in orig., emp. added).

What may one say about the types of allegations made by these various authors? First, it certainly would help matters if they concentrated on getting their facts right. Clayton's suggestion that the Bible was written over a period of 4,000 years is, quite simply, wrong. The Bible was composed over a period of 1,600 years (c. 1,500 B.C. to c. A.D. 100), not 4,000.

Second, to suggest that the Bible is little more than "an earthen vessel" that contains "differences of opinion" resulting from its human writers, is a spurious assertion that evinces ignorance on the part of the one who makes it, in regard to how the Bible came to be in its present form. It also maligns the Author

(God), the Holy-Spirit-inspired writers whom He chose for task, and the process of inspiration itself. The men who penned God's Word did not write by the dim light of mere human opinion, but by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13). The Old Testament, for example, was written mostly in Hebrew (with a fractional portion in Aramaic). But approximately two-and-a-half centuries before Christ, the Old Covenant was translated into Greek. In fact, Christ Himself frequently quoted from this Greek version, known as the *Septuagint* (cf. Matthew 4:10; 15:8-9), and even went so far as to call it "scripture" (John 19:36), citing the material therein as "that which was spoken by God" (Matthew 22:31-32). [Of the 300 or so quotations in the New Testament from the Old Testament, a sizable number (in fact, the vast majority) are from the Septuagint.] Elsewhere, the Lord declared that "the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Clearly, the Lord did not feel that the translation process had nullified inspiration. And that is my point here: faithful translation does not destroy inspiration. While cultural transitions may make the interpretation of some passages rather difficult, such problems certainly do not militate against the infallible proofs that the Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God. But that is a far cry from suggesting, as Clayton has, that there are "countless" examples where "variability of background leads to cultural and linguistic difficulties that allow differences of opinion to creep in." It is one thing to blindly assert that there are "countless examples"; it is another thing entirely to document them—something, by the way, that Clayton conspicuously failed to do (he did not offer a single example to document his allegation). If one cannot prove that the biblical documents are inspired, there is no way to establish the deity of Jesus Christ, for we are totally dependent upon the sacred writings for the proof of the Lord's divine nature. Since Warren Lewis has rejected the accuracy of the four gospels, it is little surprise, then, that he says he is "left in the dark as to who the 'real Jesus' might be." Without the inspired gospel accounts, how **could** he know who the "real Jesus" was? What a dangerous doctrine it is to denigrate the inspiration of God's Word!

Third, three preeminent passages from the writings of the apostles Paul and John indicate clearly what the scriptural position of every Christian should be in regard to the inspiration of the Word of God. In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul wrote. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (NKJV). The Greek text records: *pasa graphé theopneustos*—"all scripture [is] God-breathed." **Something** within this context is said to be "**God-breathed.**" What is that something? **All Scripture!** The term "scripture" [*graphé*] denotes that which is written. But it is the **words** of the biblical text that are written; hence, the very **words** of the Bible are God-breathed! No one can acknowledge the existence of 2 Timothy 3:16 without at the same time introducing and acknowledging the concept of verbal inspiration. The truth is, the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures is abundantly claimed throughout the sacred canon. More than 2,700 times in the Old Testament alone, the claim is made that the Scriptures are the word [or words] of God (and similar statements fill the New Testament as well). For instance, the psalmist wrote: "For ever, O Jehovah, **thy word** is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89; the Scriptures are exalted as the word of God some 175 times in Psalm 119!). Exodus 20:1 records: "And **God spake all these words.**" In Exodus 24:4-7, the statement is made that "...Moses wrote **all the words of the Lord.**" Moses recorded in Deuteronomy 5:22: "**These words the Lord spake.**" David declared: "The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, and **his word** was upon my tongue" (2 Samuel 23:2). God instructed the prophet Jeremiah, "Behold, I have put **my words** in your mouth" (Jeremiah 1:9). Matthew asked: "Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God?" (Matthew 22:31).

Furthermore, in John 8:32, the Lord Himself is quoted as saying, "Ye shall **know** the truth, and the truth shall make you free." In 1 John 5:13, John indicated his purpose for writing: "These things have I written unto you, that ye may **know** that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God." These two verses are representative of the whole tone and tenor of Holy Writ relative to the attainability of knowledge. Suggesting that "because the Bible has come to us through human beings, our view of the divine origin of Scripture is not a matter of mathematical certainty," appears to be a deliberate and calculated attempt to suggest that it is impossible to **know** that God's Word **is** inspired. Instead, Christians simply must "accept it on faith." [Such a statement perpetuates the utterly false view which suggests that faith represents uncertainty, and is the opposite of knowledge. I have dealt with that erroneous concept elsewhere (see Thompson, 2002a, pp. 7-84).]

If, as Jesus said, truth is both knowable and able to save, why should Christians be intimidated into believing that certainty is beyond human grasp? If certainty is unattainable, then John obviously was wrong when he claimed that his readers could **know** that they possessed eternal life. According to the testimony of Scripture, a person not only can **know** a thing to be true, but he also can **know** that he **knows** it! This is a position that posits knowledge of, and confidence in, the inspiration of God's Word. When Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:21, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good," the obvious implication was that it is possible to "prove" (i.e., know) some things. The truth recorded in the Bible via inspiration is one of those things.

But the question obviously arises: If a position such as the one advocated above by John Clayton (which suggests that one cannot prove the Bible to be the inspired Word of God) is so plainly at odds with the teaching of the Bible itself, and is so readily refuted, why would anyone advocate it? While it is improper to suppose that all of those who hold such a position do so for the same reasons, a few of those reasons might include the following. First, in our "intellectual" age, it is easy to be intimidated into believing what the "scholars" have to say. This is an abiding problem, not just in religion, but in virtually all disciplines. If a man with formal training makes what appears to be a convincing case, it often is easier simply to accept his word as truth and adopt his position as correct, than to analyze the arguments and isolate the inconsistencies. Second, it may be that many espouse such a position because it is less threatening. If one cannot really be **certain** that his belief is the **only** correct one, then when he encounters another person who has a different view, he is not placed into a position of either having to correct someone else or be challenged (and possibly corrected) himself. If everyone has as much a chance of being right as the next fellow, then confrontations need not occur among people of varied beliefs. Third, some consider such a position a more "humble" position. In their eyes, if one claims to **know** that he is most assuredly **right** about this or that, he may be viewed as some sort of egoist. To some, apparently, making a claim to **know** a thing is tantamount to claiming infallibility. Although there likely are other reasons, these are at least a few of the reasons why men choose to adopt a position which suggests that one cannot **prove** the Bible to be the inspired Word of God.

That these reasons are invalid is readily seen from the Scriptures. Festus exclaimed: "Paul, thou art mad; thy much learning is turning thee mad" (Acts 26:24). Although Festus misjudged Paul on this occasion, his sentiment accurately describes many today who get too much of the wrong kind of learning. Paul warned Timothy to turn away from "knowledge which is falsely so called" (1 Timothy 6:20). Today, the church is rife with men who are being heard and believed because of their educational notoriety or secular accomplishments, when, in fact, they should be rejected for their false views (Romans 16:17). The Christian has not been given the option of choosing a philosophical posture that is more, or less, threatening than that found in the Scriptures. Since the New Testament plainly teaches that one can know and must preach truth (John 8:32; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 4:2), no philosophical system that teaches otherwise is acceptable. Humility is indeed a Christian virtue; however, humility is not an acceptable excuse to ignore or deny biblical directives. Few would question the humility of Paul, yet there has been no man who was more fully given over to a defense of the one true Faith than he (Philippians 1:16-17).

The scriptural view of the subject is well illustrated in Deuteronomy 29:29: "The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." Here, Moses makes the point that man has the ability to know some things—not all, but some. In fact, the context indicates that the Israelites **needed** to know the things revealed so they could keep God's law. When an Israelite learned the law of God, he possessed knowledge, and he could know with certainty that what he believed was the truth. He likewise knew that by keeping that law, he was pleasing to God. It should be obvious, then, that it is irrational to assert that all who claim to know anything are making a claim of infallibility. To profess knowledge of, and confidence in, the inspiration of the Scriptures is only to claim that what has been revealed for man's knowledge can be known, and that it is the only correct basis for biblical faith.

This position is not only logically sound and scripturally correct, but also turns out to be of immense practical value in a Christian's everyday life. "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine" is an expression of confidence that escapes the person who believes that the inspiration of God's Word cannot be proved. If one

cannot **know** if he **knows** the truth relative to the existence of God, the deity of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, and the salvation that is provided by the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross, then where is the assurance? An agnostic-type view such as that offered by Lewis, Garrett, and Clayton offers none. The apostle John responded contrariwise, however.

We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but he that was begotten of God keepeth himself, and the evil one toucheth him not. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know Him who is true, and that we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 5:18-20).

Without proof of the inspiration of God's Word, one is reduced to a dependency upon a kind of self-reliance that, in times of distress, can leave him spiritually destitute. When one's own talents and innate limitations let him down, as they so often do, whence may one turn who has not the ability to ascertain truth? Can he go to a God who "may" or "may not" exist? Can he turn to a book that "may" or "may not" be the Word of that "probabilistic" God? Can he really find a friend in a Jesus who "may" or "may not" have been victorious over the same trials and temptations? What about when one finds himself in the pit of gloom and disaster? It was no agnostic who stood confidently on the creaking deck of the ill-fated Alexandrian ship and said:

I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God whose I am, whom also I serve ...wherefore sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it hath been spoken unto me (Acts 27:22-25).

Is not the fact that there is a God in heaven Who cares for the souls of men, a powerful assurance that is able to buoy up the sinking ship of life? Where is the victory for the Christian defeated by disease—if the hope of eternal life is based solely upon "probability"? There is no comfort in thinking that our beloved friends and relatives who already have died in The Faith "probably" will go into the presence of a God Who may, in fact, not even exist! Nor is there any comfort in our own unsubstantiated "belief" that we, too, "might" make it to heaven. How would we even know there was a heaven—without the inspired Word of God on the subject?

And what about freedom from the scourge of personal sin? Although one may acknowledge that the blood of Jesus has washed away his sins (1 John 1:7), a sense of personal guilt sometimes lingers. The belief that the Word of God "might" be telling us the truth about the efficacy of Christ's blood, is an impotent eraser for removing the soul's stains of guilt. Man is not intended to flounder in such insecurity, for salvation is spoken of in terms of surety: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth ...having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Peter 1:22-23). The fact of the matter reaches even to the preventative level. The God Who does exist, and Who has pledged through His inspired Word that He will provide a way of escape in every episode of temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13), has given His solemn word that He will in no wise fail us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5)! These words express the value of biblical confidence in the personal lives of those who will commit themselves to God's care. Whence comes that confidence—if it cannot be "proved" that the Bible is God's inspired Word?

### WHERE DOES ALL OF THIS EVENTUALLY LEAD?

In their book, *The Crux of the Matter*, Childers, Foster, and Reese made the interesting (albeit somewhat ironic) observation that "wrong ideas eventually end up taking you to the wrong places" (2001, pp. 195-196). Truer words were never spoken. And "wrong places" happens to be exactly where a denial of the inspiration and authority of the Bible "eventually ends up taking you." As Lindsell observed: "...[O]nce inerrancy goes, it leads, however slowly, to a further denial of other biblical truths" (1976, p. 203). It certainly does!

Consider, as just one example (out of many that could be offered), the damage that has been inflicted upon the Genesis account of Creation, and, for that matter, the very authorship of the Pentateuch itself. In more "enlightened" circles, it has become popular to deny the mosaic authorship of the first five books of the Bible, and to attribute them instead to various editors or "redactors"—a position known as the Documentary Hypothesis.

In 1979, John Willis, professor of Bible at Abilene Christian University, authored a commentary on Genesis in which he suggested that Moses alone did not author the Pentateuch, but that it instead was the combined effort of several authors whose works were pooled later by a redactor (editor). Willis wrote: "The author (or authors) responsible for this present form of the book made use of several earlier oral and/or written sources of some sort" (p. 18). In fact, Willis even suggested that the book of Genesis, in its present form, could not have been assembled any earlier than the time of the judges (p. 229). Such thinking, of course, is right in line with certain variants of the Documentary Hypothesis, as advocated by proponents of higher criticism.

Following this same line of thought, two years later in 1981, Neal Buffaloe and N. Patrick Murray co-authored a booklet, *Creationism and Evolution*, in which they addressed the type of literature they perceived Genesis 1-11 to be.

In other words, the Genesis poems are significant not because they tell us how things **were**, or the way things happened long ago. Rather, they are talking about man's situation **now**—the eternal importance of man's relationship to God, and the primordial disruption of that fellowship that lies at the root of human nature and history. When we read the ancient Hebrew accounts of the creation—Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden, man's "fall" by listening to the seductive words of a serpent, and God's Sabbath rest—we must understand...that "these things never were, but always are. ...The stories are told and retold, recorded and read and reread not for their **wasness** but for their **isness** (p. 8, emp. in orig.).

John Clayton, speaking of Exodus 20:11, which records God's creation of "the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that in them is" in six days, remarked that the acceptance of this verse by Christians as literal history is "a very shallow conclusion" that is "inconsistent with the Genesis record as well as other parts of the Bible" (1976a, 3[10]:5). This is the case, he explained, because "Exodus 20:11 is a quote of Genesis 2 and **Genesis 2 is not a historical account**" (1979a, 7[4]:3, emp. added).

Approximately a decade after Clayton began calling into question the historicity of the Genesis account, another progressive creationist, Davis A. Young, joined in the fray when he wrote: "I suggest that we will be on the right track if we stop treating Genesis 1 and the flood story as scientific and **historic** reports" (1987, 49:303, emp. added). Three years later, in 1990, he added:

The most acceptable view of Genesis 1 does not regard it as a chronicle of successive events during the first seven days (however long) of cosmic history. Rather, Genesis 1 should be regarded as a highly structured theological cosmology that extensively employs a royal-political metaphor because of the great importance of kingship in the world of ancient Israel. In contrast to the pagan, polytheistic myths of the cultures that surrounded the infant nation of Israel, Genesis 1 portrays God as the sovereign King who calls into existence by his royal decrees those creatures that the nations sinfully worshiped and the myths deified. The days are part of the literary portrayal of the royal council of divine creation and may be employed analogously to a temporal succession of decrees by an earthly kind. The days are days in the sphere of divine action, a sphere that transcends time, not the first seven days of cosmic history. Genesis 1 is therefore a theological statement and should not be used to answer scientific questions about the age and historical unfolding of the cosmos that would have been alien to the Israelites. Genesis 1 tells us that God is the Creator, but it does not tell us when or how he created (pp. 58-59, parenthetical item in orig.).

In 1996, two important books were produced by leading authors, and subsequently published by highly respected companies. The first was by Karen Armstrong, the *New York Times* best-selling author of *A History of God*. In her book, *In the Beginning: A New Interpretation of Genesis* (published by Ballantine), she defended the standard Graf-Wellhausen documentary hypothesis, which suggests that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, but instead was produced by a multiplicity of authors and/or redactors, including those known as J,E,D, and P. In writing about those authors' attempts to produce the book of Genesis, she stated:

The authors of Genesis do not give us historical information about life in Palestine during the second millennium BCE. In fact, as scholars have shown, they knew nothing about the period. **Frequently, they made mistakes.... Our authors are not interested in historical accuracy....** The tales of Genesis have a timeless quality because they address those regions of the spirit that remain opaque to us and yet exert an irresistible fascination.... Yet precisely because the authors of Genesis are dealing with such fundamental and difficult matters, they give us few precise teachings. There are no glib or facile messages in Genesis. **It is impossible to find a clear theology in its pages.**

...[T]he editors of Genesis seem to have introduced their readers to P's version of a serene and omnipotent deity only to dismantle it in later chapters. The God who dominates the first chapter of the Bible has disappeared from the human scene by the end of Genesis. Story after story reveals a much more disturbing God: as we shall see, the omnipotent God of the first chapter soon loses control of his creation; the immutable deity is seen to change his mind and even to feel threatened by humanity. The benevolent Creator becomes a fearful Destroyer. The impartial God who saw all his creatures as "good" now has favorites and teaches his protégés to behave in an equally unfair manner to their dependents. **It is impossible to come away from the Book of Genesis with a coherent notion of God** (1996, p. 13, emp. added).

The second significant volume published that year, *The Bible as Literature*, was authored by John B. Gabel, Charles B. Wheeler, and Anthony York, and was published by Oxford University Press. Gabel and his co-authors likewise accepted the Graf-Wellhausen documentary hypothesis, and therefore wrote:

**This hypothesis explains certain obvious repetitions and contradictions....** Efforts to reconcile contradictions or explain away problems have been made and will be made by persons who feel that the integrity of the text (which for them means its divine authority) must be preserved at all costs. The costs, however, tend to be rather high. Whenever there are contradictions or other problems, the documentary theory usually presents a more reasonable alternative, and it is accepted by a great many scholars who do not feel their faith threatened by the possibility that **the Bible text, being a product of human history**, experienced some adventures in reaching the point where it is now... (1996, pp. 112-113, parenthetical comment in orig., emp. added).

They then asserted that there are two completely different (and contradictory) "creation accounts" in Genesis 1 and 2, and that the Genesis "stories" drew from a "shared tradition" with earlier works (such as the so-called Gilgamesh epic and the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*). [For an examination and refutation of the idea that pagan mythology such as the Gilgamesh epic influenced biblical writers, see Brantley, 1993b. For an examination and refutation of the idea that the Genesis account of creation was influenced by, and contains elements of, ancient pagan myths such as the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, see Brantley, 1995, pp. 75-92.] The authors continued:

Until archaeology and the recovery of ancient languages made it possible to go behind biblical narratives, there was no way for a reader of, say, Genesis 8:6-12 to know that the author was drawing upon an older narrative tradition for details in his story....

Since the detail about sending out birds from the ark is found in none of the earlier narratives except the Gilgamesh epic, **we know that this is the version adapted for the Hebrew Bible, where all the key elements of the tradition are found....** The use of a shared tradition, and especially its adaptation to the new use, is perhaps best shown in the creation story of Genesis 1. This is a reworking of the Babylonian creation "*Enuma Elish*," sometimes called the "*Babylonian Genesis*" (pp. 49,50, emp. added).

Then, late in 1999, Jeffery L. Sheler, a religion writer for *U.S. News & World Report*, authored a significant—and highly publicized—volume, *Is the Bible True?* He, too, defended the Graf-Wellhausen position, and suggested:

Nowhere has the question of literary genre been more central than in the wrangling over the Bible's veracity than in regard to what many scholars refer to as the "primordial history" in the opening chapters of Genesis. What are we to make of the stories of creation and of Noah's ark and the worldwide flood? Should they be taken as literal history, as religious myth, or perhaps as some kind of literary hybrid that combines features of both?...

While most biblical scholars consider the story of the flood a myth or a folktale, or assign it to some other category of literature that allows for an allegorical interpretation, many conservatives have little difficulty imagining that an omnipotent God could pull off precisely what the Genesis story describes. **As with the creation narrative, however, the evidence and arguments from science stack up overwhelmingly against a literal interpretation of the flood story....** [T]here is little doubt that a lack of compelling evidence makes a purely literal reading of the Bible's primordial history a most difficult position to sustain.... Today, a growing number of conservative scholars, harking back to Augustine, are convinced that **more nuanced views of the biblical creation account are required to accommodate the knowledge revealed in science** (pp. 48,54,55,52, emp. added).

Think of the implications of these kinds of statements, and the implications of the positions they are intended to uphold. If this type of thinking is correct, then when Jesus stated, “if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; **for he wrote of me**” (John 5:46, emp. added), He obviously erred, since Moses, according to the documentary hypothesis, most assuredly did **not** write Genesis.

Furthermore, Genesis 1-11, so we are told, cannot be accepted as literal history, but must be “reinterpreted” as: (a) mythical; (b) spiritual; (c) a royal-political metaphor; (d) a discussion of “things that never were”; (e) a commentary on man’s condition **now**; (f) a “priestly discussion” for the Israelite people **then**; (g) etc. That being the case, when Jesus stated in Mark 10:6 regarding God’s creation of Adam and Eve, “But from the beginning of the creation, male and female made he them,” He once again erred, since Adam and Eve “never really were.” [One cannot help but wonder how advocates of these types of positions might respond to the second half of Christ’s statement in John 5:47 when He said of Moses: “If ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?” Toss out the mosaic authorship of Genesis, and you toss out the deity of Christ right along with it!]

In a similar fashion, consider the damage inflicted on the inspired writers. When Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:45-47, “The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.... The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven,” he, too, must have erred, since there was no “first man Adam.” [Again, one wonders how advocates of these types of position would respond to the following? The Creation itself is attributed to the word of God (Hebrews 11:3), and Peter referred to the emerging of the Earth as an event that actually occurred (2 Peter 3:5b). There was no question in Paul’s mind about God’s fiat creation (2 Corinthians 4:6), or the fact that man had been made in the image of God (1 Corinthians 11:7). Paul intentionally drew a direct comparison between the “first Adam” and the “second Adam.” If the **first** Adam (of Genesis 1) was a myth, then is the **last** (Jesus Christ) also a myth? Are advocates of these types of positions really willing to go this far with their doctrine?]

“Wrong ideas **do** eventually end up taking you to the wrong places.” And, yes, “once inerrancy goes,” it **does** lead to “a further denial of other biblical truths.” How much additional evidence is required, aside from that presented above, to document the truthfulness of such statements? And how much more evidence would one need in order to come to the conclusion that the abandonment of the inerrancy and authority of the Scriptures is deadly serious and eternally dangerous? As Jesus Himself said: “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). If we end up being rejected by the Lord, we obviously have ended up in the “wrong place.”

## CONCLUSION

Our plea always has been that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and that it is our pattern for all that we do in His service. In the Old Testament, we are told that Ezra and others read the law and “caused the people to understand” (Nehemiah 8:7). We find that “they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading” (Nehemiah 8:8). Jesus promised His apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth (John 16:13-14). He did, and we have in the New Testament the record of that truth. Peter assured us that we have “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3). Why do some suggest that we need to add to, delete from, or “reinterpret” God’s inspired Word? They say we have “misunderstood” all along. We deny their claim, and reconfirm our faith in, and love for the Bible as God’s inspired, inerrant Word. If we abandon inerrancy, we have no objective standard upon which to base either our faith or our actions. Paul’s statement that “every scripture is inspired of God” does not leave the matter open for opinion. He did not intend for it to.





## CHAPTER 6

### ANSWERING ALLEGED BIBLE DISCREPANCIES AND CONTRADICTIONS [PART I]

Through my mailbox in a year's time come hundreds of letters (and that does not count the thousands of e-mail messages!). Some are from friends offering a word of thanks or encouragement. Some are from people whose faith—for a variety of reasons—is faltering and needs to be bolstered. Some are from students, writing to request information they can use in the preparation of term papers, speeches, or debates. Some are from folks who are searching for answers to various questions they might have, or that they have been asked by friends or neighbors. And some are from those who are openly hostile, and who are writing, not to make a legitimate inquiry, but to challenge, disagree, or argue. In this chapter, and the one that follows, I would like to discuss items from letters in the latter category.

It has never been unusual for me to receive frequent inquiries related to alleged Bible discrepancies and/or contradictions. As a result, I have expended considerable time and effort in researching the various charges that frequently are made against the biblical text. As I was writing this book, it occurred to me that perhaps the reader might benefit from some of that research.

First, I would like to discuss the methodology and principles involved in answering alleged biblical discrepancies and contradictions because a knowledge of such can be of immense value to those who are in need of such answers, and who are desirous of building, sustaining, and defending a rock-solid faith.

Second, in the next chapter, I would like to offer some specific examples of how alleged biblical discrepancies and/or contradictions can be answered. It is my hope that those who read these two chapters will have their own faith strengthened, will then be able to assist others in strengthening their faith, and, last but not least, will learn what is involved in a proper defense of The Faith against those who would attack, denigrate, or ridicule it.

#### INTRODUCTION

Opponents of religion frequently have boasted of their ability to remove the Christian's foundation of faith by hacking away at the Bible. They believe that by chopping incessantly in the forest of inspiration with the cynical axe of criticism, they will be able to expunge the Bible from the masses, and banish God from His own Universe. Over 2,500 years ago, King Jehoiakim took his penknife, slashed the Old Testament Scriptures to pieces and tossed them into a fire (Jeremiah 36:22-23). During the Middle Ages, attempts were made to keep the Bible from the man on the street. In fact, those caught translating or distributing the Scriptures often were subjected to imprisonment, torture, and even death. Centuries later, the French philosopher Voltaire (1694-1778) boastfully declared that there would not be a copy of the Bible on Earth within 100 years of his death. And in 1795, Thomas Paine arrogantly concluded in *The Age of Reason*:

I have now gone through the Bible, as a man would go through the woods with an axe on his shoulder and fell trees. Here they lie; and the priests, if they can, may replant them. They may, perhaps, stick them in the ground, but they will never make them grow (p. 151).

The axe used by Paine, Voltaire, and others like them is most often the alleged discrepancies or contradictions that they brazenly brag can be demonstrated on practically every page and in nearly every major premise of biblical teaching. Dennis McKinsey, in his book, *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Errancy*, stated:

Every analyst of the Bible should realize that the Book is a veritable miasma of contradictions, inconsistencies, inaccuracies, poor science, bad math, inaccurate geography, immoralities, degenerate heroes, false prophecies, boring repetitions, childish superstitions, silly miracles, and dry-as-dust discourse. **But contradictions remain the most obvious, the most potent, the most easily proven, and the most common problem to plague the Book** (1995, p. 71, emp. added).

Steve Wells, author of the *Skeptic's Annotated Bible*, has claimed that the Bible is “unworthy of belief” because of its numerous contradictions and false prophecies (2001). And Dan Barker (a denominational-preacher-turned-infidel) wrote in his book, *Losing Faith in Faith*: “People who are free of theological bias notice that the bible contains hundreds of discrepancies.... The bible is a flawed book” (1992, pp. 164,177).

Though the Bible has withstood centuries of abuse at the hands of infidels, the anvil of God’s Word rings of the skeptic’s blows much more often (and louder) today. Whereas in the past, the Bible’s integrity was attacked only occasionally, and by people who usually were in the minority, today we live in a society that is much less “believing.” Thomas Paine’s denial of biblical truthfulness in the late 18th century led to his English publisher’s imprisonment. Today, Thomas Paine is hailed as a “scholarly, enlightened freethinker.” A century before Paine, a Scottish student named Thomas Aikenhead was hanged for teaching Benedict Spinoza’s idea that Moses did not write the Pentateuch (Thiede and D’Ancona, 1996, p. 157). In the twenty-first century, however, if one does not accept the fundamental principles of Spinoza’s theory, he is considered a “non intellectual” (see Brown, 1999, p. 167). Even when my parents were growing up in the 1930s and 1940s, relatively few people in the United States questioned the existence of God or doubted that the Bible was a special book from God. Yet today, people are asked to believe in the inerrancy of Scripture while living in a much more cynical society. Thus, there is an even greater need to answer the allegations levied against the Bible.

The question concerning alleged discrepancies in the Bible is serious, and it deserves our utmost attention for at least three reasons. First, the doctrine of full or complete inspiration is at stake. By definition, God is perfect, and if the Bible is from God (as it claims to be—2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21), then it cannot contain contradictions or discrepancies. The Bible is either from God (and thus flawless in its original autographs) or it contains mistakes. There is no middle ground. Second, if there are some errors that are apparent in the Bible, there may be many others that are not. If the Bible contains contradictions, then one could not trust the accounts recorded therein. Third, if the Bible contains contradictions (and thus is not inspired), then the foundation of Christianity is destroyed, since one would be unable to distinguish between what is of man and what is of God. Gaussen emphasized the seriousness of this subject when he wrote: “First of all, we acknowledge that, were it true that there were, as they tell us, erroneous facts and contradictory narratives in the Holy Scriptures, one must renounce any attempt to maintain their plenary inspiration” (1949, p. 207). Simply put, if the Word of God contains legitimate errors, Christianity collapses like a house of cards. And if it is a genuine faith to which Christians cling—faith that is backed by evidence (cf. 1 Peter 3:15)—then the hundreds of alleged contradictions charged to the Bible must be both answerable and answered.

## **PRINCIPLES FOR DEALING WITH ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS**

### **Innocent Until Proven Guilty**

One of the fundamental principles of nearly any study or investigation is that of being “innocent until proven guilty.” A teacher cannot justifiably assume that the student who makes a perfect score on a test without studying “must have cheated.” It might be that he had received all of the information elsewhere at another time. It could be that he learned everything well enough in class that he did not have to study at home. Or, it may be that he simply guessed correctly on the questions he did not know. Similarly, a policeman is not justified in assuming that because a murder was committed by a man wearing green tennis shoes, the first person the policeman finds wearing green tennis shoes is the murderer.

In our daily lives, we generally consider a person to be truthful until we have evidence that he or she has lied. At the same time, when we read a historical document or book, the same rule should apply. It is considered to be truthful until it can be shown otherwise. A book is to be presumed internally consistent until it can be shown conclusively that it is contradictory. This approach has been accepted throughout literary history, and still is accepted today in most venues. Respected law professor, Simon Greenleaf, dealt with this principle in his book, *The Testimony of the Evangelists*:

The rule of municipal law on this subject is familiar, and applies with equal force to all ancient writings, whether documentary or otherwise; and as it comes first in order, in the prosecution of these inquiries, it may, for the sake of mere convenience, be designated as our first rule: "Every document, apparently ancient, coming from the proper repository or custody, and bearing on its face no evident marks of forgery, **the law presumes to be genuine, and devolves on the opposing party the burden of proving it to be otherwise**" (1995, p. 16, emp. added).

The accepted way to approach ancient writings is to assume innocence, not guilt. The Bible deserves this same treatment.

### **Possibilities Will Suffice**

If we believe that the Bible is innocent until proven guilty, then any **possible** answer should be good enough to nullify the charge of error. This principle does not allow for just **any** answer, but any **possible** answer. When one studies the Bible and comes across passages that may seem contradictory, one does not necessarily have to pin down the exact solution in order to show their truthfulness. The Bible student need only show the possibility of a harmonization between passages that appear to conflict in order to negate the force of the charge that a Bible contradiction really exists.

The alleged contradiction surrounding Mark 2:25-26 illustrates the value of this principle. While Jesus and His disciples were strolling through a field one Sabbath, they plucked ears of grain and ate the kernels. The hypercritical Pharisees found fault with this act—calling it work—and accused the disciples of breaking the Sabbath law. The Lord responded to their charge by asking: "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat, except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?" Critics compare Christ's reply to 1 Samuel 21 and cry "Contradiction!"

The difficulty centers on the question of which levitical minister was present when David ate the showbread. Whereas Jesus mentioned **Abiathar**, 1 Samuel 21:1 states: "Then came David to Nob to **Ahimelech** the priest...." Who was correct—Jesus or Samuel? No fewer than three answers are possible. First, it may be that the two names belonged to the same man. Such an answer is not impossible, and finds analogy in Scripture. For example, Moses' father-in-law was known both as both Reuel and Jethro (Exodus 2:18; 3:1). And Peter is sometimes called Peter, Simon Peter, Simon, or Cephas (Matthew 14:28; 16:16; 17:25; John 1:42). It may be that Abiathar and Ahimelech were the same person.

A second possible solution to this "problem" passage may be found in the fact that Jesus did not say Abiathar was the priest who ministered to David, but simply that the event occurred during the lifetime of Abiathar. This is in agreement with the text of 1 Samuel, which mentions a priest named Abiathar several times. Thus, the phrase "in the days of" may not be intended to modify Abiathar's **priesthood**, but rather his **entire life**.

Third, notice that Samuel does not give the name of the **high** priest when Ahimelech assisted David. Samuel mentioned a **priest** named Ahimelech, whereas Christ mentioned a **high priest** named Abiathar. These were two different offices in the Mosaic age.

Which of these three solutions is correct? Actually, in the absence of more information, a definite answer seems impossible. However, all of the above answers possess merit. Any one is sufficient to answer the charge of error. Over a century ago, the reputable and conservative Bible scholar J.W. McGarvey commented on this point as follows:

We are not bound to show the truth of the given hypothesis; but only that it may be true. If it is at all possible, then it is possible that no contradiction exists; if it is probable, then it is probable that no contradiction exists.... It follows, also, that when there is an appearance of contradiction between two writers, **common justice requires that before we pronounce one or both of them false we should exhaust our ingenuity in searching for some probable supposition on the ground of which they may both be true**. The better the general reputation of the writers, the more imperative is this obligation, lest we condemn as false those who are entitled to respectful consideration (1886, part 2, p. 32, emp. added).

Again, the apologist does not have to know the exact solution to an alleged contradiction; he need only show one or more possibilities of harmonization. We act by this principle in the courtroom, in our treatment of

various historical books, as well as in everyday-life situations. It is only fair, then, that we show the Bible the same courtesy by exhausting the search for possible harmony between passages before pronouncing one or both accounts false.

### What is a Contradiction?

One of the main problems in a discussion concerning alleged contradictions is that most people do not understand what constitutes a genuine contradiction. Ninety-nine percent of all alleged contradictions likely could be resolved simply by acknowledging the real meaning of the word contradiction. What is a contradiction? In its briefest form, the Law of Contradiction, as stated in W. Stanley Jevons' *Elementary Lessons in Logic*, says: "Nothing can both be and not be" (1928, p. 117). The famous Greek philosopher Aristotle amplified this definition by suggesting that there are three areas to which this maxim is applied. He stated: "That the same thing should at the same time both be and not be for the same person and in the same respect is impossible" (see Arndt, 1955, p. x). Although this definition may seem somewhat complicated at first glance, it actually is quite elementary. For example, a door may be open, or a door may be shut, but the same door may not be both open and shut at the same time. With reference to the door, shut and open are opposites, but they are not contradictory unless it is affirmed that they characterize the same object at the same time. So it is very important to recognize that mere opposites or differences do not necessitate a contradiction. For there to be a bona fide contradiction, one must be referring to the **same person, place, or thing in the same sense at the same time**.

Suppose that someone says, "Terry Anthony is rich," and "Terry Anthony is poor." Do those two statements contradict each other? Not necessarily. How do you know the same Terry Anthony is under consideration in both statements? It could be that Terry Anthony in Oklahoma is rich, but Terry Anthony in Tennessee is poor. The same person, place, or thing must be under consideration.

Furthermore, the same time period must be under consideration. Terry Anthony could have made a fortune in his early twenties as a business consultant and been very rich, but after a terrible stock-market crash, he could have lost everything he owned. At one time, then, he was rich, but now he is poor. The two statements could have been accurately describing his life at the time each was made.

Also, the statements must be talking about the same sense. Terry Anthony could have more money than anyone else in the entire world, but if he is not following God, then he is poor. On the other hand, he could have absolutely no money, but be rich in spiritual blessings. After all, "Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith" (James 2:5)? Answering these three questions helps tremendously in resolving the contradiction controversy.

These examples reveal that **a mere difference does not make a contradiction**. For a thing to both **be** and **not be** for the same person, place, or thing in the same sense at the same time is a contradiction. But if it cannot be shown that these three things are all the same, then one cannot honestly say there is a contradiction. It **never** is legitimate to **assume** a contradiction until every possible means of harmonization has been exhausted.

Consider, then, how the proper understanding of what a contradiction is can help solve allegedly conflicting passages of Scripture.

### Same Person, Place, or Thing

The book of Acts records the death of James in Acts 12, while later (Acts 15), James is prominent at the Jerusalem conference. Is this a contradiction? Not at all. The James murdered in Acts 12 was the brother of John (v. 2), the son of Zebedee (Matthew 4:21), while the James of Acts 15 was Jesus' half-brother (Matthew 13:55; Acts 12:17; 15:13; Galatians 1:19).

Harry Rimmer, author of *The Harmony of Science and Scripture*, wrote about an infidel he knew while growing up who once suggested that he had discovered a "contradiction" in the Bible (1936, pp. 193-194). The unbeliever noted that since Noah's ark (described in Genesis 6) was 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high (or 450 feet x 75 feet x 45 feet) and would have weighed several tons when fully loaded, it was preposterous to believe that the priests could have carried it across the Jordan River as described in Joshua 3! Impossible—thus a clear-cut contradiction, right? Not at all. The critic's inability to distinguish

between the **ark of Noah** and the **Ark of the Covenant** made answering his argument a simple matter for even the most elementary Bible student. Obviously, different objects were under consideration. The priests carried the Ark of the Covenant—not the ark of Noah (cf. Genesis 6:14-16; Exodus 25:10-15). It is critically important, first, to make sure that differences between two or more passages are not the result of different people, places, or things being discussed.

### Same Time Reference

Some time ago, I visited a skeptic's Website in which he indicated that Genesis 1:31 and Genesis 6:5-6 were contradictory. Supposedly, a discrepancy is evident since in Genesis 1 the Bible records, "God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good," and then in Genesis 6 it says, "And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart." The Lord could not be both satisfied and dissatisfied with His creation, could He? He certainly could—if the statements were not referring to the same time. It just so happens that the events, though only five chapters apart in the Bible, are separated—chronologically speaking—by hundreds of years.

Another skeptic charged the Bible with making a mistake after comparing Genesis 6:9 with Genesis 9:21. In the first verse, Noah is described as being "a just man, perfect in his generations." In the second passage, Noah's drunkenness is described. How is it that Noah could be "a just man," while also being a drunk? The same person, admittedly, is under consideration in both passages. The problem with this line of reasoning is that the two verses are separated by more than one hundred years. Furthermore, one also would be incorrect in concluding from Genesis 9 that Noah was a drunkard. He may have continued to "walk with God" throughout his life, despite his struggles with sin (cf. Hebrews 11:7,13).

### Same Sense

If any book is to be understood correctly, it is imperative that recognition be given to the different senses in which words may be used. For example, in Philippians 3:12 Paul wrote that he had not yet been "made perfect" (ASV), but then, just three verses later, he indicated that he was "perfect." How do we harmonize Paul's denial of perfection in verse 12 with his affirmation in verse 15 that he was perfect? The former "perfection" is a faultlessness and excellence that cannot be expected in this life. Paul had not yet attained a state of total holiness and dedication when no additional progress would be possible or needed. The "perfection" or "maturity" of verse 15 was "used to mean mature in mind, as opposed to one who is a beginner in a subject" (Barclay, 1959, p. 81).

Normally, terms are used literally, but they sometimes can be employed figuratively as well. In Matthew 11:14, Jesus referred to John the Baptist as "Elijah," yet on another occasion the forerunner of Christ plainly denied that he was Elijah (John 1:21). These verses are reconciled quite easily when we recognize that even though John was not **literally** Elijah (physically reincarnated), he was the **spiritual antitype** of that great prophet. He prepared the way for Christ "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17).

On occasion, a biblical passage also may appear to be in conflict with a historical fact because it employs language in a different sense than the way we normally use it. Such likely is the case with Daniel 2:39. In this passage (2:31-45), Daniel was interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's prophetic dream. The most widely accepted view of the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which is backed by a vast amount of historical and archaeological evidence, is that the gold, silver, brass, and iron/clay sections of the statue refer respectively to the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman empires, respectively. Since Daniel stated that the second kingdom (representing the Medo-Persian Empire) would be "inferior" (2:39) to the first (Babylon), critics claim that Daniel was historically inaccurate since the Medo-Persian Empire was larger and richer than the Babylonian Empire. Surely Daniel would not refer to a kingdom as being **inferior** when it was larger than the one spoken of as being **superior**.

Could Daniel have been referring to the second kingdom, and therefore been using the term "inferior" in a different sense than the way we most frequently use the word? Most certainly. Keep in mind that the reference to the second kingdom being inferior does not mean that it necessarily was inferior in all respects. H.C. Leupold mentioned the fact that the Persian Empire was inferior in the sense of influence on the rest of the world. Babylonian culture was dominant in that part of the world for around 2,000 years, and is well

known for many of its accomplishments in architecture and science (1989, p. 116). The truth is, in Daniel 2:39, the prophet never mentioned **what** was inferior about the second kingdom; rather, he merely stated that **something** would be inferior. The key to understanding this supposed historical discrepancy (and many others) is to understand that the writer used the word in a different sense than the way we most often think of it.

### **Supplementation Does not Equal Contradiction**

Another common-sense principle that is useful in approaching alleged contradictions surrounds one's understanding of supplementation. Suppose you are telling a story about the time you and a friend went to an Atlanta Braves baseball game. You mention what great defense the Braves played, and your friend tells about their clutch hits in the final innings of the game. Is there a contradiction just because your friend mentions the Braves' offense but you mention only the defense? No. He is simply adding to (or supplementing) your story to make it more complete. That happens in the Bible quite often.

As an example, in Matthew 14:21 the Bible says that Jesus fed about five thousand men, and that He also fed women and children. But in Mark 6:44, it says that He fed about five thousand men. Mark never mentions the women and children. Is that a contradiction? No, of course not. Did Jesus feed about 5,000 men? Yes, and that makes Mark correct. Did Jesus break the loaves for about 5,000 men, along with some women and children? Yes, which makes Matthew right, too. Just because one account "adds" some things does not mean that the accounts contradict each other.

Again, Matthew 27:57-60 says that Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus' body and placed it in his tomb, yet John 19:38-40 says that Joseph **and Nicodemus** put the body in the tomb. Do they contradict each other? Certainly not! If one text said **only** Joseph did it or **only** Nicodemus did it, then a contradiction might exist. But as it stands, John simply "adds" some facts to the story. Supplementary accounts are not contradictory.

### **Look Who's Talking**

Another principle that must be remembered when dealing with various biblical passages is that the Bible reports numerous uninspired statements. Even though "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16), not everything that the inspired writers recorded was a true statement. For example, after God created Adam, He told him not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil lest he die (Genesis 2:17). Yet, when the serpent approached Eve, he "informed" her that she would not die if she ate of this forbidden fruit (3:4). Obviously, Satan was not inspired by God to say, "You will not surely die." In fact, as we learn later, he actually lied (John 8:44). However, when Moses recorded the events that took place in Eden hundreds of years later, he wrote by inspiration of God (cf. Luke 24:44; John 5:46). When Jesus healed a demoniac, some of the Pharisees accused Him of casting out demons, not by the power of God, but by the power of "Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons" (Matthew 12:24). Like Moses, Matthew did not lie, but instead merely reported a lie. The writers of the Bible are in no way responsible for the inaccurate statements that are recorded therein. Whether the statements were true or false, they reported them accurately.

The above examples are quite basic: Satan's statement and the Pharisees' allegations clearly were false. But what about instances where statements are made by individuals who do not seem "as bad" as these? I once read an article by a gentleman who was defending a doctrine by citing various verses in the book of Job. The problem was that these verses blatantly contradicted other passages in the Bible. This man was mistaken in his understanding of the biblical text because he never took into consideration one of the fundamental rules of interpretation—knowing who is speaking; he simply cited all statements as being true. One who studies the book of Job must realize that it is an inspired book that contains many **uninspired** statements. For instance, we know that Job's wife was incorrect when she told him to "curse God and die" (Job 2:9). We also know that many statements made by Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were incorrect. Nine of the forty-two chapters in the book were speeches by these "miserable comforters" (16:2) whom God said had "not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has" (42:7). Clearly, then, one never should quote these men and claim the statement as an inspired truth (unless, of course, an inspired man verified it as being true—cf. 1 Corinthians 3:19).

## The Golden Rule

A final rule to keep in mind when interpreting alleged contradictory passages is that we need to be as fair with the Bible as we wish others to be toward us. Suppose you mentioned to a friend at work that you woke up at sunrise. How would you feel if your coworker responded by saying, “You, sir, are a moron. The Sun does not rise! That’s just the Earth rotating on its axis.”? No doubt, you would think this person had some serious problems because it is common knowledge that the Sun does not **literally** rise in the east; however, people have no problem understanding the real meaning of this comment. We call this “phenomenal” language—language that is used in everyday speech to refer to ordinary phenomena. On occasion, the Bible also uses phenomenal language. In Psalm 50:1, the writer described the Sun as rising, and in 1 Corinthians 15:6 Paul described some of the Christians who had died as having “fallen asleep.” No one would accuse us of making a scientific mistake when we say that the Sun will rise, or that a dead person has “fallen asleep.” In the same way, the Bible should not be accused of containing mistakes simply because it uses the same type of language. So, remember, the Bible regularly describes things as they appear, and not in scientific terms—just as you do in casual conversation.

Having set forth these nine foundational principles, the groundwork is complete. Let us now turn our attention to answering some of the alleged contradictions and/or discrepancies that skeptics have proposed as insurmountable.

## THE REALITY OF COPYISTS’ ERRORS

From time to time, a person reading the Bible will come across names or numbers in two or more passages that seem to contradict each other. After thoroughly studying the context of the passages in order to make certain that the assumed contradiction is not just a misunderstanding of the text, the reader then concludes that the passages do indeed contradict one another. For example, 2 Kings 24:8 says that Jehoiachin succeeded his father as the nineteenth king of Judah at the age of **eighteen**, whereas 2 Chronicles 36:9 informs us that he was “**eight** years old when he became king.” The honest person must admit that these two passages are in disagreement. The question that must be asked is: Do such disagreements indicate that the Bible is not the inspired Word of God? No, they do not.

The fact is, differences within two or more biblical accounts **may** be the result of copyists’ errors. Oftentimes, modern man forgets that whenever duplicates of the Old Testament Scriptures were needed, copies had to be made by hand—a painstaking, time-consuming task requiring extreme concentration and special working conditions. In time, an elite group of scribes, known as the Masoretes, arose just for this purpose. Norman Geisler and William Nix, in their classic work on critical biblical issues, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, observed:

The Masoretic period (flourished c. A.D. 500-1000) of Old Testament manuscript copying indicates a complete review of established rules, a deep reverence for the Scriptures, and a systematic renovation of transmission techniques.... Copies were made by an official class of sacred scribes who labored under strict rules (1986, pp. 354,467; cf. also pp. 371,374,380).

The Masoretes went above and beyond the “call of duty” in order to make the most accurate copies humanly possible. Out of respect for the Word of God, these copyists took numerous precautions to “guarantee” precise duplication. As Eddie Hendrix noted:

When a scribe finally completed the laborious task of copying it with a catalog of detailed information about that book, the catalog listed the number of verses, words, and letters that should occur in the book. The catalog also listed the word and the letter that should fall in the middle of the book. Such minute checks contributed to a high degree of copying accuracy (1976, p. 5).

Anyone who has studied the exacting conditions under which the Masoretes worked, and the lengths to which they went to ensure fidelity in their copies of the Scriptures, could attest to the fact that their goal was to produce accurate copies—even to the point of reproducing errors already present in the much older copies from which they were working. The Masoretes were some of the world’s greatest perfectionists. They were, nevertheless, still human.



There are at least seven important ways in which a copyist might change the text accidentally, including such actions as: (a) omissions of letters, words, or whole lines; (b) unwarranted repetitions; (c) transposition (the reversal of two letters or words); (d) errors of memory; (e) errors of the ear; (f) errors of the eye; and (g) errors of judgment (Geisler and Nix, 1986, pp. 469-473).

Such errors, especially before the Masoretes came on the scene, could account for the alleged discrepancies in various parts of the Bible (cf. 1 Kings 4:26; 2 Kings 8:26; 2 Chronicles 9:25; 22:2). For example, biblical scholar Gleason Archer has stated: "Even the earliest and best manuscripts that we possess are not totally free of transmissional errors. Numbers are occasionally miscopied, the spelling of proper names is occasionally garbled, and there are examples of the same types of scribal error that appear in other ancient documents as well" (1982, p. 27). Do copyists' errors appear in other ancient documents, too? Most assuredly! Corruptions in the writings of the Greek classics are very common. Take, for instance, the secular works of Tacitus. They are known to contain at least one numerical error that Tacitean and classical scholars have acknowledged as a copyist's mistake (Holding, 2001). These scholars recognize that, at some point in history, a copyist accidentally changed a number (from CXXV to XXV). Why is it, then, that biblical critics will not recognize the same possibility when supposed discrepancies are found in the Bible? Just as those who copied secular historical documents sometimes misspelled names and numbers, scribes who copied the Bible from earlier texts occasionally made mistakes. The complexity of the Hebrew language and its alphabetic/numeric system no doubt served as an even greater challenge for the scribes.

Errors of the ear also may have played a part. If a scribe was writing the text as it was being read to him, the reader actually may have **said** one thing while the scribe **heard** another. Other differences might have been the result of an error of memory. A scribe may have looked at an entire line, memorized it, and copied it from memory without looking at it a second time during the copying process. When he went to write one of the numbers in the two passages, however, his memory failed him; what he **thought** he remembered the original text having said was not what it **actually** said. Such could have been the case in 2 Chronicles 22:2, where it says that Ahaziah was forty-two years old when he became king of Judah. In light of other Scriptures (2 Kings 8:17,26), one understands that Ahaziah could not have been forty-two when he inherited the throne, because this would make him two years older than his father. The correct reading of Ahaziah's age is "twenty-two" (2 Kings 8:17), not "forty-two." When one stops to consider the extremely poor conditions under which most copyists worked (poor lighting, crude writing instruments, imperfect writing surfaces, etc.), it is not difficult to understand how inadvertent errors such as these might occur from time to time.

Is God to be blamed for these errors? Although some would like to think so, one must remember that an author is not responsible for errors that are found in copies made of his book. God cannot be blamed for errors made by those who have copied the Scriptures in the distant past. Nor can He be held accountable for those who continue to print copies of the Bible today. It is not God's fault that various publishing companies today have printed translations of the Bible containing such things as misspelled words, incorrect numbers, duplicate words, etc. Would it be God's fault if I decided to copy the whole Bible by hand, with the result being a copy of the Bible containing some misspelled names and a few wrong numbers? Certainly not! God is not responsible for the errors made by those who produce copies of the Bible.

But why do we not possess infallible copies of the infallible originals of the Bible books? Archer has observed that it is

because the production of even one perfect copy of one book is so far beyond the capacity of a human scribe as to render it necessary for God to perform a miracle in order to produce it. No reasonable person can expect even the most conscientious copyist to achieve technical infallibility in transcribing his original document into a fresh copy.... But the important fact remains that accurate communication is possible despite technical mistakes in copying (1982, p. 29).

Indeed, **accurate** communication **is** possible despite technical mistakes in copying. In the two-and-a-half decades during which Apologetics Press has published its monthly journal, *Reason and Revelation*, we never had someone suggest that as a result of an inadvertent mistake, they were unable to comprehend the meaning, or detect the intent, of an article. Cannot the same be said of the Bible? Surely it can! Archer concluded:

Well-trained textual critics operating on the basis of sound methodology are able to rectify almost all misunderstandings that might result from manuscript error.... Is there objective proof from the surviving manuscripts of Scripture that these sixty-six books have been transmitted to us with such a high degree of accuracy as to assure us that the information contained in the originals has been perfectly preserved? The answer is an unqualified yes (1982, pp. 29-30).

In every case where the Bible's defenders refer to that Grand Book as being "inspired," they are by necessity referring to inspiration as it pertained to the original manuscripts (routinely referred to as "autographs"), since there is no such thing as an "inspired copy." "Aha!," the skeptic might say, "since you no longer possess those autographs, but only slightly flawed copies made by imperfect humans, that makes it impossible to know the truth of the message behind the text."

Try applying such a concept—that no longer being in personal possession of a perfect original makes knowing truth impossible—to matters of everyday life. Gleason Archer has done just that, using something as simple as a yardstick.

It is wrong to affirm that the existence of a perfect original is a matter of no importance if that original is no longer available for examination. To take an example from the realm of engineering or of commerce, it makes a very great difference whether there is such a thing as a perfect measure for the meter, the foot, or the pound. It is questionable whether the yardsticks or scales used in business transactions or construction projects can be described as absolutely perfect. They may be almost completely conformable to the standard weights and measures preserved at the Bureau of Standards in our nation's capital but they are subject to error—however small. But how foolish it would be for any citizen to shrug his shoulders and say, "Neither you nor I have ever actually seen those standard measures in Washington; therefore we may as well disregard them—not be concerned about them at all—and simply settle realistically for the imperfect yardsticks and pound weights that we have available to us in everyday life." On the contrary, the existence of those measures in the Bureau of Standards is vital to the proper functioning of our entire economy. To the 222,000,000 Americans who have never seen them they are absolutely essential for the trustworthiness of all the standards of measurement that they resort to throughout their lifetime (1982, p. 28).

The fact that we do not possess the original autographs of the Bible in no way diminishes the usefulness or authority of the copies, any more than a construction superintendent not being in possession of the original measures from the Bureau of Standards diminishes the usefulness or authority of the devices he employs to erect a building. This point is made all the more evident when one considers the inconsequential nature of the vast majority of alleged discrepancies offered by skeptics as proof of the Bible's non-divine origin. Does not the "quality" of the "discrepancies" submitted to us by skeptics reveal just how desperate skepticism is to try to find **some** discrepancy—**any** discrepancy—within the Sacred Text? But to what end? As Archer noted:

In fact, it has long been recognized by the foremost specialists in textual criticism that if any decently attested variant were taken up from the apparatus at the bottom of the page and were substituted for the accepted reading of the standard text, there would in no case be a single, significant alteration in doctrine or message (1982, p. 30).

Most Bible critics are completely indifferent to the principles of textual criticism. They disregard rules of interpretation, and treat the Bible differently than any other historical document. These skeptics assume that partial reports of an event are false reports, that figurative language must be interpreted literally, and that numbers always must be exact and never estimated. But the most frustrating truth for skeptics to accept involves copyists' errors. Even though textual critics in secular studies readily acknowledge such errors when studying the writings of historians like Josephus, Tacitus, or Suetonius, critics of the Bible hypocritically reject the explanations involving copyists' errors.

## EXAMPLES OF COPYISTS' ERRORS

### Who Killed Goliath? (2 Samuel 21:19; 1 Chronicles 20:5)

Some might be surprised to learn that an alleged contradiction hovers over one of the most famous battles ever to have taken place on the Earth—the clash between David and Goliath. Whereas, in 1 Samuel 17 the detailed record clearly shows that David defeated the defiant Philistine giant (Goliath), 2 Samuel

21:19 says that Goliath was killed by “**Elhanan**, the son of Jaare-oregim the Beth-lehemite” (ASV). Furthermore, 1 Chronicles 20:5 states that “Elhanan the son of Jair killed Lahmi **the brother of Goliath** the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver’s beam.” So who actually killed Goliath? And how does Elhanan fit into all of this?

First, we must recognize that Jair and Jaare-oregim are the same person. The widely quoted Albert Barnes noted that this difficulty may have begun when *oregim*, the Hebrew word translated “weaver” in this passage, ended up being placed on the wrong line by a copyist—something that has been known to happen in several instances (see Spence and Exell, 1978, 4:514). Therefore, Jair, combined with *oregim*, became *Jaare-oregim* in order to make it fit with proper Hebrew grammar.

Second, the phrase “Lahmi the brother of” is absent in 2 Samuel 21:19. [The King James Version inserts the phrase “the brother of” between “Beth-lehemite” and “Goliath.”] In the Hebrew, *eth Lachmi* (a combination of “Lahmi” and the term “brother”) appears to have been changed into *beith hallachmi* (Beth-lehemite) in 2 Samuel 21:19. With this simple correction, the two texts would be in clear agreement (Clarke, 1996). In other words, **“the brother of” and the name “Lahmi” likely were mistakenly combined by a copyist to form what is translated in English as “Beth-lehemite” in 2 Samuel 21:19.** Thus, “the 2 Samuel 21 passage is a perfectly traceable corruption of the original wording, which fortunately has been correctly preserved in 1 Chronicles 20:5” (Archer, 1982, p. 179). David slew Goliath, while Elhanan killed Goliath’s brother. A fair, in-depth examination of the alleged difficulty shows that there actually is no contradiction at all, but simply a copyist’s mistake.

#### **How Old Was Jehoiachin When He Began His Reign? (2 Kings 24:8; 2 Chronicles 36:9)**

In 2 Kings 24:8, we read that Jehoiachin succeeded his father as the nineteenth king of Judah at the age of **eighteen**. Second Chronicles 36:9 informs us that he was “**eight** years old when he became king.” Fortunately there is enough additional information in the biblical text to prove the correct age of Jehoiachin when he began his reign over Judah.

There is little doubt that Jehoiachin began his reign at eighteen, not eight years of age. This conclusion is established by Ezekiel 19:5-9, where Jehoiachin appears as going up and down among the lions, catching the prey, devouring men, and knowing the widows of the men he devoured and the cities he wasted. As Keil and Delitzsch observed when commenting on this passage: “The knowing of widows cannot apply to a boy of eight, but might well be said of a young man of eighteen.” Furthermore, it is doubtful that an eight-year-old child would be described as one having done “evil in the sight of the Lord” (2 Kings 24:9).

The simple answer to this “problem” is that a copyist, **not an inspired writer**, made a mistake. A scribe simply omitted a ten, which made Jehoiachin eight instead of eighteen. This does not mean the Bible had errors in the original autographs, but it does indicate that minor scribal errors have slipped into some copies of the Bible. [If you have ever seen the Hebrew alphabet, you no doubt recognize that the Hebrew letters (which were used for numbers) could be confused quite easily.]

#### **Hadadezer or Hadarezer? (2 Samuel 8:3; 1 Chronicles 18:3; KJV and ASV)**

This discrepancy obviously came about through the mistake of a scribe. It is very likely that Hada-dezer (with a “d”) is the true form since, “Hadad was the chief idol, or sun-god, of the Syrians” (Barnes, 1997; cf. Benhadad and Hadad of 1 Kings 15:18; 11:14; etc.). As William Arndt stated, “D and R may be distinct enough in appearance in English, but in Hebrew they are vexingly similar to each other” (1955, p. XV). There should be no doubt in our minds that Hadarezer simply is a corrupted form of Hadadezer. Surely, one can see how a copyist could easily have made this mistake.

#### **When Did Absalom Commit Treason? (2 Samuel 15:7)**

When David’s son Absalom finally returned after killing his half-brother Amnon, 2 Samuel 15 indicates that “after **forty years**” passed, Absalom left home again and committed treason. Anyone who knows much Israelite history quickly realizes that Absalom most certainly did not spend 40 years at home during this time, for David’s entire reign was only 40 years (2 Samuel 5:4). The number given in 2 Samuel 15:7 probably should be **four years**, which is more in keeping with the lifetime of Absalom, who was born in Hebron

after David's reign as king began (2 Samuel 3:3). The number "four" also agrees with such ancient versions as the Septuagint, the Syriac, the Arabic, and the Vulgate. There is little question that the number "forty" represents a copyist's error.

### **How Many Stalls did Solomon Have? (1 Kings 4:26; 2 Chronicles 9:25)**

First Kings 4:26 indicates that Solomon owned 40,000 stalls. However in 2 Chronicles 9:25 the number 4,000 is given. Both numbers obviously cannot be correct. Likely, respected biblical commentators Keil and Delitzsch were correct when they stated that the forty thousand figure in 1 Kings 4:26 "is an old copyist's error" (1996, p. 39). We learn elsewhere in the books of 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles that Solomon's chariots were but 1,400 (10:26; 1:14). It makes sense then that 40,000 horses could not possibly be required. In a way of comparison, Albert Barnes indicated that the "Assyrian chariots had at most three horses apiece, while some had only two. 4,000 horses would supply the full team of three to 1,200 and the smaller team of two to 2000 chariots" (1997). The 4,000 figure appears to be the more probable of the two renderings.

### **IS THE OLD TESTAMENT STILL RELIABLE?**

If there are scribal errors in today's copies of the Old Testament, many wonder how we can be certain the text of the Bible was transmitted faithfully across the centuries. Is it not possible that it was corrupted so that its form in our present Bible is drastically different from the original source?

The accuracy of the Old Testament text was demonstrated forcefully by the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls. Prior to 1947, the oldest Hebrew manuscripts of significant length did not date earlier than the ninth century A.D. However, when the Dead Sea scrolls were found (containing portions of all Old Testament books except Esther), this discovery pushed the record of the Old Testament text back almost 1,000 years. These copies were produced sometime between 200 B.C. and A.D. 100. One scroll found in the Qumran caves was of particular importance. It was a scroll of the book of Isaiah, which only had a few words missing. What was amazing about this scroll is that when it was compared to the text of Isaiah produced 900 years after it, the two matched almost word for word with only a few small variations. In commenting on this comparative reading of the two texts, A.W. Adams observed:

The close agreement of the second Isaiah Scroll from the Dead Sea with the manuscripts of the ninth and tenth centuries shows how carefully the text tradition which they represent has been preserved. We may therefore be satisfied that the text of our Old Testament has been handed down in one line without serious change since the beginning of the Christian era and even before (as quoted by Kenyon, 1939, pp. 69,88).

Amazingly, a comparison of the standard Hebrew texts with that of the Dead Sea scrolls has revealed that the two are virtually identical. The variations (about 5%) occurred only in minor spelling differences and minute copyists' mistakes. Thus, as Rene Paché noted: "Since it can be demonstrated that the text of the old Testament was accurately transmitted for the last 2,000 years, one may reasonably suppose that it had been so transmitted from the beginning" (1971, p. 191).

Even within the various passages of Scripture, numerous references to copies of the written Word of God can be found. [It would be a gratuitous conclusion to assume that only one copy of the Scriptures existed during the period that the Old Testament covers.] A copy of the "book of the law" was preserved in the temple during the days of king Josiah (c. 621 B.C.), thus demonstrating that Moses' writings had been protected over a span of almost 1,000 years (2 Kings 22). Other Old Testament passages speak of the maintenance of the Holy Writings across the years (Jeremiah 36; Ezra 7:14; Nehemiah 8:1-18).

During Jesus' personal ministry, He read from the Isaiah scroll in the synagogue at Nazareth and called it "Scripture" (Luke 4:16-21)—a technical term always employed in the Bible for a **divine** writing! Jesus endorsed the truth that the Old Testament Scriptures had been preserved faithfully. Even though Jesus read from a **copy** of Isaiah, He still considered it the Word of God. Hence, Scripture had been preserved faithfully in **written** form. Furthermore, even though Jesus condemned the scribes of His day for their many sins, in not one instance in Scripture is it recorded where He even intimated they were unfaithful in their work as scribes. Yes, Jesus gave approval to copies (and translations—e.g., Septuagint) of the Old Testament by reading/quoting from them. We should do no less.

One of the great language scholars of the Old Testament text was Dr. Robert Dick Wilson (1856-1930). A master of over thirty-five languages, Wilson carefully compared the text of the Old Testament with inscriptions on ancient monuments (as those two sources dealt with common material). As a result of his research, Dr. Wilson declared that “we are scientifically certain that we have substantially the same text that was in the possession of Christ and the apostles and, so far as anybody knows, the same as that written by the original composers of the Old Testament documents” (1929, p. 8).

For the believer, it is only logical to conclude that if a just God exists (Psalm 89:14; cf. 19:1), and if He expects man to obey Him (Hebrews 5:8-9; John 14:15), then His will must be preserved. Since man is amenable to God’s religious and moral laws, it surely follows that God, through His providence, would preserve accurate copies of His divine will in order that those who are created “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:27) might be able to avoid the consequences of disobedience and have access to the wonderful blessings in Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Timothy 2:10). How could we do this if we did not have access to accurate copies of the Bible?

### WHAT ABOUT THE RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT?

How well do the New Testament documents compare with additional ancient, historical documents? F.F. Bruce examined much of the evidence surrounding this question in his book, *The New Testament Documents—Are They Reliable?* As he and other writers (e.g., Metzger, 1968, p. 36; Geisler and Brooks, 1990, p. 159) have noted, there are over 5,300 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament in existence today, in whole or in part, that serve to corroborate the accuracy of the New Testament. The best manuscripts of the New Testament are dated at roughly A.D. 350, with perhaps one of the most important of these being the Codex Vaticanus, “the chief treasure of the Vatican Library in Rome,” and the Codex Sinaiticus, which was purchased by the British from the Soviet Government in 1933 (Bruce, 1953, p. 20). Additionally, the Chester Beatty papyri, made public in 1931, contain eleven codices (manuscript volumes), three of which contain most of the New Testament (including the gospel accounts). Two of these codices boast a date in the first half of the third century, while the third slides in a little later, being dated in the last half of the same century (Bruce, p. 21). The John Rylands Library boasts even earlier evidence. A papyrus codex containing parts of John 18 dates to the time of Hadrian, who reigned from A.D. 117 to 138 (Bruce, p. 21).

Other attestation to the accuracy of the New Testament documents can be found in the writings of the so-called “apostolic fathers”—men who wrote primarily from A.D. 90 to 160, and who often quoted from the New Testament documents (Bruce, p. 22). Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Tatian, Clement of Rome, and Ignatius (writing before the close of the second century) all provided citations from one or more of the gospel accounts (Guthrie, 1990, p. 24). Other witnesses to the authenticity of the New Testament are the Ancient Versions, which consist of the text of the New Testament translated into different languages. The Old Latin and the Old Syriac are the most ancient, being dated from the middle of the second century (Bruce, p. 23).

The fact is, the New Testament enjoys far more historical documentation than any other volume ever known. Compared to the 5,300 Greek manuscripts “backing” the New Testament, there are only 643 copies of Homer’s *Iliad*, which is undeniably the most famous book of ancient Greece. No one doubts the text of Julius Caesar’s *Gallic Wars*, but we have only ten copies of it, the earliest of which was made 1,000 years after it was written. We have only two manuscripts of Tacitus’ *Histories* and *Annals*, one from the ninth century and one from the eleventh. The *History of Thucydides*, another well-known ancient work, is dependent upon only eight manuscripts, the oldest of these being dated about A.D. 900 (along with a few papyrus scraps dated at the beginning of the Christian era). And *The History of Herodotus* finds itself in a similar situation. “Yet no classical scholar would listen to an argument that the authenticity of Herodotus or Thucydides is in doubt because the earliest MSS [manuscripts—BT] of their works which are of any use to us are over 1,300 years later than the originals” (Bruce, pp. 20-21). Bruce thus declared: “It is a curious fact that historians have often been much readier to trust the New Testament records than have many theologians” (p. 19). In 1968, Bruce Metzger, a longtime professor of New Testament language and literature at Princeton, stated: “The amount of evidence for the text of the New Testament...is so much greater than that available for

any ancient classical author that the necessity of resorting to emendation is reduced to the smallest dimensions” (p. 86). Truly, to have such abundance of copies for the New Testament from within seventy years of their writing is nothing short of amazing (see Geisler and Brooks, 1990, pp. 159-160).

The available evidence makes it clear that the New Testament has been transmitted accurately over the past 2,000 years, with relatively few variations. Consider this: Since the King James Version was first translated (in 1611) and revised (one of the latest revisions taking place in 1769), several manuscripts came to light that were older than those used in the KJV translation. When these manuscripts were compared and contrasted with those used in the translation of the KJV, the Greek text used in its translation was seen to be essentially sound. Although the translators of the American Standard Version (published in 1901) had access to more ancient Greek manuscripts than did the KJV translators, the ASV differs very little from the KJV. And since most differences are seen only in the matter of vocabulary, someone reading from the KJV has no difficulty listening to a person reading from the ASV. The truth is, if the English language was not constantly changing, there would be no need for more translations of the Bible. We can be confident that we have accurate copies of the New Testament today—a fact attested to by more than 5,000 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament. \*

---

\* I would like to gratefully acknowledge the contribution of Eric Lyons at Apologetics Press in the research and writing of the material contained in this chapter, which represents the text of a two-part series (“Answering the Allegations” and “The Reality of Copyists’ Errors”) that he and I co-authored for the section of the Apologetics Press Website dealing with alleged Bible discrepancies.



## CHAPTER 7

### ANSWERING ALLEGED BIBLE DISCREPANCIES AND CONTRADICTIONS [PART II]

It is easy for the skeptic or infidel to allege that the Bible is “full of discrepancies and contradictions.” All he has to do is open his mouth and make the charge. And, with very little effort on his part, he can scour the Internet and come up with a veritable plethora of examples of these so-called “difficulties.” Then, using what frequently is referred to as the “shotgun approach,” he can hurl a barrage of these alleged discrepancies and contradictions at the Bible believer, all the while pressing for an immediate response.

While it is a simple matter to charge the Bible with error, it is not always an equally simple matter to respond to such a charge. There are hundreds of these putative discrepancies and contradictions. And, admittedly, answering some of them can require research efforts that are both thought-intensive and time-consuming. But the important thing to remember is this: **The skeptics’ and infidels’ charges can be answered!**

But the question inevitably will arise: Is it worth our time and trouble? I would like to answer that by offering the following real-life example. Some time ago, I was in West Virginia on a speaking assignment. During a break in the lectures, I was in the foyer of the lecture hall when a man approached me and introduced himself as a minister from a nearby congregation. He indicated that he wanted to speak to me about a matter of some urgency. During the conversation that followed, he told me of a young man who had grown up at the congregation where he preached. The preacher described the young man as a “solid Christian” who always had been enthusiastic about living for Jesus. From the time he was a young boy, his grandmother had taken him to worship God on the first day of every week. After becoming a Christian he had, according to man telling me this story, “attended every service of the church.” He grew in the faith, and began taking part in leading the congregation in prayer. Later, he personally taught the congregation by occasionally standing before the church and reading the Bible to them aloud, at times even delivering short talks. Before leaving for the university an hour from his hometown, the young 18-year-old was considered by those who knew him best as a devout Christian with impressive potential—one whose shield of faith would stand strong when worldliness attacked, and whose Christian foundation would remain firm when shaken by the devil’s doctrines.

Unfortunately, only a short time passed before this young man lost his faith. He went to college as a believer in the God of the Bible, and came home an “enlightened” skeptic. One of the first classes he took at the university was an elective course on world religions. Initially, he thought he could handle whatever questions came his way about Christianity. He had memorized numerous verses in the Bible. He knew about the uniqueness of the church. He could tell people what to do in order to have their sins forgiven. It took, however, little time for **one** teacher in **one** class in **one** university to turn this “solid Christian” into an unbeliever.

What led to the demise of this young man’s belief in God and the Bible as His Word? Why did the young man’s faith crumble so easily? It all began with his inability to handle the so-called “factual discrepancies” that his newly found friends had convinced him were in the Bible. When asked to explain to his teacher and fellow classmates how hundreds of “Bible contradictions” are not contradictions at all, but simply “misunderstandings” on man’s part, he would not...because he could not. After being bombarded with hundreds of questions that he was completely incapable of answering, he eventually began denying the truths he once believed. Not long after this young man’s “transformation,” he gave the preacher who was telling me this story a document titled “Factual Discrepancies.” This document (of which I have a copy) contains nearly seventy alleged “factual” contradictions that supposedly are found in the Bible. Because this frustrated young man from West Virginia (who had been taught the Bible his entire life) was unable to answer these allegations, he gave up on the God of the Bible. His faith in the inerrant, inspired Word of God was replaced with the emptiness of a skeptic’s uncertainty—all because he was unable to defend the Truth against the vicious, frequent attacks leveled against it by infidelity.



I wonder how many times this true story could be rehearsed by mothers and fathers all over the world? How many grandmothers (like the one above) have seen their “work” (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15) destroyed at the hands of infidels? How many young college students leave home as “solid” Christians, and return four years later as “enlightened” skeptics?

In this chapter, I want to respond to a number of alleged Bible discrepancies and contradictions, many of which were presented to the young man from West Virginia. Quite obviously, my purpose in doing so is not to answer every single allegation that might be made against the Bible. Rather, I have chosen a sampling of the same types of alleged discrepancies and contradictions that caused the young man to lose his faith—to show how the principles presented in the previous chapter can be applied in responding to the charges leveled at God’s inspired Word, and to show that **such charges** can be **answered!** [For those who would like a more in-depth treatment of this subject, I would like to recommend that you visit the Website of Apologetics Press ([www.ApologeticsPress.org](http://www.ApologeticsPress.org)), where you will find an extensive listing of the so-called discrepancies and contradictions, along with answers and refutations for each. I also would like to recommend a two-volume set of books—*The Anvil Rings*—authored by Eric Lyons, which deals with these issues.] Consider, if you will, the following.

**QUESTION:** Some time ago, I received an unusual offer in the mail. It came from a skeptic who was offering a **\$1,000 reward**. His letter said simply: “\$1,000 reward. Produce the prophecy referred [sic] to in Matthew 2:23, ‘He shall be called a Nazarene.’” Intriguing offer, to be sure. How did I handle it? And did I win the \$1,000?

**ANSWER:** This is not the first such “reward” offer that I (or others) have received, and in all likelihood it will not be the last. Financial gain aside, this particular question on the part of the skeptic provides an excellent teaching opportunity.

First, it is important to note that alleged Bible discrepancies fall into various categories of difficulty, so far as ease of response is concerned. Certain charges against God’s Word are explained effortlessly. However, not all alleged discrepancies are answered as easily. Some require extensive research to explain. Entire books have been written to discuss these so-called discrepancies (see, for example: Haley, 1951, Arndt, 1932, 1955; Archer, 1982). It is a simple matter for the atheist, agnostic, freethinker, or skeptic to charge that God’s Word contains contradictions or discrepancies; it is not always a simple matter for the Bible believer to respond to such a claim.

Second, on occasion it is the case that the charge being made against the Bible is itself seriously flawed. In other words, we need to be admonished **never** to react to a charge leveled against a certain passage of Scripture based on what the passage is “supposed” to say according to the Bible critic, or on what the Bible critic **thinks** it says. Prior to making any response, we should open our Bibles, turn to the passage in question, and read it for ourselves. For example, in the letter I received, the skeptic “quoted” Matthew 2:23 as stating, “He shall be called a Nazarene,” and then challenged me to find an Old Testament prophecy that said exactly that. The skeptic no doubt intended for me to conclude—based on the limited information he provided—that Matthew erred, and that the Bible contains a blatant error on the part of an inspired writer, thereby negating its claim of inspiration.

Upon closer examination, however, it becomes evident that the passage does not say what the skeptic wants us to think it says. The “quote” actually was only the latter half of the verse. In the context (which begins earlier in verse 22), here is what the passage **actually** says:

But when he [Joseph—BT] heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither; and being warned of God in a dream, he withdrew into the parts of Galilee, and came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets, for he should be called a Nazarene (vss. 22-23).

An examination of the actual facts that come to bear on this passage reveals the following information. It is true, as various Bible commentators have noted, that nowhere in the Old Testament did any of the prophets say: “He shall be called a Nazarene” (see Lenski, 1943, p. 87). However, while at first glance the verse might be construed to suggest that some “prophets” (the plural in the Greek text is significant; see com-

ments below) suggested that Christ “should be called a Nazarene,” further study shows that this is not the actual intent of the passage at all. In discussing the grammatical construction of the passage in the original Greek, R.C.H. Lenski (a highly respected Greek scholar in his own right) stated:

But the plural “through the prophets” is important. It cannot refer to **one** prophet speaking for all. This plural evidently refers either to the prophetic books in general or to the entire Old Testament. It also shows that no quotation is to follow which will introduce some word that was uttered by several prophets (1943, p. 87, emp. in orig.).

With great care, Lenski then went on to show that the structure of the Greek involved in the passage “is not...like our quotation marks, pointing to a direct quotation.” Then, after remarking on the original words, the form in which they occur, and their careful use by Matthew within the passage under consideration, Lenski noted that such construction in the Greek “shuts out not only a direct quotation but also an indirect prophetic utterance” (p. 87).

What, then, is Matthew’s meaning? The text is saying simply this: Jesus lived in Nazareth not because the prophets had said that He would live in that specific city, but **in order to fulfill additional specific things that the prophets had said about Him**. Lenski has done an excellent job of explaining this point:

Jesus lived in Nazareth in order to fulfill the prophets; and the evidential reason by which we ourselves can see that his living in Nazareth fulfilled the prophets, is that afterward, due to his having lived there, he was called “the Nazarene.” We may add that even his followers were called “Nazarenes.” Matthew writes nothing occult or difficult. A Nazarene is one who hails from Nazareth. Matthew counts on the ordinary intelligence of his readers, who will certainly know that the enemies of Jesus branded him the “Nazarene,” that this was the name that marked his Jewish rejection and would continue to do so among the Jews. They put into it all the hate and odium possible, extending it, as stated, to his followers. And this is “what was spoken through the prophets.” One and all told how the Jews would despise the Messiah, Ps. 22:6; Isa. 49:7; 53:3; Dan. 9:26; every prophecy of the suffering Messiah, and every reference to those who would not hear him, like Deut. 18:18. The Talmud calls Jesus *Yeshu Hannotzri* (the Nazarene); Jerome reports the synagogue prayer in which the Christians are cursed as Nazarenes.... Compare Acts 24:5, “sect of the Nazarene,” and Paul’s characterization. If Jesus had been reared in Jerusalem, he could not have been vilified as the Nazarene. It was God who let him grow up in Nazareth and thus furnished the title of reproach to the Jews in fulfillment of all the reproach God had prophesied for the Messiah through the prophets (pp. 88-89).

Albert Barnes made the same assessment of this passage in his commentary on Matthew when he wrote:

Some have supposed that he refers to some prophecy which was not recorded, but handed down by tradition. But these suppositions are not satisfactory. It is much more probable that Matthew refers not to any particular place, but to the **leading characteristics** of the prophecies respecting him.... When Matthew says, therefore, that the prophecies were “fulfilled,” his meaning is **that the predictions of the prophets that he would be of a low and despised condition, and would be rejected, were fully accomplished in his being an inhabitant of Nazareth, and despised as such** (1972b, p. 21, emp. in orig.).

So in the end, the skeptic’s \$1,000 reward remained safely in his own pocket. His offer turned out to be vacuous, due to the fact that it rested on a completely incorrect interpretation of the passage in the first place. With time and study, the unfounded charge which suggested that Matthew had erred and that the Bible contains contradictions evaporated like an early morning fog hit by the hot noon Sun.

**QUESTION:** A skeptic wrote to ask the following question: “Bible contradictions, are they real?” He then answered his own question (which makes one wonder why—if he already knew the answer—he was writing me in the first place): “Yes. How did Saul die? 2 Samuel 21:12 says he was killed by a Philistine. 1 Samuel 31:4 says he killed himself. 2 Samuel 1:18-20 says he was killed by an Amalekite. Which one is it?”

**ANSWER:** With just a few short sentences, the skeptic appears to have documented a legitimate discrepancy within the biblical text. The key word here, however, is “appears.” As is so often the case, there is much more to the matter than merely quoting a single verse or two in an effort to make the Bible appear to contradict itself. An examination of these passages—in their historical context—makes for an interesting and educational study.

Let me begin with the skeptic's claim that 2 Samuel depicts Saul as having been killed by "a Philistine." The context for the statement in 2 Samuel 21:12 can be found one book earlier in 1 Samuel 31, which centers on the fact that the Israelites and the Philistines were engaged in an important battle against each other. The text of 1 Samuel 31:1 indicates that "the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa." From this simple commentary by the writer, it is clear that the battle was not going well for God's people. Israel's finest-trained armies had been thoroughly and completely routed. Her battle-weary soldiers not only were in disarray, but also full retreat. Even their king, Saul, was in peril. In fact, the next two verses go on to explain: "And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, the sons of Saul. And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers overtook him; and he was greatly distressed by reason of the archers."

Israel's first king was mortally wounded by the Philistines' arrows. Knowing he was in his death throes, Saul determined not to fall into the hands of his enemies while still living. He therefore turned to his armor-bearer and said: "Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me" (1 Samuel 31:4a). Verses 4-6 present the conclusion of the matter: "But his armorbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took his sword, and fell upon it. And when his armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he likewise fell upon his sword, and died with him. So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armorbearer, and all his men, that same day together."

So how did Saul die? Did "a Philistine" kill him, as the skeptic alleges? Or did Saul commit suicide to escape capture and possible torture at the hands of some of his most feared enemies, as 1 Samuel 31:4 seems to indicate?

First, notice how cautiously the skeptic's question to us was worded in its original form. The skeptic carefully crafted his statement to read: "2 Samuel 21:12 says he was killed by a Philistine." But the text nowhere states that **a** Philistine killed Saul. Rather, it says, "the **Philistines** (plural) slew Saul in Gilboa." This is a subtle but important difference. Considering the context, was it not the Philistines (as they battled against the Israelites) who ultimately were responsible for Saul's self-inflicted wound and subsequent death? Indeed it was.

Suppose a modern-day soldier were in the same situation. Wounded by an enemy's bullet, he takes his own life on the battlefield to avoid capture and torture. Were a journalist to write an article for a national or local newspaper, might he not (justifiably) report that the soldier died at the hands of his enemy as a direct result of the battle? Indeed he might, for had the events never unfolded as they did, obviously the soldier would not have died under such circumstances.

But if the reporter continued his story in the next day's edition of that same newspaper, and in giving additional details of the circumstances surrounding the battle went on to state that the young man had taken his own life rather than fall into the enemy's possession and possibly become a tool of betrayal against his comrades, would any reader of the two-part account suggest that the journalist had "contradicted" himself? Hardly. The normal reader, with average common sense, would recognize that in the **general** context, the enemy had caused the young soldier's death. In the **immediate** context, his death had been at his own hand as a direct result of his fear of being captured by that enemy.

The circumstances surrounding Saul's death were no different. The writer of 2 Samuel 21 was correct, in the **general** context, in assigning Saul's demise to "the Philistines" (not "a Philistine," as the skeptic alleged), because it was in the battle with the Philistines that Saul found himself dying of wounds caused by their arrows and thus committed suicide. The writer of 1 Samuel 31:4 was correct, in the **immediate** context, in providing additional information regarding exactly **how** that death occurred—i.e., at Saul's own hand as he lay mortally wounded and in danger of capture and torture.

But what about the story that is recorded in 2 Samuel 1:1-16, wherein an Amalekite claimed to have killed the Israelite's beloved king? The context of this story is as follows. David had just returned from a battle with the Amalekites. While in the city of Ziklag, a young man in ragged clothing appeared before him with a report of Saul's death. The young man, himself an Amalekite, stated:

“As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul was leaning upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and the horsemen followed hard after him. And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, ‘Here am I.’ And he said unto me, ‘Who art thou?’ And I answered him, ‘I am an Amalekite.’ And he said unto me, ‘Stand, I pray thee, beside me, and slay me; for anguish hath taken hold of me, because my life is yet whole in me.’ So I stood beside him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord” (2 Samuel 1:6-10).

David’s response to this story was one of outrage. At hearing the young man’s report, he inquired: “How wast thou not afraid to put forth thy hand to destroy Jehovah’s anointed?” (2 Samuel 1:14). Turning to the Amalekite, he sternly said: “Thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, ‘I have slain Jehovah’s anointed.’” David then ordered one of his own soldiers to slay the young man as punishment for the atrocity he claimed to have committed—the murder of Israel’s king, Saul (2 Samuel 1:15-16).

How can this story be reconciled with the accounts in 1 Samuel 31 and 2 Samuel 21? Isolated from both the general and immediate historical context, the simple fact is that it cannot. Is there, then, an unavoidable, unexplainable contradiction as the skeptic has alleged? No, there is not. There is another possible explanation. In his book, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, Gleason L. Archer elaborated on this possibility when he wrote that the Amalekite’s story

is not presented as being an actual record of what happened during Saul’s dying moments; it is only a record of what the Amalekite mercenary **said** had taken place. Coming with Saul’s crown and bracelet in hand and presenting them before the new king of Israel, the Amalekite obviously expected a handsome reward and high preferment in the service of Saul’s successor. In the light of the straightforward account in the previous chapter, we must conclude that the Amalekite was lying in order to gain a cordial welcome from David. But what had actually happened was that after Saul had killed himself, and the armorbearer had followed his lord’s example by taking his own life (1 Sam. 31:5), the Amalekite happened by at that moment, recognized the king’s corpse, and quickly stripped off the bracelet and crown before the Philistine troops discovered it. Capitalizing on his good fortune, the Amalekite then escaped from the bloody field and made his way down to David’s headquarters in Ziklag. But his hoped-for reward turned out to be a warrant for his death; David had him killed on the spot.... His glib falsehood had brought him the very opposite of what he had expected, for he failed to foresee that David’s high code of honor would lead him to make just the response he did (1982, pp. 181-182, emp. added).

It would not be unusual for a Bible writer to record a story that was told at the time as the truth when, in fact, it was a lie. Moses recorded Satan’s lie to Eve in Genesis 3:4, without comment on its false nature. The writer of 1 Kings 13 recorded the lie of the older prophet to the younger prophet (a lie that ultimately caused the younger prophet’s death). John recorded Peter’s three-fold lie when he denied being one of Christ’s disciples (18:15-27). Other similar examples could be offered. The point is, just because the Amalekite mercenary **claimed** to have killed King Saul does not mean that he was telling the truth when he made such a claim. In fact, we know he was not because elsewhere (e.g., 1 Samuel 31:4-5) the actual facts of the case are presented with great clarity. Once again, the skeptic’s claim of a biblical discrepancy can be answered by a common-sense appeal to reason that provides a solution consistent with the available facts.

**QUESTION:** One skeptic wrote to affirm that he “knew” the Bible contained contradictions, and challenged me to unravel the following alleged discrepancy. In 2 Kings 25:8, the Bible reads: “Now in the fifth month, on the **seventh** day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem.” In discussing the same historical event (i.e., the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar), Jeremiah wrote: “Now in the fifth month, in the **tenth** day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, who stood before the king of Babylon, into Jerusalem” (52:12). The skeptic noted a three-day difference between the two accounts, and asked: “So when did Nebuzaradan arrive to destroy Jerusalem—on the **seventh** day or the **tenth** day?”

**ANSWER:** In responding, it is important once again to consider the context in which these two passages appear. Zedekiah, King of Judah, had warred in open rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar. Subsequently, the king of Babylon sent his army to besiege Jerusalem, where Zedekiah held court. At one point during the

siege, as Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers breached the city's walls, Zedekiah and the troops still loyal to him quietly slipped away and attempted to make good their escape. Their attempt was thwarted, however, when they were captured and taken to Nebuchadnezzar, who commanded that Zedekiah's sons be slain before his eyes, and that he then be blinded and imprisoned until his death. Shortly thereafter, as a result of Zedekiah's rebellion, the Babylonian king sent the captain of his personal bodyguard, Nebuzaradan, to lead his army against the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to lay waste the city.

Nebuzaradan is designated within the text of both 2 Kings 25 and Jeremiah 52 as "captain of the guard." Burton Coffman observed that "He was one of the great generals in command of the armies of Babylon" (1993, p. 331). His title, "captain of the guard," indicates that apparently he was the chief of King Nebuchadnezzar's bodyguards (see Keil and Delitzsch, 1982, p. 514). But the literal translation of the title actually reveals much more than that. Miller has noted that "Nebuzaradan is literally designated as 'captain of the slaughterers,' which might indicate that he was the chief executioner, or the captain of the royal bodyguard (cf. Gen. 37:36; 39:1; 40:3)" (1991, p. 466). Spence and Exell designated him as "chief of the executioners" (1950, p. 489), as did Barnes (1972a, p. 308).

Did Nebuzaradan come to Jerusalem on the **seventh** day as the writer of 2 Kings indicated, or, as Jeremiah wrote, on the **tenth** day? There are at least two potential explanations for the seeming discrepancy. First, Keil and Delitzsch allow for the possibility that "This difference might be reconciled, as proposed by earlier commentators, on the assumption that the burning of the city lasted several days, commencing on the seventh and ending on the tenth" (p. 514). In other words, one writer may be discussing Nebuzaradan's activities from their **beginning**, while the other writer is discussing those same activities from their **conclusion**.

This solution receives support from an in-depth examination of the original language of the texts. The phrasing of Jeremiah 52:12 and 2 Kings 25:8 is very similar in the Hebrew—with one important exception. In Jeremiah 52:12, the last part of the verse states literally that Nebuzaradan came "**in**[to] Jerusalem." The Hebrew preposition "in," which conveys the idea of being "inside" or "within" (cf. Judges 1:21, Zechariah 12:6 [KJV/ASV], 1 Kings 15:4, et al.), is not present in 2 Kings 25:8. It therefore is quite possible that Nebuzaradan **came to** Jerusalem on the seventh day, but actually **went inside** the holy city on the tenth day.

Second, the three-day difference in the two accounts may be a copyist's error. This is the position favored by Keil and Delitzsch (p. 515) as well as Spence and Exell (p. 489). Such an error, especially before the Masoretes came on the scene, could account for the alleged discrepancy in the passages under discussion here. For example, Archer noted:

Even the earliest and best manuscripts that we possess are not totally free of transmissional errors. Numbers are occasionally miscopied, the spelling of proper names is occasionally garbled, and there are examples of the same types of scribal error that appear in other ancient documents as well (1982, p. 27).

Dr. Archer then provided numerous examples of what he termed "misreading similar-appearing letters," based on the complexity of the Hebrew language and its alphabetic/numeric system (pp. 37-39). It is at this point that the alleged discrepancies in 2 Kings 25 and Jeremiah 52 may well enter the picture.

Interestingly, the Masoretes had a policy of making notes in the margins of their copies in order to indicate obvious differences among the manuscripts from which they were copying. Furthermore, they were not averse to calling attention to possible mistakes by their less meticulous forerunners. But the Masoretes made no such note of any alleged discrepancy between 2 Kings 25:8 and Jeremiah 52:12. In this case, they may not have thought that a comment was warranted, considering the type of resolution I discussed earlier (i.e., that the two passages in question actually refer to the activities of two different days).

The axe of infidelity has not felled the tree of inspiration. The skeptic may hack away to his heart's content. But in the end, it will be the axe, and he who wields it, that will fall—not the mighty timber that is God's Word. Or, as the Bible itself concludes: "As I live, saith the Lord, to me every knee shall bow, And every tongue shall confess to God" (Romans 14:11).

**QUESTION:** Critics have charged that passages such as John 1:18, Exodus 33:20, and Genesis 32:30 contradict one another. In John 1:18, the apostle wrote: "No one has seen God at any time." In Exodus 33:20 God said to Moses: "You cannot see My face; for no man can see Me and live." But Genesis 32:30

records Jacob as saying: “For **I have seen God face to face**, and my life is preserved.” Have John and Moses—two of the most influential writers in the Bible—contradicted each other as infidels and skeptics have suggested?

**ANSWER:** No, they have not. The Bible is internally consistent, and does not contradict itself. The “contradiction” is the result of the passages being taken out of the context in which they were written originally. For example, consider the following two statements. Joe is rich; Joe is poor. Do these statements contradict one another? Not necessarily. Is it not possible that Joe could be **rich spiritually** but **poor physically**? Renowned Bible scholar R.A. Torrey noted: “We must remember first of all that two statements which in terms flatly contradict one another may be both of them absolutely true, for the reason that the two terms are not used in the same sense in the two statements” (1907, p. 80). That is exactly what has happened in texts such as John 1:18 and Genesis 32:30. The passages **seem** to contradict one another, but when considered in their appropriate context they do not because they are not speaking of God being “seen” in the same sense. Several illustrations of this principle can be found in Scripture.

First, consider Moses “seeing” God in a burning bush (Exodus 3:2ff.). He saw a fire on the side of a mountain. When he went to investigate, he saw a bush that burned but was not consumed. As he observed this unusual sight, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.” Then the voice from the burning bush echoed: “I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exodus 3:6a). The text indicates: “Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God” (3:6b).

As Moses spoke to the burning bush on the mountainside, was he addressing God? Indeed he was, as the passage clearly teaches. But does the passage also teach that as he looked at the bush, Moses was fearful because he considered it “seeing” God? Yes, Exodus 3:6b so states.

When Moses looked upon the burning bush, did he **actually** “see” God? No. He saw an image that we as humans can comprehend. The bush was a **representation** of God—an occasion where something took God’s place.

Second, consider Job’s “seeing” God in a whirlwind (Job 38:1ff.). Job made a wrongful boast that landed him in serious trouble with God. Suddenly (and unexpectedly) a whirlwind appeared before Job—from which the voice of God echoed: “Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me” (Job 38:2-3). Job looked at the whirlwind and heard God. But was God really **in** the whirlwind? Did Job actually **see** God when he looked into this magnificent force of nature? No. Instead, Job saw a **manifestation** of God that a human could comprehend. The whirlwind “took God’s place.”

Third, consider Jacob’s “seeing” God as he wrestled with an angel (Genesis 32:24-30). He wrestled from night until daybreak with this heavenly being and eventually said: “**I have seen God face to face.**” Was it really God that Jacob saw? No, he did not see God but instead witnessed a representative of God. A similar example can be found in the case of Manoah (the father of Samson), recorded in Judges 13. In this instance, the text says that Manoah and his wife were visited by the “Angel of the Lord” (13:13) who informed them of their son’s impending birth. Afterwards, Manoah said: “We shall surely die because **we have seen God!**” (13:22). Again, it is necessary to ask: Was it **really** God that Manoah and his wife saw? No, they did not see God, but instead witnessed (just as Jacob had) a manifestation of God via the angel. [NOTE: A fascinating parallel can be seen in Gideon’s statement in Judges 6:22 when he cried: “I have seen the Angel of the Lord **face to face.**”]

What, then is the explanation of the alleged contradiction between passages such as John 1:18, Exodus 33:20, and Genesis 32:30? How can the Scriptures state that “no man hath seen God” (John 1:18) or that “no man shall see Me and live” (Exodus 33:20), while stating elsewhere that Jacob saw God “face to face” (Genesis 32:30) and that Manoah and his wife had “seen God” (Judges 6:22)? E.G. Sewell provided a partial answer to this kind of question when he wrote: “When Jacob is represented as saying he saw God, it was only an angel of God that appeared to him in the form of a man. In Hosea it is called an **angel** so that in that case Jacob did not see the face of God at all, but only an angel of God” (1921, p. 274, emp. in orig.).

An illustration of this very point can be found in the incarnation of Jesus. The apostle Paul, in discussing Christ's deity, noted that as a member of the Godhead, Jesus had existed throughout eternity and possessed "equality with God" (Philippians 2:5-6). He also discussed the fact, however, that Christ—Who had existed in heaven "in the form of God"—took on the "likeness of men" (2:7) while He was on Earth. Was Christ equal to God? Yes, He was. Did men **see** Christ during His earthly ministry? Yes, they did. Did they therefore "see" God? Yes, indeed. But did they see God's true image (i.e., as a spirit Being—John 4:24), or did they see instead an **embodiment** of God as Jesus dwelt here in a fleshly form? The answer is obvious from John's explanation in the first few verses of the first chapter of his Gospel. All this makes it clear that while Jesus is God, He also became a man "so that in history he might reveal the God whom no man has ever seen" (Pack, 1975, p. 39).

So the next time someone takes a two- or three-word quote from the Bible in an attempt to make the point that the text contains contradictions, we can be sure that in all likelihood it is not a proper quote (i.e., considered in its context). We can keep the improper interpretation from spreading by studying the "problem passage" and pointing out the **correct** context. When we prevent the interpretation offered by atheists, then they have nothing to use to prove their point that the Bible has contradicted itself.

## CONCLUSION

Of all the challenges to a Christian's faith, surely one of the most troubling in this day and age is skepticism's charge that the Bible is filled with various discrepancies and contradictions. If true, such a charge (which is occurring with increasing frequency) certainly would serve to negate the inerrancy and inspiration of the Bible.

Such a charge, however, is **not** true. And it is possible for the faithful Christian—through diligence and dedication—to answer in a thorough and sensible way the numerous charges and allegations that have been, and continue to be, made against God's Word by skeptics and infidels. The key, of course, is knowledge. The prophet Hosea, speaking on behalf of God, observed: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (4:6). The truthfulness of that statement has not dimmed across the centuries. Where knowledge is lacking, wisdom always will be in short supply.

A generation ago, we taught diligently on such topics as the existence of God and the inspiration of the Bible. But, ultimately, we taught less and less on these matters and, as a result, people's faith began to rest on sand rather than rock. Then, when the winds of trial and tribulation came (as they did in the case of the young Christian college student from West Virginia), that faith collapsed (and along with it, the hope of heaven as well).

Christians always have served God in an anti-Christian environment. That was true in the first century, and it is true in the twenty-first. However, while Christians exist and function **in** the world, we are not **of** the world (Romans 12:2; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15). Blurring that distinction (especially in the mind of a youngster) can have disastrous results. We can be—yea, we **must** be—"more than conquerors" (Romans 8:37). And so, let us make up our minds—right here, right now—to do everything within our power to protect our precious faith, and that of our children and grandchildren. Let us study ourselves, and then teach others as well, the evidence for God's existence, the evidence for the inspiration of God's Word, the evidence for the deity of Christ, etc. We must remember that an important part of building and sustaining a rock-solid faith is **defending** that faith. We cannot afford to falter or give up. Rather, we must be "set for the defense of the Gospel." A faith worth having is a faith worth defending. And it **can** be defended!

## CHAPTER 8

### DEFENDING THE GENESIS ACCOUNT OF CREATION [PART I]

Origins. The mere mention of the word has the power to evoke deep-seated emotions, because this is one issue on which practically everyone has an opinion. From the very earliest times, men have inquired about their origin, and the question, “Whence have I come?,” has not been far from either their minds or their lips. As we make our way through the pilgrimage we call “life,” on occasion we invariably stop to reflect upon the nature and meaning of our own existence, because such matters variously enthrall, excite, or intrigue us. Nowhere is this more evident than in regard to our ultimate origin. Few there must be who do not pause, at some point in their earthly sojourn, to ponder such topics as the origin of the Universe, the origin of planet Earth, the origin of various life forms on the Earth, the possibility of life on other planets, and even their own origin and destiny.

There are two fundamentally different, and diametrically opposed, explanations for the origin of the Universe, the origin of life in that Universe, and the origin of new types of varying life forms. Each of these explanations is a cosmogony—an entire world view, or philosophy, of origins and destinies, of life and its meaning. One of these cosmogonies is **creation** (often referred to as special creation, the theory of creation, the creation model, etc.). The second alternate and opposing view is known as **evolution** (often referred to as organic evolution, the theory of evolution, the evolution model, atheistic evolution, etc.).

One of the most serious threats to the faith of a Christian—especially a young Christian—is the concept of organic evolution. When “everyone” seems to believe in evolution, and when all the “smart folks” appear to have accepted it wholeheartedly, it can be difficult to believe otherwise. Alfred Rehwinkel discussed just such a situation when he wrote:

The shock received by the inexperienced young student is therefore overwhelming when he enters the classroom of such teachers and suddenly discovers to his great bewilderment that these men and women of acclaimed learning do not believe the views taught him in his early childhood days; and since the student sits at their feet day after day, it usually does not require a great deal of time until the foundation of his faith begins to crumble as stone upon stone is being removed from it by these unbelieving teachers. Only too often the results are disastrous. The young Christian becomes disturbed, confused, and bewildered. Social pressure and the weight of authority add to his difficulties. First he begins to doubt the infallibility of the Bible in matters of geology, but he will not stop there. Other difficulties arise, and before long skepticism and unbelief have taken the place of his childhood faith, and the saddest of all tragedies has happened. Once more a pious Christian youth has gained a glittering world of pseudo-learning but has lost his own immortal soul (1951, p. xvii).

It is the purpose of this chapter, and those that follow, to prevent that sad scenario from occurring. If we as Christians plan to build and sustain a rock-solid faith, there can be little doubt that at some point along the way, we are going to have to defend it against the attacks made upon it by those who advocate belief in organic evolution.

### ORGANIC EVOLUTION DEFINED

As we begin, let me offer some important definitions. The term “evolution” derives from the Latin word *evolvere*, which means literally to “unroll, unfold, or change.” The word “evolution” may be used legitimately to speak of a bud’s development into the flower, the metamorphosis of the butterfly, or even the production of new varieties of organisms.\* However, this is not what the average person has in mind when he speaks of evolution. In everyday parlance, the word carries quite a different meaning.

In 1960, G.A. Kerkut, the renowned British physiologist and evolutionist, authored *The Implications of Evolution*. In that small-but-powerful volume, he defined two theories of evolution that are of importance for our discussion here. He termed one of those the Special Theory of Evolution.† This is the kind of

---

\* For a comprehensive discussion of the varied definitions of evolution, see Bales, 1971.

† The Special Theory of Evolution sometimes is referred to by the term **microevolution**.



evolution to which practically all people subscribe, and over which there is no controversy. It suggests that limited change, within narrow limits, occurs throughout all living things. I know of no one who would deny this point. Creationists agree to its factuality, as do atheistic evolutionists. Years ago (to list just three examples), Brangus cattle, Cockapoo dogs, and 1,000+ varieties of roses did not exist. But today they do. Why? Simply stated, it is because evolution has occurred.

But as everyone recognizes, this “evolution” produces only small changes that do not cross what biologists refer to as “phylogenetic boundaries.” That is to say, the Brangus is still a cow, the Cockapoo is still a dog, and (to employ an old adage), a rose by any other name is still a rose. While the Special Theory of Evolution allows for change **within** groups, it does not allow for change **between** groups. It is not the Special Theory of Evolution that I will be investigating in the pages that follow; rather, I intend to examine the other theory of evolution mentioned by Kerkut.

In addition to the Special Theory, Dr. Kerkut also identified, defined, and discussed what he termed the General Theory of Evolution.\* He stated: “On the other hand, there is the theory that all the living forms in the world have arisen from a single source which itself came from an inorganic form. This theory can be called the ‘General Theory of Evolution...’” (1960, p. 157). This is what is referred to commonly as organic evolution, atheistic evolution, or simply “evolution.” Through the years, numerous investigators have offered various definitions of evolution. The same year that Dr. Kerkut offered his definitions, the late evolutionist of Harvard, George Gaylord Simpson, wrote:

Evolution is a fully natural process, inherent in the physical properties of the universe, by which life arose in the first place, and by which all living things, past or present, have since developed, divergently and progressively (1960, 131:969).

This definition has been accepted widely because of: (a) Dr. Simpson’s reputation in the evolutionary community; and (b) its succinct statement of what evolution is and allegedly does. Previously, Simpson and his coauthors had defined the theory by suggesting:

First, there is the theory of evolution in the strict sense. This states that all living organisms have evolved from common ancestors in a gradual historical process of change and diversification. The theory rejects the notion that all organisms were designed and created at the beginning of time (Simpson, et al., 1957, pp. 25-26).

Simpson’s Harvard colleague, the famous zoologist P.D. Darlington, reiterated these same points twenty-three years later.

The outstanding evolutionary mystery now is how matter has originated and evolved, why it has taken its present form in the universe and on the earth, and why it is capable of forming itself into complex living sets of molecules. This capability is inherent in matter as we know it, in its organization and energy.... It is a fundamental evolutionary generalization that no external agent imposes life on matter. Matter takes the form it does because it has the inherent capacity to do so. This is one of the most remarkable and mysterious facts about our universe: that matter exists that has the capacity to form itself into the most complex patterns of life (1980, pp. 15,234).

While disavowing its factuality, creationists agree with evolutionists about the definition of their theory. One creationist publication defined evolution as:

...the hypothesis that millions of years ago lifeless matter, acted upon by natural forces, gave origin to one or more minute living organisms which have since evolved into all living and extinct plants and animals, including man. The theory of evolution has to do with the origin of life and the origin of species, and should not be confused with the ordinary development or natural history of living plants and animals which we see all around us and which is an entirely different phenomenon. In its wider aspects, the theory of evolution embraces the origin and development of the whole universe... (*Evolution*, n.d., p. 7).

Wilbert H. Rusch, a creationist, defined evolution as:

...the theory that large groups or kinds of basic organisms change with the passage of time. Then it is held that their descendants will now be as different from them as they were different from their ancestors. It would follow that, given the passage of a sufficient time span, the life forms at any given point in time

---

\* The General Theory of Evolution sometimes is referred to by the term **macroevolution**.

will be radically different from the life forms present at any time during the past. It really involves what might be termed transspecific change. According to this theory, modern plants and animals are all the modified descendants of plants and animals from the past. All present taxa are then somehow descended from a common ancestry over vast periods of time. This would call for a continuum from the beginning of life to the present, with no distinct groups. This continuum would be made up of all fossil as well as present forms of life... (1991, pp. 13-14).

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that evolution encompasses much more than just biology, geology, paleontology, etc. It is an entire cosmogony (world view). The late, eminent evolutionist of the Rockefeller University, geneticist Theodosius Dobzhansky, willingly admitted:

Evolution comprises all the states of development of the universe: the cosmic, biological, and human or cultural developments. **Attempts to restrict the concept of evolution to biology are gratuitous.** Life is a product of the evolution of inorganic matter, and man is a product of the evolution of life (1967, 155:409, emp. added).

Notice the common thread running through the various definitions. First, evolution is a **fully natural** process. Second, no “external agent” (viz., “Creator”) is responsible for inanimate matter becoming animate; evolution “rejects the notion that all organisms were designed and created....” Third, all life descended (evolved) from a common source, which owes its own existence to inorganic matter. Fourth, evolution is a process of “change and diversification” which ultimately produces living organisms that develop “divergently and progressively.” Fifth, evolution “comprises all the states of development of the universe.” In summary then, by definition evolution precludes the supernatural, a Creator, any divine guidance of the natural processes involved, and the creation of organisms as separate and distinct entities not having descended from a common ancestor.

### WHY DO PEOPLE BELIEVE IN EVOLUTION?

One of the most mind-numbing mysteries for those who do **not** believe in evolution is trying to understand the people who **do**. [Perhaps evolutionists feel the same exasperation in regard to creationists’ beliefs, but on that point I am less qualified to judge.] This observation is not intended to be derogatory, but is offered merely as a statement of fact. Allow me to explain.

December 18, 1975. October 6, 1984. December 20, 1996. May 20, 2002. What do these dates—representative of four consecutive decades—have in common? The answer is that each represents a day in that particular decade on which an eminent evolutionary scientist died. In the decade of the ’70s, it was Thursday, December 18, 1975, when Theodosius Dobzhansky, the world-class geneticist of The Rockefeller University, passed away. In the decade of the ’80s, it was Saturday, October 6, 1984, when George Gaylord Simpson, the renowned paleontologist who served as a professor at both Harvard and the University of Arizona, died. In the decade of the ’90s, it was Friday, December 20, 1996, when Carl Sagan, the acclaimed astronomer and Pulitzer Prize-winning author of Cornell University, passed from this life. In the decade of the ’00s, it was Monday, May 20, 2002, when the eminent, award-winning paleontologist and Harvard University paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould died.

Each of these evolutionists was a multi-talented, highly intelligent individual who was well known and widely respected, both by those within and without the scientific community. Because of their reputations, and the lifetime achievements that in some cases had made their names household words, their passing did not go unnoticed by those involved on either side of the creation/evolution controversy. The evolutionary colleagues they left behind invariably penned glowing tributes acknowledging the tireless dedication that their now-deceased coworkers had demonstrated on behalf of a common cause. Those same colleagues repeatedly emphasized the profound scholarship that these men had exhibited through the years as they promoted and defended evolution; simultaneously, they expressed their deep regret that the concept of evolutionary thought now had lost such remarkable and powerful champions.

Creationists, on the other hand, had a somewhat different reaction. While they certainly shared the grief at the loss of a valuable human life, and while they deeply regretted the various circumstances surrounding the death of each of these men, other feelings could not help but surface as well. For example, it is extremely

difficult for those who believe in God, and who accept the biblical account of creation as the correct explanation for the origin of the Universe and its inhabitants, to comprehend fully how intelligent people can accept the naturalistic concept of organic evolution. In every decade, whenever an evolutionist of the stature of a Dobzhansky, a Simpson, a Sagan, or a Gould dies, one important question immediately springs to mind: **How** could someone who possessed such obvious talent, and such undeniable brilliance, spend a lifetime believing, promoting, and defending a concept as seemingly erroneous as organic evolution? Or, to state the question another way: **Why** do people choose to believe in evolution?

As one who writes and lectures often on the topics of creation and evolution, I frequently am asked such questions. More often than not, the question is phrased in what are intended to be complimentary terms: “Why is it that so many **obviously intelligent** people believe in evolution?” Such a question is not easy to answer, because generally the querist wants a simple, concise response. It is difficult for him to understand why people whom he accepts as “obviously intelligent” believe in a concept that he, personally, considers as meritless (and thus as unworthy of acceptance by intelligent people) as organic evolution.

It has been my experience that rarely is there a singular reply that can provide an answer to such a question, because rarely is there just a single reason that can explain adequately why a person believes what he does. Especially is this true in regard to belief in evolution. Here, however, I would like to offer seven **specific** reasons as to why people believe in evolution. But before I do, I would to approach the issue from a broader, more generic perspective.

### **The Freedom to Believe...**

I am convinced that a larger part of the answer as to why “obviously intelligent” people choose to believe in evolution can be found, at least in part, in the fact that when God created humans, He endowed us with freedom of choice. We often refer to that freedom as “personal volition” or “free moral agency.” The truth of the matter is that God did not create mankind as some kind of robot to slavishly serve Him, without any personal choice in the matter. This stands to reason, considering Who God is. The Scriptures describe God as being, among other things, a God of love (1 John 4:8). But is it not true that love allows freedom of choice. Ask people who are responsible parents. Do they love their children? Certainly. Do they—because of that love—allow those children freedom of choice? Indeed.

God, Who often is depicted in Scripture as a loving Father, is no different in this regard. Even a cursory survey of the biblical text documents God’s desire that man, as His creation, possess, and employ, freedom of choice. For example, when Joshua—who had led the Israelite nation so faithfully for so long—realized that his days were numbered and his hours were few, he assembled the entirety of that nation before him and, in one of the most impassioned pleas in Holy Writ, urged them to employ their personal volition in a proper fashion when he spoke these words:

And if it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether gods which your fathers served that were beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah (Joshua 24:15).

Joshua’s point was clear. The Israelites, individually and collectively, had the ability, and yes, even the God-given right, to choose whether or not they wished to follow Jehovah. As the text continues, it indicates that on that particular occasion they chose correctly.

And the people answered and said, Far be it from us that we should forsake Jehovah, to serve other gods.... And Israel served Jehovah all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, and had known all the work of Jehovah that he had wrought for Israel (Joshua 24:16,31).

In the New Testament, the principle is the same. When Jesus condemned the self-righteousness of the Pharisees in John 5:39-40, He made this observation: “Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.” The Pharisees of New Testament times possessed the same freedom of choice that the Israelites of Old Testament times possessed. But while the Israelites to whom he spoke chose to heed Joshua’s plea and obey Jehovah, the Pharisees to whom Christ spoke chose to ignore His plea and disobey God.

Two chapters later, when Jesus addressed the Jews in their own temple, the text indicates that they marveled at His teaching (John 7:15). But Jesus demurred, and said: “My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man **willeth** to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself” (John 7:16-17). Jesus’ point to the devout temple Jews was no different than the one He had made earlier to the legalistic Pharisees. God has imbued mankind with the ability to **choose**. If a person **wills**, he can accept God and His teaching, but God never will force Himself on that person. As the apostle John brought the book of Revelation to a close, he wrote: “He that will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). The operative phrase here, of course, is “he that will.”

But what of he who **will not**? Freedom is accompanied by responsibility. With freedom of choice comes the responsibility to think carefully, choose wisely, and act forcefully. Freedom of choice always works best when tempered with wisdom and good judgment. For that reason, to use just one example, parents who allow their children freedom of choice do not give them **just** freedom of choice. Rather, they provide their offspring with rules, regulations, and guidelines intended to help them use that freedom of choice correctly. If the children heed their parents’ admonition, it is likely that wisdom and good judgment will prevail.

In mankind’s relationship with God, it is much the same. In addition to giving us freedom of choice and personal volition, He has provided the rules, regulations, and guidelines that He knew we would need to help us use our personal freedom wisely. When we obey the rules, follow the regulations, and adhere to the guidelines, our lives are enriched. When we disobey the rules, refuse to follow the regulations, and ignore the guidelines, the opposite effect occurs. The Proverbs writer commented on this aspect of human life when he remarked: “The way of the transgressor is hard” (13:15). Jeremiah wrote: “It is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps” (10:23).

Thus, in every human activity the process of recognizing, believing, and properly utilizing truth is vitally important. Especially is this true in the spiritual realm. Jesus tried to impress this upon His generation when He said: “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). The same principle operates even today, almost two thousand years later. If knowing the truth makes us free, surely, then, **not** knowing the truth makes us captives of one sort or another.

Whenever we refuse to acknowledge, and believe, the truth, we are susceptible to every ill-conceived plan, deceptive scheme, and false concept that the winds of change may blow our way. We become captive to error because we have abandoned the one moral compass—truth—that possesses the ability to show us the way, and thereby to set us free. What we as humans so often fail to realize is that we are not involved in a search for truth because **it** is lost; we are involved in a search for truth because, without it, **we** are!

As I attempt to respond to the question, “Why do so many obviously intelligent people believe in evolution?” I would like to suggest that among the **specific** reasons as to why people believe in evolution, would be the following.

### Reason #1

There can be little doubt that many today believe in evolution simply because it is what they have been taught. For the past century, evolution has been in the limelight. And for the past quarter of a century or more, it has been taught as **scientific fact** in most educational settings—from kindergarten through graduate school. Marshall and Sandra Hall noted:

In the first place, evolution is what is taught in the schools. At least two, and in some cases three and four generations, have used textbooks that presented it as proven fact. The teachers, who for the most part learned it as truth, pass it on as truth. Students are as thoroughly and surely indoctrinated with the concept of evolution as students have ever been indoctrinated with any unproven belief (1974, p. 10).

In their book, *Why Scientists Accept Evolution*, Bales and Clark confirmed such an observation. “Evolution,” they wrote, “is taken for granted today and thus it is uncritically accepted by scientists as well as laymen. It is accepted by them today because it was already accepted by others who went before them and under whose direction they obtained their education” (1966, p. 106). Conway Zirkle stated that “practically every educated man believes in evolution.... [E]volution is incorporated in the thinking of our time” (1959, p. 19). A university biology textbook used widely for almost two decades began with these words:

Organic evolution is the greatest principle in biology. Its implications extend far beyond the confines of that science, ramifying into all phases of human life and activity. Accordingly, understanding of evolution should be part of the intellectual equipment of all educated persons (Moody, 1962, p. 1x).

Or, as Stephen J. Gould of Harvard put it: "The fact of evolution is as well established as anything in science (as secure as the revolution of the earth around the sun)..." [1987, 8[1]:64, parenthetical comment in orig.]. People believe in evolution because they have been taught that it is true.

### **Reason #2**

To suggest that many people today accept evolution as true merely because they have been taught to believe it, does not tell the whole story, however. Intellectual pride enters into the picture as well. Who among us does not want to present at least the appearance of being smart and well educated? Over the last century, we have been led to believe that if we wish to be considered intelligent, then we should believe in evolution, because intelligent people all over the world believe in evolution. As Henry Morris well stated the issue: "[T]he main reason most educated people believe in evolution is simply because they have been told that most educated people believe in evolution!" (1963, p. 26).

Consider the hypothetical example of two college students discussing their professors and courses. One of the students, Joe, asks his friend, Mark, the following question: "Hey, Mark, do you believe in evolution? My professor says all smart folks do." Honestly, what is Mark supposed to say? If he says, "No, Joe, I do **not** believe in evolution," then by definition he has admitted to being outside the sphere of all the "smart folks." On the other hand, if he says, "Yes, Joe, I **do** believe in evolution," he may be admitting to a belief based, not on an examination of the evidence, but on the idea that he does not wish to be viewed by his peers as anything but "smart." Undoubtedly, many people today fall into this category. They do not accept evolution because they have seen evidence that establishes it as true. Rather, they believe it because doing so places them in the same category as others whom they consider to be intelligent.

### **Reason #3**

Further exacerbating the problem is the fact that evolution has been given a "stamp of approval" by important spokespersons from practically every field of human endeavor. While there have been those from politics, the humanities, the arts, and other fields who openly have defended evolution as factual, in no other area has this defense been as pronounced as in the sciences. Because science has seen so many successes, and because these successes have been so visible and well publicized, scientists have been granted an aura of respectability that can only be envied by non-scientists. As a result, when scientists champion a cause, people take notice. After all, it is their workings through the scientific method that have eradicated smallpox, put men on the Moon, prevented polio, and lengthened life spans. We have grown used to seeing "experts" from various scientific disciplines ply their trade in an endless stream of amazing feats. Heart surgery has become commonplace; organ transplants have become routine; space shuttles flying to the heavens have become standard fare.

Thus, when evolution is presented as something that "all reputable scientists believe," there are many who accept such an assessment at face value, and who fall in line with what they believe is a well-proven dictum that has been enshrouded with the cloak of scientific respectability. The obvious impression is that since "all scientists believe it; so should you." This, in turn, sends the message that well-informed, intelligent people would not dare to doubt the truthfulness of evolution. As Marshall and Sandra Hall asked: "How, then, are people with little or no special knowledge of the various sciences and related subjects to challenge the authorities? It is natural to accept what 'experts' say, and most people do" (1974, p. 10).

### **Reason #4**

Without a doubt, there are many who believe in evolution because they have rejected God. For those who refuse to believe in the Creator, evolution becomes their only escape. They generally make no pretense of believing it based on anything other than their disbelief in God. Henry Fairfield Osborn, one of the most famous evolutionists of the early twentieth century, suggested: "In truth, from the earliest stages of Greek thought man has been eager to discover some natural cause of evolution, and to abandon the idea of super-

natural intervention in the order of nature” (1918, p. ix). Henry Morris has noted: “Evolution is the natural way to explain the origin of things for those who do not know and acknowledge the true God of creation. In fact, some kind of evolution is absolutely necessary for those who would reject God” (1966, p. 98).

Well-known British scientist, D.M.S. Watson, who held the position of the Chair of Evolution at the University of London for over twenty years, once stated his conclusion that “evolution itself is accepted by zoologists, not because it has been observed to occur or can be proven by logically coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation, is incredible” (1929, 123:233). Almost seventy years later, evolutionist Richard Lewontin (whom I quoted in chapter 2 to this effect) wrote:

Our willingness to accept scientific claims against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science *in spite* of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, in spite of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, *in spite* of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because **we have a prior commitment, a commitment to naturalism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes** to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door (1997, p. 31, italics in orig., emp. added).

These kinds of statements leave little to the imagination, and make it clear that those who make them believe in evolution, not because of the evidence, but instead because they have made up their minds, *a priori*, that they are not going to believe in God.

In his book, *Man’s Origin: Man’s Destiny*, the late, eminent United Nations scientist, A.E. Wilder-Smith, observed: “Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism, rightly or wrongly, have been used everywhere in the East and West, in the hands of the atheists and agnostics, as the main weapon against the biblical doctrine of origins” (1975, p. 31). For the person who stubbornly refuses to believe in God, belief in evolution becomes automatic. Similarly, opposition to God, the Bible, and the system of origins the Bible describes, becomes just as automatic. Whenever a person rids himself of God, he simultaneously (even if unwittingly) embraces evolution. By his disbelief, he has eliminated creation as an option regarding his origin.

### Reason #5

Another reason people offer for their belief in evolution has to do with the fact that there is so much evil, pain, and suffering in the world. No rational, well-informed person can deny the widespread and unmistakable occurrence of “bad” things that happen, often engulfing those who seem undeserving of such tragic events. To some, no explanation from religionists—regardless of how elaborately stated or elegantly defended that explanation may be—ever will provide an adequate answer to the conundrum of how an omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent God can allow atrocities to fill His specially created world (see Thompson, 2000b, pp. 95-105).

Evolution, on the other hand, provides what appears to be a perfectly logical explanation for such a scenario. According to evolutionary dogma, throughout the history of the world various species (including man) have been engaged in a struggle for survival and advancement. Charles Darwin (borrowing a phrase from his friend, English philosopher Herbert Spencer) referred to it as “survival of the fittest.” The evolutionist—because of the nature of his theory—is forced to view the Universe and everything within it as the end result of numerous purposeless accidents. All living things, including man, exist on the Earth not because of any Grand Plan, but because of fortuitous occurrences that resulted from chance happenings in nature. And, to survive—and thrive—in such a world may seem to justify a “might makes right/strong subjugates the weak/to the victor go the spoils” attitude. “It’s a jungle out there”—and in the jungle it is the law of tooth and claw that prevails.

Since man is viewed as little more than a naked ape, why should he somehow be exempt from the perils that continually befall other species of animals? These animals live their entire lives with one eye looking over their shoulder, as it were, because they exist in a dog-eat-dog world with no set moral standard. Man, according to evolutionary theory, is no different. His only claim to fame in this regard lies in the fact that he (so far) occupies the last rung of the evolutionary ladder.

But nature confers on him no special rights, privileges, or protection. In a world where evolution is considered as true, and “survival of the fittest” is touted as nature’s way of weeding out the weak, it should be no surprise that evil, pain, and suffering exist. In fact, from the evolutionary vantage point, whenever competition occurs for such things as food supplies, adequate shelter, reproductive advantages, etc., humanity has to learn to cope with evil, pain, and suffering. Granted, at first this may sound harsh, but from the evolutionists’ perspective it is consistent, and offers an attempted explanation for the undeniable existence of “bad” things in our world. Unfortunately, all too often the answers offered by religionists for the problem of evil, pain, and suffering have fallen short of the mark, and as a result people have accepted evolution as providing a legitimate explanation for a very real problem in their lives.

### Reason #6

While it is undeniable that some reject creation because of inappropriate conduct on the part of those who advocate it, likewise it is true that some reject God, and creation, to excuse or legitimize their own inappropriate personal conduct. In other words, they believe in evolution because it allows them to avoid any objective moral standard of behavior. It keeps them “out of reach” of any deity. It provides a subjective climate of situation ethics where any and all behavior, no matter how absurd or perverse, is acceptable. It nourishes a “do your own thing” attitude that precludes rules and regulations, in a vain attempt to circumvent the guilt that inevitably comes from doing wrong.

In the evolutionary scenario, humans are merely the last in a long line of amoebas, crocodiles, and orangutans resulting from fortuitous cosmic accidents. In such an arrangement, it is futile to speak of “personal responsibility.” There exists, in the grand scheme of things, no reason why one “ought” or “ought not” to act a certain way, or to do/not do a certain thing. Aldous Huxley stated the matter succinctly in his article, “Confessions of a Professed Atheist”:

I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning; consequently, assumed it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find reasons for this assumption.... The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics; he is also concerned to prove there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do.... For myself, as no doubt for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. **We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom** (1966, 3:19, emp. added).

If Huxley and his cohorts had abandoned belief in evolution and accepted the existence of God, it would have “interfered with their sexual freedom.” Realizing that, they chose instead to abandon belief in God. That left them with only one option—belief in evolution. It was not something they did because of the weight of the evidence. Rather, it was something they did because they desired to avoid personal accountability to the Creator. Their actions belied their motives. As Woods remarked: “Convince a man that he came from a monkey, and he’ll act like one!” (1976, 118[33]:514).

### Reason #7

Last, we may state that some people accept evolution because they are honest, truth-seeking people who are convinced that it is the correct answer to the question of origins. They have examined the evidence and, on the basis of their examination, have concluded that evolution is the only plausible explanation for the Universe and all that it contains. These people generally are both sincere and open-minded. They are not attempting to rid themselves of the idea of God. They do not feel the need to be “intellectually correct.” They are not reacting to unkind treatment at the hand of religionists. They are not searching for a way to justify worldly behavior. They simply believe that the evidence favors evolution, and thus have accepted it as the correct view of origins.

### “LOGICAL ILLITERATES, SCIENTIFIC SIMPLETONS, FOOLS AND MENACES”

On Thursday evening, May 23, 1985, I participated in a televised debate with renowned evolutionist and humanist, Delos McKown. The setting was the Tracey Larkin show on Alabama Public Television. The audience was composed of the people of Alabama. The show aired at 6:30 p.m.

The day before, I had received a telephone call from Mr. Larkin, asking if I might be willing to meet Dr. McKown in order to discuss the creation/evolution controversy. I gladly accepted the invitation. Dr. McKown was no stranger to me. He is well known in evolutionist/humanist circles. At the time of our debate, he was the chairman of the philosophy department at Auburn University (he since has retired), and wrote often for anti-creation publications such as the humanist journal *Creation/Evolution*. In fact, he had just authored a fictional novel, *With Faith & Fury* (1985), which depicted a fundamentalist preacher who tangled with an evolutionist and (of course) lost. The novel was published by the humanist publishing firm, Prometheus Press, of Buffalo, New York. Eight years later, in 1993, Dr. McKown authored (and Prometheus published) *The Myth-Maker's Magic—Behind the Illusion of “Creation Science,”* which was a frontal attack on biblical creationism.

As the debate opened, Dr. McKown fired a salvo intended to leave the audience with the impression that **all** legitimate scientists of repute are evolutionists. He quoted from a booklet that had just been published by the National Academy of Sciences (the 1984 volume, *Science and Creationism: A View from the National Academy of Sciences*) that sought to present evolution as a scientific fact. He suggested that evolution is accepted by “all scientists” as representative of the truth regarding human origins. Dr. McKown then opined that the only view that should be presented in public schools was the evolutionary scenario. I quickly reminded him, however, that by taking such a position he had put himself at odds with his famous mentor, Charles Darwin, as well as the great public defender of evolutionary theory, Clarence Darrow. Darwin, for example, stated in the “Introduction” to his 1859 publication, *The Origin of Species*:

I am well aware that there is scarcely a single point discussed in this volume on which facts cannot be adduced, often apparently leading to conclusions directly opposite to those at which I have arrived. **A fair result could be obtained only by fully stating and balancing the facts on both sides of each question** (emp. added).

During the famous 1925 “Scopes Monkey Trial,” Clarence Darrow stated that it was “sheer bigotry” to teach only one theory of origins. [Of course, at the time Darrow had reference to the teaching of only creation, in the absence of evolution, but his statement is true nonetheless.] I asked Dr. McKown what would be wrong with allowing students to have access to **all** the evidence so they could examine it at their leisure and then make up their minds without fear of undue coercion. The Auburn philosophy professor recoiled in utter shock at such a suggestion, and stated that exposing students to such concepts would be tantamount to putting astrology back into astronomy, or the stork back into obstetrics. He stated that if we put the “so-called evidences” (to use his exact terminology) for creation into the public schools, students quickly would see that they had been “sold a bill of goods.”

I hastened to point out to Dr. McKown that students in public schools **already** had been “sold a bill of goods,” in that they were being allowed to see only one small segment of the evidence regarding origins—the **side the evolutionists wanted them to see**. The fact of the matter is that creationists have an impressive arsenal of evidence at their disposal which helps to establish the conclusion that the creation model fits the available scientific facts far better than the evolution model. [See my book, *The Scientific Case for Creation* (2004), for a presentation and discussion of much of that evidence.] The one-sided indoctrination of students in this materialistic philosophy in the tax-supported schools of our pluralistic, democratic society is a violation of both academic and religious freedoms. Furthermore, it is **poor education** and **poor science**. To remedy this intolerable situation, creation scientists insist that only after students have had an opportunity to weigh **all** the data, consider each alternative, and examine the implications and consequences of both positions, are they then able to determine correctly which is more credible and rational. **That is good education, and good science!** But, as Harvard-trained lawyer Norman Macbeth accurately pointed out in his book, *Darwin Retried* (1971), evolutionists (and this certainly would include Dr. McKown) are almost irrationally fearful of creationists, and are determined to prevent them—at all costs—from presenting any scientific evidence that supports creationism.



In the last sixty seconds of the debate, the television host, Mr. Larkin, was wrapping up the evening's discussion when he remarked to Dr. McKown that the creationists seemed to be making a good bit of progress in their efforts to set forth the scientific evidence for creation. Upon hearing this, Dr. McKown exploded in a burst of incensed rhetoric, and stated in no uncertain terms that, indeed, creationists **were** making a good deal of headway—but due only to the fact that our nation is filled with (and this is a direct quote from Dr. McKown) **“logical illiterates and scientific simpletons!”**

While such a statement may have been as shocking to the people of Alabama as it was insulting, Dr. McKown hardly is the only evolutionist making such public, inflammatory statements. Just a brief four years after Delos McKown's tirade, the eminent British evolutionist, Richard Dawkins, offered the following blunt assessment of those who choose to believe in creation as opposed to evolution: **“It is absolutely safe to say that if you meet somebody who claims not to believe in evolution, that person is ignorant, stupid, or insane (or wicked, but I'd rather not consider that)”** [1989, p. 34, parenthetical comment in orig., emp. added].

In 1991, Phillip Johnson, a lawyer with impeccable credentials from both Harvard and the University of Chicago, and a professor at the University of California at Berkeley, authored a volume titled *Darwin on Trial*. His book—which became practically an overnight best seller—presented a withering critique of Darwinian evolution, and included this assessment:

The official scientific organizations, however, are at war with creationism, and their policy is to demand unconditional surrender.... To the zealots, people who say they believe in God are either harmless sentimentalists who add some vague God-talk to a basically naturalistic worldview, or they are creationists. **In either case they are fools, but in the latter case they are also a menace** (p. 128, emp. added).

To those who have helped develop, and who ardently defend, the concept known as the General Theory of Evolution, those people who believe in God are fools, and creationists are worse by far because they are logical illiterates, scientific simpletons, and fools who are ignorant, stupid, insane, wicked menaces! After reading such epithets, can anyone really doubt that the Christian Faith is under attack, and needs defending?

### **“I DO NOT WANT TO BE A FOOL”**

Some time ago, I received a gut-wrenching letter from a young Christian who was a graduate student in the applied sciences at a state university. His major professor was a man he referred to as “a giant in his field...rocket-scientist intelligent...and a devout evolutionist.” In his missive, the student went on to say:

Working this closely with one who thinks as he does is beginning to cause not a small amount of cognitive dissonance in my own mind. Hundreds of thousands of scientists can't be wrong, can they? Consensual validation cannot be pushed aside in science. How can that many people be following a flag with no carrier, and someone not find out? **I do not want to be a fool!**

This young writer expressed what many people experience, yet are unable to enunciate so eloquently. It is not an enjoyable experience to be exposed to the slings and barbs of infidelity. Nor is it pleasant to be labeled as dumb, stupid, or ignorant because you hold to a belief different than your opponent's. Yet it is those very labels that have been applied to those of us who are willing to defend the existence of God or the concept of creation. The old adage, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me,” may be easy to parrot in such instances, but it is difficult to believe, and does not offer much comfort. Truth be told, words **do** hurt. No one enjoys being thought of (or actually called) ignorant, stupid, insane, or wicked.

Words also can alter perspectives. It is not at all uncommon in this day and age to encounter those who once knew what they believed and why they believed it, yet who now are terribly confused. “Cognitive dissonance” is the internal struggle one experiences when presented with new information that contradicts what he believes to be true. As he struggles for consistency, he must change what he believes or disregard the new information. This Christian student—who once knew what he believed and why he believed it—no longer knows either. He stated: “I am a confused young man with some serious questions about my mind, my faith, and my God. Please help me sort through these questions....”

There were two things he **did** know, however. First, he recognized that the beliefs he once held were inconsistent with those he was being taught. Second, he recognized that if he accepted these new teachings, then not only his **beliefs** but his **actions** would be inconsistent with his Christianity. His plea—"help me sort through these questions"—has been echoed countless times through the centuries by those who languish in the "cognitive dissonance" which results from replacing the wisdom of God with the wisdom of man. What answer could I give the young querist?

### **"Consensual Validation"**

It very likely is true that "most scientists" accept organic evolution. So what? That is not the issue. The issue is: Are they **correct** in doing so? That is to say, is "consensual validation" reason enough to acquiesce in favor of organic evolution?

The graduate student asked: "Hundreds of thousands of scientists can't be wrong, can they?" This question may be addressed as follows. First, any argument based on "counting heads" is fallacious. Philosophy professors instruct their students on various fallacies of human thought, one of which is the "fallacy of consensus." In his textbook, *Fundamentals of Critical Thinking*, atheistic philosopher Paul Ricci discussed the "argument from consensus," and explained its erroneous nature (1986, p. 175). Interestingly, however, in the pages prior to his discussion, Mr. Ricci offered the following as proof of evolution: "The reliability of evolution not only as a theory but as a principle of understanding is not contested by **the vast majority** of biologists, geologists, astronomers, and other scientists" (p. 172, emp. added).

Mr. Ricci thus fell victim to the very fallacy about which he tried to warn his readers—**truth is not determined by popular opinion or majority vote**. A thing may be, and often is, true even when accepted only by a small minority. The history of science is replete with such examples. British medical doctor, Edward Jenner (1749-1823), was scorned when he suggested that he had produced a smallpox vaccine by infecting people with a less-virulent strain of the disease-causing organism. Afterwards, he lived as a man whose reputation had been sullied. Yet his vaccine helped the World Health Organization eradicate smallpox. Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis (1818-1865) of Austria is another interesting case study. He noticed the high mortality rate among surgical patients, and suggested that the deaths resulted from surgeons washing neither their hands nor their instruments between patients. Dr. Semmelweis asked them to do so, but they ridiculed him. Today, the solutions posed by this gentle doctor are the basis of antiseptic techniques in life-saving surgery.

Often, scientific successes have occurred **because** researchers rebelled against the status quo. Sometimes consensual validation **must** be set aside for the sake of truth. If it is not, those of us who work in science shall become little more than cookie-cutter scientists rushing to fit into a predetermined mold.

Darrell Huff correctly observed: "People can be wrong in the mass, just as they can individually" (1959, p. 122). If something is true, stating it a million times does not make it any truer. Similarly, if something is false, stating it a million times does not make it true. And the prestige of a position's advocates has nothing to do with whether or not the fact is true or false. It is incorrect (to use one example) to suggest that because a Nobel laureate states something, it is true by definition. Were that the case, when Nobel laureate W.B. Shockley suggested that highly intelligent women be artificially inseminated using spermatozoa from Nobel Prize winners to produce super-intelligent offspring, we should have taken him up on his suggestion. Of course, such an idea was based on nothing more than the narcissistic dreamings of an over-inflated ego. As Ian Taylor commented: "Status in the field of science is no guarantee of the truth" (1984, p. 226). Factual knowledge is not based on: (a) the number of people supporting the claim; or (b) the importance of the one(s) making that claim.

Second, the idea of strict objectivity in science is a myth. While scientists like to think of themselves as broad-minded, unprejudiced paragons of virtue, the fact is that they, too, on occasion, suffer from bouts of bias, bigotry, and presuppositionalism. Another Nobel laureate, James Watson, remarked rather bluntly: "In contrast to the popular conception supported by newspapers and mothers of scientists, a goodly number of scientists are not only narrow-minded and dull, but also just stupid" (1968, p. 14).

History provides a sad but instructive example of how scientists sometimes treat their colleagues when “consensual validation” is threatened. Immanuel Velikovsky was a medical doctor, and a scholar in his own right. He was also an “evolutionary catastrophist” (a rarity in the evolutionary community). Dr. Velikovsky believed, among other things, that the miracles described in the Bible actually occurred, but had purely natural explanations. His books (*Earth in Upheaval*, *Worlds in Collision*, *Ages in Chaos*, and others) challenged much evolutionary thought, and caused ripples of global proportions in the scientific community. The ensuing controversy was not a pretty sight (see de Grazia, 1966; Talbott, 1976). In their book, *Velikovsky Reconsidered*, the editors of *Pensée* magazine offered the following assessment of what occurred in this instance:

The professional scientists’ campaign against *Worlds in Collision* began well before the book appeared. Harlow Shapley, probably the best-known American astronomer alive today, led an energetic attempt to stop the publisher, Macmillan, from publishing the book. He arranged for denunciations of the book, still before its appearance, by an astronomer, a geologist, and an archaeologist in a learned journal. None of them had read the book. When it did appear, denunciatory reviews were arranged, again, in several instances, by professors who boasted of never having read the book.

Velikovsky was rigorously excluded from access to learned journals for his replies. Then Shapley and others really got busy on the old-boy circuit. They forced the sacking of the senior editor of Macmillan responsible for accepting the Velikovsky manuscript. (He had been with the firm twenty-five years.) They forced the sacking of the director of the famous Hayden Planetarium in New York, because he proposed to take Velikovsky seriously enough to mount a display about the theory.

...The process thus begun did not stop. ...a great many “refutations” of Velikovsky’s theory have appeared in print, some by very famous people.... Some of them are chiefly remarkable for dishonesty or incompetence. They misquote the text they are criticizing. They willfully misrepresent the theory Velikovsky advanced. And they are replete with errors of fact and theory (Talbott, 1976, pp. 38,39).

Eventually, Macmillan was forced to transfer Velikovsky’s works to its competitor, Doubleday, which had no textbook division and thus was not subject to the blackmail that Shapley and his evolutionary colleagues were perpetrating. The whole sordid affair was made public in Dr. Velikovsky’s last book, *Stargazers and Gravediggers* (1984), published posthumously at his insistence.

Dr. Velikovsky’s treatment was scandalous, and remains a source of embarrassment to every scientist. Science is alleged to be self-testing and self-correcting. Even unorthodox views are supposedly welcome, since once put to the test, they will be weeded out if incorrect. But to deny someone the right to set forward a theory is not science—it is bigotry. While I as a scientist certainly do not share most of Velikovsky’s views, I delight in the fact that science has room in its investigative method and procedures for even the most unlikely candidate of a theory.

Newspaper magnate William Randolph Hurst Jr. once wrote about pressures from “fashionable ideas... which are advanced with such force that common sense itself becomes the victim.” He observed that a person under such pressure may then act “with an irrationality which is almost beyond belief” (1971, p. A-4). This is exactly what happened in the cases of Jenner, Semmelweis, and Velikovsky—and the list could be extended with ease. Common sense became the victim, and people acted irrationally. Were “the scientists” in the majority? Indeed. Were they wrong? Yes. Just because “hundreds of thousands of scientists” believe something does not make it right.

### **“Thou Shalt not Follow a Multitude to do Evil”**

Christ, in His “Sermon on the Mount,” warned that “narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:14). The majority ultimately will abandon God’s wisdom in favor of their own. Moses commanded the Israelites: “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil” (Exodus 23:2). Regarding this passage, the late Guy N. Woods observed that this divine injunction

...was designed to guard the Lord’s people from the corrupting influences of an evil environment, as well as from the powerful appeals of mob psychology to which so many in every generation succumb.... Man, by nature, is a social and gregarious being, tending to flock or gather together with others of his kind.... Man may, and often does, imbibe the evil characteristics of those about him as readily, and often more so, than the good ones (1982, 124[1]:2).

Yes, there are “hundreds of thousands of scientists” who reject the biblical account of creation. But, as Woods noted, “It is dangerous to follow the multitude because **the majority is almost always on the wrong side** in this world” (p. 2, emp. added). The “wisdom” with which we **are** impressed is not always the wisdom with which we **should be** impressed. Paul told the Corinthian Christians:

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning will I bring to naught. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God’s good pleasure through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Corinthians 1:19-21).

It should not be surprising that so many “intelligent” people view creation, and Christianity, as “the fool’s way out.” Paul himself commented that “...not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong” (1 Corinthians 1:26-27). Those highly intelligent are often the least interested in spiritual matters because “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:3-4) has blinded their minds so that they cannot, or will not, see the truth. They ignore the fact that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 1:7).

We must not fall prey to mob psychology—the idea which suggests because “everyone is doing it” that somehow makes it right. Nor should we believe that “science” provides the answer to every conceivable question.

To treat science as a secular substitute for God is not only naive, it is idolatry.... Science and technology are the activities of imperfect people. The tendencies to misuse and exploit for personal gain operate here as in every other department of life. But the answer to abuse is not disuse, but responsible use (Poole, 1990, p. 126).

The graduate student said, “I do not want to be a fool.” It was a joy to tell him that he does not have to bear that stigma. The Scriptures are clear: “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God” (Psalm 14:1). We need not be intimidated by the pseudo-intellectualism of those who esteem themselves with higher regard than they do their Creator. The “Peanuts” cartoon character Lucy was correct when she told Charlie Brown, “You’re not right; you just **sound** right!”

At times, we need to focus on these issues and remember that it is far more important to study, and submit to, the Word of God than it is to be able to explain the ins and outs of quantum physics. One of those will “abide forever” (Isaiah 40:8); the other will perish. One of the graduate student’s final questions was: “How, then, may we compete?” Frankly, there may be times when we cannot. We run a different race, operated by different rules. While the world may esteem us not at all, the One Who eventually will judge us shall esteem us as “sons by adoption,” and “heirs of the kingdom.” Who, then, shall have played the fool?



## CHAPTER 9

### DEFENDING THE GENESIS ACCOUNT OF CREATION [PART II]

#### SCIENCE AND ORIGIN MODELS

In a seminar on origins held at Murray, Kentucky, on November 29, 1980, the late Russell C. Artist, former biology department chairman and professor emeritus at David Lipscomb University, commented: “The statement, ‘In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,’ is the very cornerstone of all scientific thinking.” If Genesis 1:1 is the **cornerstone** of science, then surely Genesis 1:28 is the **charter** of science. Shortly after He created the beginnings of the human race, God granted His permission for mankind to “have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” Inherent in God’s statement were two precepts: (1) that man was to involve himself in procedures of study and investigation that lead to a proper understanding of the world around him; and (2) that man was to be a responsible steward of the marvelous gifts that God had provided for him in nature.

Within the past several hundred years, science has made great strides that have affected men’s lives in both a permanent and positive fashion. Germ theory was developed, antibiotics were discovered, vaccines were invented, and life-saving surgical techniques were pioneered. Within the lifetimes of many who read this chapter, science has performed feats so amazing that at times they seem to defy description and strain credulity. The genetic code has been elucidated, the human genome has been decoded, smallpox has been eradicated worldwide, and successful manned space flights have been dispatched to the Moon. Rarely does a day go by that we are not reminded of scientists’ successful search for the knowledge that has become so highly prized by the human race, and so beneficial to its continued existence on this planet. Hardly a day passes that man’s future does not grow brighter as a result of the passing of these scientific milestones, and the use of the wisdom they have imparted to humanity. But what, exactly, is science?

#### WHAT IS SCIENCE?

Science is (or, at least, should be) man’s attempt to subdue and have dominion over the Earth. It is humanity’s effort to understand God’s creation. English philosopher Herbert Spencer acknowledged that science is divided into five basic fundamentals: time, force, action, space, and matter. That is exactly what Moses wrote in Genesis 1:1—“In the beginning (time) God (force) created (action) the heavens (space) and the earth (matter).”

The procedures of study and investigation that lead man to a proper understanding of his world, we properly call “science.” Derived from the Latin *scientia*, our English word science means “knowledge.” Thus, one of the goals of science, and of the scientists who practice it, is to provide man with the knowledge relevant to the world he inhabits, and to his existence within it. Virgil Trout summarized these ideas as follows:

The Bible recognizes the multi-dimensional nature of the human predicament. Man is regarded in the scriptures as being one having physical, intellectual, and moral capacities and needs. The biblical concept is that man has been created in the image of God to become, among other things, a steward of the earth. **This means simply that God intended for man to become a scientist...** The Bible’s treatment of science is that this is a discipline of man, who is exercising his Creator-invested rights to explore his Father’s magnificent physical realm (1970, 1[2]:48, emp. in orig.).

Science is indeed a wonderful enterprise, and those of us who are its practitioners are on an admirable quest. Dedicated men and women labor diligently to comprehend the intricacies and complexities of our Earth and Universe, and to explore and explain their multitudinous mysteries. The reward of this unending search—knowledge that can impart wisdom—is well worth the time and effort expended in the quest. Who among us can doubt the value of the scientific endeavor?

“Science,” Harris Rall noted, “stands for a way of study, and an attitude of mind. To leave theories and prejudices to one side, to bring an open mind and ask only for the truth, to study concrete facts with endless patience, to try to find an order of behaviour in the world, as indicated by these facts, to test these findings by experiment and more facts—this is the spirit and method of science” (1936, p. 66). Geneticist John Klotz observed that “science, on the other hand, is man’s groping for the truth. Science deals only with the natural, with things that can be apprehended by the sense organs. Science deals with those things that can be measured” (1970, p. 11). The *Oxford Dictionary* defines science as “a branch of study which is concerned with a connected body of **demonstrated** truths or **observed** facts...” (emp. added).

The key to these thoughts, and thus to science, is that science deals only with those things that can be **observed with the five senses**. George Gaylord Simpson suggested that “the goal of science is to establish generalizations and explanations for observed facts. The mere gathering of facts is quite useless unless the observations are directed toward this goal” (1965, p. 15). Science, therefore, is an attempt to gather and explain the facts about the Universe in which we live. It is, says Simpson,

an exploration of the material universe that seeks natural, orderly relationships among observed phenomena and that is self-testing. We may well add, but not as a part of the definition, that the best answers are theories that apply to a wide range of phenomena, that are subject to extensive tests, and that are suggestive of further questions (1964, pp. 90-91).

Margaret Balcom has noted that science is “primarily a method for dealing with matter (objects) in action through (1) observation and experimentation, (2) analysis, (3) derivation of a physical law (a concept), (4) prediction in terms of that law. **Science is concerned with a given physical system already in operation**” (1967, p. 592, emp. added).

Since science is “concerned with a given physical system already in operation,” what is the **origin** of this system? Science is powerless to explain origins. It may define methods, qualities, and limits, but it cannot determine ultimate origins. Evolutionist Theodosius Dobzhansky well stated that “science is cumulative knowledge” (1962, p. xxi). But science is not adequate to explain everything. It provides many, but not all, of the answers. Albert Wells remarked:

As knowledge of the universe expands and man’s position within it becomes both more central and more critical, so increases the demand for meaning, as well as for effective means of moral and spiritual control of the achievements science has made possible. **Science cannot give us these**. The scientific task fosters integrity and character. A persistent and passionate devotion to truth cannot help but build trustworthiness in the man who engages in the quest. But science is not at all sufficient to itself. It is, after all, quite limited as far as being able to answer the real questions is concerned (1962, p. 72, emp. added).

Thornton Whaling, in his book, *Science and Religion*, wrote:

Physical science knows by experimentation and observation; historical science knows through credible testimony; psychology, by immediate consciousness of freedom and personality; philosophy through the universal laws of pure reason or thought; religion, by the answer of the infinite Personality to the call of moral and spiritual need. And to claim that knowledge belongs alone to any one of these fields is to ignore the breadth of possible knowledge and the high endowments of human nature, through a certain concealed Pharisism which is the essence of conceit and obscurantism. For natural science, history, psychology, ethics, philosophy, or religion to affirm that there is only one mode of cognition, and that way its own, is to betray a fatuous pride which convicts of lack of real culture in the court of high reason (1929, pp. 12-13).

Science is a marvelous enterprise that has benefited mankind in more ways than would be possible to list. But its continued success is dependent in large part on an understanding of its proper nature and correct use. An understanding of what science is, how it works, and its inherent limitations will not only help us appreciate science, but prevent its abuse as well.

Should science’s amazing successes eliminate man’s acknowledgment of, and dependence upon, God? Certainly not! In addressing this point, Edmund W. Sinnott observed:

...the attainment of a working philosophical relationship between science and religion is more essential now than ever. An attempt to reach it has been my purpose here. To succeed where others have so often failed is more than I can expect, but any sincere effort to this end is worth making. Science and religion, ministering so diversely to the life of man, will necessarily follow different roads, but they still can powerfully reinforce

each other. Surely they should enlarge their boundaries together. Both church and laboratory will be more effective in their service through such mutual aid. Reason and spirit are the pillars that support our Great Tradition. They must both be strong, but neither can be so without the other's help. Between them they hold up the hopes of man today as he strives to fulfill his splendid destiny (1953, p. xi).

Science is merely man's attempt to "understand God's thoughts after Him." Wernher von Braun, the foremost missile expert of the 20th century, declared that it is as difficult

to understand a scientist who does not acknowledge the presence of a superior rationality behind the existence of the universe as it is to comprehend a theologian who would deny the advances of science. And there is certainly no scientific reason why God cannot retain the same position in our modern world that He held before we began probing His creation with telescope and cyclotron.... I deplore the attitude that scientific enlightenment and religious beliefs are incompatible. I consider it one of the greatest tragedies of our times that this is so widely believed.... **Through a closer look at creation, we ought to gain a better knowledge of the Creator; and a greater sense of man's responsibility to God will come into focus....** Science and religion are not antagonists, but sisters. Both seek ultimate truth. Science helps to reveal more about the creator through His creation.... The public has a deep respect for the amazing scientific advancements made within our lifetime. There is admiration for the scientific process of observation, experimentation, of testing every concept to measure its validity. But it still bothers some people that we cannot prove scientifically that God exists. **Must we light a candle to see the sun?** (1969, p. 5, emp. added).

Dr. von Braun was correct. Through a closer look at the world around us, we **should** be able to gain a better knowledge of the Creator. And a greater sense of man's responsibility to God **should** come into focus. But has it?

## SCIENCE VERSUS SCIENTISM

In our day and age, scientific success stories, and the rewards they confer, arrive at practically break-neck speed. Today the citizens of most developed countries are better fed, better clothed, and healthier than they have ever been. Transportation, educational, medical, industrial, and even recreational facilities are vastly improved, compared to those of previous generations. We are the smartest, best-educated, most mobile people ever to have lived on the Earth. Deadly diseases are being conquered, life spans are being increased, and daily living is being made more pleasurable as a result of our continued scientific advancements. All should be well with us. But is it?

In this era of accelerated scientific wizardry, on occasion the tendency has been to think that man's knowledge and ability know no limits. In fact, Richard Leakey and Roger Lewin echoed that very idea in their book, *Origins*, when they wrote:

During that relatively brief span evolutionary pressures forged a brain capable of profound understanding of matters animate and inanimate; the fruits of intellectual and technological endeavour in this latter quarter of the twentieth century give us just an inkling of what the human mind can achieve. The potential is enormous, almost infinite. **We can, if we choose, do virtually anything;** arid lands will become fertile, terrible diseases will be cured by genetic engineering; touring other planets will become routine; we may even come to understand how the human mind works (1977, p. 256, emp. added).

George Gaylord Simpson ended one of his books with these words:

Man stands alone in the universe, a unique product of a long, unconscious, impersonal, material process with unique understanding and potentialities. These he owes to no one but himself, and it is to himself that he is responsible. He is not the creature of uncontrollable and undeterminable forces, but is his own master. He can and must decide and manage his own destiny (1953, p. 155).

The implication is that man, as a result of his own scientific advancements, **can**, and indeed someday **will**, find all, or enough of, the answers to life's most pressing questions.

There are clear indications that as our scientific prowess has grown, our ever-increasing knowledge of the creation has diminished, or replaced completely, our knowledge of the Creator. This situation has manifested itself in both the secular and spiritual realms.



As scientists have enjoyed increasingly more frequent and more impressive successes, an attitude has developed which suggests that science, and science alone, can provide answers to all of life's questions. As long ago as 1935, agnostic British philosopher, Bertrand Russell advocated such a view when he observed: "Whatever is attainable, must be attained by scientific methods; and what science cannot discover, mankind cannot know" (1935, p. 243). Almost thirty years later, the preeminent atheistic evolutionist of Harvard University, George Gaylord Simpson, echoed the same sentiment when he stated: "It is inherent in any acceptable definition of science that statements that cannot be checked by observations are not really about anything—or at the very least they are not science" (1964, 143:769). Thus, with pronouncements that practically rivaled divine fiat, we were informed that everything of ultimate importance would be addressed, studied, and defined by the scientist and his method. All knowledge, we were assured, flowed from science, and "what science cannot discover, mankind cannot know."

Flush with one success after another stemming from his incursions into the natural world, and drunk with self-infatuation, man, in his own egotistical pride, drifted farther and farther from his Creator. As a result, humanity progressively struggled to cut itself loose from the moral, ethical, and spiritual apron strings of God, and from the objective standard provided by His Word. Finally, at least in the eyes of some, science itself acquired the status of a god. The Creator God of heaven was no longer needed, or acknowledged. Science replaced His infinite wisdom, and organic evolution replaced His creative power. "After Darwin," said Sir Julian Huxley, "it was no longer necessary to deduce the existence of divine purpose for the facts of biological adaptation" (1946, p. 87). At the Darwin Centennial Convocation held at the University of Chicago in 1959, Huxley boasted:

In the evolutionary pattern of thought there is no longer need or room for the supernatural. The earth was not created; it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind, and soul as well as brain and body. So did religion (1960c, pp. 252-253).

This kind of thinking is known generally as **scientism**, and suggests that science is to be viewed as the whole of reality because it alone provides the key to all knowledge. Such an attitude is based on what is known in philosophical circles as the fallacy of reductionism. In committing this fallacy, scientism's adherents have reduced the whole to one of its parts. Everything of ultimate importance in the world was relegated to the discipline of science.

This, of course, is terribly wrong, and presents a skewed viewpoint of reality that, when considered logically, is impossible to defend or accept. Most people, when pressed to consider the matter seriously, would admit, for example, that there are certain critical areas of human existence with which science simply cannot deal—morality, aesthetics, hate, greed, sorrow, and altruistic love, to mention just a few. Science, as science, cannot speak with authority in such matters, for they fall beyond the scope of the scientific method which, by definition, deals only with those things that are universal, reproducible at will, timeless, and dependable. [I will have more to say about this later in this chapter.] It is not my intention in this discussion to examine in an in-depth fashion the various aspects of scientism, but I would like to address how science works, and the limitations of the scientific method.

## **HOW DOES SCIENCE WORK?**

Through the ages, various scientists (and certain philosophers) have used science as a weapon to attack religion. Some have denied the possibility of miracles, but allowed for the existence of God; still others have been completely naturalistic, and thus have ruled out God altogether. David Hume, for example, made an all-out attack on miracles, and opted instead for a cosmogony that left no room for God, with the Universe becoming little more than an "everlasting vegetable" of sorts. What should be the response of religious people to the attack made upon religion by those using science as their weapon? Gordon H. Clark wrote:

The theologians who reply to these attacks are under a disadvantage. When a scientist or a philosopher argues against religion, he does not need to know much about religion; but when a theologian discusses science, he must know quite a lot. The scientist can get by if he understands no more than that Christians believe God to be an incorporeal spirit; but the theologian is called upon to discuss space, time, motion, energy,

electrodynamics, the solar system, quantum theory, relativity, and other assorted items. There is something else the theologian must know, and something more important. In addition to a selection of particular pieces of information, such as the details just mentioned, the theologian must have an overall view of science as a whole. He must have a philosophy of science; that is, he must know what science is. Obviously he cannot compare, contrast, or relate religion and science unless he knows them both.... The scientific method is said to be the best, indeed, the only method for solving any problem, so that in every debate it is science, not theology, that has the last word. Since every curious and intelligent person naturally wishes to understand his own times, he must be prepared to give science sustained attention (1964, pp. 8-9).

## The Scientific Method

It is my desire here to give science some “sustained attention.” As I do so, I would like to begin by examining each of the steps involved in the scientific method.

**Observation.** Douglas Marsland has noted: “The primary basis of all scientific thinking is observation” (1969, p. 12). Biologist Paul Weisz, in his textbook, *Elements of Biology*, stated: “All science begins with observation, the first step of the scientific method. At once this delimits the scientific domain; something that cannot be observed cannot be investigated by science” (1965, p. 40). Henry Morris wrote in agreement: “Science thus involves facts which are observed and laws which have been demonstrated” (1966, p. 151).

**Statement and Definition of Problem.** Scientific inquiry is characterized by what is called the “hypothetico-deductive” model. The scientist notes a problem based on his observations and states the problem as he wishes to investigate it. He then formulates his hypothesis, and gathers facts to either substantiate or negate it.

**Formation of Hypothesis.** Geneticist Francisco J. Ayala has suggested: “A hypothesis is empirical or scientific only if it can be tested by experience.... A hypothesis or theory which cannot be, at least in principle, falsified by empirical observations and experiments does not belong to the realm of science” (1974, p. 700). David Hull, in his book, *Philosophy of Biological Science*, commented: “First and foremost...a scientific hypothesis must be testable. Ideally the hypothesis to be tested is universal in form” (1974, p. 2).

**Deduction from Hypothesis of Prediction.** Biologist John N. Moore observed that “...the heart of the scientific method is the problem-hypothesis-test process. And, necessarily, the scientific method involves predictions. And predictions, to be useful in scientific methodology, must be subject to test empirically” (1973, pp. 23-24). Duane Gish remarked:

Thus, for a theory to qualify as a scientific theory, it must be supported by events, processes, or properties which can be observed and the theory must be useful in predicting the outcome of future natural phenomena or laboratory experiments. An additional limitation usually imposed is that the theory must be capable of falsification. That is, it must be possible to conceive of some experiment the failure of which would disprove the theory (1973, pp. 2-3).

Weisz noted: “Deductive logic is used extensively by scientists to obtain predictions from hypotheses.... Most scientists are so accustomed to deductive reasoning that the formal construction of ‘if... then...’ statements is unnecessary in setting up experiments” (p. 8). Keeton has pointed out, however, that induction is also a necessary part of the process. “After the scientist has reasoned inductively from the specific to the general (i.e.: from specific factors to general statements), he must reverse his field and reason deductively, from the general to the specific” (1973, p. 2).

**Experimentation.** A key element in any scientific endeavor is the use of experimentation, since this provides a method by which hypotheses and predictions can be tested. Moore observed that

...scientific activity involves the search for facts that can be observed or demonstrated, and for laws that have been demonstrated also, by means of trustworthy methods of discovery. And at the core of scientific method or methods is experimental repeatability or reproducibility (1973, pp. 23-26,34).

Morris commented that “...the scientific method involves experimental reproducibility, with like causes producing like effects” (1966, p. 151).

**Formation of Theory or Law.** A **theory** is a broadly based, widely accepted hypothesis supported by at least some good experimental evidence. It is considered an accepted answer to explain something unusual. A good scientific theory meets these criteria: (a) it identifies orderly relationships of various and diverse ob-

servations; (b) it predicts future outcome; (c) it is modifiable; and (d) it can be used to develop new direction for additional research. A scientific **law** is “viewed as reflecting actual regularities in nature” (Hull, 1974, p. 3). There are no known exceptions to scientific laws—else they would not be laws (e.g.: Law of Biogenesis, Law of Causality, etc.). In speaking of science, George Gaylord Simpson remarked:

The important distinction between science and those other systematizations (the arts, philosophy, and theology) is that science is self-testing and self-correcting. The testing and correcting are done by means of observation that can be repeated with essentially the same results by normal persons operating by the same methods and with the same approach (as quoted in Moore, 1973, p. 23).

But, after science has performed its duty, may it then feel free to pronounce “absolute truth” to a waiting world? The answer to that question is “no,” as Simpson explained when he wrote:

We speak in terms of “acceptance,” “confidence,” and “probability,” not “proof.” If by proof is meant the establishment of eternal and absolute truth, open to no possible exception or modification, then proof has no place in the natural sciences. Alternatively proof in a natural science, such as biology, must be defined as the attainment of a high degree of confidence (1965, p. 16).

Bolton Davidheiser, quoting Simpson, observed:

The eminent George Gaylord Simpson says concerning the inductive nature of the scientific method, “The concept of ‘truth’ in science is thus quite special. It implies nothing eternal and absolute but only a high degree of confidence after adequate self-testing and self-correcting.” Professor Simpson further says that “above the level of triviality there is hardly any scientific subject on which agreement is literally universal.” He says that the most fundamental reason for disagreement in science is the inherent impossibility of complete certainty. He points out that “**one** fact may disprove a theory and not **all** facts can be observed, therefore an investigator cannot completely discard the possibility that a discrepant phenomenon may occur.” He further points out that “in any complex situation the data are rarely so complete that only **one** explanation can conceivably be correct.” In other words, there are likely to be rival theories (1969, p. 11; quotation from Simpson is from his *Notes on the Nature of Science*, 1962, p. 11; emp. in orig.).

Science, then, as wonderful as it is, does not provide **all** the answers.

There can be no real conflict between natural science and true religion because their spheres are entirely distinct and separate. Natural science deals with physical entities by abstraction, experiment, and mathematical measurement; while religion is an attitude of trust and love toward an infinite God, which results in a vital experience constituting the essence of religion. Conflicts between these two are always the result of misinterpretation and misrepresentation of one or the other or both, and history abounds with illustrations of all these forms of confusing contradictions. Science and religion, while thus separate, have various relationships which make each the servant of the other. Dean Inge remarks, “We may hope for a time when the science of a religious man will be scientific and religion of a scientific man religious” (Whaling, 1929, pp. 51-52).

True science and true religion are not in conflict. They are, in fact, wholly harmonious. Science is the “looking glass” given to man by God for the purpose of investigating and having dominion over His creation. Properly used, it is a most beneficial tool.

## THE LIMITATIONS OF SCIENCE

In his book, *The Dance of Life*, writer Havelock Ellis (1859-1939) commented that if at some point in the course of civilization we find that science and religion are antagonistic, then there must be something wrong with either our science or our religion. There are those, of course, who have suggested, in all seriousness, that science and religion **are** antagonistic. For example, Marshall Walker, in his book, *The Nature of Scientific Thought*, wrote:

The various Christian churches of the world have in common a supernatural theology which few scientists can bring themselves to accept. The attitude of the scientist toward authority is often misunderstood, and becomes a source of confusion in communicating with those in other disciplines. The scientist recognizes no authority except an empirical observation of nature. The scientist insists that students work in the laboratory to teach them this attitude toward authority. The student seldom verifies any law very accurately and

never verifies all laws, but he does become convinced that empirical observation is the ultimate court of appeal which can be invoked if necessary for any statement or law of his science. This attitude toward authority prevents the scientist from accepting the religious interpretation of mystical experiences. He has been trained to distrust his own personal experiences and emotions. The mystics' easy acceptance of an explanation with no possibility of empirical validation puzzles the scientist. Such an acceptance is impossible for him, and he can only conclude that the mystic has never encountered the feeling of conviction which the scientist finds in empirical validation. Rational behavior consists in being guided by the predictions of the most successful known model (theory) of natural law (1963, pp. 159-160).

And so, with a stroke of the pen, **anything of real importance** has been relegated, by definition, to the realm of the empirical. Such statements are representative of a certain kind of built-in bias. Lynn White Jr., writing in the premier issue of *Science* 80, observed:

It should be no news that scientists—even great ones—are people too.... More damaging to the intellectual process is the tendency of everyone, including historians as well as scientists, to operate within a set of inherited and inadequately tested assumptions (1979, pp. 73-74).

When certain scientists, and those sympathetic with them, suggest that science alone is the “ultimate court of appeal,” the charge can be leveled (and sustained) that they have built their world view on “inadequately tested assumptions.” It is the height of intellectual bigotry to suggest that science and science alone—to the exclusion of all other areas of human thought and endeavor—somehow possesses the authority to answer every question that might be posed. Phillip Abelson, writing in *Science*, addressed just such an attitude in an article on “Bigotry in Science.”

One of the most astonishing characteristics of scientists is that some of them are plain, old-fashioned bigots. Their zeal has a fanatical, egocentric quality characterized by disdain and intolerance for anyone or any value not associated with a special area of intellectual activity (1964, p. 373).

Those who suggest that “rational behavior” is characterized by the exclusion of religion, and the acceptance of science as the sole authority in all matters, are guilty of the bigotry of which Dr. Abelson wrote. They do not seem to realize that science—as great as it is—is not without its own limitations. The honest scientist admits, frankly and candidly, the limitations inherent in his method. Adherents of scientism, on the other hand, suggest that science can provide answers to any and all questions—something that science is not equipped to do!

If those of us in the scientific community would do a better job of explaining to the public at large how science works, and the limitations of the scientific method, the alleged antagonism between science and religion might dissipate. In speaking of the backlash of a current public disenchantment with science—as a result of the “science can answer anything” attitude—White remarked:

The problem is not public ignorance, but public alienation. Moreover, the chief reason for this alienation is the reluctance of most professional scientists to be as objective about themselves, their values, their goals, and their intellectual methods as they claim to be about interpreting specific data. For a variety of reasons—a litany of grievances that is so commonplace it need not be repeated here—a significant part of the general public has become distrustful of those goals, values and methods. If they are valid today, they need new validation and not simply reassertion. If they are superstitions, i.e., obsolete assumptions, left over from the recent past of science, they need rejection or revision. And the discussion of all this must be public, else it will carry no conviction to the disenchanted laity who provide the support for science (p. 73).

None among us doubts the tremendous strides science has made. Nor can there be any doubt about the benefits that have accrued to mankind as a result of scientific endeavor. However, as great as science is, and as wonderful as its benefits for humankind have been, the scientific method nevertheless is subject to certain limitations. Five readily come to mind.

**1. The scientific method is limited to what can be observed** with the five senses. Earlier, I quoted George Gaylord Simpson, who wrote: “It is inherent in any acceptable definition of science that statements that cannot be checked by observations are not really about anything—or at the very least they are not science” (1964, 143:769). I also quoted the *Oxford Dictionary*, which defines science as “a branch of study which is concerned with a connected body of **demonstrated** truths or **observed** facts” (emp. added). It is only through use of the five senses that observation takes place. As Duane Gish has noted: “Thus, for a

theory to qualify as a scientific theory, it must be supported by events, processes, or properties which can be observed..." (1973, pp. 2-3). If something can be seen, heard, touched, smelled, or tasted, then science can deal with it. But to expect science to investigate something in the proverbial "sixth sense" is to demand too much of the scientific method, and lays it open to charges of abuse or misuse.

**2. The scientific method is limited to the present.** That science is limited to the present should be a self-evident, axiomatic truth, since the present is the only place and time in which the five senses operate. Enno Wolthius commented on this point when he wrote:

Science seeks to explain the behavior of that which is, and to check its explanation by means of experiments. But this experimental requirement can be met only in the present time. The past, and especially the beginning of things, lies beyond the grasp of this method, and so science can only speculate about the origin and history of the world (1963, p. 50).

To require science to make factual statements about pre-history is to prostitute the method. Since science is based upon observation, it must limit its scope to human history, where things can be properly observed and recorded. As John Whitcomb and Henry Morris have suggested: "Since historical geology, unlike other sciences, cannot deal with currently observable and reproducible events, it is manifestly impossible ever really to prove, by the scientific method, any hypothesis related to pre-human history" (1961, p. 213).

In recent years, there has been considerable disagreement between creationists and evolutionists over whether or not science should be limited to the present. Evolutionists have insisted on using science in an attempt to study various aspects of their theory (e.g., the Big Bang, the origin of the Solar System, etc.) that they freely admit belong in "pre-history." Creationists have responded by suggesting that such events are not observable, and therefore are not properly within the domain of science. Yet there are certain things about both evolution and creation that can be tested. In order to distinguish the things within each model that can be tested from those that cannot, some authors have suggested that science itself be divided into two categories. For example, Thaxton, Bradley, and Olsen, in *The Mystery of Life's Origin*, recommended separating **operation science** from **origin science** (1984). Others (e.g., Geisler and Anderson, 1987) have followed suit.

Operation science deals with regular, recurring events in nature that require natural causes (eclipses, volcanoes, reproduction, etc.), while origin science deals with singularities that may or may not require a natural cause (the so-called Big Bang, creation, etc.). The term "origin science" may be new, but it operates by the standard principles of causality and uniformity. The **principle of causality** says that every material effect must have a prior, necessary, and adequate cause. The **principle of uniformity** (or principle of analogy) states that similar effects have similar causes. In other words, the kinds of causes that we observe producing effects today can be counted on to have produced similar effects in the past. What we see as an adequate cause in the present, we assume to have been an adequate cause in the past; what we see as an inadequate cause in the present, we assume to have been an inadequate cause in the past.

None of us denies that creation occurred in the distant past as the result of events that now are unable to be studied experimentally in the laboratory. But the same limitations are inherent in evolutionary scenarios. Anyone familiar with the works of evolutionists like Robert Jastrow and Fred Hoyle is aware of the fact that these scientists, and others like them, have pointed out that the origin of the Universe, and of life itself, occurred in the distant past under conditions not necessarily experimentally reproducible and therefore not able to be studied in a strictly scientific manner. Evolutionists Paul Ehrlich and L.C. Birch addressed these issues.

Our theory of evolution has become...one which cannot be refuted by any possible observations. Every conceivable observation can be fitted into it. It is thus "outside empirical science" but not necessarily false. No one can think of ways in which to test it. Ideas, either without basis or based on a few laboratory experiments carried out in extremely simplified systems, have attained currency far beyond their validity. They have become part of an evolutionary dogma accepted by most of us as part of our training (1967, 214:349).

Thus, even defenders of evolutionary theory have admitted that their theory is "outside of empirical science." Of course, evolutionists have responded by suggesting that "creation is based on supernatural processes in the past" and therefore is not scientific. However, the "supernatural" beginnings of creation are no

less available for scientific examination than are the “prehistoric” (though allegedly natural) beginnings of evolution. To the unbiased observer, that would seem to put creation and evolution on equal footing, scientifically speaking.

**3. The scientific method is limited to telling us “how” a process works, not “why.”** In his book, *Questions of Science and Faith*, J.N. Hawthorne remarked: “Science can give us the ‘know-how’ but it cannot give us the ‘know-why’ ” (1960, p. 4). The late James D. Bales noted:

The scientific method is incapable of dealing with the realm of purpose. It can deal with cause and effect relationships; or as some would say, it can deal with the succession of events in time. It cannot deal with the “why” when one uses the term “why” with reference to purpose (1976, p. 37).

Science deals with mechanism, not purpose. “Why”—in regard to purpose—is not a question that science is equipped to answer.

**4. The scientific method is limited in that it is amoral (non-moral).** Nobel laureate Jacques Monod once stated that “science is ignorant of values” (1969, p. 21). There is nothing inherent in the scientific method that provides for the definition or study of morals. Paul Little, in *Know Why You Believe*, was correct when he said:

It should be recognized that science is incapable of making value judgments about the things it measures. Many men on the frontiers of science are realizing that there is nothing inherent in science to guide them in the application of the discoveries they make. There is nothing in science itself which will determine whether nuclear energy will be used to destroy cancer or to destroy cities. This is a judgment outside the scientific method to determine (1967, p. 105).

Bales also was correct in his assessment: “The scientific method cannot prove that we have any obligation to accept truth if we find it unpalatable, or show why we should not accept falsehood if we can turn it to our advantage” (p. 37). Science simply does not have the mechanism (by definition of its own method) to legislate morals. This is not meant to imply that scientists work without morals or values. It is simply to say that whatever morals or values they may possess were not derived from the scientific method. Science is not equipped to deal with morals.

**5. The scientific method is limited in that it cannot deal with the unique.** The scientific method deals with those things that are: (a) timeless; (b) universal; (c) dependable; and (d) repeatable. Those things that do not fit in these categories are outside the realm of science. Paul Weisz, in his text, *Elements of Biology*, stated that “one-time events on earth are outside of science” (1965, p. 4). John N. Moore observed that “...at the core of scientific method or methods is experimental repeatability or reproducibility” (1973). Earlier in this chapter, I quoted Simpson, who remarked:

The important distinction between science and those other systematizations (the arts, philosophy, and theology) is that science is self-testing and self-correcting. The testing and correcting are done by means of observations that can be repeated with essentially the same results by normal persons operating by the same methods and with the same approach (as quoted in Moore, p. 23).

Scientists are supposed to be on a lifelong search for knowledge and truth, regardless of where that search eventually leads. Science is based on an observation of the facts, and is directed at finding patterns of order in the observed data. To suggest that knowledge can be acquired solely on the basis of naturalism, and that empirical observation is the “court of ultimate appeal,” is to err. Such an attitude ignores other numerous, significant avenues of human endeavor, as well as additional means of coming to knowledge and truth. It also misuses and abuses the scientific method, which, as great as it is, never was intended to be a panacea.

## IS EVOLUTION A FACT?

Whenever we talk about the origin of the Universe and those things in it, we cannot speak as eyewitnesses or firsthand observers. None of us was present when the origin of the Universe occurred. Therefore, any scientific discussion must be based on assumptions, hypotheses, and theories put in place after the fact.

An **assumption** is something taken for granted, and represents a legitimate starting point for an investigation. A **hypothesis** is an educated guess or tentative assumption. A **theory** is a plausible or scientifically acceptable general principle or body of principles to explain phenomena.

It generally is alleged by the more spirited evolutionists that evolution has been proven, and therefore must be spoken of not as theory, but fact. As far back as 1944, evolutionist W.W. Howells wrote in *Man-kind So Far* that “there is also the mystery of how and why evolution takes place at all.... Evolution is a fact, like digestion...” (p. 5). On May 2, 1966, Nobel laureate Hermann J. Muller circulated a manifesto that affirmed:

It has for many years been well established scientifically that all known forms of life, including man, have come into being by a lengthy process of evolution. There are no hypotheses, alternative to the principle of evolution with its “tree of life,” that any competent biologist of today takes seriously. Moreover, the principle is so important for an understanding of the world we live in and of ourselves that the public in general, including students taking biology in high school, should be made aware of it, and of the fact that it is firmly established even as the rotundity of the earth is firmly established (1966, p. 2)\*

Affixing their names to Dr. Muller’s manifesto to signify their agreement were 177 of the world’s most eminent evolutionary scientists.

In this day and age, most evolutionists no longer speak of the “theory” of evolution, but refer instead to the “fact” of evolution. The widely accepted Biological Sciences Curriculum Study, financed by the National Science Foundation, organized the entire treatment of biological science around the “fact” of the evolutionary framework of life history. Almost all books on biology published by secular publishers for at least the past two generations have been written as though evolutionary presuppositions were fact instead of theory. In introducing the papers in the three-volume work on evolution stemming from the 1959 Darwinian Centennial Convocation in Chicago, Sir Julian Huxley eulogized Darwin as follows:

Charles Darwin has rightly been described as the “Newton of biology”; he did more than any single individual before or since to change man’s attitude to the phenomena of life and to provide a coherent scientific framework of ideas for biology, in place of an approach in large part compounded of hearsay, myth, and superstition. He rendered evolution inescapable as a fact, comprehensible as a process, all-embracing as a concept (1960b, pp. 1-2).

Fourteen years earlier, Huxley had written that “after Darwin it was no longer necessary to deduce the existence of divine purpose for the facts of biological adaptation” (1946, p. 87). He reiterated that point more than once at the Chicago convocation. He boasted during a television interview, for example: “Darwin pointed out that no supernatural designer was needed; since natural selection could account for any known form of life, there was no room for a supernatural agency in its evolution” (1960a, p. 46). And, he opined, “in the evolutionary pattern of thought there is no longer need or room for the supernatural. The earth was not created; it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind, and soul as well as brain and body. So did religion” (1960c, pp. 252-253). Jacques Barzun, in his book, *Darwin, Marx, Wagner*, raised this question:

Why was evolution more precious than scientific suspense of judgment? Why do scientists to this day speak with considerable warmth of “the fact of evolution,” as if it were in the same category as the fact of combustion, which “may be observed by anyone who will take the necessary trouble”? (1958, p. 65).

Barzun went on to point out why evolution is accepted as a fact, by stating that it gave scientists complete freedom over “everything in heaven and earth without restriction.” He also observed that it put everything under one cause (p. 65).

The codiscoverer of the DNA molecule, James Watson, is on record as stating: “Today the theory of evolution is an accepted fact for everyone but a fundamentalist minority” (1987, p. 2). Joining Dr. Watson in that assessment was the late Harvard paleontologist, Stephen Jay Gould, one of the evolutionary establishment’s fieriest apologists, and an indefatigable crusader on behalf of organic evolution. He was a cogent

---

\* Muller’s manifesto was published originally in the February 1967 issue of *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. In his book, *Forty-two Years on the Firing Line*, James D. Bales gives the entire text of the manifesto (n.d.-a, pp. 71-72), along with a listing of the 177 scientists who signed it (pp. 73-77).

writer, a gifted speaker, and a tireless worker for “the cause.” He also was one of science’s most prolific and best-read authors (along with such late colleagues as Carl Sagan and Isaac Asimov), and was highly regarded in many scientific circles (the January 1982 issue of *Discover* magazine voted him “Scientist of the Year”). Through the years, Dr. Gould’s articles appeared not only in refereed scientific journals (e.g., *Nature*, *New Scientist*, *Science*, et al.), but also in popular science magazines (*Discover*, *Omni*, *Science Digest*, et al.). Therefore, when Dr. Gould spoke, many people listened. To quote him directly: “When we come to popular writing about evolution, I suppose that my own essays are as well read as any” (1987, 8[1]:65). And therein lies the problem.

In the January 1987 issue of *Discover*, Dr. Gould authored a lengthy article titled “Darwinism Defined: The Difference Between Fact and Theory.” In this particular article, Gould expressed his extreme agitation at the inability of certain people (who should know better, he said) to properly address evolution by its rightful designation—as a **fact**, not a theory. The specific cause (this time) for his discomfiture was an article in the September 30, 1986 issue of the *New York Times* by Irving Kristol (“Room for Darwinism and the Bible”). Dr. Gould acknowledged both his dismay and dissatisfaction at the apparent inability of people like Mr. Kristol to distinguish (to use his own words) “the central distinction between secure fact and healthy debate about theory” (p. 64). Dr. Gould then explained himself when he noted:

Facts are the world’s data; theories are explanations proposed to interpret and coordinate facts. The fact of evolution is as well established as anything in science (as secure as the revolution of the earth about the sun), though absolute certainty has no place in our lexicon. Theories, or statements about the causes of documented evolutionary change, are now in a period of intense debate—a good mark of science in its healthiest state. Facts don’t disappear while scientists debate theories (p. 64, parenthetical comment in orig.).

Later, Gould commented that “...evolution is also a fact of nature, and so do we teach it as well, just as our geological colleagues describe the structure of silicate minerals, and astronomers the elliptical orbits of the planets” (p. 65).

What could be clearer? Dr. Gould wanted everyone to know that evolution is a fact. **How** evolution occurred may be considered by some to be merely a “theory,” but **that** evolution has occurred is a fact not open for further discussion. Gould even commented, “I don’t want to sound like a shrill dogmatist shouting ‘rally ‘round the flag boys,’ but biologists have reached a consensus...about the fact of evolution” (p. 69). [In a guest editorial in the August 23, 1999 issue of *Time* magazine, Gould boasted that “evolution is as well documented as any phenomenon in science, as strongly as the earth’s revolution around the sun rather than vice versa. In this sense, we can call evolution a ‘fact’ ” (1999, 154[8]:59).] Dr. Gould was upset because there are those who refuse to acknowledge evolution as a fact. According to him, “Evolution is a fact, like apples falling out of trees” (as quoted in Adler, 1980, p. 95). Gould’s colleagues could not agree more. In the March 1987 issue of *Natural History*, Douglas J. Futuyma wrote in his review of Richard Dawkins’ book, *The Blind Watchmaker*:

In the last ten years or so, evolution has been under severe attack, especially in the United States. It is important here to recognize the distinction between the proposition that evolution has occurred and the theory that describes the causes of evolutionary change. That evolution has occurred—that diverse organisms have descended from common ancestors by a history of modification and divergence—is accepted as fact by virtually all biologists. “Fact” here means a proposition, like the proposition that the earth revolves about the sun, supported by so much evidence that to disbelieve it would require disbelieving a large, successful edifice of scientific achievement. The historical reality of evolution is doubted chiefly by creationists, mostly on doctrinaire religious grounds (96[3]:34).

Of course, such renowned scientists as Gould and Futuyma are not even willing to concern themselves with creationists. In fact, Gould commented:

I don’t speak of the militant fundamentalists who label themselves with the oxymoron “scientific creationists,” and try to sneak their Genesis literalism into high school classrooms under the guise of scientific dissent. I’m used to their rhetoric, their dishonest mis- and half-quotations, their constant repetition of “useful” arguments that even they must recognize as nonsense.... Our struggle with these ideologues is political, not intellectual. I speak instead of our allies among people committed to reason and honorable argument (1987, 8[1]:64).



This point should not be overlooked. Gould suggested that his concern is about people who are “committed to reason and honorable argument.” That, by his definition, would eliminate any and all “creationists.”

The purpose of the writings of Gould and Futuyma (and other evolutionists) is to convince people to stop speaking of the “theory” of evolution, and to speak instead of the “fact” of evolution. But, in order to accomplish this, they have to redefine the word “fact” as it is used in science. I might note here that they are by no means the first to attempt such a redefinition. Simpson and Beck tried the exact same thing in their biology text, *Life: An Introduction to Biology*, and ended their “redefining” section by claiming that theories ultimately

...may be just as certain—merit just as much confidence—as what are popularly called “facts.” Belief that the sun will rise tomorrow is the confident application of a generalization. The theory that life has evolved is founded on much more evidence than supports the generalization that the sun rises every day. In the vernacular, we are justified in calling both “facts” (1965, p. 16).

A fact usually is defined as an actual occurrence or something that has actual existence. With that standard-usage definition in mind, consider the following.

Charles Darwin, in his *Origin of Species*, stated: “Long before the reader has arrived at this part of my work, a crowd of difficulties will have occurred to him. Some of them are so serious that to this day I can hardly reflect on them without being in some degree staggered” (1859, p. 158). Theodosius Dobzhansky, the late, eminent geneticist of the Rockefeller University, stated in his book, *The Biological Basis of Human Freedom*: “Evolution as a historical fact was proved beyond reasonable doubt not later than in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.” Yet two pages later he stated: “There is no doubt that both the historical and the causal aspects of the evolutionary process are **far from completely known**.... The causes which have brought about the development of the human species **can be only dimly discerned**” (1956, pp. 6,8,9, emp. added). Notice Dobzhansky’s admission that both the historical (what Gould referred to as the “fact” of evolution) and the causal (what Gould referred to as the “theory” of evolution) are “far from completely known.”

In other words, on the one hand evolution is declared to be a fact, yet on the other hand it is acknowledged that the process is “far from completely known,” with its causes “only dimly discerned,” and the difficulties “staggering.” Evolutionist W. LeGros Clark wrote: “What was the ultimate origin of man? ...Unfortunately, any answers which can at present be given to these questions are based on indirect evidence and thus **are largely conjectural**” (1955, p. 174, emp. added). Kerkut, as an evolutionist, stated:

...I believe that the theory of Evolution as presented by orthodox evolutionists is in many ways a satisfying explanation of some of the evidence. At the same time I think that the attempt to explain all living forms in terms of evolution from a unique source...is premature and **not satisfactorily supported by present-day evidence**. ...the supporting evidence remains to be discovered.... We can, if we like, believe that such an evolutionary system has taken place, but I for one do not think that “it has been proven beyond all reasonable doubt.” ...It is very depressing to find that many subjects are being encased in scientific dogmatism (1960, pp. vii, viii, emp. added).

After listing and discussing the seven **non-provable assumptions** upon which evolution is based, Dr. Kerkut then observed: “The first point that I should like to make is that these seven assumptions by their nature **are not capable of experimental verification**” (p. 7, emp. added).

This stinging rebuke of the alleged factuality of evolution is not an isolated instance. W.R. Thompson, while Director of the Commonwealth Institute of Biological Control in Canada, penned the “Introduction” to the 1956 edition of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, in which he wrote:

Darwin did not show in the *Origin* that species had originated by natural selection; he merely showed, on the basis of certain facts and assumptions, how this **might** have happened, and as he had convinced himself he was able to convince others.... On the other hand, it does appear to me that Darwin in the *Origin* was not able to produce palaeontological evidence sufficient to prove his views but that **the evidence he did produce was adverse to them**; and I may note that the position is not notably different today. The modern Darwinian palaeontologists are obliged, just like their predecessors and like Darwin, to **water down the facts** with subsidiary hypotheses which, however plausible, are in the nature of things unverifiable (pp. xii, xix, emp. added).

Evolutionists dogmatically assert that evolution is a fact, yet admit that it: (a) is based upon **non-provable assumptions** that are “not capable of experimental verification”; (b) bases its conclusions upon answers that are “largely conjectural”; (c) is faced with evidence “adverse” to the available facts; (d) must continually be found guilty of “watering down the facts”; and (e) has both historical and causal aspects that “are far from completely known.” Little wonder Dr. Kerkut stated concerning the theory of evolution: “The evidence that supports it is not sufficiently strong to allow us to consider it anything more than a working hypothesis” (p. 157). What a far cry from the assessments of Gould and his colleagues in the modern evolutionary camp.

Someone might object, however, that the quotations I have employed (from evolutionists such as Dobzhansky, Clark, and others) to document the nonverifiability of evolution were written during the 1950s and 1960s. Much scientific research on evolution has occurred in the decades that followed, and thus it might be considered unfair to rely on such “dated” critiques of a concept like evolution that changes so rapidly and that has been studied so intently.

My response to such an objection would be to point out that I used the quotations from the 1950s and 1960s intentionally, in order to document that the situation over the past four decades has not improved. By the 1970s, for example, little had changed. At the height of his professional career, Pierre-Paul Grassé was considered by many to be France’s greatest living zoologist. In fact, Dobzhansky wrote of him: “Now, one can disagree with Grassé, but not ignore him. He is the most distinguished of French zoologists, the editor of the 28 volumes of *Traité de Zoologie*, author of numerous original investigations, and ex-president of the Academie des Sciences. His knowledge of the living world is encyclopedic” (1975, 29:376). In 1977, Grassé wrote in *The Evolution of Living Organisms*:

Today our duty is to destroy the myth of evolution, considered as a simple, understood, and explained phenomenon which keeps rapidly unfolding before us. Biologists must be encouraged to think about the weaknesses and extrapolations that theoreticians put forward or lay down as established truths. The deceit is sometimes unconscious, but not always, since some people, owing to their sectarianism, purposely overlook reality and refuse to acknowledge the inadequacies and falsity of their beliefs.

Their success among certain biologists, philosophers, and sociologists notwithstanding, **the explanatory doctrines of biological evolution do not stand up to an objective, in-depth criticism.** They prove to be either in conflict with reality or else incapable of solving the major problems involved (pp. 8,202, emp. added).

Three years later, in 1980, British physicist H.S. Lipson produced a thought-provoking piece in the May issue of *Physics Bulletin*, a refereed science journal. In his article, “A Physicist Looks at Evolution,” Dr. Lipson commented first on his interest in life’s origin and, second, on his non-association with creationists. He then noted: “In fact, evolution became in a sense a scientific religion; almost all scientists have accepted it, and many are prepared to ‘bend’ their observations to fit with it.” Dr. Lipson went on to ask how well evolution has withstood the years of scientific testing, and suggested that “to my mind, the theory does not stand up at all.”

After reviewing many of the problems (especially from thermodynamics) involved in producing something living from something nonliving, he asked: “If living matter is not, then, caused by the interplay of atoms, natural forces, and radiation, how has it come into being?” After dismissing any sort of “directed evolution,” Lipson concluded: “I think, however, that we must go further than this and admit that the only acceptable explanation is **creation.**” Like other evolutionists who have voiced similar views, Dr. Lipson hardly was ecstatic about his conclusion—a fact he made clear when he wrote: “I know that this is anathema to physicists, as indeed it is to me, but we must not reject a theory that we do not like if the experimental evidence supports it” (31:138, emp. in orig.).

Just a little over a year later, on November 5, 1981, the late Colin Patterson (who at the time was the senior paleontologist of the British Museum of Natural History in London, the editor of the professional journal published by the museum, and one of the world’s foremost fossil experts) delivered a public address to his evolutionist colleagues at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. In his speech, Dr. Patterson astonished those colleagues when he stated that he had been “kicking around” non-evolutionary, or “anti-evolutionary,” ideas for about eighteen months. As he went on to describe it:

One morning I woke up and something had happened in the night, and it struck me that I had been working on this stuff for twenty years and there was not one thing I knew about it. That's quite a shock to learn that one can be misled so long. Either there was something wrong with me, or there was something wrong with evolution theory (1981).

Dr. Patterson said he knew there was nothing wrong with him, so he started asking various individuals and groups a simple question: "Can you tell me anything you know about evolution, any one thing that is true? I tried that question on the geology staff at the Field Museum of Natural History, and the only answer I got was silence." He tried it on the Evolutionary Morphology Seminar at the University of Chicago, a very prestigious body of evolutionists, and all he got there "was silence for a long time and eventually one person said, 'I do know one thing—it ought not to be taught in high school.'" He then remarked, "It does seem that the level of knowledge about evolution is remarkably shallow. We know it ought not to be taught in high school, and that's all we know about it."

Dr. Patterson went on to say: "Then I woke up and realized that all my life I had been duped into taking evolution as revealed truth in some way." But more important, he termed evolution an "anti-theory" that produced "anti-knowledge." He also suggested that "the explanatory value of the hypothesis is nil," and that evolution theory is "a void that has the function of knowledge but conveys none." To use Patterson's wording, "I feel that the effects of hypotheses of common ancestry in systematics has not been merely boring, not just a lack of knowledge, I think it has been positively anti-knowledge" (1981; cf. Bethell, 1985, 270:49-52,56-58,60-61).

Dr. Patterson made it clear, as I wish to do here, that he had no fondness for the creationist position. Yet he did refer to his stance as "anti-evolutionary," which was quite a change for a man who had authored several books (one of which was titled simply *Evolution*) in the field that he later acknowledged was capable of producing only "anti-knowledge."

Colin Patterson was not the only one expressing such views, however. Over the past two decades, distinguished British astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle stressed the serious problems—once again, especially from the fields of thermodynamics—with various theories about the naturalistic origin of life on the Earth. The same year that Dr. Patterson traveled to America to speak, Dr. Hoyle wrote:

I don't know how long it is going to be before astronomers generally recognize that the combinatorial arrangement of not even one among the many thousands of biopolymers on which life depends could have been arrived at by natural processes here on the Earth. Astronomers will have a little difficulty in understanding this because they will be assured by biologists that it is not so, the biologists having been assured in their turn by others that it is not so. The "others" are a group of persons who believe, quite openly, in mathematical miracles. They advocate the belief that tucked away in nature, outside of normal physics, there is a law which performs miracles (provided the miracles are in the aid of biology). This curious situation sits oddly on a profession that for long has been dedicated to coming up with logical explanations of biblical miracles.... It is quite otherwise, however, with the modern miracle workers, who are always to be found living in the twilight fringes of thermodynamics (1981a, 92:526, parenthetical comment in orig.).

In fact, Hoyle described in a rather picturesque manner the evolutionary concept that disorder gives rise to order when he wrote: "The chance that higher forms have emerged in this way is comparable with the chance that a tornado sweeping through a junk-yard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the materials therein" (1981b, 294:105). And in order to make his position perfectly clear, he provided his readers with the following analogy:

At all events, anyone with even a nodding acquaintance with the Rubik cube will concede the near-impossibility of a solution being obtained by a blind person moving the cubic faces at random. Now imagine  $10^{50}$  blind persons each with a scrambled Rubik cube, and try to conceive of the chance of them all **simultaneously** arriving at the solved form. You then have the chance of arriving by random shuffling at just one of the many biopolymers on which life depends. The notion that not only biopolymers but the operating programme of a living cell could be arrived at by chance in a primordial organic soup here on the Earth is evidently nonsense of a high order (1981a, 92:527, emp. in orig.).

Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe (who is a professor of astronomy and applied mathematics at the University College, Cardiff, Wales) went even farther. Using probability figures applied to cosmic time (not just geologic time here on the Earth), their conclusion was:

Once we see, however, that the probability of life originating at random is so utterly minuscule as to make the random concept absurd, it becomes sensible to think that the favourable properties of physics on which life depends, are in every respect deliberate.... It is therefore almost inevitable that our own measure of intelligence must reflect in a valid way the higher intelligences...even to the extreme idealized limit of **God** (1981, pp. 141,144, emp. in orig.).

Hoyle and Wickramasinghe suggested, however, that this “higher intelligence” did not necessarily have to be, as far as they were concerned, what most people would call “God,” but simply a being with intelligence “to the limit of God.” They, personally, opted for “directed panspermia,” a view which suggests that life was “planted” on the Earth via genetic material that originated from a “higher intelligence” somewhere in the Universe. But just one year later, in 1982, Dr. Hoyle wrote:

A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that **a superintellect** has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question (20:16, emp. added).

Three years after that, in 1985, molecular biologist Michael Denton authored *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, in which he stated:

In this book, I have adopted the radical approach. By presenting a systematic critique of the current Darwinian model, ranging from paleontology to molecular biology, I have tried to show why I believe that the problems are too severe and too intractable to offer any hope of resolution in terms of the orthodox Darwinian framework, and that consequently the conservative view is no longer tenable.

The intuitive feeling that pure chance could never have achieved the degree of complexity and ingenuity so ubiquitous in nature has been a continuing source of scepticism ever since the publication of the *Origin*; and throughout the past century there has always existed a significant minority of first-rate biologists who have never been able to bring themselves to accept the validity of Darwinian claims. In fact, the number of biologists who have expressed some degree of disillusionment is practically endless.

The anti-evolutionary thesis argued in this book, the idea that life might be fundamentally a discontinuous phenomenon, runs counter to the whole thrust of modern biological thought.... Put simply, no one has ever observed the interconnecting continuum of functional forms linking all known past and present species of life. The concept of the continuity of nature has existed in the mind of man, **never** in the facts of nature (pp. 16,327,353, emp. in orig.).

In 1987, two years after Denton’s book was published, Swedish biologist Søren Løvtrup wrote in an even stronger vein:

After this step-wise elimination, only one possibility remains: **the Darwinian theory of natural selection**, whether or not coupled with Mendelism, **is false**. I have already shown that the arguments advanced by the early champions were not very compelling, and that there are now considerable numbers of empirical facts which do not fit with the theory. Hence, **to all intents and purposes the theory has been falsified**, so why has it not been abandoned? I think the answer is that current evolutionists follow Darwin’s example—they refuse to accept falsifying evidence (p. 352, emp. added).

In his 1988 book, *The Cosmic Blueprint: New Discoveries in Nature’s Creative Ability to Order the Universe*, Australian physicist Paul Davies wrote: “There is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all. It seems as though somebody has fine-tuned nature’s numbers to make the Universe. **The impression of design is overwhelming**” (p. 203, emp. added). In 1992, Arno Penzias (who fourteen years earlier had shared the 1978 Nobel Prize in physics with Robert W. Wilson for their discovery of the so-called “background radiation” left over from the Big Bang) declared:

Astronomy leads us to a unique event, a universe which was created out of nothing, one with the very delicate balance needed to provide exactly the conditions required to permit life, and one which has an underlying (one might say “supernatural”) plan [p. 83, parenthetical comment in orig.].

In his 1994 book, *The Physics of Immortality*, Frank Tipler (who co-authored with John D. Barrow the massive 1986 volume, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*) wrote:

When I began my career as a cosmologist some twenty years ago, I was a convinced atheist. I never in my wildest dreams imagined that one day I would be writing a book purporting to show that the central claims of Judeo-Christian theology are in fact true, that these claims are straightforward deductions of the laws of physics as we now understand them. I have been forced into these conclusions by the inexorable logic of my own special branch of physics (Preface).

One year later, NASA astronomer John O’Keefe admitted:

We are, by astronomical standards, a pampered, cosseted, cherished group of creatures.... If the Universe had not been made with the most exacting precision we could never have come into existence. It is my view that these circumstances indicate the universe was created for man to live in (as quoted in Heeren, 1995, p. 200).

Then, in 1998, evolutionist Michael Denton shocked everyone with his new book, *Nature’s Destiny*, when he admitted:

Because this book presents a teleological interpretation of the cosmos which has obvious theological implications, it is important to emphasize at the outset that the argument presented here is entirely consistent with the basic naturalistic assumption of modern science—that the cosmos is a **seamless unity which can be comprehended ultimately in its entirety by human reason and in which all phenomena, including life and evolution and the origin of man, are ultimately explicable in terms of natural processes....**

Although this is obviously a book with many theological implications, my initial intention was not specifically to develop an argument for design; however, as I researched more deeply into the topic and as the manuscript went through successive drafts, it became increasingly clear that the laws of nature were fine-tuned on earth to a remarkable degree and that the emerging picture provided powerful and self-evident support for the traditional anthropocentric teleological view of the cosmos. Thus, by the time the final draft was finished, the book had become in effect an essay in natural theology in the spirit and tradition of William Paley’s *Natural Theology* (pp. xvii-xviii, xi-xii, emp. in orig.).

Such quotations could be multiplied almost endlessly. Even a cursory examination documents that there is much more that is “unknown” than “known” in the evolutionary scenario. Consider the following examples.

### The Origin of Life

Evolution cannot be proven true unless nonliving can give rise to living—that is to say, spontaneous generation must have occurred. Evolution, in its entirety, is based on this principle. But what evidence is there that the concept of spontaneous generation is, in fact, correct? What evidence is there that life arose from nonlife? Evolutionary anthropologist Loren Eiseley summed up the matter in his classic text, *The Immense Journey*, when he said:

With the failure of these many efforts, science was left in the somewhat embarrassing position of having to postulate theories of living origins which it could not demonstrate. **After having chided the theologian for his reliance on myth and miracle, science found itself in the unenviable position of having to create a mythology of its own: namely, the assumption that what, after long effort, could not be proved to take place today, had, in truth, taken place in the primeval past** (1957, pp. 201-202, emp. and italics added).

Four years later, Harry Fuller and Oswald Tippo admitted in their text, *College Botany*:

The evidence of those who would explain life’s origin on the basis of the accidental combination of suitable chemical elements is no more tangible than that of those people who place their faith in Divine Creation as the explanation of the development of life. Obviously the latter have just as much justification for their belief as do the former (1961, p. 25).

In their 1965 biology textbook, *Life: An Introduction to Biology*, Simpson and Beck begrudgingly admitted that the spontaneous generation of life “does not occur in any known case” (p. 261). In speaking of the concept of spontaneous generation, evolutionists D.E. Green and R.F. Goldberger wrote in their text, *Molecular Insights into the Living Process*:

There is one step [in evolution—BT] that far outweighs the others in enormity: the step from macromolecules to cells. All the other steps can be accounted for on theoretical grounds—if not correctly, at least elegantly. However, **the macromolecule to cell transition is a jump of fantastic dimensions, which lies beyond the range of testable hypothesis.** In this area, all is conjecture. The available facts do not provide a basis for postulation that cells arose on this planet. This is not to say that some parapsychical forces were not at work. **We simply wish to point out that there is no scientific evidence** (1967, pp. 406-407, emp. added).

Ten years later, in his book, *Until the Sun Dies*, Robert Jastrow, the founder and former director of the Goddard Institute for Space Studies at NASA, summarized the situation as follows:

According to this story, every tree, every blade of grass, and every creature in the sea and on the land evolved out of one parent strand of molecular matter drifting lazily in a warm pool. What concrete evidence supports that remarkable theory of the origin of life? There is none (1977, p. 60).

Four years after that, in 1981, renowned British astrophysicist Sir Fred Hoyle complained in *Nature* magazine:

The likelihood of the spontaneous formation of life from inanimate matter is one to a number with 40,000 noughts after it.... It is big enough to bury Darwin and the whole theory of evolution. There was no primeval soup, neither on this planet nor on any other, and **if the beginnings of life were not random, they must therefore have been the product of purposeful intelligence** (1981b, 294:148, emp. added).

That same year, Nobel laureate Sir Francis Crick wrote:

An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, **the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle**, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going (1981, p. 88, emp. added).

After another four years had passed, evolutionist Andrew Scott authored an article in *New Scientist* on the origin of life, titled “Update on Genesis,” in which he observed:

Take some matter, heat while stirring, and wait. That is the modern version of Genesis. The “fundamental” forces of gravity, electromagnetism and the strong and weak nuclear forces are presumed to have done the rest.... But how much of this neat tale is firmly established, and how much remains hopeful speculation? In truth, the mechanism of almost every major step, from chemical precursors up to the first recognizable cells, is the subject of either controversy or complete bewilderment.

We are grappling with a classic “chicken and egg” dilemma. Nucleic acids are required to make proteins, whereas proteins are needed to make nucleic acids and also to allow them to direct the process of protein manufacture itself.

The emergence of the gene-protein link, an absolutely vital stage on the way up from lifeless atoms to ourselves, is still shrouded in almost complete mystery.... **We still know very little about how our genesis came about, and to provide a more satisfactory account than we have at present remains one of science’s great challenges** (1985, 106:30-33, emp. added).

Three years later, in an article titled “The Origin of Life: More Questions Than Answers,” well-known origin-of-life researcher Klaus Dose pointed out:

More than 30 years of experimentation on the origin of life in the fields of chemical and molecular evolution have led to a better perception of the immensity of the problem of the origin of life on Earth rather than to its solution. **At present all discussions on principal theories and experiments in the field either end in stalemate or in a confession of ignorance** (1988, 13[4]:348, emp. added).

Three more years passed before Hoyle and Wickramasinghe published in *New Scientist* an article with a catchy title (“Where Microbes Boldly Went”) but a dismal message—dismal, that is, for evolutionists who are forced by their theory to believe in the concept of biochemical evolution that allegedly produced the first life on Earth by chance processes.

Precious little in the way of biochemical evolution could have happened on the Earth. It is easy to show that the two thousand or so enzymes that span the whole of life could not have evolved on the Earth. If one counts the number of trial assemblies of amino acids that are needed to give rise to the enzymes, the probability of their discovery by random shufflings turns out to be less than 1 in  $10^{40,000}$  (91:415).

Those “40,000 noughts” with which Dr. Hoyle was struggling in 1981 still were a thorn in his side ten years later. And the situation has not improved in the years since. One of the “scientific heavyweights” in origin-of-life studies from an evolutionary viewpoint is Leslie Orgel, who has spent most of his professional career attempting to uncover the secrets of how life began on this planet. In the October 1994 issue of *Scientific American*, Dr. Orgel authored an article titled “The Origin of Life on Earth” in which he admitted:

It is extremely improbable that proteins and nucleic acids, both of which are structurally complex, arose spontaneously in the same place at the same time. Yet it also seems impossible to have one without the other. **And so, at first glance, one might have to conclude that life could never, in fact, have originated by chemical means....**

We proposed that RNA might well have come first and established what is now called the RNA world.... This scenario could have occurred, we noted, **if prebiotic RNA had two properties not evident today: a capacity to replicate without the help of proteins and an ability to catalyze every step of protein synthesis....**

The precise events giving rise to the RNA world remain unclear. As we have seen, investigators have proposed many hypotheses, but evidence in favor of each of them is fragmentary at best. **The full details of how the RNA world, and life, emerged may not be revealed in the near future** (271:78,83, emp. added).

It is not enough, of course, “just” to establish the possibility of spontaneous generation/biochemical evolution. Evolutionists also must explain the origin of the dazzlingly complex DNA/RNA genetic code that is the basis of every living organism. But, just as their fanciful-but-failed scenarios for the explanation of the naturalistic origin of life have left them lacking any substantive answers, so their theories regarding the origin of the genetic code have failed just as miserably. One evolutionist, Sir John Maddox, confessed as much in a curiously titled but revealing article, “The Genesis Code by Numbers,” in *Nature*.

It was already clear that the genetic code is not merely an abstraction but the embodiment of life’s mechanisms; the consecutive triplets of nucleotides in DNA (called codons) are inherited but they also guide the construction of proteins. **So it is disappointing that the origin of the genetic code is still as obscure as the origin of life itself** (1994, 367:111, emp. added).

Evolutionist John Horgan concluded that if he were a creationist today, he would focus on the subject of the origin of life because this

...is by far the weakest strut of the chassis of modern biology. The origin of life is a science writer’s dream. It abounds with exotic scientists and exotic theories, which are never entirely abandoned or accepted, but merely go in and out of fashion (1996, p. 138).

Or, as renowned physicist Paul Davies and his coworker Phillip Adams noted two years later:

Some scientists say, just throw energy at it and it will happen spontaneously. That is a little bit like saying: put a stick of dynamite under the pile of bricks, and bang, you’ve got a house! Of course you won’t have a house, you’ll just have a mess. **The difficulty in trying to explain the origin of life is in accounting for how the elaborate organizational structure of these complex molecules came into existence spontaneously from a random input of energy. How did these very specific complex molecules assemble themselves?** (1998, pp. 47-48, emp. added).

How indeed?!

Furthermore, not only is the inability of **how** to get life started a serious stumbling block for evolutionists, but now the **where** of this supposed happening has been called into question as well. Hoyle and Wickramasinghe have argued that life fell to Earth from space after having evolved from the warm, wet nucleus of a comet (see Gribbin, 1981, 89[3]:14; Hoyle and Wickramasinghe, 1981). Sir Francis Crick, co-discoverer of the DNA molecule, has suggested that life actually was sent here from other planets (1981). Meanwhile, back on Earth, Sidney Fox and colleagues have proposed that life began on the side of a primitive volcano on our primeval planet when a number of dry amino acids “somehow” formed there at exactly the right temperature, for exactly the right length of time, to form exactly the right molecules necessary for living systems (1977). Evolutionists are fond of saying (remember Gould?) that there is no controversy over the **fact** of evolution; it is only the “how” about which they disagree. Not true. They cannot even agree on the “where.”

## The Origin of Sex

Consider, too, the difficulty involved in explaining the origin of sex. In his book, *The Masterpiece of Nature: The Evolution of Genetics and Sexuality*, Graham Bell described the dilemma in the following manner:

**Sex is the queen of problems in evolutionary biology.** Perhaps no other natural phenomenon has aroused so much interest; certainly none has sowed as much confusion. The insights of Darwin and Mendel, which have illuminated so many mysteries, have so far failed to shed more than a dim and wavering light on the central mystery of sexuality, emphasizing its obscurity by its very isolation (1982, p. 19, emp. added).

Much of nature reproduces sexually, yet evolutionists do not have the first clue as to how sex evolved. Sir John Maddox (quoted above), who served for over twenty-five years as the distinguished editor of *Nature*, the prestigious journal published by the British Association for the Advancement of Science (and who was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 1994 for “multiple contributions to science”), authored an amazing book titled *What Remains to be Discovered* in which he addressed the topic of the origin of sex, and stated forthrightly: “The overriding question is when (and then how) sexual reproduction itself evolved. **Despite decades of speculation, we do not know**” (1998, p. 252, parenthetical item in orig., emp. added).

## The Origin of Language and Speech

Then, think about the difficulty in explaining the origin of language and speech, which remains one of the most significant hurdles in evolutionary theory, even in the twenty-first century. In fact, many evolutionists simply have stopped discussing the matter completely. In her book, *The Seeds of Speech: Language Origin and Evolution*, Jean Aitchison noted:

In 1866, a ban on the topic was incorporated into the founding statutes of the Linguistic Society of Paris, perhaps the foremost academic linguistic institution of the time: “The Society does not accept papers on either the origin of language or the invention of a universal language” (2000, p. 5).

That is an amazing (albeit inadvertent) admission of defeat, especially coming from a group of such eminent scientists, researchers, and scholars. In regard to the origin of language, Aitchison commented:

Of course, holes still remain in our knowledge: in particular, at what stage did language leap from being something new which humans discovered to being something which every newborn human is scheduled to acquire? **This is still a puzzle** (p. ix, emp. added).

A puzzle? To be sure!

## CONCLUSION—WHAT DO THE DATA SAY?

In his January 1987 *Discover* article, Dr. Gould, discussed some of the “data” that establish evolution as a “fact” (his statement was that “facts are the world’s data”). An examination of these data **disproves** the very thing that Gould was attempting to prove—the “factuality” of evolution. He commented:

We have direct evidence of small-scale changes in controlled laboratory experiments of the past hundred years (on bacteria, on almost every measurable property of the fruit fly *Drosophila*), or observed in nature (color changes in moth wings, development of metal tolerance in plants growing near industrial waste heaps) or produced during a few thousand years of human breeding and agriculture (8[1]:65, parenthetical items in orig.).

Dr. Gould wanted us to believe that such changes **prove** evolution to be a fact. Yet notice what the professor conspicuously omitted. He failed to tell the reader what he stated publicly during a lecture at Hobart College, February 14, 1980, when he said:

A mutation doesn’t produce major new raw material. You don’t make new species by mutating the species.... That’s a common idea people have; that evolution is due to random mutations. A mutation is **not** the cause of evolutionary change (as quoted in Sunderland, 1984, p. 106, emp. in orig.).

On the one hand, Gould wants us to believe that bacteria and fruit flies have experienced “small-scale changes” via genetic mutations and thus serve as excellent examples of the “fact” of evolution. But on the other hand, he tells us that mutations (“small-scale changes”) don’t cause evolution. Which is it?



On March 4, 1982, Colin Patterson participated in a radio interview for the British Broadcasting Corporation. In that interview, he admitted: “No one has ever produced a species by mechanisms of natural selection. No one has ever gotten near it and most of the current argument in neo-Darwinism is about this question: how a species originates” (1982). If evolution does not occur by mutation, and if it does not occur by natural selection, how, then, could evolution be considered a “fact”? The only two known mechanisms have been admitted—even by evolutionists—to be completely impotent in this regard. Keith Thompson, professor of biology and dean of the graduate school at Yale University, admitted as much when he wrote in the *American Scientist*:

Twenty years ago Mayr, in his *Animal Species and Evolution* seemed to have shown that if evolution is a jigsaw puzzle, then at least all the edge pieces were in place. But today we are less confident and the whole subject is in the most exciting ferment. Evolution is both troubled from without by the nagging insistence of antiscientists [his term for creationists—BT] and nagged from within by the troubling complexities of genetic and developmental mechanisms and new questions about the central mystery—speciation itself (1982, p. 529).

Further, notice that in his article, Gould made the same mistake that Darwin made 128 years earlier—extrapolating far beyond the available evidence. Darwin looked at finches’ beaks, and from small changes he extrapolated to state that evolution from one group to another had occurred. Gould looked at changes in fruit flies or bacteria and did exactly the same thing, all the while failing to tell the reader that the bacteria never changed into anything else, and the fruit flies always remained fruit flies. If the “data” are the “facts,” and if the “data” actually **disprove** evolution, how is it then that evolution can be called, in any sense of the word, a “fact”?

The standard-usage dictionary definition of a fact is something that is “an actual occurrence,” something that has “actual existence.” Can any process be called “an actual occurrence” when the knowledge of how, when, where, what, and why is missing? Were someone to suggest that a certain skyscraper had merely “happened,” but that the how, when, where, what, and why were complete unknowns, would you be likely to call it a fact, or an “unproven assertion”? To ask is to answer. Gould, Futuyma, Simpson, and other evolutionists may ask us to believe that their unproven hypothesis somehow has garnered to itself the status of a “fact,” but if they do, they will have to come up with something based on evidence to substantiate their wishful thinking. Merely trying to alter, for their own purposes, the definition of fact will not suffice. Pardon us for our incredulity, but when the best they can offer is a completely insufficient explanation for life’s origin in the first place, an equally insufficient mechanism for the evolution of that life once it “somehow” got started via naturalistic processes, and a fossil record full of “missing links” to document its supposed course through time, we will continue to relegate their “fact” to the status of a theory (or better yet, a hypothesis). Adulterating the definition of the word fact is a poor attempt by Gould (and others) to lend credence to a theory that lacks any factual merit whatsoever. Little wonder, then, that evolutionist Michael Denton wrote concerning Darwin:

His general theory that all life on earth had originated and evolved by a gradual successive accumulation of fortuitous mutations, is still, as it was in Darwin’s time, a highly speculative hypothesis entirely without direct factual support and very far from that self-evident axiom some of its more aggressive advocates would have us believe (1985, p. 77).

I could not have said it any plainer, or any better. All the disclaimers of its proponents notwithstanding, evolution always has been, and still remains, a “highly speculative hypothesis without direct factual support.

## CHAPTER 10

### DEFENDING THE GENESIS ACCOUNT OF CREATION [PART III]

Earlier, I discussed a number of reasons concerning why individuals believe in evolution. The last reason I listed was the fact that some—who are honest, truth-seeking people—are convinced that it is the correct answer to the question of origins because they have examined the evidence and, on the basis of their examination of that evidence, have concluded that evolution is the only plausible explanation for the Universe and all that it contains.

That, however, raises several questions. First, what, exactly, **is** that evidence? Second, is it the evidence itself that is under consideration, or is it the **interpretation** of the evidence that results in belief in evolution? And third, is there **additional evidence** (or an alternate interpretation of the available evidence) that should be considered?

In this chapter, I would like to answer those types of questions. First, I would like to examine much of the evidence upon which belief in evolution is based. Then, I would like to present additional evidence for your consideration—evidence that comes directly to bear on whether or not evolution is, in fact, the correct model of origins. And, last, I would like to suggest that there is another much more logical interpretation that fits the available evidence far better than an evolution-based interpretation. Join me as we examine the scientific evidence concerning human origins. It is a fascinating (and educational) journey—and one that, upon its completion, I believe you will be glad you made.

#### NATURAL SELECTION

*The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* was the title of the book published by Charles Darwin in November 1859. Those last two words, “natural selection,” have been discussed frequently within the halls of science. Darwin suggested that “natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinizing every variation, even the slightest; rejecting that which is bad, preserving and adding up all that is good; silently and insensibly working at the improvement of each organic being.” And it certainly is no secret that Darwin’s concept of “natural selection” (or “survival of the fittest,” as it has come to be known) has long been, and still is, at the center of evolutionary thought. According to Darwin, an individual creature with a particular advantage—the “fittest of its kind”—naturally would be selected to pass on the advantage to its offspring. A horse with long legs, for example, would be able to gallop faster than the rest, thus escaping from predators in order to produce heirs. A “fit” creature, therefore, was the one that could best carry out the functions that kept it alive—it was the best adapted to its environment and to its way of life. Paleontologist Kurt Wise defined it as “the preferential survival of those individuals with heritable characters that give advantage to them in the environment in which they find themselves” (2002, p. 165). This is what Darwin meant by “survival of the fittest.”

But difficulties with the concept of natural selection soon developed. T.H. Morgan, the eminent geneticist and pioneer of fruit-fly research, seems to have been among the first to spot the problem. He wrote in the early part of the twentieth century: “For it may be little more than a truism to state that the individuals that are best adapted to survive have a better chance of surviving than those not so well adapted to survive” (as quoted in Bethell, 1976). Nevertheless, evolutionists, both past and present, have continued to defend the concept. Stephen Jay Gould wrote:

Certain morphological, physiological, and behavioral traits should be superior *a priori* as designs for living in new environments. These traits confer fitness by an engineer’s criterion of good design, not by the empirical fact of their survival and spread. It got colder before the woolly mammoth evolved its shaggy coat.... The essence of Darwinism lies in its claim that natural selection creates the fit.... It preserves the favorable variants and builds fitness gradually (1977a, pp. 42,44).

Sir Francis Hitching observed that “Darwinism, as Darwin wrote it, could be simply but nonsensically stated: survivors survive. Which is certainly a tautology; and tells us nothing about how species originate, as even Darwin’s supporters admit” (1982, p. 84). Hitching went even farther to note that “a tautology (or truism)

is a self-evident, circular statement empty of meaning, such as ‘Darwin was a man,’ or ‘biology is studied by biologists.’ The trouble with natural selection (and survival of the fittest) is that it seems to fall into this category” (p. 84, parenthetical items in orig.).

Creationists have been trying for years to get evolutionists to see exactly that. Natural selection **is** a tautology. It somehow is supposed to ensure the “survival of the fittest,” yet the only pragmatic way to define the “fittest” is “those that survive.” Various writers (even evolutionists) have begun to take notice of this serious problem. At a professional symposium on Neo-Darwinism, C.H. Waddington of Edinburgh University opined:

The theory of neo-Darwinism is a theory of the evolution of the changing of the population in respect to leaving offspring and not in respect to anything else. Nothing else is mentioned in the mathematical theory of neo-Darwinism. It is smuggled in, and everybody has in the back of his mind that the animals that leave the largest number of offspring are going to be those best adapted also for eating peculiar vegetation, or something of this sort; but this is not explicit in the theory. All that is explicit is that they will leave more offspring. There, you do come to what is, in effect, a vacuous statement: Natural selection is that some things leave more offspring than others; and you ask, which leave more offspring than others; and it is those that leave more offspring; and there is nothing more to it than that. The whole guts of evolution—which is, how do you come to have horses and tigers and things—is outside the mathematical theory (as quoted in Moorhead and Kaplan, 1967, p. 14).

Waddington is not alone in his summary of the serious problems facing evolution as a result of natural selection having been shown to be a circular argument. G.A. Peseley joined the ranks of those criticizing natural selection as evolution’s mechanism when he stated:

One of the most frequent objections against the theory of natural selection is that it is a sophisticated tautology. Most evolutionary biologists seem unconcerned about the charge and make only a token effort to explain the tautology away. The remainder, such as Professors Waddington and Simpson, will simply concede the fact. For them, natural selection is a tautology which states a heretofore unrecognized relation: the fittest—defined as those who will leave the most offspring—will leave the most offspring.

What is most unsettling is that some evolutionary biologists have no qualms about proposing tautologies as explanations. One would immediately reject any lexicographer who tried to define a word by the same word, or a thinker who merely restated his proposition, or any other instance of gross redundancy; yet no one seems scandalized that men of science should be satisfied with a major principle which is no more than a tautology (1982, 38:74).

Arthur Koestler, vitalist philosopher and author, incisively described the tautology of natural selection in these words:

Once upon a time, it all looked so simple. Nature rewarded the fit with the carrot of survival and punished the unfit with the stick of extinction. The trouble only started when it came to defining fitness.... Thus natural selection looks after the survival and reproduction of the fittest, and the fittest are those which have the highest rate of reproduction.... We are caught in a circular argument which completely begs the question of what makes evolution evolve (1978, p. 170).

Yet, as Harvard-trained lawyer Norman MacBeth observed: “In the meantime, the educated public continues to believe that Darwin has provided all the relevant answers by the magic formula of random mutations plus natural selection—quite unaware of the fact that random mutations turned out to be irrelevant and natural selection a tautology” (1982, 2:18). Tautologous concepts (i.e., reasoning in a circle), however, cannot be used as an independent proof of something.

But the problem for natural selection does not end there. In fact, it gets even more serious, as Gould admitted when he wrote: “The essence of Darwinism lies in a single phrase: natural selection is the creative force of evolutionary change. No one denies that selection will play a negative role in eliminating the unfit. **Darwinian theories require that it create the fit as well**” (1977d, 86[6]:28, emp. added). Unfortunately, that is the one thing natural selection **cannot** do. The late Colin Patterson, who served with distinction as the senior paleontologist at the British Museum of Natural History in London, placed the matter in its proper focus when he said: “No one has ever produced a species by mechanisms of natural selection. No one has ever gotten near it, and most of the current argument in neo-Darwinism is about this question: how a species

originates. And it is there that natural selection seems to be fading out, and chance mechanisms of one sort or another are being invoked” (1982). Patterson was absolutely correct. Ariel Roth, in his book, *Origins*, addressed this very point when he commented:

The basic problem is: How can purposeless random mutations, **accompanied by a natural selection that has no foresight**, create organs of extreme complexity? **Some evolutionists downgrade or eliminate the natural selection process, leaving evolution purely to chance** (1998, p. 97, emp. added).

Creationists never have objected to the idea of natural selection as a mechanism for eliminating the unfit, non-adapted organisms. In fact, creationists long before Darwin were advocating natural selection as a **conservation principle**. As a screening device for eliminating the unfit, natural selection represents the Creator’s plan for preventing harmful mutations from affecting and even destroying the entire species. But that is **all** it does. Of course, “nature” can “select,” just as human breeders can select. But demonstrating this fact does not mean that fish evolve into philosophers via natural selection. The real issue is the **nature** of the variation—viz., what is the mechanism that successfully alters the genetic information in order to create a different type of plant or animal? [I will address this matter shortly.]

Furthermore, to employ an old adage, that which says too much says nothing at all. The long neck of the giraffe and the short neck of the hippopotamus both are explicable by natural selection, as are the dull coloration of the peppered moth and the brilliant colors of the bird of paradise. Natural selection “explains” everything, and therefore really explains **nothing**. It cannot create new species, genera, families, phyla, etc. And it cannot explain adaptation. The fact that an organism is adapted to its environment tells us absolutely nothing about how it **became** adapted. Any organisms not so adapted would not have survived, but this constitutes no proof that the adaptations were produced by evolution. Yet, as Dr. Gould admitted, natural selection must be able to “create the fit”—if it is to be deemed successful in an evolutionary scenario. That, it cannot do. In reality, it is little more than a tautology—an argument that reasons in a circle. And circular arguments are not equipped with the power to “explain,” much less “create.” As such, natural selection is to be rejected as an adequate mechanism for evolution. As Wise went on to note:

In carefully studied cases, natural selection (1) involves rather small changes, (2) usually dampens change..., and (3) works most effectively in taking out harmful mutations. Natural selection seems to act more to prevent organisms from changing (as suggested in young-age creation theory) rather than facilitating their change (as suggested in evolutionary theory) [2002, p. 165, parenthetical items in orig.].

That is exactly my point. Natural selection cannot begin to explain the vast complexity of life as we know it. Something else is needed. And from an evolutionary viewpoint, that “something else” is genetic mutations.

## GENETIC MUTATIONS

At the end of the nineteenth century, just as Darwin’s dogma of natural selection was beginning to fall on hard times, the science of genetics was born. The concepts that had been published in 1865 in a little-known journal by the Moravian monk Gregor Mendel, but which had lain quietly forgotten on dusty library shelves for thirty-five years, were “rediscovered” with an attendant flourish. Some who began to study this fledgling science felt for the first time that they had in their possession the actual mechanism of evolution—genetic mutations. Their suggestion was that species arose by mutations that then somehow were incorporated into the system by natural selection. Today, the alleged mechanism of evolution, therefore, is not merely natural selection, but rather **natural selection plus genetic mutations**. Hitching wrote in this regard:

The theory is that a chance favorable mutation gradually spreads through a population of plants or animals by a process of natural selection of the fittest; and over geological periods of time, a new species emerges. Genetics provides the mechanism that supports Darwin’s original insight (1982, p. 34).

Writing almost twenty years earlier, Ernst Mayr of Harvard agreed: “The proponents of the synthetic theory maintain that all evolution is due to the accumulation of small genetic changes, guided by natural selection” (1963, p. 586). In their high school biology textbook, *Life: An Introduction to Biology*, Simpson

and Beck likewise agreed: “Mutations are the ultimate raw materials for evolution” (1965, p. 430). Evolutionist Theodosius Dobzhansky commented that “the process of mutation is the only known source of the new materials of genetic variability, and hence of evolution” (1957, p. 385).

Through the years, not much has changed in this regard. In a chapter on the role of mutations in evolution for the 1997 book *Evolution* edited by Mark Ridley, evolutionary biologist Sewall Wright observed:

The observed properties of gene mutation—fortuitous in origin, infrequent in occurrence and deleterious when not negligible in effect—seem about as unfavourable as possible for an evolutionary process. Under biparental reproduction, however, **a limited number of mutations which are not too injurious to be carried by the species furnish an almost infinite field of possible variations through which the species may work its way under natural selection** (pp. 32-33, emp. added).

In his book, *The Way of the Cell*, Franklin M. Harold suggested: “Any alteration in the sequence of DNA, once replicated, is inherited henceforth; that is the chemical basis of mutation, and therefore of much of the genetic variation within populations” (2001, p. 47). Donald Goldsmith noted:

During the process of DNA replication, small changes called **mutations** can occur.... Some mutational changes tell the organism to do something additional that proves useful its quest to survive and to reproduce. In that case, provided that the mutation can be passed from ancestors to descendants, the organisms carrying the mutation may come to dominate the local scene, and can eventually produce new types of organisms (1997, p. 125, emp. in orig.).

In his 2000 volume, *Quantum Evolution: The New Science of Life*, Johnjoe McFadden wrote: “Mutations are therefore the elusive source of the variation that Darwin needed to complete his theory of evolution. They provide the raw material for all evolutionary change” (p. 65). That same year, evolutionist Paul R. Ehrlich penned the following statement in his book, *Human Natures: Genes, Cultures, and the Human Prospect*: “The ultimate source of variation in the DNA—that is, the creation of different kinds of genes—is mutation: the accidental alteration of DNA that changes genes.... In short, genetic variation has its basic source in mutation” (2000, pp. 20-21). Also that same year, renowned evolutionary geneticist of Stanford University, Luigi Cavalli-Sforza, head of the International Human Genome Diversity Project, remarked in his book, *Genes, Peoples, and Languages*:

Evolution also results from the accumulation of new information. In the case of a biological mutation, new information is provided by an error of genetic transmission (i.e., a change in the DNA during its transmission from parent to child).... Natural selection makes it possible to accept the good ones and eliminate the bad ones (2000, p. 176, parenthetical item in orig.).

Perhaps this would be a good time to ask, “What, exactly, is a mutation?” Simply put, a mutation is an error made when cells copy DNA—usually the loss, insertion, or change of a nucleotide in a DNA molecule (see Wise, 2002, p. 163). As Ariel Roth put it in his book, *Origins*: “A mutation can refer to a variety of genetic changes, such as: a change in a nucleotide base on the DNA chain, an altered gene position, the loss of a gene, duplication of gene, or insertion of a foreign genetic sequence” (1998, p. 85). In their biology textbook, *Biology: A Search for Order in Complexity*, Moore and Slusher defined a mutation as “genetic change that can be inherited” (1974, p. 560). In his text, *Biology*, A.O. Wasserman defined a mutation as “a change in the form, qualities, or nature of the offspring from their parent type brought about by a change in the hereditary material from the parents” (1973, p. 803). Geneticist George Burns wrote: “Basically a mutation is a sudden, random alteration in the genotype of an individual. Strictly speaking, it is a change in the genetic material itself...” (1973, pp. 313-314). There are certain other basic facts about genetic mutations that come into play here. Consider, for example, the following.

**Mutations are random.** C.H. Waddington, an evolutionary geneticist, once noted: “It remains true to say that we know of no other way other than **random** mutations by which hereditary variation comes into being....” (1962, p. 98, emp. added). Thirty-eight years later, Ehrlich wrote: “A key axiom of modern evolutionary theory is that mutations do not occur in response to the needs of the organism.... Mutations are random” (2000, p. 21). Creationists concur. Henry Morris, for example, observed: “There is no way to control mutations to make them produce characteristics which might be needed. Natural selection must simply take what comes” (1974b, p. 54). In other words, nature is not “selecting” at all. Rather, nature is pressed into accepting whatever appears. The obvious question, then, is: What appears?

**Mutations are rare, not common.** How often do random mutations occur? Evolutionists themselves frankly and candidly admit what every research biologist knows—mutations occur rarely. Geneticist Francisco J. Ayala of the University of California once remarked: “It is probably fair to estimate the frequency of a majority of mutations in higher organisms between one in ten thousand and one in a million per gene per generation” (1970, p. 3). In their book, *The Natural Limits to Biological Change*, Lane Lester and Raymond Bohlin commented: “Considering a host of both eukaryotic and prokaryotic organisms, the chances of a single gamete containing a new mutation for a particular gene range from 1/2,000 to 1/1,00,000,000” (1984, p. 59).

**Mutations may be good, bad, or neutral.** There are, theoretically speaking, at least three types of mutations: good, bad, and neutral. Obviously, the bad mutations (those that cause various diseases such as hemophilia, Duchenne dystrophy, phenylketonuria, galactosemia, etc.) are of no use to evolutionary theory. Neutral mutations likewise are of little use to the evolutionist (see Hitching, 1982, pp. 62-63) because they, then, are dependent on still more mutations in order to be fully expressed and “useful” (in an evolutionary sense). Thus, another obvious question becomes: How often do **good** mutations occur—i.e., “good” in the sense that they can “push evolution forward”?

**Good mutations are very, very rare.** The late Hermann J. Muller, Nobel laureate in genetics, said: “Accordingly, the great majority of mutations, certainly well over 99%, are harmful in some way, as is to be expected of the effects of accidental occurrences” (1950, 38:35, emp. added). Evolutionary geneticist Theodosius Dobzhansky candidly admitted that favorable mutations amount to less than 1% of all mutations that occur (see Davidheiser, 1969, p. 209). Dr. Dobzhansky even remarked that “most mutants which arise in any organism are more or less **disadvantageous** to their possessors...” (1955, p. 105). C.P. Martin, also an evolutionist, wrote in the *American Scientist*: “Accordingly, mutations are more than just sudden changes in heredity; **they also affect viability, and, to the best of our knowledge, invariably affect it adversely.** Does not this fact show that mutations are really assaults on the organism’s central being, its basic capacity to be a living thing?” (1953, p. 102, emp. added). Almost twenty-five years later, in addressing the rarity of these “good” mutations, one researcher commented: “From the standpoint of population genetics, positive Darwinian selection represents a process whereby advantageous mutants spread through the species. Considering their great importance in evolution, it is perhaps surprising that well-established cases are so scarce” (Kimura, 1976, 138[6]:260). And twenty-five years after that, Harvard’s eminent taxonomist, Ernst Mayr, remarked that “...the occurrence of new beneficial mutations is rather rare” (2001, p. 98). Numerous researchers through the years have written in agreement (Winchester, 1951, p. 228; Martin, 1953, p. 100; Ayala, 1968, p. 1436; Morris, 1984, p. 203; Klotz, 1985, p. 181; Margulis and Sagan, 2002, pp. 11-12).

Furthermore, those animals or plants that ought to show the most mutants apparently show the least—which is not an insignificant problem for the population geneticist. France’s preeminent zoologist, Pierre-Paul Grassé, lamented:

Bacteria, the study of which has formed a great part of the foundation of genetics and molecular biology, are the organisms which, because of their huge numbers, produce the most mutants.... Bacteria, despite their great production of intra-specific varieties, exhibit a great fidelity to their species. The bacillus, *Escherichia coli*, whose mutants have been studied very carefully, is the best example. The reader will agree that it is surprising, to say the least, to want to prove evolution and to discover its mechanisms and then to choose as a material for this study a being which practically stabilized a billion years ago (1977, p. 87).

Interestingly, the same is true of other species. Consider the lowly fruit fly. “The fruit fly (*Drosophila melanogaster*), the favorite pet insect of the geneticists, whose geographical, biotropical, urban, and rural genotypes are now known inside out, seems not to have changed since the remotest times” (Grassé, p. 130). Dr. Grassé has provided an insightful evaluation, and is absolutely correct in his assessment. We are being asked to believe that organisms that have been in a period of **stasis** (i.e., no change) “somehow” provide the proof of evolution (vast amounts of change). As Roth put it:

[T]housands of laboratory experiments with bacteria, plants, and animals witness to the fact that the changes that a species can tolerate have definite limits. There appears to be a tight cohesion of interacting systems that will accept only limited change without inviting disaster. After decades or centuries or decades of ex-

perimentation, fruit flies retain their basic body plan as fruit flies, and wool-producing sheep remain basically sheep. Aberrant types tend to be inferior, usually do not survive in nature, and, given a chance, tend to breed back to their original types. Scientists sometimes call this phenomenon genetic inertia (genetic homeostasis) [1998, pp. 85-86, parenthetical item in orig.].

Two other points bear mentioning here as well. First, as Wise remarked:

**Of carefully studied mutations, most have been found to be harmful to organisms, and most of the remainder seem to have neither positive nor negative effect.** Mutations that are actually beneficial are extraordinarily rare and involve insignificant changes. **Mutations seem to be much more degenerative than constructive...** (2002, p. 163, emp. added).

Favorable mutations are indeed “extraordinarily rare.” It also is a well-known fact that “most mutations are recessive—that is, they will not manifest themselves unless present in both parents. Furthermore, while mutations producing minor changes may survive, **those causing significant modification are especially detrimental and unlikely to persist**” (Roth, p. 86, emp. added). Lester and Bohlin also addressed this point:

Overall, however, mutations would primarily be a constant source of genetic noise and degeneration.... Mutations occur in organisms that are already adapted to their environment. Any large-scale, rapid alteration to the organism will not only be deleterious but most likely lethal (1984, pp. 171,68).

Second, as David DeWitt of Liberty University observed: “Successful macroevolution requires the addition of **new** information and **new** genes that produce **new** proteins that are found in **new** organs and systems” (2002, emp. in orig.). And therein lies the problem. Mutations do not add new information. When Luigi Cavalli-Sforza (quoted earlier) remarked that “new information is provided by an error of genetic transmission,” he could not have been more wrong. It most certainly is not! Jonathan Sarfati correctly commented:

The issue is not **new traits**, but new genetic information.... If evolution from goo to you were true, we should expect to find **countless** information-adding mutations. But we have not even found one (2002a, emp. in orig.).

Mutations do **not** result in **new** information! And this is what evolution is all about. Lester and Bohlin noted:

The usual answer given to the dilemma of new genetic information is that as a gene continues to mutate, eventually something different will arise. But immediately, several questions come to our minds. What function, for example, is this protein performing while all this mutating is going on? Is its function slowly changing? If so, is its former function still needed? If not, why not? And if so, then how is the former function being handled? (1984, p. 87).

Good points, these. Mutations in bacteria, to use just one example, may result in antibiotic resistance. But in the end, the resistant microorganisms are still the same species of microorganisms they were **before** the mutations occurred. Alan Hayward was right on target when he wrote that

...mutations do not appear to bring progressive changes. Genes seem to be built so as to allow changes to occur within certain narrow limits, and to prevent those limits from being crossed. To oversimplify a little: mutations very easily produce new varieties within a species, and might occasionally produce a new (though similar) species, but—despite enormous efforts by experimenters and breeders—**mutations seem unable to produce entirely new forms of life** (1985, p. 55, emp. added, parenthetical item in orig.).

In the end, after mutations have occurred, no macroevolution has taken place. Evolutionary theory requires that mutations occur—in order to add the information needed to push evolution “uphill.” But the mutations that we observe, generally are neutral (i.e., they do not alter the information or the “message” of the DNA code), or else they go “downhill” (from an informational standpoint), which results in the loss or corruption of information. In addition, the rare “beneficial” mutations that do occur and that do confer some type of survival advantage, still result in the loss of information, and thus are headed in the wrong direction, from an evolutionary vantage point.

Evolutionists Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan, in their 2002 book, *Acquiring Genomes: A Theory of the Origins of Species*, expressed their strong disagreement with genetic mutations as the alleged mechanism of evolution.

We certainly agree that random heritable changes, or gene mutations, occur. We also concur that these random mutations are expressed in the chemistry of the living organism.... The major difference between our view and the standard neodarwinist doctrine today concerns the importance of random mutation in evolution. **We believe random mutation is wildly overemphasized as a source of hereditary variation.** Mutations, genetic changes in living organisms, are inducible; this can be done by X-ray radiation or by addition of mutagenic chemicals to food. Many ways to induce mutations are known but none leads to new organisms. **Mutation accumulation does not lead to new species** or even to new organs or new tissues. If the egg and a batch of sperm of a mammal is subjected to mutation, yes, hereditary changes occur, but as was pointed out very early by Hermann J. Muller (1890-1967), the Nobel prizewinner who showed X-rays to be mutagenic in fruit flies, 99.9 percent of the mutations are deleterious. **Even professional evolutionary biologists are hard put to find mutations, experimentally induced or spontaneous, that lead in a positive way to evolutionary change** (pp. 11-12, emp. added).

They went on to say:

We agree that very few potential offspring ever survive to reproduce and that populations do change through time, and that therefore natural selection is of critical importance to the evolutionary progress. **But this Darwinian claim to explain all of evolution is a popular half-truth whose lack of explicative power is compensated for only by the religious ferocity of its rhetoric. Although random mutations influenced the course of evolution, their influence was mainly by loss, alteration, and refinement.... Never, however, did that one mutation make a wing, a fruit, a woody stem, or a claw appear. Mutations, in summary, tend to induce sickness, death, or deficiencies. No evidence in the vast literature of hereditary change shows unambiguous evidence that random mutation itself, even with geographical isolation of populations, leads to speciation** (pp. 28-29, emp. added).

Adding their combined weight to the testimony of Margulis and Sagan are such eminent evolutionists as the late Pierre-Paul Grassé, who held the position of the Chair of Evolution at the Sorbonne in Paris for over 30 years, and the late Stephen Jay Gould of Harvard. Dr. Grassé remarked:

The opportune appearance of mutations permitting animals and plants to meet their needs seems hard to believe. Yet the Darwinian theory is even more demanding: a single plant, a single animal would require thousands and thousands of lucky, appropriate events. Thus, miracles would become the rule: events with an infinitesimal probability could not fail to occur.... There is no law against day-dreaming, but science must not indulge in it.

Some contemporary biologists, as soon as they observe a mutation, talk about evolution. They are implicitly supporting the following syllogism: mutations are the only evolutionary variations, all living beings undergo mutations, therefore all living things evolve. This logical scheme, is, however, unacceptable: first, because its major premise is neither obvious nor general; second, because its conclusion does not agree with the facts. No matter how numerous they may be, **mutations do not produce any kind of evolution** (1977, p. 103, emp. added).

Gould's testimony is no less weighty. In a speech titled, "Is a New and General Theory of Evolution Emerging?," presented at Hobart College on February 14, 1980, Dr. Gould went on record as stating: "A mutation doesn't produce major new raw material. You don't make a new species by mutating the species.... That's a common idea people have; that evolution is due to random mutations. A mutation is not the cause of evolutionary change" (as quoted in Sunderland, 1984, p. 106). Or, as Lester and Bohlin put it:

Mutations are mistakes, errors in the precise machinery of DNA replication. Combine this with the rarity and randomness of mutations, and one has a major reason why Neo-Darwinists perceive evolutionary change as being gradual and slow. **Since any specific mutation is rare, and most are deleterious, a mutation that somehow enhances survival is admittedly highly unlikely...** (1984, p. 67).

Nobel laureate Sir Ernest Chain (credited with purifying penicillin in a way that made it possible to employ it as an antibiotic) wrote in agreement.



**To postulate that the development and survival of the fittest is entirely a consequence of chance mutations seems to me a hypothesis based on no evidence and irreconcilable with the facts.** These classical evolutionary theories are a gross oversimplification of an immensely complex and intricate mass of facts, and it amazes me that they are swallowed so uncritically and readily, and for such a long time, by so many scientists without a murmur of protest (1970, p. 1, emp. added).

Writing in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, D.H. Erwin and J.W. Valentine remarked:

Viable mutations with major morphological or physiological effects are exceedingly rare and usually infertile; the chance of two identical rare mutant individuals arising in sufficient propinquity to produce offspring seems too small to consider as a significant evolutionary event (1984, 81:5482-5483).

“Chances” that are “too small to consider as a significant evolutionary event”? What is **that** all about?

It has to do with the mathematical probability of having random mutations account for all we see around us—a probability that is, well, **infinitesimal**. It would require **many** non-harmful mutations to produce the characteristics of just one useful structure. The problem is how to get such extremely rare events to occur **simultaneously** in an organism, in order to produce a functional structure that possessed survival value. Evolutionist E.J. Ambrose outlined the problem as follows:

The frequency with which a single non-harmful mutation is known to occur is about 1 in 1,000. The probability that two favourable mutations will occur is  $1 \times 10^3 \times 10^3$ , 1 in a million, 1 in a million. Studies of *Drosophila* [fruit fly—BT] have revealed that large numbers of genes are involved in the formation of separate structural elements. There are as many as 30-40 involved in a single wing structure. It is most unlikely that fewer than five genes could ever be involved in the formation of even the simplest new structure previously unknown to the organism. The probability now becomes one in one thousand million million. We already know that mutations in living cells appear once in ten million to once in one hundred thousand million. It is evident that the probability of five favourable mutations occurring within a single life cycle of an organism is effectively zero (1982, p. 120).

What is the conclusion to be drawn from these facts? Simpson admitted that if there was an effective breeding population of **100 million** individuals, and they produced a new generation **every day**, the likelihood of obtaining good evolutionary results from mutations could be expected only about once every **274 billion years!** He was forced to conclude: “Unless there is an unknown factor tremendously increasing the chance of simultaneous mutations, such a process has played no part whatever in evolution” (1953, p. 96). Little wonder Grassé concluded: “No matter how numerous they may be, **mutations do not produce any kind of evolution**” (1977, p. 103, emp. added).

If evolution does not occur by natural selection, and if it does not occur by mutation, how, then, does it occur? Even evolutionists have admitted that both of the alleged mechanisms for evolution are impotent in this regard. Creationists have been stressing these points for years by noting that mutations either are harmful or neutral (neither of which provides the forward thrust for evolution) and that since mutations are unpredictable, random changes in an extremely complex system, any change represents a **mistake**, not an improvement. The practical end result of mutations has been noted time and again by those within the scientific community. The Environmental Mutagenic Society, in a report published in *Science*, warned that “being an error process, mutation consists of all possible changes in the genetic material (excluding recombination and segregation)” and that “most mutations producing effects large enough to be observed are deleterious.” Further, the Society stated in its report that “since the vast majority of detectable mutations are deleterious, an artificially increased human mutation rate would be expected to be harmful in proportion to the increase” (Environmental Mutagenic Society, 1975, 187:503-504).

Mutations, as much as evolutionists hate to have to admit it, **presuppose creation**. After all, mutations are changes in **already-existing** genes. A gene must be present before it can mutate, and the end result of such mutations is merely a varied form of an already existing gene (i.e., variation within a type, which is consistent with the creation model). Mutations represent an undesirable departure from the original. We do not know of mutations that can cause one kind of animal to give rise to another kind of animal or one kind of plant to give rise to another kind of plant. What we **do** know, and **have** documented, are mutations that damage or destroy what already is present. The creation model predicts a built-in variation within the gene pool. If living things were created, variation within types certainly is good design. Mutations militate **against** evolution. The story confirmed by the actual scientific facts is much more in accord with the creation model than with the evolution model.

## COMPARATIVE ARGUMENTS AND THE CASE FROM HOMOLOGY

Undoubtedly, one of the most impressive arguments for the theory of evolution is provided by the comparative sciences such comparative anatomy, comparative embryology, comparative physiology, comparative cytology, comparative biochemistry, etc. As scientists have worked in these related fields, and have learned to compare one organism with another, basic similarities have arisen between, and among, various groups. When making comparisons of parts of organisms, scientists commonly speak of **homologous** structures, suggesting that these particular structures go through similar stages of development, have similar attachments, etc. In discussing these comparative arguments and homology, R.L. Wysong noted:

Much of the case for amoeba to man evolution is built upon arguments from similarity. Evolutionists argue that if similarity can be shown between organisms through comparative anatomy, embryology, vestigial organs, cytology, blood chemistry, protein and DNA biochemistry, then evolutionary relationship can be proven (1976, p. 393).

Michael Denton, in his text, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, devoted a large portion of the book to such arguments and wrote: "Since 1859 the phenomenon of homology has been traditionally cited by evolutionary biologists as providing one of the most powerful lines of evidence for the concept of organic evolution" (1985, p. 143). Denton is correct in his assessment. Charles Darwin himself thought of the argument from homology as one of the greatest single proofs of his theory. Denton commented that "homology provided Darwin with apparently positive evidence that organisms had undergone descent from a common ancestor" (p. 143). Darwin stated as much in *The Origin of Species* when he wrote: "We have seen that the members of the same class, independently of their habits of life, resemble each other in the general plan of their organization.... Is it not powerfully suggestive of true relationship, of inheritance from a common ancestor?" (1962, pp. 434-435). Denton therefore observed: "The phenomenon of homology has remained the mainstay of the argument for evolution right down to the present day" (p. 144). Strausburg and Weimer, in their *General Biology*, suggested: "The greater the similarity of structure, the closer the relationship, and, wherever close relationship is found, a common ancestry is indicated" (1947, p. 629).

That statement was made in 1947. Decades later, the same kind of thinking still is commonplace. For example, the 1981 edition of the respected *Encyclopaedia Britannica* gave pride of place to the argument from homology in discussing the evidence for evolution:

The indirect evidence for evolution is based primarily on the significance of similarities found in different organisms.... The similarity of plan is easily explicable if all descended with modification from a common ancestor, by evolution, and the term homologous is used to denote corresponding structures formed in this way.... Invertebrate animals, the skeleton of the forelimb is a splendid example of homology, in the bones of the upper arm, forearm, wrist, hand, and fingers, all of which can be matched, bone for bone, in rat, dog, horse, bat, mole, porpoise, or man. The example is all the more telling because the bones have become modified in adaptation to different modes of life but have retained the same fundamental plan of structure, inherited from a common ancestor (7:8).

Denton acknowledged the importance of such thinking within the evolutionary camp, and showed why such thinking is so necessary, when he observed that "without underlying homologous resemblance in the fundamental design of dissimilar organisms and organ systems then evolution would have nothing to explain and comparative anatomy nothing to contribute to evolutionary theory" (p. 145). The late biochemist, Isaac Asimov, one of America's most prolific science writers, suggested that our ability to classify plants and animals on a groups-within-groups hierarchical basis virtually forces scientists to treat evolution as a "fact" (1981, 89[9]:85-87).

At first glance, descent from a common ancestor appears to be a "logical" argument because it seems to make so much sense. After all, isn't that how we explain such similarities as brothers and sisters looking more alike than, say, cousins? They have parents closer in common. And evolutionists have an impressive array of data at their disposal. They are quick to point out that the wing of the bat, the forefoot of the turtle, the forefoot of the frog, and the arm of the man all have the same general structure. They also note, correctly, that the forefoot of the dog, the flipper of the whale, and the hand of the man contain essentially the same bones and muscles. As Michael Pitman observed:

To the evolutionist, homologous structures are clear evidence of common ancestry and a family tree of life. Bat wings, bird wings, flippers, and human arms are similar because the ancestors common to birds, bats and humans had just such a structure—a forelimb built on the pattern that biologists identify as “pentadactyl” or “five-fingered” (1984, p. 40).

In more recent times, this argument even has been carried to the molecular level as scientists begin to compare similarities in blood groups, cytochrome C composition, enzymes, cellular DNA, and a myriad of other molecular entities. For example, it has been suggested that the chimpanzee and the human have DNA that is similar 95% of the time (Britten, 2002). The conclusion we are supposed to draw, of course, is that evolution must be true because we can trace our ancestral lineages to a common ancestor who lived millions of years ago. That, in fact, is exactly what the late scientist of Cornell University, Carl Sagan, suggested: “The inner workings of terrestrial organisms—from microbes to men—are so similar in their biochemical details as to make it highly likely that all organisms on the Earth have evolved from a single instance of the origin of life” (see Shklovskii and Sagan, 1966, p. 183).

### The Creationist Response to Homology

What is the creationist’s response to all of this? Do similarities exist? And if so, is the evolutionist’s explanation the correct, or the only, explanation that fits the facts of the case?

First, let us note how the creationist does **not** respond to this argument. Creationists do not deny the existing similarities; similarities **do** exist. Creationists are not ignorant of the existence of such facts of science. It is here, however, that we can learn an extremely valuable lesson in the creation/evolution controversy. That lesson is this: **rarely is it the data that are in dispute—it is the interpretation placed on the data that is in dispute**. In the cases of basic similarities, whether at the anatomical or biochemical level, denying that such similarities exist serves no good purpose. Creationists and evolutionists both have access to the same data. The evolutionist, however, looks at the data and says that similarity is proof of **common ancestry**. The creationist, on the other hand, examines the exact same data and suggests that similarity is evidence of **creation according to a common design**. In essence, a stalemate exists. Both sides have an answer to the data at hand. And in many instances, either explanation might appear legitimate.

However, the evolutionists’ argument works only if certain portions of the data on homology are presented. If **all** the available data are allowed full exposure, then the evidence from homology fails. Many years ago, T.H. Morgan of Columbia University, himself a committed evolutionist, candidly admitted what many evolutionists do not want to become common knowledge: “If, then, it can be established beyond dispute that similarity or even identity of the same character in different species is not always to be interpreted that both have arisen from a common ancestor, the whole argument from comparative anatomy seems to tumble in ruins” (1923, p. 246). Or, as Wysong wrote: “If the law of similarity can be used to show evolutionary relationships, then dissimilarities can be used to show a lack of relationship” (1976, pp. 393-394).

Ferenc Kiss, as dean of the medical faculties at the University of Budapest, once stated that “...it is necessary for the evolutionists—in order to maintain their theory—to collect only the similarities and to neglect the numerous differences” (1949, p. 3). Evolution is a complete cosmogony. It must explain **both** similarities **and** differences within its own framework. It is not the similarities that present the problem; it is the numerous differences. As Sir Alistair Hardy, former professor of zoology at Oxford University, wrote: “The concept of homology is fundamental to what we are talking about when we speak of evolution, yet in truth we cannot explain it all in terms of present-day biological theory” (1965, p. 211).

What did Dr. Hardy mean when he said, more than thirty-five years ago, that “we cannot explain it all in terms of present-day biological theory”? He meant simply this: only when evolutionists are allowed to “pick and choose” similarities that fit their theory can the argument from homology be made to work. When evolutionists are forced to use **all** the data—including those documenting dissimilarity—the argument from homology utterly fails.

His point is well taken—even today. It is a documented fact that evolutionists are guilty of filtering the data to make it appear as if homology supports evolutionary theory. Now, however, that “picking and choosing” method has been exposed, as Lester and Bohlin have observed.

Another problem is that from the raw data alone, not one single phylogeny emerges, but several. The one that agrees most closely with the traditional phylogeny is **assumed** to be the most “correct.” This hardly demonstrates the independent confirmation of evolutionary relationships. The combining of several phylogenies from different proteins combines not only strengths but also weaknesses (1984, p. 173, emp. in orig.).

Vincent Demoulin likewise pointed out the fallacy inherent in this kind of “pick and choose” game when he noted that “the composite evolutionary tree encompasses all the weaknesses of the individual trees” (1979). That is to say, adding up **all** the available data from homology studies makes for an even weaker argument than already is present when examining just a few of the data on this topic.

### Homology and the “Rest of the Story”

But there is no need to take any creationist’s word on the subject. Evolutionist Michael Denton stated quite succinctly just how valuable all this “proof” from similarity studies really is.

Invariably, as biological knowledge has grown, common genealogy as an explanation for similarity has tended to grow ever more tenuous. Clearly, such a trend carried to the extreme would hold calamitous consequences for evolution, as homologous resemblance is the very *raison d’être* of evolution theory. Without the phenomenon of homology—the modification of similar structures to different ends—there would be little need for a theory of descent with modification....

Like so much of the other circumstantial “evidence” for evolution, that drawn from homology is not convincing because it entails too many anomalies, too many counter-instances, far too many phenomena which simply do not fit easily into the orthodox picture. The failure of homology to substantiate evolutionary claims has not been as widely publicized as have the problems in paleontology.

The discussion in the past three chapters indicates that the facts of comparative anatomy and the pattern of nature they reveal provide nothing like the overwhelming testimony to the Darwinian model of evolution that is often claimed. Simpson’s claim that “the facts simply do not make sense unless evolution is true,” or Dobzhansky’s that “nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution” are simply not true if by the term evolution we mean a gradual process of biological change directed by natural selection....

In the last analysis the facts of comparative anatomy provide no evidence for evolution in the way conceived by Darwin, and even if we were to construe with the eye of faith some “evidence” in the pattern of diversity for the Darwinian model of evolution, this could only be seen, at best, as indirect or circumstantial....

...the same hierarchic pattern which may be explained in terms of a theory of common descent, also, by its very nature, implies the existence of deep divisions in the order of nature. The same facts of comparative anatomy which proclaim unity also proclaim division; while resemblance suggests evolution, division, especially where it appears profound, is counter-evidence against the whole notion of transmutation (1985, pp. 154-155).

What did Denton mean when he said that the “evidence” for evolution from homology studies “entails too many anomalies, too many counter-instances, far too many phenomena which simply do not fit easily into the orthodox picture”? The answer to that lies in an examination of the data that have become available during the past several years. For example, Wysong provided an extensive list of such data, among which are the following examples:

1. The octopus eye, pig heart, Pekingese dog’s face, milk of the ass, and the pronator quadratus muscle of the Japanese salamander are all very similar to analogous human structures. Do these similarities show evolutionary relationships?
2. The weight of the brain in proportion to body weight is greater in the dwarf monkey of South America, the marmoset, than in man. Since this proportion is used to show relationship between primates and man, is the marmoset, therefore, more evolved than man?
3. The plague bacterium (*Pasteurella pestis* [now known as *Yersinia pestis*—BT]) afflicts only man and rodent. Does this similarity show close relationship?
4. Plant nettle stings contain acetylcholine, 5-hydroxytryptamine and histamine. These chemicals are also found in man. Are man and plant closely related?
5. The root nodules of certain leguminous plants and the crustacean, *Daphnia*, contain hemoglobin, the blood pigment found in man. Are these organisms closely related to man?
6. If certain specific gravity tests are run on the blood of various animals, the frog and snake are found to be more similar to man than the monkey is to man.

7. If the concentration of red blood cells in animals is compared (millions per cubic millimeter of blood), man is more similar to frogs, fish, and birds than he is to sheep.
8. Since bones are often used to show relationships, bone chemistry should be useful in this regard. If the calcium/phosphorus ratio is plotted against bone carbonate, man proves to be close to the turtle and elephant, the monkey close to the goose, and the dog close to the horse but distant from the cat.
9. The tetrapyrrole chemical ring is found in plant chlorophyll, in hemoglobin and other animal respiratory pigments, sporadically as a coloring pigment in molluscan shells, and also in the feathers of some bird species. How does tetrapyrrole similarity speak for relationships (1976, pp. 394-395).

After examining examples such as these, it is easy to understand what Dr. Denton meant when he said that there are too many “anomalies,” too many “counter-instances,” and “too many phenomena which simply do not fit easily into the orthodox picture.” Other writers (both evolutionists and creationists) have documented this same problem. Michael Pitman, for example, remarked:

Consider reptilian scales, bird feathers, and fur. The evolutionist holds that feathers and fur have evolved, divergently, from scales. But can such different skin coverings be called “homologous”? For example, a feather and a scale develop from different layers of skin and follow different development paths; the feather’s greater structural complexity must reflect a more complex genetic background. Yet the first known feather is entirely featherlike, not at all scale-like. The genes coding for each type of skin-covering must contain a sequence (subroutine) for keratin, because each is made primarily of a form of keratin. Yet this subroutine could well be integrated into quite a different overall set of genes. If so, how could we explain their origin in terms of simple inheritance from a common ancestor (1984, p. 42)?

Such anomalies have caused evolutionists to search for a way to salvage the argument from homology. Some evolutionary scientists have suggested that evidence now is available that can perform such a “salvage operation.” Bernard Davis of the Bacterial Physiology Unit at Harvard Medical School explained:

In most of its development evolutionary biology has depended on morphological homologies, both in the fossil record and among living species; but this approach has not revealed the continuum of transition forms between species that Darwin predicted. Moreover, while he expected further research in paleontology to fill in the gaps, we no longer entertain that hope. But now, at least, molecular genetics has provided a direct, radically different kind of evidence for such continuity.... Not only does molecular genetics provide the most convincing evidence for evolutionary continuity, but this evidence should impress a public that is well aware of the power of this science in other areas (1985, 28:252-253).


Notice two important points in Davis’ statement. First, he admits that the approach from morphological homologies “has not revealed the continuum of transition forms that Darwin predicted.” In other words, if you look at the data from morphological homologies (i.e., the kind of data examined above), then the result is a dismal failure for evolutionary theory. The required “continuum” simply does not exist. Second, however, Dr. Davis believes that something better, something more powerful as a proof from homology, has been found—evidence from molecular (as opposed to morphological) homology. His point is: now that the “proofs” from morphological homologies have failed, the hope is that the “proofs” from molecular homologies will not. Davis obviously is optimistic that such proofs **will** succeed. His optimism, however, proved to be short lived.

Despite the bright promise that molecular evidences are so strong as to provide almost undeniable proof for evolution, several puzzles have emerged from studies in molecular homologies. In 1981, Colin Patterson (senior paleontologist at the British Museum of Natural History) came to America to speak to several scientific societies. During his various speeches, Dr. Patterson suggested that he had “experienced a shift from evolution as knowledge to evolution as faith.” He then presented numerous specific examples documenting the failure of the evolutionary hypothesis of common ancestry. He said that the hypothesis acted as an “anti-theory” and conveyed nothing but “anti-knowledge.” Dr. Patterson presented data on amino acid sequences for the alpha hemoglobins of a viper, crocodile, and chicken. Evolutionists “know” (since evolution is assumed to be true) that vipers and crocodiles (two reptiles) should be much more closely related than either is to a bird. But the crocodile and the chicken showed the greatest similarity (17.5% of their amino acids in common) with the viper and the chicken the next most similar (10.5%), and the two reptiles with the **least** similarity (5.6%).

An examination of the amino acids in myoglobin showed that crocodiles and lizards (two reptiles) shared 10.5%, but that a lizard and a chicken (reptile/bird) also shared the same percentage (10.5%). Dr. Patterson then described studies of mitochondrial DNA performed on man and on various primates. He acknowledged that where there should have been a high percentage of similarities, there was a very low percentage. After all his data were presented, Dr. Patterson remarked that “the theory makes a prediction, we’ve tested it, and the prediction is falsified precisely” (as quoted in Sunderland, 1982).

### Homology, Genes, and Chromosomes

Other molecular studies over the past few years have yielded no better results. For example, within cells of living organisms are found chromosomes that carry the genes responsible for the individual organism’s genetic make-up. If there has been a gradual evolution of all creatures—from the simple to the complex, as evolution demands—then the evolutionary scheme would predict that there likewise would be an increase in chromosome number and quality as one moves up the evolutionary scale. Today, however, advanced molecular technology has caused the evolutionary prediction to fall on hard times. Note the following chart comparing the actual chromosome numbers of several organisms with the evolutionary prediction.

PREDICTION		FACTS	
Simple to Complex		Chromosome Count	
	Man	Fern—512	
	Dog	Crayfish—200	
	Bat	Dog—78	
	Herring Gull	Herring Gull—68	
	Reptiles	Reptiles—48	
	Fern	Man—46	
	Crayfish	Bat—32	

The chromosome count does not “fit” what one would predict based upon the theory of evolution. Evolutionist Ashley Montagu admitted: “The number of chromosomes does not appear to be associated with the degree of complexity of an organism” (1960, p. 24), and that most assuredly would include the chromosomes, since they are the carriers of the genetic material.

Furthermore, it would make sense that, if humans and chimpanzees (our alleged closest evolutionary ancestor) were 95% genetically the same, then the manner in which they store DNA also would be similar. Yet it is not. DNA, the fundamental blueprint of life, is tightly compacted into chromosomes. All cells that possess a nucleus contain a specific number of chromosomes. Common sense would seem to necessitate that organisms that share a common ancestry would possess the same number of chromosomes. However, chromosome numbers in living organisms vary from 308 in the black mulberry (*Morus nigra*), to 6 in animals such as the mosquito (*Culex pipiens*) or nematode worm (*Caenorhabditis elegans*) [see Sinnot, et al., 1958]. Additionally, complexity does not appear to affect the chromosomal number. The radiolaria (a simple protozoan) has over 800, while humans possess 46. Chimpanzees, on the other hand, have 48 chromosomes. A strict comparison of chromosome numbers would indicate that we are more closely related to the Chinese muntjac (a small deer found in Taiwan’s mountainous regions), which also has 46 chromosomes.

This hurdle of differing numbers of chromosomes may appear trivial, but we must remember that chromosomes contain genes, which themselves are composed of DNA spirals. If the blueprint of DNA locked inside the chromosomes codes for only 46 chromosomes, then how can evolution account for the **loss** of two entire chromosomes? The task of DNA is to continually reproduce itself. If we infer that this change in chromosome number occurred through evolution, then we are asserting that the DNA locked in the original number of chromosomes did not do its job correctly or efficiently. Considering that each chromosome car-

ries a number of genes, **losing** chromosomes does not make sense physiologically, and probably would prove deadly for new species. No respectable biologist would suggest that by removing one chromosome (or more), a new species likely would be produced. To remove even **one** chromosome would potentially remove the DNA codes for millions of vital body factors. Eldon Gardner summed it up as follows: "Chromosome number is probably more constant, however, than any other single morphological characteristic that is available for species identification" (1968, p. 211). To put it another way, humans always have had 46 chromosomes, whereas chimps always have had 48.

Other such "anomalies" abound. Wysong pointed out that human cells contain 7 picograms of DNA/cell, whereas the frog contains more and the African lungfish contains 100 picograms of DNA/cell. According to evolutionary predictions, should the frog and lungfish contain more DNA than a man? Or what about amino acid sequences? Cytochrome C, for example, is a coenzyme found in the mitochondria of all aerobic cells and therefore is found in most organisms. As evolutionists have studied amino acid sequences among organisms, they have found many similarities. But what about the many differences? One hears a lot these days about the similarities among organisms in regard to their cytochrome C content, yet numerous dissimilarities exist as well (but rarely are mentioned by evolutionists). Frair and Davis, in their book *A Case for Creation*, pointed out that 104 amino acids are strung together in building cytochrome C. On the basis of the number of differences in these units, the gray whale has more in common with the duck than with another mammal, the monkey; the bullfrog has more in common with the fruit fly than with the rattlesnake; and the tuna has more in common with the rabbit than with the dogfish (1983, pp. 45-53). Lester and Bohlin, in their discussion of cytochrome C and many of the dissimilarities associated with it, noted:

The most well-known phylogeny is that of cytochrome C, which appears to agree very well with the accepted phylogeny. However, there are exceptions and procedural difficulties of interpretation. There are often large discrepancies between the protein phylogeny and the traditional one. In cytochrome C chickens are more closely related to penguins than to ducks and pigeons, turtles are closer to birds than to snakes (fellow reptiles), and people and monkeys diverge from the mammals before marsupial kangaroos separate from the rest of the mammals (1984, pp. 172-173, parenthetical item in orig.).

The facts simply do not fit the predictions. And perhaps no one has done a more outstanding job of providing the evidence for that statement than evolutionist Michael Denton. Evolutionists suggest that as one ascends the "tree of life," organisms should become increasingly separated by differences in biochemistry from the "earliest" and most "primitive" organisms. In fact, no evolutionary trend can be observed in the biochemical data—at least none that can be adequately defended. Denton showed that bacteria are as divergent from yeast (69%) as they are from wheat (66%), silkmoths (65%), tuna (65%), pigeons (64%), horses (64%), or humans (65%). There is no gradation from one group to another that would show any kind of evolutionary sequence. Denton's conclusion was that "at a molecular level there is no trace of the evolutionary transition from fish to amphibian to reptile to mammal" (1985, p. 285). He then added: "To those well acquainted with the traditional picture of vertebrate evolution, the result is truly astonishing" (p. 285). Dr. Denton went on to state that "at a molecular level, no organism is 'ancestral' or 'primitive' or 'advanced' compared with its relatives" (p. 290). "Yet," he said, "in the face of this extraordinary discovery the biological community seems content to offer explanations which are no more than apologetic tautologies" (p. 306).

### A Word About Comparative Embryology

Embryology is, as its name implies, the study of the embryo. In *The Origin of Species* (1859), Darwin asserted (in a discussion occupying 12 pages) that similarity among the various embryos of animals and man was a primary proof of the theory of evolution. In fact, he called it "second to none" in importance. In *The Descent of Man* (1871), Darwin devoted the entire first chapter to this line of evidence, stressing how critical it was to the success of his theory.

Ernst Heinrich Haeckel (1834-1919) was a German biologist who was such a devoted follower of Darwin that he was dubbed "the apostle of Darwinism in Germany." He taught at the University of Jena, and became famous for his popularization of the so-called "theory of embryonic recapitulation" (or, as it came to be known, the great "Biogenetic Law"—see Hickman, et al., 1996, p. 161). [NOTE: Haeckel's "Biogenetic Law" is not to be confused with the Law of Biogenesis, which correctly states that all life comes from pre-

vious life of its kind.] Haeckel suggested that the successive stages of human embryonic development repeat the evolutionary stages of our animal ancestry. The catch-phrase he developed to popularize this idea was that “ontogeny [the development of one] recapitulates [repeats] phylogeny [the development of the race].” In other words, the human embryo passes through all stages representing its ancestors—from the one-celled stage to the human. Seeing a human embryo grow would therefore be like watching a silent, moving picture of all our ancestral history. And the evidence of such an evolutionary transformation would show up in the embryo. As Sir Julian Huxley put it:

Embryology gives us the most striking proof of evolution. Many animals which are extremely different as adults are hard to tell apart as embryos. You yourself when you were a young embryo were very like the embryos of lizards, rabbits, chickens, dogfish, and other vertebrates. The only reasonable explanation is that we vertebrates are all related by common descent.... Even more extraordinary is the fact that we and all other land vertebrates show a fish-like plan of construction in early embryonic life, with a fish-like heart, gill-slits, and pattern of blood-vessels. This only makes sense if we, as well as all other mammals, birds and reptiles, have gradually evolved from some kind of fish (1958, p. 15).

Today, we recognize that this argument is specious, and those who keep up with the scientific literature no longer use it. Richard Milner, writing in *The Encyclopedia of Evolution*, admitted: “During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Haeckel’s Biogenetic Law was considered one of the proofs of evolution. As detailed research showed it to be a sweeping and superficial generalization, untenable in most particulars, science abandoned it” (1990, p. 44).

But why did science “abandon” the Biogenetic Law? To quote the late George Gaylord Simpson of Harvard: “It is now firmly established that ontogeny does not repeat phylogeny” (1965, p. 352). Over seventy years ago, Sir Arthur Keith bluntly stated:

It was expected that the embryo would recapitulate the features of its ancestors from the lowest to the highest forms in the animal kingdom. Now that the appearances of the embryo at all stages are known, the general feeling is one of disappointment; the human embryo at no stage is anthropoid in appearance. The embryo of the mammal never resembles the worm, the fish, or the reptile. **Embryology provides no support whatsoever for the evolutionary hypothesis** (1932, p. 94, emp. added).

A word of explanation is in order. Haeckel was an accomplished artist who used his artistic talent to falsify certain of the drawings that accompanied his scientific articles. One writer summarized the matter as follows:

To support his theory, however, Haeckel, whose knowledge of embryology was self-taught, faked some of his evidence. He not only altered his illustrations of embryos, but also printed the same plate of an embryo three times, and labeled one a human, the second a dog and the third a rabbit to show their similarity (Bowden, 1977, p. 128).

Haeckel even went so far as to alter the drawings of some of his colleagues, including the famous embryologist, professor L. Rutimeyer of Basel University, and professor Arnold Bass. Haeckel’s drawings have long been known to be fraudulent (see Assmuth and Hull, 1915; Grigg, 1996, 1998; Pennisi, 1997; Richardson, 1997a, 1997b; 1998; Richardson, et al. 1998; Youngson, 1998). In the end, as evolutionist H.H. Newman of the University of Chicago put it, Haeckel’s works “did more harm than good to Darwinism” (1932, p. 30).

Haeckel’s falsified drawings were published around 1866. One of the major points stressed by Haeckel in his “research”—and one of the items that has remained ensconced in the evolutionary literature to this very day—is the idea that the human embryo possesses gill slits that are leftovers from its past fish-like ancestor stage. Evolutionist Irvin Adler, in his book, *How Life Began*, wrote:

The embryo of each species seems to repeat the main steps by which the species developed from the common ancestor of all living things. All mammal embryos, for example, pass through a stage in which they have gills like a fish, showing that mammals are descended from fishlike ancestors (1957, p. 22).

Fast-forward almost fifty years to the twenty-first century. In an educational program produced in 2001 by the University of Chicago for its Newton Electronic Community division, the following statement appeared: “All mammals have gill slits in their very early fetal development” (Myron, 2001, p. 1). Writing in *New Sci-*



entist as late as 1997, Howard Topoff stated that the “embryos of all major groups of vertebrates do possess gill pouches and gill furrows, and these similarities clearly reveal Darwin’s evolutionary principle of descent with modification from a common ancestor” (85[2]:104-107).

We have known for almost 150 years that Haeckel’s “Biogenetic Law” is not correct, and that human embryos do not possess gill slits (see Assmuth and Hull, 1915; Grigg, 1996, 1998; Pennisi, 1997; Richardson, 1997a, 1997b; Youngson, 1998). As O’Rahilly and Müller put it: “The pharyngeal clefts of vertebrate embryos...are neither gills nor slits” (1992, p. 9). Even though it was common knowledge by the end of the 1920s that Haeckel’s concepts, to use evolutionist Stephen Jay Gould’s words, had “utterly collapsed” (1977a, p. 216), Haeckel’s drawings and ideas still continue to turn up in modern biology texts and instructional tools as a “proof” of evolution. Modern editions of most high school and college textbooks rarely present the latest evolutionary ideas on embryology, but instead remain content to rest their case on century-old woodcuts and misnamed “gill slits.” Unfortunately, even today the “Biogenetic Law” still is being taught as a scientific fact in many public schools and universities. Of fifteen high school biology textbooks being considered for adoption by the Indiana State Board of Education as late as 1980, nine offered embryological recapitulation as evidence for evolution. In his letter to the editor in the August 28, 1998 issue of *Science*, Michael Richardson lamented: “Sadly, it is the discredited 1874 drawings that are used in so many British and American biology textbooks” (281:1289). Yes, unfortunately, it is.

Evolutionists themselves have conceded that the idea of embryonic recapitulation has become so deeply rooted in evolutionary dogma that it cannot be “weeded out.” Paul Ehrlich observed: “Its shortcomings have been almost universally pointed out by modern authors, but the idea still has a prominent place in biological mythology” (1963, p. 66). The evidence of such an assessment is obvious when one looks at just how far-reaching Haeckel’s drawings have become. America’s famous “baby doctor,” Benjamin Spock, perpetuated Haeckel’s recapitulation myth in his well-known book, *Baby and Child Care*. Spock confidently assured expectant mothers that

each child as he develops is retracing the whole history of mankind, physically and spiritually, step by step. A baby starts off in the womb as a single tiny cell, just the way the first living thing appeared in the ocean. Weeks later, as he lies in the amniotic fluid of the womb, he has gills like a fish (1998, p. 223).

Such imagery persists in the popular media, too. The cover story of the November 11, 2002 issue of *Time* magazine detailed what were at the time the latest findings in human fetal development. Juxtaposed between the illustrations and the article were photo-captions that contained throwbacks to the outdated concept of embryonic recapitulation theory: “32 days: ...The brain is a labyrinth of cell-lined cavities, while the emerging arms and legs still resemble flipper-like paddles. 40 days: At this point, a human embryo looks no different from that of a pig, chick or elephant. All have a tail, a yolk sac and rudimentary gills” (Nash, 2002, 160[20]:71). The article itself presented a “marvelous,” seemingly “miraculous,” and “vastly complicated” embryonic process. But the glossy pictures that accompanied the article—the ones that people tend to remember—had captions that painted an entirely different picture.

The scientific community has known for decades that Ernst Haeckel—the man responsible for conjuring up this theory and then falsifying drawings to support it—purposely misled the public during the late 1800s. Embryologist Erich Blechschmidt regarded Haeckel’s “Great Biogenetic Law” as one of the most egregious errors in the history of biology. In his book, *The Beginnings of Human Life*, he minced no words in repudiating Haeckel’s fraudulent forgeries: “The so-called basic law of biogenetics is wrong. No buts or ifs can mitigate this fact. It is not even a tiny bit correct or correct in a different form. It is totally wrong” (1977, p. 32). Biologist James W. Leach of Ohio State University bluntly commented:

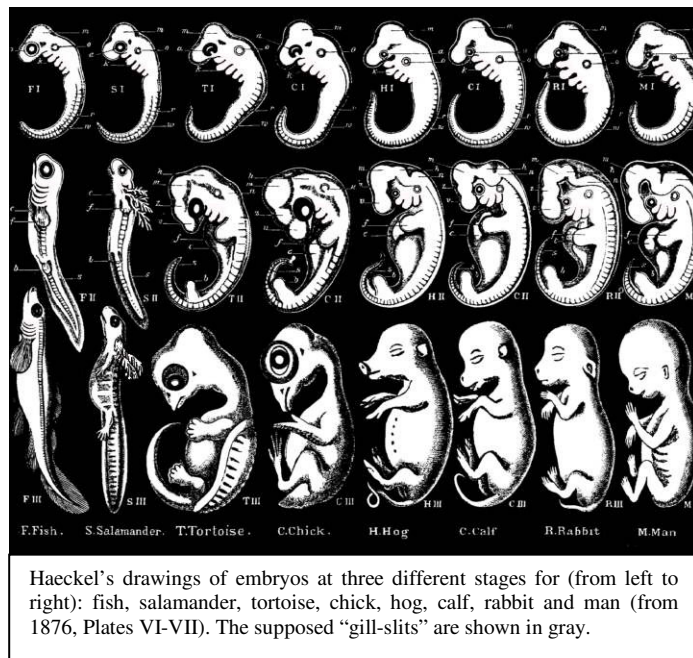
The undeniable tendency of a complex animal to pass through some developmental stages reminiscent of the adult conditions of a selected and graduated series of lower forms has long been described as the “Biogenetic Law.” But as “law” inscribed by nature it is perhaps more full of “loopholes” and “bypasses” than any law thus far inscribed by man (1961, p. 44).

In their widely used high school biology textbook, *Life: An Introduction to Biology*, George Gaylord Simpson and William Beck included a footnote to their student readers on this point. They wrote: “The human embryo does not have any differentiated gill tissue, and the gill-like pouches do not have open gill slits as

in fishes. Fins are lacking. The tail is not at all like any fish's tail. Indeed, the resemblance to an adult fish is vague and superficial" (1965, p. 240). Simpson and Beck went on to conclude: "It is now firmly established that ontogeny does **not** recapitulate phylogeny" (p. 241, emp. in orig.).

Why, then, does the concept of embryonic recapitulation persist? Perhaps John Tyler Bonner, former head of the biology department at Princeton University, explained it best when he admitted: "We may have known for almost a hundred years that Haeckel's blastaea-gastraea theory of the origin of the metazoa is probably nonsense, but it is so clear-cut, so simple, so easy to hand full-blown to the student" (1961, p. 240). Yes, it is. But is it **right**? No, it is not. In fact, recognition of Haeckel's falsehoods still appears in scientific journals from time to time, as was evident in a letter to the editor in the May 15, 1998 issue of *Science*. The seven authors of the letter pointed out (correctly) that Haeckel was overzealous, and purposely gave incorrect details in his embryonic drawings (Richardson, et al., 1998). In her book, *Essays in the History of Embryology and Biology*, Jane Oppenheimer observed that Haeckel's work "was the culmination of the extremes of exaggeration which followed Darwin," (1967, p. 150). She lamented: "Haeckel's doctrines were blindly and uncritically accepted," and "delayed the course of embryological progress." Almost thirty years earlier, W.D. Matthew, former chairman of the geology department at the University of California, had acknowledged the fact that, unfortunately, some doctrines are "blindly and uncritically accepted." He wrote: "Many a false theory gets crystallized by time and absorbed into the body of scientific doctrine through lack of adequate criticism when it is formulated" (1939, p. 159). Never was there a more blatant case of such, than Haeckel's "Biogenetic Law" with its catch-phrase of "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny."

What should be the creationist's response to embryology as an alleged "proof" of evolution? Our response—if, indeed, any is needed in light of the startling facts presented above—is exactly the same as that offered by the eminent Canadian biologist, W.R. Thompson, in the "Introduction" he authored for the 1956 edition of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. He wrote: "The 'Biogenetic Law' as a proof of evolution is valueless" (1956, p. xvi). Biologist Aaron Wasserman observed that the mammalian embryo "can in no sense be called a fish; it never actually develops functional gills and is at all times a mammal" (1973, p. 497). Jonathan Sarfati noted: "A human embryo never looks reptilian or pig-like. A human embryo is always a human embryo, from the moment of conception; it is never anything else. It does not **become** human sometime after eight weeks" (2002b, p. 202, emp. in orig.). Indeed, embryology no longer can be offered as a legitimate proof of evolution.



Although Haeckel's theory has fallen into disfavor, embryonic recapitulation has survived in a modified form. In its current version, evolutionists argue that similar patterns of embryo development in different animals prove their common descent. For example, the neck folds in human embryos (which Haeckel labeled as "gill slits") eventually give rise to the jaw. These folds develop from a similar area of the vertebrate column, and are controlled by similar gene sequences, as the gill arches of fish embryos (e.g., Gould, 1990, p. 16). The evolutionist concludes from this that fish and humans had a common ancestor.

However, this similarity also is evidence of common design. Mice, men, and pigs have four appendages and a head, and therefore it is not surprising that embryos should follow a similar path of development. Indeed, the ability of embryos to form in such perfection demands something more than evolution. Natural selection works primarily on organisms exposed to the environment or competition. Yet the embryo is isolated from the outside world. Evolutionary processes are at a loss to explain the origin of the mechanism that causes a fertilized egg to develop into a young version of the adult. Life's startling complexity—complete with DNA-coded instruction causing each embryo to be totally different from all others—is compelling evidence of a masterful plan of design inherent in the system. As one writer put it:

...in terms of DNA and protein, right at conception each of these types of life is as totally different chemically as each will ever be structurally.... Embryonic development is not even analogous to evolution, which is meant to indicate a progressive increase in potential. The right Greek word instead would be *entelechy*, which means an unfolding of potential present right from the beginning. That's the kind of development that so clearly requires creative design (Morris, 1982, p. 34).

What could be clearer? From DNA to the organs of the body, evidence of design is everywhere, while gradualistic development is countered by the perpetual discontinuity seen in nature. There is nothing—either in the proposed mechanisms, or by direct observation—to show that Darwin's theory of general evolution is a "fact" of science. The "miracle" that we call "life" cannot be explained by random acts of natural selection coupled with genetic mutations. The evolution model, to use the words of geneticist T.H. Morgan, does indeed "tumble in ruins."

Homology does not establish common ancestry. The entire genome of the tiny nematode, *Caenorhabditis elegans*, has been sequenced as a tangential study to the human genome project. Of the 5,000 best-known human genes, 75% have matches in the worm (see "A Tiny Worm Challenges Evolution," n.d.). Does this mean that humans are 75% identical to a nematode worm? Just because living creatures share some genes with humans does not mean there is necessarily a linear ancestry. Biologist John Randall admitted this fact when he wrote:

The older textbooks on evolution make much of the idea of homology, pointing out the obvious resemblances between the skeletons of the limbs of different animals. Thus the "pentadactyl" [five bone—BT] limb pattern is found in the arm of a man, the wing of a bird, and flipper of a whale—and this is held to indicate their common origin. Now if these various structures were transmitted by the same gene couples, varied from time to time by mutations and acted upon by environmental selection, the theory would make good sense. Unfortunately this is not the case. Homologous organs are now known to be produced by totally different gene complexes in the different species. The concept of homology in terms of similar genes handed on from a common ancestor has broken down... (as quoted in Fix, 1984, p. 189).

Yet textbooks and teachers still continue to proclaim that humans and chimps are 95-98% genetically identical. The evidence clearly demonstrates vast molecular differences—differences that can be attributed to the fact that humans, unlike animals, were created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27; see Lyons and Thompson, 2002a, 2002b). Elaine Morgan commented on this difference.

Considering the very close genetic relationship that has been established by comparison of biochemical properties of blood proteins, protein structure and DNA and immunological responses, the differences between a man and a chimpanzee are more astonishing than the resemblances. They include structural differences in the skeleton, the muscles, the skin, and the brain; differences in posture associated with a unique method of locomotion; differences in social organization; and finally the acquisition of speech and tool-using, together with the dramatic increase in intellectual ability which has led scientists to name their own species *Homo sapiens sapiens*—wise wise man. During the period when these remarkable evolutionary changes were taking place, other closely related ape-like species changed only very slowly, and with far less

remarkable results. **It is hard to resist the conclusion that something must have happened to the ancestors of *Homo sapiens* which did not happen to the ancestors of gorillas and chimpanzees** (1989, pp. 17-18, emp. added).

That “something” actually is “Someone”—the Creator.



## CHAPTER 11

### DEFENDING THE GENESIS ACCOUNT OF CREATION [PART IV]

#### THE FOSSIL RECORD

Both evolution and creation are concepts that may be explored as scientific models, since both may be used to understand and explain certain scientific facts. Obviously the one that ultimately does the better job of explaining is the better scientific model. In order to examine properly the two models, each must be compared to the available facts. In this chapter, I would like to continue our examination of some of that evidence—in particular, evidence that relates to the geologic timetable, evidence from the fossil record that pertains to the creation/evolution controversy in general, and evidence from the fossil record that relates specifically to the matter of human origins.

As we consider the evidence, it is essential to know exactly what the evolution and creation models predict so that the predictions can be compared to the actual data. When it comes to the fossil record, the evolution model predicts that: (a) the “oldest” rocks would contain evidence of the most “primitive” forms of life capable of fossilization; (b) “younger” rocks would exhibit more “complex” forms of life; (c) a gradual change in organisms from “simple-to-complex” would be apparent; and (d) transitional forms should be present. Charles Darwin himself stated in *The Origin of Species* that “the number of intermediate varieties, which have formerly existed, must be truly enormous.” However, he then went on to note: “Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely graduated organic chain; and this, perhaps, is the most obvious and serious objection which can be argued against this theory. The explanation lies, I believe, in the extreme imperfection of the geological record” (1956, pp. 292-293). While Darwin predicted that the fossil record should show numerous transitional fossils, almost a century and a half later, the best that evolutionists are able to produce is a handful of dubious and disputable candidates.

This was a problem for Darwin’s theory in 1859, and remains a problem for the modern version of evolution, even today. After all, isn’t it a bit ridiculous to expect people to accept a scientific theory as truth when its advocates have to explain why much of the critical evidence is missing? It would be somewhat like a prosecuting attorney trying a murder case, and saying in his opening speech: “We know that the defendant is guilty of murder, although we cannot find a motive, the weapon, the body, or any witnesses.”

It is true, of course, that the fossil record is “imperfect.” Darwin suggested a specific reason for that imperfection—insufficient searching. In 1859 (when Darwin wrote his book), most fossil collecting had been done in Europe and the United States. However, after more than 140 years of additional paleontological work, Darwin’s defense no longer can be upheld. In fact, one evolutionary geologist, T.N. George of Great Britain, stated over forty years ago: “There is no need to apologise any longer for the poverty of the fossil record. In some ways it has become almost unmanageably rich” (1960, 48[1]:1-5).

The creation model, on the other hand, predicts that: (a) the “oldest” rocks would not always contain evidence of the most “primitive” forms of life, and “younger” rocks would not always contain evidence of more “complex” forms of life; (b) a “simple-to-complex” progression of life forms would not always appear; instead, there would be a sudden “explosion” of diverse and highly complex forms of life; and (c) there would be a regular and obvious absence of transitional fossils, since there were no transitional forms.

Evolutionists and creationists do agree on one thing: If there is ever to be any **physical evidence** for evolution, by necessity it will have to come from the fossil record, for it is only here that the actual historical evidence of evolution can be located. One well-known evolutionist, LeGros Clark, commented on this very point when he wrote:

That evolution actually did occur can only be scientifically established by the discovery of the fossilized remains of representative samples of those intermediate types which have been postulated on the basis of the indirect evidence. In other words, the really crucial evidence for evolution must be provided by the paleontologist whose business it is to study the evidence of the fossil record (1955, p. 7).

Indeed, in the past, some mistakenly thought that it was within the record of the rocks—"nature's museum"—that evolution finally would be documented. As more and more finds were discovered, however, it became obvious that the evidence from the fossil record strongly **opposes** evolution, and strongly **supports** creation.

First, consider the prediction of the evolution model that the fossil record should reveal a simple-to-complex progression of life forms. Until fairly recently, an examination of the Precambrian strata of the geologic timetable showed no undisputed evidence of multicellular fossil forms, while the Cambrian layer (the next layer in succession) exhibited a sudden "explosion" of life forms. In years gone by, this was a serious and fundamental problem in evolutionary theory. Today, evolutionists suggest that they have found, in the Precambrian era, multicellular animals that had neither shells nor skeletons. Labeled the "Ediacaran fossil complex," these finds include animals resembling jellyfishes, segmented worms, and possible relatives of corals, according to evolutionists. But even with these new finds, the serious, fundamental problem for evolution still remains. Geneticist John Klotz has explained why:

All of the animal phyla are represented in the Cambrian period except two minor soft-bodied phyla (which may have been present without leaving any fossil evidence), and the chordates. Even the chordates may have been present, since an object which looks like a fish has been discovered in Cambrian rock. It is hardly conceivable that all these forms should have originated in this period; and yet there is no evidence for the existence of many of them prior to the Cambrian period (1972, pp. 193-194).

Since Dr. Klotz's book was published, the chordates have, in fact, been found in Cambrian rocks (see Repetski, 1978). Writing in *Science News*, Richard Monastersky detailed one such find.

Paleontologists have long regarded vertebrates as latecomers who straggled into evolutionary history after much of the initial sound and fury had fizzled. Chinese paleontologists, however, have discovered fossils of two fish that push the origin of vertebrates back to the riotous biological bash when almost all other animal groups emerged in the geologic record.

Preserved in 530-million-year-old rocks from Yunnan province, the paper clip-size impressions record the earliest known fish, which predate the next-oldest vertebrates by at least 30 million years. The fossil finds, while not totally unexpected, thrill paleontologists who despaired of ever uncovering such evidence from Earth's dim past. "It's important because up to now the vertebrates were absent from the big bang of life, as we call it—that is, the great early Cambrian explosion, where all the major animal groups appeared suddenly in the fossil record," comments Philippe Janvier, a paleontologist at the National Museum of Natural History in Paris (1999, 156:292).

The problem of the "missing ancestors" in Precambrian rocks is as severe as it ever was. As one science text commented:

Even theoretically, to make the vast biological leap from primitive organisms to the Cambrian fauna poses enormous problems. A remarkable series of transformations is required to change a single-celled protozoan into a complex animal such as a lobster, crab, or shrimp. The new life-forms appearing in the Cambrian were not simply a cluster of similar cells; they were complex, fully formed animals with many specialized types of cells.... The new Cambrian animals represented an astonishing leap to a higher level of specialization, organization, and integration (see *Teaching Science...*, 1986, pp. 35,37).

We are being asked by evolutionists to believe that from such "ancestors" as those found in the Ediacaran complex, **all** of the major animal phyla "evolved" in the time period represented by a jump between the Precambrian and the Cambrian periods. Such is not only impossible, but also unreasonable. Writing under the title of "When Earth Tipped, Life Went Wild," Monastersky remarked:

Before the Cambrian period, almost all life was microscopic, except for some enigmatic soft-bodied organisms. At the start of the Cambrian, about 544 million years ago, animals burst forth in a rash of evolutionary activity never since equaled. Ocean creatures acquired the ability to grow hard shells, and a broad range of new body plans emerged within the geologically short span of 10 million years. Paleontologists have proposed many theories to explain this revolution but have agreed on none (1997, 152:52).

Stefan Bengtson, of the Institute of Paleontology at Uppsala University in Sweden, suggested:

If any event in life's history resembles man's creation myths, it is this sudden diversification of marine life when multicellular organisms took over as the dominant actors in ecology and evolution. Baffling (and embarrassing) to Darwin, this event still dazzles us and stands as a major biological revolution on a par with the invention of self-replication and the origin of the eukaryotic cell. **The animal phyla emerged out of the Precambrian mists with most of the attributes of their modern descendants** (1990, 345:765, parenthetical item in orig., emp. added).

Evolutionist Richard Dawkins of Oxford University, wrote:

The Cambrian strata of rocks, vintage about 600 million years [evolutionists are now dating the beginning of the Cambrian at about 530 million years], are the oldest in which we find most of the major invertebrate groups. **And we find many of them already in an advanced state of evolution, the very first time they appear. It is as though they were just planted there, without any evolutionary history.** Needless to say, this appearance of sudden planting has delighted creationists (1986, p. 229, bracketed comment in orig., emp. added).

Indeed, this "sudden planting" **has** delighted creationists, because the evidence it provides fits perfectly with the creation model. In an article appearing in *American Scientist* on "The Origin of Animal Body Plans," Erwin Douglas and his colleagues discussed what Dawkins referred to as an "advanced state of evolution."

**All of the basic architectures of animals were apparently established by the close of the Cambrian explosion;** subsequent evolutionary changes, even those that allowed animals to move out of the sea onto land, involved only modifications of those basic body plans. About 37 distinct body architectures are recognized among present-day animals and from the basis of the taxonomic classification level of phyla.... Clearly many difficult questions remain about the early radiation of animals. Why did so many unusual morphologies appear when they did, and not earlier or later? The trigger of the Cambrian explosion is still uncertain, although ideas abound (1997, 85:126,127, emp. added).

As Stephen Jay Gould once observed: "Even the most cautious opinion holds that 500 million subsequent years of opportunity have not expanded the Cambrian range, achieved in just five million years. **The Cambrian explosion was the most remarkable and puzzling event in the history of life**" (1994, 271:86, emp. added). Or, as Andy Knoll noted three years earlier: "We now know that the Ediacaran radiation was indeed abrupt and that the geologic floor to the animal fossil record is both real and sharp" (1991, 265:64). This "explosion of life," which is found in the fossil record all over the world, is a serious stumbling block for evolutionists, while for creationists it makes logical sense—God created all living things during the Creation week. Once again, it is creationists who have built a logical scientific theory on the actual evidence (the sudden appearance of fully formed, completely functional, well-designed organisms), while evolutionists have been forced to invent theory after theory due to a complete **lack** of evidence.

Second, if the fossil record is to offer support for evolution, it must demonstrate a clear-cut sequence of fully functional intermediate forms, by which we mean that certain conditions must be met before an organism (fossil or living) may be considered a true intermediate form. That means we should see transitional body parts such as half scales/half feathers, or animals that are something like half reptile/half mammal. Yet the fossil record does not satisfy the conditions for any such transitional forms. For instance, mammals take many forms, but all are equally mammalian; birds vary greatly, but all are avian. The late paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould stated that the absence of fossil intermediary stages has remained a "persistent and nagging problem for gradualistic accounts of evolution" (1980, p. 127). Or, as Gould remarked three years prior to making that statement: "**The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of paleontology**" (1977b, 86[5]:14, emp. added). This is a fascinating admission. I was not aware that science—by all accounts, a very public enterprise—was supposed to have "trade secrets." George Gaylord Simpson (also of Harvard, and one of Gould's mentors) wrote as far back as 1944:

This **regular absence of transitional forms** is not confined to mammals, but is an almost universal phenomenon, as has long been noted by paleontologists. It is true of almost all orders of all classes of animals, both vertebrate and invertebrate. *A fortiori*, it is also true of the classes, and of the major animal phyla, and it is apparently also true of analogous categories of plants (p. 105, emp. added).

Thirty years later, University of Oklahoma paleontologist David Kitts acknowledged:



Despite the bright promise that paleontology provides a means of “seeing” evolution, it has presented some nasty difficulties for evolutionists, the most notorious of which is the presence of “gaps” in the fossil record. **Evolution requires intermediate forms between species and paleontology does not provide them...** (1974, 28:467, emp. added).

Gould thus lamented:

Paleontologists have paid an exorbitant price for Darwin’s argument. We fancy ourselves as the only true students of life’s history, yet to preserve our favored account of evolution by natural selection, we view our data as so bad that we never see the very process we profess to study (1977b, 86[5]:14).

As late as 2001, Ernst Mayr of Harvard admitted: “Nothing has more impressed the paleontologists than the discontinuous nature of the fossil record. This is the reason so many of them were supporters of saltational [by “leaps” or “jumps”—BT] theories of evolution” (p. 163).

When one examines the various “candidates” for actual transitional forms, it quickly becomes clear how desperate evolutionists are to find such forms. One of the most famous “missing links” of the past has been the supposed half-reptile/half-bird, *Archaeopteryx*. I have dealt with this at great length elsewhere, and so will not repeat that refutation here (see Harrub and Thompson, 2001; 2002; Thompson and Harrub, 2004). *Archaeopteryx* is not now, nor has it ever been, a missing link between reptiles and birds. It is an extinct bird—period. And it is not just creationists who have offered such an assessment. Evolutionists have chimed in to agree as well. Evolutionary ornithologist Allan Feduccia wrote in *Science* a decade ago:

I conclude that *Archaeopteryx* was arboreal and volant [i.e., possessing extended wings for flight—BT], considerably advanced aerodynamically, and probably capable of flapping, powered flight to at least some degree. ***Archaeopteryx... was, in the modern sense, a bird*** (1993, 259:792, emp. added).

Plus, the fossil remains of two crow-sized birds 75 million years **older** than *Archaeopteryx* (i.e., approximately 225 million years old according to evolutionary dating schemes) were found in 1986 near Post, Texas, by Sankar Chatterjee and colleagues from Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas (see Beardsley, 1986; Chatterjee, 1991). Chatterjee has named the find *Protoavis texensis* (first bird from Texas). In 1997, he authored a beautifully illustrated book on the evolution of birds (*The Rise of Birds*), in which *Protoavis* was displayed prominently as being the forerunner of modern birds. All of this, needless to say, has caused evolutionists severe problems because *Protoavis* appeared at the time of the earliest dinosaurs, which means that if it is accepted as genuine, then birds certainly could not have evolved from dinosaurs, and *Archaeopteryx* could not be the ancestor of modern birds. After looking at the evidence for *Protoavis*, Kansas University paleontologist Larry Martin suggested: “There’s going to be a lot of people with *Archaeopteryx* eggs on their face” (as quoted in Anderson, 1991, 253:35).

On occasion, evolutionists still trot out the horse lineage as evidence of transitional fossils, beginning with the tiny *Eohippus* (now known as *Hyracotherium*) and going all the way up to our modern *Equus* (see Rennie, 2002; Quammen, 2004). Most evolutionists, however, no longer consider horse evolution to be a good example of transitional forms, since they do not believe it represents anything like a straightforward progression, but instead a bush with many varying branches. As Heribert Nilsson correctly pointed out—as long ago as 1954:

The family tree of the horse is beautiful and continuous only in the textbooks. In the reality provided by the results of research it is put together from three parts, of which only the last can be described as including horses. The forms of the first part are just as much little horses as the present day damans are horses. The construction of the horse is therefore a very artificial one, since it is put together from non-equivalent parts, and cannot therefore be a continuous transformation series (pp. 551-552, emp. added).

Thus, as far back as the 1950s, scientists already had cast aside the false notion of horse evolution in North America via classic Darwinian changes. Paleontologist David Raup acknowledged:

Well, 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 had in Darwin’s time. By this I mean that some of the classic cases of Darwinian change in the fossil record, such as the evolution of the horse in North America, have had to be discarded or modified as a result of more detailed information—what appeared to be a nice, simple progression when relatively few data were available now appears to be much more complex and much less gradualistic (1979, pp. 24,25).

Simpson summed it up well when he wrote: “The uniform, continuous transformation of *Hyracotherium* into *Equus*, so dear to the hearts of generations of textbook writers, **never happened in nature**” (1953, p. 125, emp. added). Creationist Jonathan Sarfati wrote along these lines:

Even informed evolutionists regard horse evolution as a bush rather than a sequence. But the so-called *Eohippus* is properly called *Hyracotherium*, and has little that could connect it with horses at all. The other animals in the “sequence” actually show hardly any more variation between them than that within horses today. One non-horse and many varieties of the true horse kind does not a sequence make (2002a).

In fact, the fossil record does not demonstrate a sequence of transitional fossils **for any** species. As *Newsweek* reporter Jerry Adler accurately noted:

In the fossil record, missing links are the rule: the story of life is as disjointed as a silent newsreel, in which species succeed one another as abruptly as Balkan prime ministers. The more scientists have searched for the transitional forms between species, the more they have been frustrated.... Evidence from fossils now points overwhelmingly away from the classical Darwinism which most Americans learned in high school: that new species evolve out of existing ones by the gradual accumulation of small changes, each of which helps the organism survive and compete in the environment (1980, 96[18]:95).

Evolutionists continue to set forth various candidates—from whales, to reptiles turning into feathered birds. But when all is said and done, the story ends the same way it has for centuries—with a lot of wishful thinking, and no reputable transitional-form candidates that can be used to document the long and perilous journey from an amoeba-like creature to a human.

Certainly many authentic fossils do exist. However, as Colin Patterson admitted in his 1999 book, *Evolution*: “Fossils may tell us many things, but one thing they can never disclose is whether they were ancestors of anything else” (p. 109). Henry Gee, the chief science writer for *Nature*, reiterated that point in his 1999 book, *In Search of Deep Time*, when he stated:

We know that it is impossible when confronted with a fossil, to be certain whether it is your ancestor, or the ancestor of anything else, even another fossil. We also know that adaptive scenarios are simply justifications for particular arrangements of fossils made after the fact, and which rely for their justification on authority rather than on testable hypotheses (p. 127).

Thus, even if legitimate transitional fossils had been found (and they have not), that still would not prove “descent from common ancestry.” That is something the fossil record is not equipped to prove.

In an article (“A Theory Evolves”) in the July 29, 2002 issue of *U.S. News & World Report*, staff writer Thomas Hayden correctly observed that Darwin held that new species evolve slowly, “the result of countless small changes over many generations” (133[4]:44). Hayden also correctly noted, however, that “many creatures still appear quite suddenly in the fossil record.” He went on to admit that the first animals appearing in the fossil record are “complex animals, including worms, mollusks, and shrimplike arthropods” that “show up some 545 million years ago.” “Paleontologists,” Hayden continued, “have searched far and wide for fossil evidence of gradual progress toward these advanced creatures but have come up empty” (pp. 44-45). He then quoted paleontologist Whitey Hagadorn of Amherst College, who sheepishly confessed: “Paleontologists have the best eyes in the world. If we can’t find the fossils, sometimes you have to think that they just weren’t there” (p. 45).

While at first glance the average reader might view this as an amazing, first-of-a-kind admission of defeat, history shows otherwise. The fact of the matter is, this statement—made in 2002—is little more than a dim echo of an identical admission made more than half a century ago by the eminent evolutionary paleontologist George Gaylord Simpson, who wrote:

Possibility for such dispute exists because transitions between major grades of organization are seldom well recorded by fossils. There is in this respect a tendency toward systematic deficiency in the record of the history of life. **It is thus possible to claim that such transitions are not recorded because they did not exist...** (1949, p. 231, emp. added).

Creationists—adhering to the concept that scientific theories should be based upon the actual **presence** of evidence, rather than on the **absence** of evidence—have long taken exactly such a stance: **transitional forms are not recorded because they did not exist!**

The creation model, of course, predicts a sudden “explosion” of life—with fully formed plants and animals. The creation model predicts a mixture of life forms. The creation model predicts a systematic absence of transitional forms. The evidence from the fossil record clearly shows: (a) fully formed life appearing suddenly; (b) a mixture of life forms (for example, almost all, if not all, of the phyla in the Cambrian period); and (c) an obvious lack of reputable transitional forms.

Evolutionists today certainly are in an embarrassing position. They can find neither the transitional forms their theory demands, nor the mechanism to explain how the evolutionary process supposedly occurred. The facts, however, fit the creation model perfectly.

Creationists and evolutionists both agree that fossils occur, and that they represent the environments in which they once lived. However, it is not the fossils themselves that creationists question, but rather the **interpretation** placed on those fossils by evolutionists. And nowhere is this more evident (or more critically important) than in the fossils that relate to human evolution—an area I would like to investigate further in this chapter.

## THE FOSSIL RECORD AND HUMAN EVOLUTION

Let’s be blunt about one thing. Of all the branches to be found on that infamous “evolutionary tree of life,” the one leading to humans should be the best documented. After all, as the most recent evolutionary arrival, pre-human fossils supposedly would have been exposed to natural decay processes for the shortest length of time, and thus should be better preserved and easier to find than any others. [Consider, for example, how many dinosaur fossils we possess, and those animals were supposed to have existed over a hundred million years before man!] In addition, since hominid fossils are of the greatest interest to man (because they are supposed to represent his past), it is safe to say that more people have been searching for them longer than for any other type of fossils. If there are any real transitional forms anywhere in the world, they should be documented most abundantly in the line leading from the first primate to modern man. Certainly, the fossils in this field have received more publicity than in any other. But exactly what does the human fossil record reveal? What is its central message?

Lyall Watson, writing in *Science Digest*, put it plainly: “The fossils that decorate our family tree are so scarce that there are still more scientists than specimens. The remarkable fact is that all the physical evidence we have for human evolution can still be placed, with room to spare, inside a single coffin” (1982, p. 44). And relatively few “family tree” fossils have been found since that statement was made.

The public, of course, generally has no idea just how scarce, and how fragmentary (literally!), the “evidence” for human evolution actually is. Furthermore, it is practically impossible to determine which “family tree” one should accept. Richard Leakey (of the famed fossil-hunting family in Africa) has proposed one. His late mother, Mary Leakey, proposed another. Donald Johanson (now of the University of Arizona) has proposed yet another. And Meave Leakey (Richard’s wife) has proposed still another. At an annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, anthropologists from all over the world descended on New York City to view hominid fossils exhibited by the American Museum of Natural History. Reporting on this exhibit, *Science News* had this to say:

One sometimes wonders whether orangutans, chimps and gorillas ever sit around the tree, contemplating which is the closest relative of man. (And would they want to be?) Maybe they even chuckle at human scientists’ machinations as they race to draw the definitive map of evolution on earth. If placed on top of one another, all these competing versions of our evolutionary highways would make the Los Angeles freeway system look like County Road 41 in Elkhart, Indiana (see “Whose Ape Is It, Anyway?,” 1984, p. 361).

How, in light of such admissions, can evolutionary scientists possibly defend the idea of ape/human evolution as a “scientifically proven fact”?

The primate family (*Hominidae*) supposedly consists of two commonly accepted genera: *Australopithecus* and *Homo*. While it is impossible to present **any** scenario of human evolution upon which even the evolutionists themselves would agree, currently the alleged scenario (gleaned from the evolutionists’ own writings) might appear like this:

*Aegyptopithecus zeuxis* (28 million years ago) ➔ *Dryopithecus africanus* (20 million) ➔ *Ramapithecus brevirostris* (12-15 million) ➔ *Orrorin tugenensis* (6 million) ➔ *Ardipithecus ramidus* (5.8-4.4 million) ➔ *Kenyanthropus platyops* (3.8 million years) ➔ *Australopithecus anamensis* (3.5 million) ➔ *Australopithecus afarensis* (3.4 million) ➔ *Homo habilis* (1.5 million) ➔ *Homo erectus* (2-0.4 million) ➔ *Homo sapiens* (0.3 million-present).

Here, now, is what is wrong with all of this. *Aegyptopithecus zeuxis* has been called by Richard Leakey “the first ape to emerge from the Old World monkey stock” (1978, p. 52). No controversy there; the animal is admittedly an ape. *Dryopithecus africanus* is (according to Leakey) “the stock from which all modern apes evolved” (p. 56). But, as evolutionists David Pilbeam and Elwyn Simons have pointed out, *Dryopithecus* already was “too committed to ape-dom” to be the progenitor of man (1971, p. 23). No controversy there; the animal is admittedly an ape. What about *Ramapithecus*? Thanks to additional work by Pilbeam, we now know that *Ramapithecus* was not a hominid at all, but merely another ape (1982, 295:232). No controversy there; the animal is admittedly an ape. What, then, shall we say of these three “ancestors” that form the taproot of man’s family tree? We simply will say the same thing evolutionists have said: all three were nothing but apes.

The 13 fossil fragments that form *Orrorin tugenensis* (broken femurs, bits of lower jaw, and several teeth) were found in the Tugen Hills of Kenya in the fall of 2000 by Martin Pickford and Brigitte Senut of France, and have been quite controversial ever since. If *Orrorin* were considered to be a human ancestor, it would predate other candidates by around 2 million years. Pickford and Senut, however, in an even more drastic scenario, have suggested that **all the australopithecines**—even those considered to be our direct ancestors—should be relegated to a dead-end side branch in favor of *Orrorin*. Yet paleontologist David Begun of the University of Toronto has stated that scientists can’t tell whether *Orrorin* was “on the line to humans, on the line to chimps, a common ancestor to both, or just an extinct side branch” (2001).

In 1994, Tim White and his coworkers described a new species known as *Australopithecus ramidus* (renamed a year later as *Ardipithecus ramidus*), which was dated at 4.4 million years. The August 1999 issue of *Time* contained a feature article, “Up from the Apes,” about the creature. When first found (and while still considered an australopithecine), morphologically this was the earliest, most ape-like australopithecine yet discovered, and thus seemed to be a good candidate for the most distant common ancestor of the hominids. Dr. White eventually admitted, however, that *A. ramidus* was not a missing link, but instead had numerous “chimp-like features.” A year later, Meave Leakey and colleagues described the 3.5-4.2 million-year-old *Australopithecus anamensis*, a taxon that bears striking similarities to *Ardipithecus* (an admitted chimp) and *Pan* (the actual genus of the chimpanzees). In 1997, researchers discovered another *Ardipithecus*—*A. ramidus kadabba*—which was dated at 5.8-5.2 million years old. [The original *Ardipithecus ramidus* then was renamed *A. ramidus ramidus*.] Once again, *Time* ran a cover story on this alleged “missing link” (in its July 23, 2001 issue). What was it, exactly, which convinced evolutionists that *kadabba* walked upright and was on the road to becoming man? **A single toe bone!**

Then, in the March 22, 2001 issue of *Nature*, Meave Leakey and her co-authors announced the discovery of *Kenyanthropus platyops* (“flat-faced man of Kenya”). The authors described their finds as “a well-preserved temporal bone, two partial maxillae, isolated teeth, and most importantly a largely complete, **although distorted**, cranium” (410:433, emp. added). Leakey placed a tremendous amount of importance on the flatness of the facial features of this find, due to the widely acknowledged fact that more modern creatures supposedly possessed an admittedly flatter facial structure than their older, more ape-like alleged ancestors. This is no small problem, however, because creatures younger than *K. platyops*, and therefore closer to *Homo sapiens*, have much more pronounced, ape-like facial features. *K. platyops* was dated at 3.8 million years, and yet has a much flatter face than any other hominid that old. Thus, the evolutionary scenario seems to be moving in the wrong direction.

Some have argued that *K. platyops* belongs more properly in the genus *Australopithecus*. In fact, in the March 28, 2003 issue of *Science*, paleontologist Tim White of the University of California, Berkeley, published an article titled “Early Hominids—Diversity or Distortion?,” in which he took strong exception to Meave Leakey’s creation of a new genus (*Kenyanthropus*), and in which he argued that *Kenyanthropus* is

nothing more than another *Australopithecus afarensis* (2003, 299:1994-1995,1997). White has suggested that the fossil that Leakey and her colleagues found had undergone what is known as “expanding matrix distortion.” In short, this means that the shape of the fossil had been distorted by the geological formation in which it was found. Rex Dalton addressed the controversy that Tim White’s article caused when he offered the following assessment on *Nature’s* Website on March 28, 2003: “Geology, not genes, gave the Flat-faced Man his distinctive looks, White reckons. Over time, he explains, fine-grained rock invaded tiny cracks in the skull and distorted its shape in an irregular way” (2003). Or, to quote White directly: “The most insidious aspect of EMB [expanding matrix distortion—BT] is its ability to radically alter morphology in a nonlinear manner. Because matrix expansion does not enlarge all dimensions equally, it often causes highly complex distortion such as that seen in *Kenyanthropus*” (2003, 299:1995). In the end, it appears that Leakey’s *Kenyanthropus* is nothing but another australopithecine, rather than some new “missing link.”

*Australopithecus afarensis* was discovered by Donald Johanson in 1974 at Hadar, Ethiopia. Dr. Johanson believed that this creature (known as “Lucy”) is the direct ancestor of man (see Johanson, 1981). Numerous evolutionists strongly disagree. Lord Solly Zuckerman, the famous British anatomist, published his views in his book, *Beyond the Ivory Tower*. He studied the australopithecines for more than 15 years and concluded that if man descended from an apelike ancestor, he did so without leaving a single trace in the fossil record (1970, p. 64). Some might say, “But Zuckerman’s work was done before Lucy was discovered.” True, but that misses the point. Zuckerman’s research—which established conclusively that the australopithecines were nothing but knuckle-walking apes—was performed on fossils **younger** (i.e., closer to man) than Lucy! If more recent finds are nothing but apes, how could an **older** specimen be “more human”? Charles Oxnard, while at the University of Chicago, reported his multivariate computer analysis, which documented that the australopithecines were nothing but knuckle-walking apes (1975, pp. 389-395). Then, in the April 1979 issue of *National Geographic*, Mary Leakey reported finding footprints—dated even older than Lucy at 3.6-3.8 million years—that she admitted were “remarkably similar to those of modern man” (p. 446). If Lucy gave rise to humans, then how could humans have existed more than 500,000 years before her in order to make such footprints? [See Lubenow, 1992, pp. 45-58, and Harrub and Thompson, 2003, for a detailed refutation of Lucy.]

What of *Homo habilis*? J.T. Robinson and David Pilbeam have long argued that *H. habilis* is the same as *A. africanus*. Louis Leakey (Richard’s father) even stated: “I submit that morphologically it is almost impossible to regard *Homo habilis* as representing a stage between *Australopithecus africanus* and *Homo erectus*” (1966, 209:1280-1281). Dr. Leakey later reported the contemporaneous existence of *Australopithecus*, *Homo habilis*, and *H. erectus* fossils at Olduvai Gorge (see Mary Leakey, 1971, 3:272). Even more startling was Mary Leakey’s discovery of the remains of a circular stone hut at the bottom of Bed I at Olduvai Gorge—**beneath** fossils of *H. habilis*! Evolutionists have long attributed the deliberate manufacture of shelter **only** to *Homo sapiens*, yet Dr. Leakey discovered the australopithecines and *H. habilis* together with manufactured housing. As Duane Gish asked:

If *Australopithecus*, *Homo habilis*, and *Homo erectus* existed contemporaneously, how could one have been ancestral to another? And how could any of these creatures be ancestral to Man, when Man’s artifacts are found at a lower stratigraphic level, directly underneath, and thus earlier in time to these supposed ancestors of Man? (1995, p. 271).

Good question!

And what about *Homo erectus*? Examine a copy of the November 1985 issue of *National Geographic* and see if you can detect any differences between the pictures of *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens* (pp. 576-577). The fact is, there are no recognizable differences. As Ernst Mayr, the famed evolutionary taxonomist of Harvard remarked: “The *Homo erectus* stage is characterized by a body skeleton which, so far as we know, does not differ from that of modern man in any essential point” (1965, p. 632). The fossil evidence for evolution (human or otherwise) simply is not there. Apes always have been apes, and humans always have been humans.

## THE GEOLOGIC TIMETABLE AND THE AGE OF THE EARTH

To the “man on the street,” one of the most impressive arguments for an ancient Earth is the testimony of sedimentary-rock layers (many of which are thousands of feet thick) strewn around the planet. Scientists (and park rangers) subject us to examples like the Grand Canyon in Arizona, and present their spiel so effectively that—as we observe those layers of sedimentary rocks piled one on top of another—the only explanation seems to be that vast amounts of time must have been involved. Each section of the rocks, we are told, represents a time eons ago and an ancient world that long since has ceased to exist.

Evolutionists contend that the Earth is 4.6 billion years old. Further, they allege that for the past three billion years or so, life has evolved gradually from simple organisms to those that are increasingly complex. One of the methods of presenting this idea is by means of the so-called “geologic timetable.” While it may sound surprising, the standard geologic column actually was devised prior to 1860 by catastrophists who considered themselves creationists (Ritland, 1982). The timetable is a common feature in most textbooks dealing with geology, biology, paleontology, etc., and proposes to show the development of living creatures, in ascending order from the simple to the complex, from the ancient past to the present. While it certainly looks good on paper, the actual evidence tells a completely different story.

Take the Grand Canyon for example. It frequently is described as one of the most awe-inspiring and spectacular natural features on the face of the Earth. Listed as one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World, it became a national park in 1919, and in 1979 was named a World Heritage Site—a designation reserved only for those places that are considered to have universal value for all humankind. Because of its sheer size, the origin of this natural beauty has been the object of a great deal of speculation. Theories regarding the geological events that led to the present canyon are as abundant as visitors to the South Rim.

In a book offered for sale in 1999 at one of the gift shops at Grand Canyon National Park, the author of the book, John Hoffman, wrote:

The Grand Canyon presents an unrivaled view into the Earth’s geologic history. From the canyon’s Paleozoic-era rims to the bottom of the Precambrian-age inner gorge, nearly 2 billion years of time are represented in the exposed rocks, or about two-fifths of the Earth’s estimated age of 5 billion years (1987, p. 11).

Hoffman then went on to describe how “about 4 million years were required for the Grand Canyon to be eroded to its awesome dimensions” (p. 12). While Hoffman’s book has truly beautiful pictures, the text inside, as it turns out, is in dire need of revision.

An article in the September 30, 2000 issue of *Science News* has shown that carving this beloved hole in the ground may not have been such a long-term project after all (Perkins, 2000). Prior to the 1930s, geologists proposed that the Grand Canyon was about “40 million years old” (p. 218). However, evidence now has come to light that indicates a **much younger** canyon. Research presented at a June 1999 conference devoted to the origin of the gorge, suggests that substantial portions of the eastern Grand Canyon have been eroded only within the past million years (according to evolutionary estimates). **And so, as quickly as ink dries on paper, geologists cut 39 million years off the age of the Grand Canyon, and dropped its age to 1/40 of their previous estimates!** This is even 3 million years less than Hoffman’s calculation (p. 12).

In justifying their new calculations for the young age of the canyon, geologists suggest a scenario in which the portions of the present-day Colorado River above and below the canyon may not have been connected. They believe that the most likely explanation is that

the west-flowing tributary of the ancestral lower Colorado River began to carve a small valley eastward into the edge of the Colorado Plateau. The upper portion of the river eventually merged with the ancestral upper Colorado River and its tributaries to form a single river system. The result would have been a strengthened torrent of water that could carve through rock at a faster clip than ever before (p. 219).

Faster clip indeed! Thirty-nine million years is a tremendous amount of time to suddenly “just vanish!” Richard Young, a geologist at the State University of New York, speculated on the swiftness of this erosion: “Fifty years ago, geologists didn’t realize how fast erosion could occur. When there’s a depression in the rock and the river flows through, it can erode incredibly rapidly.”

The *Science News* article listed other studies in which data show how fast rivers can slash through rock. It also listed the erosion rates of several neighboring canyons, and then noted: “Downstream in the Grand Canyon, where the Colorado carries much more water and sediment, rates of erosion are likely much higher.” This is exactly the point Derek Ager, former president of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (and head of the department of geology and oceanography, University College of Swansea), made in his 1993 book, *The Nature of the Stratigraphical Record*.

One of the most spectacular sights ever seen by man must have been the mile-high fiery cascade when a lava flow poured into the Grand Canyon in Arizona. Earlier lava flows, before the coming of man, date back a million years, but since that time the Colorado River has only cut down about 50 feet. **The canyon itself cannot have started more than 10 million years ago, so here too three must have been some very rapid erosion at some time** (p. 80, emp. added).

This new information likely will cause many evolutionists headaches as they try to revamp their theories about the early history of the gorge. The Grand Canyon used to be one of the evolutionists’ favorite landmarks as they tried to establish an ancient age for the Earth. Not any more! The times, they are a changin’!

### OLD EARTH/YOUNG EARTH

Much of the controversy today between creationists and evolutionists centers on the age of the Earth. A large part of that controversy has to do with the fact that there is no compromise that will permit the old-Earth/young-Earth scenarios to coexist; the gulf separating the biblical and evolutionary views on the topic of the age of the Earth is just too large. Marshall and Sandra Hall recognized this fact when they observed: “It is not easy to overthrow a belief, however absurd and harmful it may be, which your civilization has promulgated as the scientific truth for the better part of a century.” The Halls continued by saying:

Time, as poets and insurance salesmen remind us, is the enemy of life. But time has its friends, too. Without great, incomprehensible, immeasurable stretches of time to fall back on, the evolutionists would be sitting ducks for the barbed queries of even high school students. **Time** is the evolutionists’ refuge from the slings and arrows of logic, scientific evidence, common sense, and the multiplication table (1974, pp. 74, 69,71,75, emp. in orig.).

The point is well made. It **is** difficult to overthrow a belief that has been taught as the “scientific truth” for so long. And it is especially difficult to overthrow such a concept when an entire world view is based upon it. Yet when **all** the evidence is considered, it does not bode well for the evolutionists’ claims of an ancient Earth/Universe. The actual evidence, however, firmly supports the concept of a young Earth. I would like to consider some of that evidence here.

Evolutionists have divided the geologic column into a hierarchical system of eons, eras, periods, and epochs. The two major eon divisions are the Precambrian (590 million to 4.5 billion years ago) and the Phanerozoic (590 million years to the present). The three major eras of the Phanerozoic are the Paleozoic—referred to as the age of the trilobites (which includes the Cambrian, Ordovician, Silurian, Devonian, Carboniferous, and Permian periods), the Mesozoic—referred to as the age of the dinosaurs—which includes the Triassic, Jurassic, and Cretaceous periods), and Cenozoic—referred to as the age of the mammals—which includes the Tertiary and Quaternary periods). Many of us have been taught that the geologic column “proves” that evolution is true and that the Earth is extremely old. Actually, the geologic column provides extraordinary evidence which demonstrates that evolution is not true, and that the Earth is not ancient. Consider the following.

### Out-of-Place Fossils

According to the evolutionary hypothesis, man (*Homo sapiens*) appears near the top of the geologic column. Man’s history, therefore, represents but a tiny fraction (approximately 1/1000th) of the geologic record. To an evolutionist, it is inconceivable that evidence of human habitation could exist in earlier periods. Yet there are many such examples of “out-of-place” fossils that undermine the theory of evolution. For example, several years ago, evolutionist Albert G. Ingalls (the state geologist of Kentucky) was working in the coal veins in Kentucky and nearby states. Dr. Ingalls stumbled across “human-like” footprints embedded

in the coal veins of those states. Coal, of course, is supposed to have been laid down during the so-called Carboniferous period, which allegedly is separated from mankind by 250 million years according to the standard geologic timetable. How, then, could human footprints possibly occur in coal? Dr. Ingalls did not discover these footprints just in Kentucky. He also found them in Missouri, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and even westward toward the Rocky Mountains. Dr. Ingalls authored a fascinating article about this unusual find, which was published in the January 1940 issue of *Scientific American*. Under the title of “The Carboniferous Mystery,” he wrote:

On sites reaching from Virginia and Pennsylvania, through Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri and westward toward the Rocky Mountains, prints similar to those shown above, and from 5 to 10 inches long, have from time to time been found on the surface of exposed rocks, and more and more keep turning up as the years go by. What made these prints? As yet the answer is unknown to science. **They look like human footprints** and it often has been said, though not by scientists, that they really are human footprints made in the soft mud before it became rock (162:14).

Ingalls was not the only person to investigate the tracks, however. A.E. Wilder-Smith, of the United Nations, also examined the tracks, and reported as follows:

The tracks are in formations considered to be in Upper Carboniferous (250 million years old) and show five toes and an arch which is unquestionably human. The tracks are 9½ inches long and 4.1 inches broad at the heel. The width at the forward end of the track by the toes was 6 inches. The being that left the tracks was a biped that walked uprightly like a human. *Antiquities* published photographs of the tracks and said that similar ones had been found in Carboniferous formats in Pennsylvania and Missouri. The Missouri tracks look exceedingly human and resemble those of Southeast Asian aborigines (1970, p. 300).

Some evolutionists have suggested that a few of the pictures reproduced in Ingalls’ *Scientific American* article do not look like “human” footprints, because they are too “splayed” (spread out). However, for a human to have a splayed foot is nothing unusual, especially for those people who routinely walk without shoes. Examine the pictures below of splayed human feet, and compare them to the pictures published along with Ingalls’ *Scientific American* article, and I think you will be able to see for yourself the point I am attempting to make.



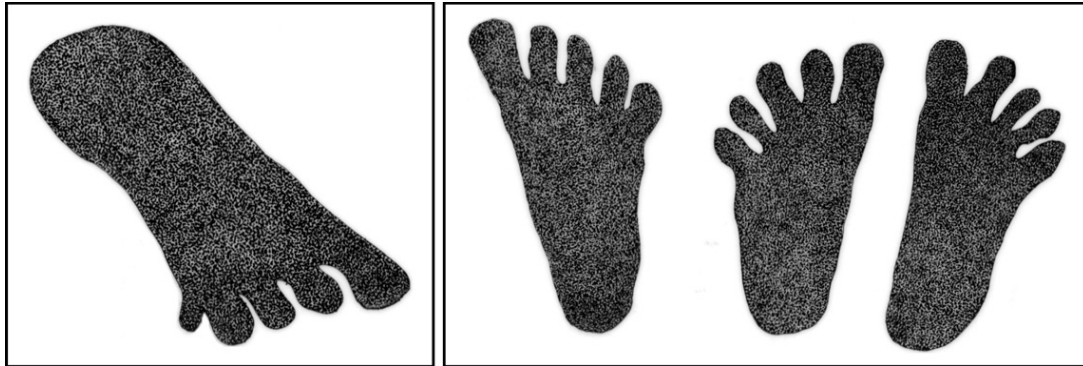
The feet on the left belong to an unnamed native who lives in a tropical rain forest; the feet on the right belong to José Maria Roa of Ecuador, who was 87 years old when the picture was taken. Photographs courtesy of Frans Lanting (left) and Black Star Publishing (right). Used by permission.

How did Dr. Ingalls “explain away” the tracks that he, himself, admitted “look like human footprints”? He wrote:

If man, or even his ape ancestor, or even the ape ancestor’s early mammal ancestor, existed as far back as in the carboniferous period in any shape, then the whole science of geology is so completely wrong that all geologists will resign their jobs and take up truck driving. Hence, for the present at least, science rejects the attractive explanation that man made these mysterious prints in the mud of the carboniferous period with his feet (162:14).



“Science rejects the attractive explanation”—**since when?** Science is systematized knowledge derived from observation, collection, and interpretation of data. Scientists do not “reject” the **data** simply because they do not fit the currently reigning theory. Rather, they reject the theory and abandon it, or modify it so it fits with the new, incoming data. And it works like that in every area of science except one—where evolution is concerned.

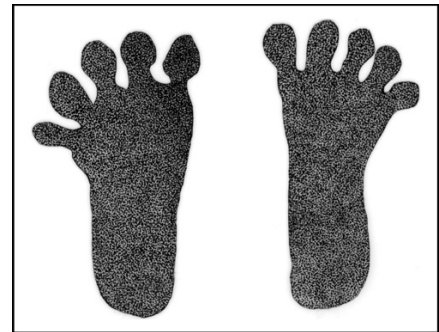


Drawings depicting human footprints found in coal (see Ingalls, 1940)

Furthermore, the tracks that Dr. Ingalls reported were not the only ones that have been discovered. In an article titled “Human-Like Tracks in Stone are Riddle to Scientists” that appeared in the October 29, 1938 issue of *Science News Letter*, the picture at the right appeared.

Interestingly, underneath the picture was a caption that stated: “These aren’t human. But they look enough that way to fool almost everybody. They are footprints made ages ago by a still unknown animal in the late Coal Age.” In the article accompanying the footprints, the editors of the journal offered the following “explanation.”

The footprints are exceedingly curious things. They are the right size to be human—nine or ten inches in length—and they are almost the right shape. **Practically everyone who sees them thinks at first they were made by human feet and it is almost impossible to persuade some people that they were not....**



**A further puzzling fact is the absence of any tracks of front feet.** The tracks, apparently all of the hind feet of biped animals, are turned in all kinds of random directions. At Berea [Kentucky], two of them are side by side, as though one of the creatures had stood still for a moment (see “Human-Like Tracks....,” pp. 278-279, emp. added).

And so, we are asked to believe that what are obvious human footprints—aren’t! Rather, even though they are the “right size to be human,” and even though “everyone who sees them thinks at first they were made by human feet,” according to evolutionists, the tracks were made by some “unknown animal” that walked in upright fashion but left tracks from **only** its “hind feet.” Is this not incredible?! I cannot help but be reminded of what G.K. Chesterton once said: “When stop believing in God, they don’t believe in nothing; they believe in anything.” This particular scenario is the perfect example of the truthfulness of that statement.

However, there is additional evidence to be considered along these lines. In 1936, a metal hammer with a wooden handle was dug out of Cretaceous limestone (dated by evolutionists at 135 million years old) in the area near London, Texas. The hammer’s broken handle is 6¾ inches long, and the hammer itself is made of a very strong metal. When the surface oxidation was removed, the metal was still shiny. [Details of this remarkable discovery (including photographs) may be found in Helfinstine and Roth (1994, pp. 83,91-92), and the February 1984 issue of *Creation Ex Nihilo* magazine (see “Ordovician Hammer Report,” 2[3]:16-17).]

Equally as fascinating are the various items that have been discovered in coal veins around the globe. Ivan Sanderson reported on one such find that was reported in the Morrisonville, Illinois, newspaper, the *Illinois Times*, on June 11, 1891.

A much greater enigma is presented by the items that have been found in coal. This substance has been deposited on the surface of this earth at various times but most notably in what is called the Carboniferous (and specifically the Upper Carboniferous, so-called, or Pennsylvanian of America) which is calculated to be from 270 to 230 millions of years old; and from the Miocene of the Tertiary Era estimated to be from 26 to 12 million years of age. From it several items have appeared that confound just about everything we believe. For instance, it has been reported that in 1891 a Mrs. Culp of Morrisonville, Illinois dropped a shovelful of coal in transferring it to her cooking range, and a large lump broke in two, disclosing a lovely little gold chain of intricate workmanship neatly coiled and embedded (1967, pp. 195-196, parenthetical comments in orig.; cf. also Wysong, 1976, p. 370).

Upon examination, it was determined that the chain was ten inches long and made out of 8-karat gold. Who—according to evolutionary timescales—was around 250 million years ago to be making “little gold chains of intricate workmanship”?

J.Q. Adams, writing in the *American Antiquarian* (1883, 5:331-332), documented the discovery of a woman’s sewing thimble within a lump of coal that was said by evolutionists to have been formed in the period between the Tertiary and Cretaceous periods. In 1915, an iron pot also was discovered in coal deposits that were dated at 300 million years (see Rusch, 1970, 7:201-213).

The trilobite, a small, marine arthropod with a hard exoskeleton, is considered so important as to be classified as an “index fossil” for the earliest period of the Paleozoic Era, the Cambrian. Evolutionist J.E. O’Rourke, in a paper in the *American Journal of Science* titled “Pragmatism versus Materialism in Stratigraphy,” discussed the use of index fossils to determine the geologic age of a formation. He noted that the methodology involved starts

...from a chronology of index fossils, and imposes them on the rocks. Each taxon represents a definite time unit and so provides an accurate, even “infallible” date. If you doubt it, bring in a suite of good index fossils, and the specialist without asking where or in what order they were collected, will lay them out on the table in chronological order (1976, 276:51, emp. added).

In other words, the assumption that evolution is true is used to place the index fossils in the appropriate order from simple to complex. The index fossils then are used to “date” the layers in order to “prove” that evolution is true. If this sounds like “circular reasoning” to you, congratulations. It most certainly is! As O’Rourke went on to admit:

**The intelligent layman has long suspected circular reasoning in the use of rocks to date fossils and fossils to date rocks.** The geologist has never bothered to think of a good reply, feeling the explanations are not worth the trouble as long as the work brings results. This is supposed to be hardheaded pragmatism.... The rocks do date the fossils, but the fossils date the rocks more accurately. Stratigraphy cannot avoid this kind of reasoning if it insists on using only temporal concepts, because circularity is inherent in the derivation of time scales (276:47,53, emp. added).

As one scientist noted: “The dating of the rocks depends on the evolutionary sequence of the fossils, but the evolutionary interpretation of the fossils depends on the dating of the rocks. No wonder the evolutionary system, to outsiders, implies circular reasoning” (Morris, 1977, p. ii). No wonder indeed!

Trilobites allegedly flourished a half-billion years before man ever arrived on the scene. On June 1, 1968, however, evolutionist William J. Meister, an amateur fossilologist, was working near Antelope Springs, Utah, and made a discovery that was destined to dispel that incorrect evolutionary supposition. Working his way up the side of a mountain some 2,000 feet to a ledge above, he broke open a slab of rock with his hammer to investigate it for fossils. Imagine his astonishment when he “saw on one side the footprint of a human with trilobites right in the footprint itself. The other half of the rock slab showed an almost perfect mold of the footprint and fossils. Amazingly the human was wearing a sandal” (as quoted in Lammerts, 1976, pp. 186-187). Numerous other fossilized human footprints, from both adults and children, have since been found in the area, as well as dinosaur prints. The contemporaneousness of man and the trilobite effectively collapses a half-billion years of the geologic column.

Additionally, fossilized animals, including chordate fish, appear in the fossil record fully formed and distinct. No ancestral forms can be found in deeper layers for animals such as protozoans, arthropods, brachiopods, mollusks, bryozoans, coelenterates, sponges, annelids, echinoderms, or chordates—suggesting an abrupt beginning (creation) rather than descent from a common ancestor (evolution). If space permitted, I could present much additional information on such “anomalies” to show that much of the geologic column is a figment of the evolutionists’ imagination. Consider, if you will, the following abbreviated listing of such contradictions composed by Erich von Fange (1974, 11:19ff.).

- (a) Fossil leather sole imprint, with a double line of sewed stitches found in “Triassic” rock estimated to be 225 million years old.
- (b) Fossil sole imprint with visible sewn thread in coal estimated at 15 million years old.
- (c) Flint carvings on extinct saurian (reptilian) bones estimated to be 180 million years old.

### **Polystrate Fossils**

Embedded in sedimentary rocks all over the globe are what are known as “polystrate” fossils. Polystrate means “many layers,” and refers to fossils that cut through at least two sedimentary-rock layers. Probably the most widely recognized of the polystrate fossils are tree trunks that extend vertically through two, three, or more sections of rock that supposedly were laid down in epochs covering millions of years. However, organic material (such as wood) that is exposed to the elements will rot, not fossilize. Thus, the entire length of these tree trunks must have been preserved quickly, which suggests that the sedimentary layers surrounding them must have been deposited rapidly—possibly (and likely) during a single catastrophe. As Paul Ackerman has suggested: “They constitute a sort of frozen time clock from the past, indicating that terrible things occurred—not over millions of years but very quickly” (1986, p. 84).

Further, tree trunks are not the only representatives of polystrate fossils. In the state of Oklahoma, geologist John Morris studied limestone layers containing fossilized reed-like creatures known as *Calamites* that ranged from one to six inches in diameter. Dr. Morris noted: “These segmented ‘stems’ were evidently quite fragile once dead, for they are usually found in tiny fragments. Obviously, the limestones couldn’t have accumulated slowly and gradually around a still-growing organism, but must have been quite rapidly deposited in a series of underwater events” (1994, p. 101).

At times, even animals’ bodies form polystrate fossils (like catfish in the Green River Formation in Wyoming—see Morris, 1994, p. 102). Probably the most famous is the fossilized skeleton of a whale discovered in 1976 near Lompoc, California. The whale is covered in “diatomaceous earth.” Diatoms are microscopic algae. As they die, their skeletons form deposits—a process that evolutionists say is extremely slow. But the whale (which is more than 75 feet long) is standing almost on its tail at an angle and is completely covered by the diatomaceous earth. There simply is no way a whale could have stood upright for millions of years while diatoms covered it, because it would have decayed or been eaten by scavengers. [For a more complete discussion of the baleen whale fossil, see Snelling, 1995; Deweese and Thompson, 2000.]

Trees, reeds, catfish, and the other organisms with which the fossil record abounds did not die and then lie around for hundreds, thousands, or millions of years while slowly being turned into polystrate fossils. Truth be told, polystrate fossils testify loudly to a young Earth whose layers formed rapidly—and not very long ago!

## **THE BIBLE AND THE AGE OF THE EARTH**

The question frequently is asked, “Does the Bible offer any evidence regarding the age of the Earth?” Yes, it does. An investigation of that evidence makes for a fascinating and profitable study. I would like to examine it here briefly.

In chapter 8, I dealt with efforts on the part of some to compromise the literal, historical nature of Genesis 1-11. In their attempts to do just that, and to accommodate the Bible to evolution-based time schemes, some have suggested that the Bible does not place any restrictions on the age of the Earth, and therefore a Christian is free to believe whatever he or she desires regarding the age of the Earth. Not only is such a state-

ment untrue, but those who make such comments generally have an ulterior motive in doing so—defending an ancient Earth. In order to accommodate the Bible to an evolutionary timetable, billions of years somehow must be inserted into the biblical record. But where, exactly, can this vast amount of time be placed to guarantee such antiquity? There are only three possible options. The time needed to guarantee an old Earth might be placed: (a) **before** the Creation week; (b) **during** the Creation week; or (c) **after** the Creation week. Let us explore each of these options.

### **Time Before the Creation Week: The Gap Theory**

Those who attempt to place the billions of years necessary for evolution **before** the Creation week generally advocate what has come to be known as the Gap Theory. This theory suggests that a vast “gap” of time (of billions of years) should be inserted between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. During this time God supposedly created a fully functional Earth complete with animals, plants, and even humans who lived before Adam. That creation, the theory suggests, was destroyed as the result of a rebellion fomented on Earth by Satan. The raging war between Satan and God supposedly left this planet “without form and void” (Genesis 1:2), which, it is claimed, accounts for the myriad of fossils present in the Earth. Then, starting in Genesis 1:2, God “re-created” (or “restored”) the Earth in six literal, 24-hour days. Thus, Genesis 1 is the story of an original, perfect creation, a judgment and ruination (the Earth in its “without form and void” state), and a re-creation.

While at first glance this may appear to be an alluring theory, it cannot possibly be true if the biblical record is taken at face value. First, the Gap Theory blatantly contradicts Exodus 20:11: “For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day.” If God made **everything** in six days, how many things did He make before those days? The answer, of course, is none.

Second, there is no biblical evidence whatsoever to substantiate the claim that Satan’s rebellion against God took place on the Earth. The idea of a so-called cataclysm that destroyed the initial Earth is not supported by an appeal to Scripture, but instead is a concept that has been imposed on Scripture from outside sources by those attempting to defend the necessity and validity of the Gap Theory.

Finally, the Gap Theory is false because it implies that humans died before Adam and Eve. The inspired apostle Paul observed that death entered this world as a result of Adam’s sin (1 Corinthians 15:21; Romans 5:12; 8:20-22). Paul also stated that Adam was **the first man** (1 Corinthians 15:45). Yet, if the Gap Theory is correct, there existed a band of sinful people who lived many years before Adam. Additionally, Moses recorded in Genesis 1:31 that everything God had created was “very good”—a very strained interpretation if the Earth and its inhabitants already had been destroyed. The simple fact of the matter is that Paul and the Gap Theory cannot both be right.

A word of caution is in order here, however. In their attempts to oppose evolution and to make the case for the biblical account of origins, some creationists (who no doubt are well intentioned) have misinterpreted, and thus misapplied, the teachings of two important New Testament passages. The first of those passages is Romans 5:12-14.

Therefore, just **as through one man sin entered the world**, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned. For until the law, sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

The second passage is 1 Corinthians 15:20-22:

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since **by man came death**, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

The portions of these two verses (shown in bold type) that are emphasized by certain creationists, stress the fact that **death entered the world as a result of man’s sin**. The argument set forth, therefore, is as follows. Gap theorists suggest that there were billions of years of happenstance, contingency, incredible waste, **death**, pain, and horror after God’s initial creation. The Bible states quite specifically, however, that

human death did not exist until Adam and Eve sinned against God. The Gap theorists' scenario, therefore, is apodictically impossible, because it requires the death of untold thousands of species of plants, animals, and humans.

But is it correct to say that there was **absolutely no death of any kind** prior to Adam and Eve's sin? No, it is not. To say that there was no **human** death prior to the fall of man is to make a perfectly biblical statement. The passages in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 make that crystal clear. However, using those same scriptures to suggest that not even plants or animals could die ignores the specific context of each of the passages and is a serious abuse of the texts under consideration. Paul's presentation in Romans 5:12-14 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 had nothing whatsoever to do with the death of either plants or animals. Rather, an examination of the two passages reveals that, **in the context**, he was discussing **only the death of humans**—a death which resulted from the tragic events that transpired in the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve's willful sin (for an extended discussion of the Gap Theory, see Thompson, 2000a).

### **Time During the Creation Week: The Day-Age Theory**

Because of the dismal failure of the Gap Theory to provide an adequate means of inserting billions of years into the Genesis record, some have suggested that perhaps the days discussed in Genesis 1 were not literal 24-hour periods, but instead were long eons of times during which evolution could have taken place (a concept known as the Day-Age Theory). After all, we are told, the word translated "day" in Genesis can have up to seven different meanings and, on rare occasions, even can refer to a long period of time. Thus, according to proponents of the Day-Age Theory, the Creation week was seven long spans of time that consisted of millions or billions of years each. Is that the case? How long were the days of the Creation week, really?

A straightforward reading of the text in Genesis 1 indicates that Moses wanted his readers to understand, in no uncertain terms, that the six days of creation were literal 24-hour periods. The available evidence reveals several reasons why we can know that these days were not millions or billions of years, but rather were approximately the same kind of days we experience currently. First, whenever the Hebrew word translated as "day" (*yom*) is preceded by a numeral (in non-prophetical passages such as Genesis 1), it **always** carries the meaning of a 24-hour day. Second, whenever the word "day" appears in the plural form (*yamim*) in non-prophetical literature, it **always** means a literal day. In fact, the Old Testament uses *yamim* in this manner more than 700 times, and it always means a literal day in its non-prophetic usage. Therefore, when Exodus 20:11 states: "For in six **days** (*yamim*) the Lord made the heavens and the earth," there can be absolutely no doubt that the text means six literal days.

Third, *yom* is both used and defined in Genesis 1:5. "God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. So the **evening** and the **morning** were the first day" (emp. added). The word *yom* accompanies the words "evening" and "morning" over 100 times in non-prophetical passages in the Old Testament, and each time it refers to an obvious 24-hour day.

Fourth, if the "days" of Genesis were not days at all, but long geological periods, then a problem of no little consequence arises in the field of botany. Plants came into existence on the third day (Genesis 1:9-13). If the days of Genesis 1 were long geological ages, how did the plant life survive millions of years of total darkness? Also, how would the plants that depend on insects for pollination have survived the supposed millions or billions of years between "day" three and "day" five (when insects were created).

Fifth, while Jesus was on the Earth He taught that man and woman were here "from the beginning of creation" (Mark 10:6; cf. Matthew 19:4). Paul affirmed this same sentiment in Romans 1:20-21, where he stated that man and woman have been here "from the beginning of the creation" when they were "perceiving the things that were made." The Day-Age Theory, on the other hand, places man at the end of billions of years of geologic time. Both cannot be true!

Sixth, in Genesis 1:14, Moses stated regarding the Sun, Moon, and stars: "Then God said, 'Let there be lights in the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons, for days and for years.'" If the "days" were millions or billions of years, then, pray tell, what would the "years" have been?

Finally, we need to ask the question: If God had wanted us to know that He created the world in six literal days, what other words could He have used than the ones He did? Or if we wanted to explain to some-

one else that God created everything in a literal six days, what words would we use? The answer, of course, is that both God and we would use the exact words that appear in Genesis 1. The Author of Genesis had other ways to say that the periods were long eons of time. He could have employed the Hebrew word *dôr*, which means a long period of time. But He did not; instead He used the word day, modified it with the phrase “evening and morning,” put numerals before it, and in Exodus 20:11 made it plural. He used practically every means at his disposal to show that the days were not long periods of time but were literal 24-hour periods. Thus, the idea that the billions of years needed for evolution occurred during creation week simply cannot be defended. You can trust your Bible when it records: “For in six days [not six billion years—BT] the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day” (Exodus 20:11).

But what about 2 Peter 3:8? Doesn’t it indicate that “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.” Isn’t this New Testament passage teaching that the days of Genesis could have been very long periods of time? No, it is not. Let us consider the passage in its appropriate context. In 2 Peter 3:8, the apostle’s discussion has nothing to do with the length of the days in Genesis 1. Rather, he is discussing the “last days” (3:3; i.e., the Christian dispensation) and Christ’s Second Coming. Some, said Peter, would suggest that since Christ had not returned already, then He was not going to return—ever! But Peter reminded his readers that God is not bound by time. He can do more in one day than humans can do in a thousand years, or, conversely, He may wait a thousand years to do what humans wish He would do in a day. Nevertheless, God keeps His promises (3:9). It is interesting to note, is it not, that from a reading of the text, God recognizes the difference between an earthly day and an earthly thousand years. It also is interesting to note that Peter did not say that a day **is** a thousand years or a thousand years **is** a day, but that a day is “**as**” a thousand years and a thousand years is “**as**” a day. God always has recognized the difference between an earthly day, month, and year. The passage in 2 Peter 3:8 proves that He is able to communicate the difference to human beings. What did He say the time periods in Genesis 1 were? Days!

### **Time After the Creation Week**

We have seen that the time needed for evolution to take place cannot be placed **before** the Creation week because the Bible says that God created everything in six days. We also have seen that vast amounts of time cannot be placed **during** the six days of creation because they were literal, 24-hour periods. The only possible place left for the eons of time, then, is **after** the Creation week.

Those who wish to place the billions of years needed to accommodate evolutionary geology **after** the Creation week are few and far between, because the Bible contains lengthy and extensive genealogies that extend all the way back to Adam. And one of the messages of those genealogies is that **man has been on the Earth** since the beginning, and that beginning was not very long ago.

In one sense, the Bible tells us exactly how old the Earth is. In Mark 10:6, Jesus stated that “from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female.” How long have humans been on this Earth? Jesus said “from the beginning of the creation.” Genesis 1:26-31 explains that God chose the sixth day of the creation week to form mankind from the dust of the ground. He chose the first day to construct the Earth. Thus, the Earth is exactly five days older than humanity!

So, in order to determine the age of the Earth, we must determine how long man has been here—which is not as difficult as it may seem. Speaking in round figures, how long has it been since Jesus Christ visited the Earth? Answer: about 2,000 years. Secular history volunteers that piece of information via its designation of dates as “A.D.” (i.e., *anno Domini*, meaning “in the year of the Lord”). Next, we must determine how many years came between Jesus and Abraham. Fortunately, secular history also volunteers that figure, which turns out to be around 2,000 years. These two figures can be obtained from practically any secular history book.

The final number we must uncover is the number of years between Abraham and Adam. Once we know this figure, simple addition of the three will give us the approximate age of the Earth. Note, however, that the figure representing the period between Abraham and Adam cannot be retrieved from secular history (nor should we expect it to be!), since the Great Flood during Noah’s day destroyed most, if not all, of the records pertaining to that time period. Then how can the figure be obtained?

In Luke 3, the physician/writer listed 55 generations between Jesus and Abraham—a time frame that archaeology has determined to be approximately 2,000 years. In that same chapter, Luke documented that there were only 20 generations between Abraham and Adam. But how much time, total, do those twenty generations cover? Since Genesis 5 and 11 list the ages of the fathers at the time of the births of their sons between Abraham and Adam, it is a simple matter to calculate the approximate number of years involved—a figure that turns out to be around 2,000. In chart form the information appears as follows:

Present time to Jesus.....	2,000 years
Jesus to Abraham.....	2,000 years (55 generations)
Abraham to Adam.....	2,000 years (20 generations)

The fact that the 55 generations between Jesus and Abraham cover 2,000 years, while only 20 generations between Abraham and Adam cover the same amount of time, is explained quite easily on the basis of the vast ages of the patriarchs (like Methuselah, for example, who lived 969 years).

Some have argued that the genealogies in Genesis 5 cannot be used to demonstrate the approximate age of the Earth because they are riddled with huge gaps. But in Jude 14, the writer noted that Enoch was “the seventh from Adam” (he is listed exactly seventh in Genesis 5:21). Therefore, we know that there are no gaps between the first seven patriarchs, because Jude confirmed the accuracy of the Old Testament in this regard. That leaves only 13 generations with potential gaps between them. But in order to accommodate the evolutionary scenario which suggests that man has been on the Earth (in one form or another) approximately 3.5 million years, you would need to insert over 290,000 years between **each** of the 13 generations. It does not take a wealth of either Bible knowledge or common sense to see that this quickly becomes ludicrous. Who could believe that the first seven of these generations are so exact, while the remaining 13 contain “gaps” of over a quarter of a million years? What type of biblical exegesis is that?

While it may be true on the one hand to say that an **exact** age of the Earth is unobtainable from the information contained within the genealogies, at the same time it is important to note that—using the best information available to us from Scripture—the genealogies hardly can be extended to anything much beyond 6,000 to 7,000 years. For someone to suggest that the genealogies do not contain legitimate chronological information, or that the genealogies somehow are so full of gaps as to render them useless, is to misrepresent the case and distort the facts.

Numerous theories have been concocted to entice Christians to believe in an ancient Earth, while supposedly allowing them to maintain their belief in the Bible as God’s Word. It soon becomes clear, however, that if biblical instruction is taken at face value, an ancient Earth is an impossibility. Scientific theories change, and estimates of the age of the Earth come and go. “The Word of the Lord,” however, “endures forever” (1 Peter 1:25; cf. Isaiah 40:8).

## CHAPTER 12

### DEFENDING THE GENESIS ACCOUNT OF CREATION [PART V]

#### THE IMPLICATIONS OF EVOLUTION

Surely, every sane person will acknowledge the fact that actions have consequences. If a man commits a crime and is sentenced to a prison term, who is responsible? When an individual decides to act, is it not true that ultimately the consequences of those actions fall squarely on his or her shoulders? Indeed, actions **do** have consequences.

But so do beliefs and ideas. Prominent humanist author Martin Gardner devoted an entire chapter in one of his books to “The Relevance of Belief Systems,” in an attempt to explain that **what a person believes** profoundly influences **how a person acts** (1988, pp. 57-64). In his book, *Does It Matter What I Believe?*, Millard Erickson, wrote that there are numerous reasons

...why having correct beliefs is important. Our whole lives are inevitably affected by the real world around us, so what we believe about it is of the utmost importance.... What we believe about reality does not change the truth, nor its effect upon us. Correct belief, however, enables us to know the truth as it is, and then to take appropriate action, so that it will have the best possible effect upon our lives. Having correct beliefs is also necessary because of the large amount and variety of incorrect beliefs which are about (1992, pp. 12, 13).

**It does matter what we believe.** Especially is this true when it comes to the topics of creation and evolution, since in this area we are dealing with complete cosmogonies (i.e., entire world views). Consider the following.

Although it is rare to see evolutionists actually admit it, the simple fact of the matter is that belief in evolution produces a society that is not a very pleasant one in which to live. Several years ago, British evolutionist Richard Dawkins authored a book titled *The Selfish Gene*, in which he set forth his theory of genetic determinism. In summarizing the basic thesis of the book, Dawkins said: “You are for nothing. You are here to propagate your selfish genes. There is no higher purpose in life” (as quoted in Bass, 1990, 124[4]: 60). Dawkins explained:

I am not advocating a morality based on evolution. I am saying how things have evolved. I am not saying how we humans morally ought to behave.... My own feeling is that **a human society based simply on the gene’s law of universal ruthless selfishness would be a very nasty society in which to live.** But unfortunately, however much we may deplore something, it does not stop it being true (1989, pp. 2,3, emp. added).

Dawkins is correct in his assessment that a society based on the truthfulness of evolution would be “a very nasty” place to live. But why is this the case? The answer has to do with the implications of belief in evolution.

George Gaylord Simpson argued that “man is the result of a purposeless and materialistic process that did not have him in mind,” yet admitted that “**good and evil, right and wrong, concepts irrelevant in nature except from the human viewpoint,** become real and pressing features of the whole cosmos as viewed by man...because morals arise only in man” (1967, p. 346, emp. added). Simpson therefore concluded: “Discovery that the universe apart from man or before his coming lacks and lacked any purpose or plan has the inevitable corollary that the workings of the universe cannot provide any automatic, universal, eternal, or absolute ethical criteria of right and wrong” (p. 346).

If such concepts as “good and evil, right and wrong” are “real and pressing features,” how, then, should morals be determined? Since man is viewed as little more than the last animal among many to be produced by the long, meandering process of evolution, this becomes problematic. In their book, *Origins*, Richard Leakey and Roger Lewin wrote: “There is now a critical need for a deep awareness that, **no matter how special we are as an animal,** we are still part of the greater balance of nature...” (1977, p. 256, emp. added). Charles Darwin declared: “There is no fundamental difference between man and the higher mammals



in their mental faculties” (as quoted in Francis Darwin, 1898, 1:64). A lion is not plagued by guilt after killing a gazelle’s infant offspring for its noon meal. A dog does not experience remorse after stealing a bone from one of its peers. Since no other animal throughout evolutionary history has been able to locate and live by moral standards, should we somehow trust a “naked ape” (to use zoologist Desmond Morris’ colorful expression from his 1967 book by that title) to do any better? Darwin himself complained: “Can the mind of man, which has, as I fully believe, been developed from a mind as low as that possessed by the lowest animals, be trusted when it draws such grand conclusions?” (as quoted in Francis Darwin, 1:282).

Matter—in and of itself—is impotent to evolve any sense of moral consciousness. If there is no purpose in the Universe, as Simpson and others have asserted, then there is no purpose to morality or ethics. But the concept of a purposeless morality, or a purposeless ethic, is irrational. Unbelief therefore must contend, and does contend, that there is no ultimate standard of moral/ethical truth, and that morality and ethics, at best, are relative and situational. That being the case, who could ever suggest, correctly, that someone else’s conduct was “wrong,” or that a man “ought” or “ought not” to do thus and so? The simple fact of the matter is that infidelity cannot explain the origin of morality and ethics. With no way to reach a rational conclusion on what is ethical, man finds himself adrift in a chaotic sea of despair where “might makes right,” where “the strong subjugate the weak,” and where each man does what is right in his own eyes. This is not a system of ethics, but rather a society driven by anarchy.

Having grown up under a father who was a veterinarian, and personally having served as a professor in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Texas A&M University for a number of years, I have seen firsthand the fate of animals that have suffered irreparable injuries, have become riddled with incurable diseases, or have become too old and decrepit to control their bodily functions. I have had to stand by helplessly and watch my own father, or one of my colleagues, discharge a firearm to end the life of a horse because of a broken leg that could not be healed. I have had to draw into a syringe the life-ending drug to be inserted into the veins of someone’s pet dog to “put it to sleep” because the combination of senility and disease had taken a toll that not even the ablest practitioner of the healing arts could reverse. It is neither a pleasant task nor a pretty sight. But while a pet dog or champion 4-H gelding may have held a place of esteem in a child’s heart, the simple fact of the matter is that the dog is not someone’s father or mother, and the horse is not someone’s brother or sister. These are animals—which is why we shoot horses.

In the evolutionary scheme of things, however, man occupies the same status. He may be more knowledgeable, more intellectual, and more scheming than his counterparts in the animal kingdom. But he still is an animal. And so the question is bound to arise: Why should man be treated any differently once his life no longer is deemed worth living? Truth be told, there is no logical reason that he should. From cradle to grave, life—from an evolutionary vantage point—is completely expendable. And so it should be—at least if Charles Darwin’s comments are to be taken at face value. In his book, *The Descent of Man*, he wrote:

With savages, the weak in body or mind are soon eliminated; and those that survive commonly exhibit a vigorous state of health. We civilised men, on the other hand, do our utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick; we institute poor-laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skills to save the life of everyone to the last moment. There is reason to believe that vaccination has preserved thousands, who from a weak constitution would formerly have succumbed to small-pox. Thus the weak members of civilised societies propagate their kind. No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man. It is surprising how soon a want of care, or care wrongly directed, leads to the degeneration of a domestic race; but excepting in the case of man himself, hardly any one is so ignorant as to allow his worst animals to breed (1871, p. 501).

In Darwin’s day (and even in the early parts of this century), some attempted to apply this view to the human race via the concept of eugenics.

By 1973, the United States Supreme Court, in a 7-to-2 vote on January 22, decided that the embryo growing within the human womb no longer is to be considered “human.” Rather, it is a “thing” that may be ripped out, slaughtered, and tossed into the nearest dumpster. And the inordinate lengths to which evolutionists will go in order to justify such a position defy description. As an example, consider the case of the late evolutionist, Carl Sagan, and his wife, Ann Druyan. In an article titled “The Question of Abortion: A

Search for the Answers” they coauthored for the April 22, 1990 issue of *Parade*, these two humanists argued for the ethical permissibility of human abortion on the grounds that the fetus—growing within a woman’s body for several months following conception—is not a human being. Thus, they concluded, the killing of this tiny creature is not murder. [Sagan died in December 1996. One year later, in 1997, his book, *Billions and Billions*, was published posthumously. Chapter 15 of that book (pp. 163-179), titled “Abortion: Is It Possible to be both ‘Pro-Life’ and ‘Pro-Choice’?,” contains the entire text of the *Parade* article, along with Dr. Sagan’s comments about the unnerving public response the magazine received following its publication (380,000 people telephoned *Parade*’s offices in a matter of days).]

And what was the basis for the assertion made by Sagan and Druyan? The two authors argued their case by subtly employing the antiquated and erroneous concept known as “embryonic recapitulation” (sometimes referred to by its catch-phrase, “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny”), which suggests that as the human embryo develops, the growth of the individual (ontogeny) repeats (recapitulates) the evolutionary history of its ancestors (phylogeny)—traveling through such stages as an amoeba-like blob, a fish, an amphibian, a reptile, etc. They wrote that the embryo first is “a kind of parasite” that eventually looks like a “segmented worm.” Further alterations, they suggested, reveal “gill arches” like that of a “fish or amphibian.” Supposedly, “reptilian” features emerge, and later give rise to “mammalian...pig-like” traits. By the end of the second month, according to these two authors, the creature resembles a “primate but is still not quite human” (1990, p. 6).

The concept of embryonic recapitulation (discussed earlier in this book) was set forth in 1866 by German scientist/artist Ernst Haeckel. Shortly thereafter, however, it came to light that Dr. Haeckel had used his art talent to falsify some of the drawings that accompanied his research articles on animal and human embryos, in order to make it appear as if embryonic recapitulation were true—when, in fact, it was not. As a result of his exposure by his colleagues, he lived much of the rest of his life in disrepute. Scientists have known for well over a century that Haeckel’s theory was based on fraudulent data, that it is without any foundation whatsoever in scientific fact, and that both he and it have been thoroughly discredited.

Unfortunately, even though scientists have known for more than a century that embryonic recapitulation is wrong, belief in recapitulation became so widespread that it is still evident in some writings about biology and evolution. For example, in the October 1981 issue of *Science Digest*, evolutionist Isaac Asimov and creationist Duane Gish participated in a written debate (at the invitation of the magazine’s editors) under the title of “The Genesis War.” During his portion of the debate, Dr. Gish correctly pointed out:

The idea of embryological recapitulation—that at successive stages of development a fetus resembles a fish, amphibian, reptile and, finally, mammal—is now a thoroughly discredited theory and should be expunged from textbooks (1981, 89[9]:83).

Surprisingly, Dr. Asimov replied:

I don’t know what aspect of embryological recapitulation is now “thoroughly discredited” in the eyes of a creationist. However, **the human fetus in the course of its development has a tail and has indications of gills** (1981, 89[9]:83, emp. added).

An author of Dr. Asimov’s stature (he wrote more than 500 volumes during his lifetime!) and preeminence in the evolutionary community should have known better than to make such statements. Eighteen years later, evolutionist Jeffrey Schwartz set the record straight when he wrote in his 1999 volume, *Sudden Origins*:

For Haeckel, the presumed gill-slit stage in human ontogeny was the equivalent of an adult fish. **(In reality, such a stage does not occur;** there are only the folds of the gill arches, which, among other structures, develop into our hyoid bone, inner ear bones, and jaws.) [p. 164, parenthetical sentence in orig., emp. added].

Yet, when the time came that Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan desperately needed to find something—anything—within science to justify their personal belief that abortion is not murder, they simply resurrected the antiquated, erroneous concept of embryonic recapitulation, dusted it off, and tried to give it some renewed credibility as an appropriate reason why abortion should not be considered as illegal and homicidal. Surely, this shows the lengths to which evolutionists will go in attempts to substantiate their theory, and the inordinate practices that the theory generates when followed to its logical conclusion.

According to Darwin, “weaker” members of society are unfit and, in keeping with the laws of nature, would not survive under normal conditions. Who is weaker than a tiny baby growing in the womb? The baby cannot defend himself, cannot feed himself, cannot even speak for himself. He (or she) is completely and totally dependent upon the mother for life. Since nature “selects against” the weaker animal, and since man is an animal, why should man expect any deferential treatment?

Once those who are helpless, weak, and young become expendable, who will be next? Will it be the helpless, weak, and old? Will it be those whose infirmities make them “unfit” to survive in a society that values the beautiful and the strong? Will it be those who are lame, blind, or maimed? Will it be those whose IQ falls below a certain point, or whose skin is a different color?

More and more there is a clamoring in this country to kill the handicapped, the weak, the old, the terminally ill, and others with a “diminished quality of life.” Richard McCormick of the Kennedy Center for the Study of Reproduction and Bioethics at Georgetown University has suggested: “Life is a value to be preserved only insofar as it contains some potentiality for human relationships” (1974). The late Nobel laureate, Francis Crick, has urged that “no newborn infant should be declared human until it has passed certain tests regarding its genetic endowment and...if it fails these tests it forfeits the right to live” (as quoted in Howard and Rifkin, 1977, p. 81). It hardly is surprising, then, to hear Joseph Fletcher (of situation-ethics fame) suggest that any individual with an IQ of 20 or less is not a person, and that anyone ranging from 20 to 40 is only marginally so (see Lygre, 1979, p. 63).

Twenty-five years ago, Robert Cooke of the University of Wisconsin testified before a U.S. Senate select subcommittee that an estimated “2,000 infants a year are dying in America because treatment has been withheld or stopped” (as quoted in Marx, 1975, p. 9). Almost thirty years ago, an investigation carried out during a three-year period (from 1970 to 1972) at the Yale/New Haven Hospital in Connecticut uncovered the fact that 43 babies died at this one hospital when doctors decided they were “unfit to live” and therefore withdrew food, water, etc. (Lygre, p. 65). Lest anyone wonders if such things still are occurring decades later, perhaps we should be reminded of the now-famous “Baby Doe” case in an American hospital (see J.J. Davis, 1985, pp. 158ff.). Doctors recommended that the newborn baby girl be allowed to die, due to the fact that, in their opinion, she was too badly deformed to live. [Joan Hodgman of the University of California School of Medicine once admitted: “If we have a baby that I know is malformed beyond hope, I make no attempt to preserve life” (as quoted in Lygre, p. 66).] The parents accepted the doctors’ advice, and the hospital staff withdrew food, water, and other reasonable care. The government stepped in to state that a violation of the baby girl’s civil rights had occurred (remember “**life**, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”?). As President of the United States, Ronald Reagan ordered the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to deliver strict rules to hospitals receiving federal funds—rules which made it clear that all necessary steps were to be taken for the continuation of human life. A callous, depraved view of the value of human life had made such extraordinary governmental intervention necessary.

Bentley Glass once suggested that “no parents will in that future time have a right to burden society with a malformed or a mentally incompetent child” (1971, 171:23-29). In his book, *The Sanctity of Life and the Criminal Law*, Glanville Williams, strongly advocated the legalization of both “humanitarian infanticide” and “euthanasia for handicapped children” (1957). Joseph Fletcher even went so far as to state that we are “morally obliged” to end the lives of all those who are terminally ill (1979, p. 152). William Gaylin, a professor of psychiatry and law at Columbia University, declared: “It used to be easy to know what we wanted for our children, and now the best for our children might mean deciding which ones to kill. We have always wanted the best for our grandparents, and now that might mean killing them” (as quoted in Marx, p. 3). Some in our society already are calling for just such “cleansing” processes to be made legal, using such household euphemisms as “euthanasia” or “mercy killing.” After all, we shoot horses, don’t we?

Richard Dawkins was correct when he suggested that “a human society based simply on the gene’s law of universal ruthless selfishness would be a very nasty society in which to live.” Indeed, actions **do** have consequences. And beliefs **do** have implications. And these points have not been lost on either evolutionary scholars or the general populace. Consider, as proof of that, the following.

### “I SOMETIMES WISH I HAD A BELIEF SYSTEM”

It surely must rank as one of the saddest statements I have ever read. I was on a plane, flying somewhere to speak, and reading (as I often do during my time aloft) in order to keep up with current events, both in the world at large and in my specific fields of interest. The cover itself first caught my attention. In big, bold, ugly gray letters across the September 18, 2000 issue of *Time* magazine—right next to the frightful visage of an elderly man with rubber tubing snaking across his face and into his nostrils to provide the life-giving oxygen he so desperately required—were the words: **“DYING ON OUR OWN TERMS.”**

When I opened the cover and began to read the feature article—“A Kinder, Gentler Death”—by *Time* staff writer John Cloud, I was shocked. Not just by the graphic images of people in the throes of dying. Not just by the pictures of seriously sick people attached to a menagerie of machinery. And not even by the photographic reproduction of the terrifying “Do Not Resuscitate” order for a hospital patient.

What shocked me was the comment of a Felice Gans, a 72-year-old retired psychologist and terminally ill patient who had been interviewed by Mr. Cloud for his article. Mrs. Gans was suffering from incurable pancreatic cancer. Her prognosis was, well, undeniably dismal. She had no hope of any recovery, much less of a cure. She tearfully acknowledged to the reporter that many days brought her “stark terror,” and that she spent “part of every day mourning my own death.” She then said, ever so sadly, **“I sometimes wish that I had a belief system”** (as quoted in Cloud, 2000, 156[12]:64, emp. added).

I could not help but be struck by the excruciating emptiness of the poor woman’s addled admission. I wondered quietly within myself—as I watched out the window of that giant Delta jumbo jet—how many people around me at that very moment might be able to make the same painful proclamation? I wondered: how many millions of people through the millennia—facing the prospect of their own imminent death and the simultaneous cessation of their physical existence—must have expressed the selfsame sentiment (if not outwardly, at least inwardly) as did Mrs. Gans? I settled back in the airline seat, soft drink in hand, and pondered the almost palpable pain of the sad souls who march through the machinations of life, watching at its end as the flailing fingers of finality enshroud their intended victim—and knowing in their heart of hearts that it all was for nought. As a chill ran through my body and goose bumps made their way up and down my arms, I could not help but be reminded of the words of the poet, John Greenleaf Whittier: “For all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: ‘It might have been.’”

### Years Later...

As I write this, it is 2003—three years to the month after I first read the article about Felice Gans, who died on October 7, 2000, at the age of 72. The obituary that appeared under her name in the *New York Times* on October 10 stated with elegant simplicity: “As she wished, there will be no funeral service.” What, you might ask, has caused me to finally decide to put pen to paper at this particular moment in time in order to comment on this terribly unfortunate event?

Actually, I began the research and writing of this material shortly after reading her obituary. But it was not just Mrs. Gans’ death that spurred me to write the chapter you hold in your hands. On Friday, May 17, 2002, Stephen Jay Gould, the eminent evolutionist and agnostic of Harvard University, died of cancer at the age of 60. His professional career was perhaps the envy of all who knew him, and his worldly accomplishments were, to say the least, prodigious. In 1975, he won the Schubert Award, which is presented annually for excellence in research to a paleontologist under the age of 40. In 1980, his columns in *Natural History* magazine (which eventually totaled 300, written without missing a month between 1974 and 2001) won him the National Magazine Award for Essays and Criticism. In 1981, his book, *The Panda’s Thumb* (his second collection of essays), received the American Book Award for science. Also in 1981, he was one of the first twenty-one “exceptionally talented” people from a variety of fields to receive the then-new MacArthur Foundation Awards (which granted to him \$38,400 a year for five consecutive years). By the time he died, Dr. Gould had been awarded no less than 41 honorary doctorates (see Shermer, 2001, p. 221). Compare that to the famed Harvard biologists Edward O. Wilson and Ernst Mayr (both of whom are decades older than Gould), with 26 and 16 respectively. And in 2001, according to the dustjacket of his next-

to-last book to be published, *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory* (2002), the Library of Congress named Gould as one of America's eighty-three "Living Legends"—people who embody the "quintessentially American ideal of individual creativity, conviction, dedication, and exuberance."

Six years earlier, on December 20, 1996, Dr. Gould's fellow evolutionist and beloved friend, Carl Sagan of Cornell University, died at the age of 72—also from cancer (myelodysplasia, a rare blood disorder that often leads to acute leukemia, causing the bone marrow to manufacture a large number of immature and dis-plastic [misshapen] blood cells). Sagan's life, too, in many ways, was the envy of all who knew him. And, like Gould, his worldly accomplishments were similarly prodigious. He had been awarded 23 honorary doctorates, had received **89** different awards, prizes, and/or fellowships, and was associated with **293** professional societies, advisory groups, etc. In addition, he had authored **500** scientific articles, and had authored, coauthored, or edited **31** books. As Michael Shermer (editor of *Skeptic* magazine) concluded in his book, *The Borderlands of Science*: "Whether Carl Sagan's life is measured qualitatively (through narrative biography) or quantitatively (through scientific biography), he really had a wonderful life" (2001, p. 238, parenthetical items in orig.).

But none of this means anything when you are lying flat of your back on a hospital bed, dying of incurable cancer. While in just such a bed at one of the nation's leading bone marrow transplant facilities, the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, Washington, and after hearing that thousands of people had been praying for his recovery, Dr. Sagan commented (in a statement found near the end of the last book he ever wrote):

If there were life after death, I might, no matter when I die, satisfy most of these deep curiosities and longings. But if death is nothing more than an endless dreamless sleep, this is a forlorn hope. Maybe this perspective has given me a little extra motivation to stay alive.... The world is so exquisite, with so much love and moral depth, that there is no reason to deceive ourselves with pretty stories for which there's little good evidence. Far better, it seems to me, in our vulnerability, is to look Death in the eye and to be grateful every day for the brief but magnificent opportunity that life provides.

While I do not think that, if there is a god, his plan for me will be altered by prayer, I'm more grateful than I can say to those—including so many whom I've never met—who have pulled for me during my illness. **Many of them have asked me how it is possible to face death without the certainty of an afterlife. I can only say it hasn't been a problem** (1997, pp. 215,221, emp. added).

But the same Carl Sagan also penned these words: **"I would love to believe that when I die I will live again, that some thinking, feeling, remembering part of me will continue."** Yet, as Sagan went on to note, he could not make himself believe such, and felt it was nothing more than "wishful thinking" to do so (p. 214, emp. added).

Dr. Sagan was not the only one, however, who wanted to believe that a part of him would "live again." After his death, his third and final wife, Ann Druyan, wrote on the back dustcover of his last, posthumously published book, *Billions and Billions*:

I sit surrounded by cartons of mail from people all over the planet who mourn Carl's loss.... Some of them say that Carl's example has inspired them to work for science and reason against the forces of superstition and fundamentalism. These thoughts comfort me and lift me up out of my heartache. **They allow me to feel, without resorting to the supernatural, that Carl lives** (1997, emp. added).

And Ann Druyan was not alone in this feeling. In the postscript of what eventually would become perhaps his most famous *Natural History* essay—an article titled "Nonoverlapping Magisteria" about how science and religion should be able to get along with each other since they are authorities (magisteria) in their own (nonoverlapping) fields—Stephen Jay Gould wrote the following after hearing about the death of his dear friend:

I dedicate this essay to his memory. Carl also shared my personal suspicion about the nonexistence of souls—but **I cannot think of a better reason for hoping we are wrong than the prospect of spending eternity roaming the cosmos in friendship and conversation with this wonderful soul** (1997, 106:62, emp. added).

## Oh, for a Belief System!

Notice any similarity in all of these statements? Felice Gans, dying from incurable pancreatic cancer, says: **“I sometimes wish that I had a belief system.”** Carl Sagan, dying from incurable bone cancer, says: **“I would love to believe that when I die I will live again, that some thinking, feeling, remembering part of me will continue.”** And Dr. Gould admits that while neither he nor Dr. Sagan believed in the existence of a personal, immortal soul, **“I cannot think of a better reason for hoping we are wrong** than the prospect of spending eternity roaming the cosmos in friendship and conversation with this wonderful soul.”

Sad statements, these. Whether echoed by a woman whom relatively few people knew, or by two distinguished scientists whom practically the entire world knew, the sentiment remains the same: Wouldn't it be grand to have a belief system that could sustain me through the “stark terror” that accompanies “part of every day mourning my own death” (to use Mrs. Gans' own words)? Wouldn't it be terrific to have a belief system that could promise—and actually deliver on the promise—that “some thinking, feeling, remembering part of us will continue” in “friendship and conversation” (to use Sagan's and Gould's exact words)? Wouldn't that be nice? Indeed it would.

But the terrible triplets of atheism, humanism, and evolution cannot promise any such belief system. And if they could, they never would be able to deliver on the promise. They cannot even offer comfort or solace in the here and now—much less for an eternity to follow. And while the advocates of atheism, humanism, and evolution are willing to ridicule what they derisively term “religious fundamentalism” for its advocacy of the concept of life after death, they have nothing better to offer. John R. Baker, writing under the title of “Fundamentalism as Anti-Intellectualism” in *The Humanist*, admitted as much when he stated:

Fundamentalism is part of a fantasy world that many people believe or wish to be true. These people wish that the reason for human existence is an afterlife and that their lives are guided by a benevolent deity. In actuality, events in the universe may be based upon chance and physical laws that have always existed, and **human existence has no other meaning than that we exist** (1986, 46:34, emp. added).

The case of Madalyn Murray O'Hair, the world's most famous atheist until her unfortunate demise at the hands of one of her greedy coworkers in 1995, provides the perfect example of exactly that—life without meaning. On January 23, 1999, the Internal Revenue Service auctioned some of Mrs. O'Hair's belongings in order to satisfy the federal government's claims against her estate. Included on six different pages in her personal diaries was this forlorn cry: **“Somebody, somewhere, love me!”** (see *Leadership*, 1999, 20 [2]:75).

Ask yourself: How many other sad souls scream that same sentiment daily? If the writings of those in the atheistic/humanistic community are anything to go by, the number must be legion. In the preface to his biography of Carl Sagan, Keay Davidson provided some autobiographical material about himself when he wrote in the second paragraph: “By the 1960s I had ceased to believe in God. **Without God, the cosmos seemed drabber—just molecules and plasma—and quite pointless**” (1999, p. xi, emp. added). Nobel laureate Steven Weinberg, in his widely acclaimed book about the origin of the Universe, *The First Three Minutes*, wrote in equally depressing terms.

It is almost irresistible for humans to believe that we have some special relation to the universe, that human life is not just a more-or-less farcical outcome of a chain of accidents reaching back to the first three minutes, but that we were somehow built in from the beginning. As I write this I happen to be in an airplane at 30,000 feet, flying over Wyoming en route home from San Francisco to Boston. Below, the earth looks very soft and comfortable—fluffy clouds here and there, snow turning pink as the sun sets, roads stretching straight across the country from one town to another. It is very hard to realize that this all is just a tiny part of an overwhelmingly hostile universe. It is even harder to realize that this present universe has evolved from an unspeakably unfamiliar early condition, and faces a future extinction of endless cold or intolerable heat. **The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless.** But if there is no solace in the fruits of our research, there is at least some consolation in the research itself. Men and women are not content to comfort themselves with tales of gods and giants, or to confine their thoughts to the daily affairs of life; they also build telescopes and satellites and accelerators, and sit at their desks for endless hours working out the meaning of the data they gather. The effort to understand the universe is one of the very few things that lifts human life a little above the level of farce, and gives it some of the grace of tragedy (1977, pp. 154-155, emp. added).

In point of fact, such melancholic musings are quite common in the writings of evolutionists and those sympathetic with them. William Provine of the University of California lamented:

The implications of modern science, however, are clearly inconsistent with most religious traditions. No purposive principles exist in nature. Organic evolution has occurred by various combinations of random genetic drift, natural selection, Mendelian heredity, and many other purposeless mechanisms. Humans are complex organic machines that die completely with no survival of soul or psyche. Humans and other animals make choices frequently, but these are determined by the interaction of heredity and environment and are not the result of free will. No inherent moral or ethical laws exist, nor are there absolute guiding principles for human society. **The universe cares nothing for us and we have no ultimate meaning in life** (1988, 2[16]:10, emp. added).

Oxford University evolutionist Richard Dawkins commented on this very point in his book, *River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life*.

[I]f the universe were just electrons and selfish genes, meaningless tragedies...are exactly what we should expect, along with equally meaningless **good** fortune. Such a universe would be neither evil nor good in its intention. It would manifest no intentions of any kind. In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. **The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing** but pitiless indifference (1995, pp. 132-133, emp. added).

In his 2002 book, *What It Means to be 98% Chimpanzee*, anthropologist Jonathan Marks of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte admitted:

Science gives us authoritative ideas about kinship, which force us to reconceptualize our place in the order of things, which is by that very fact disorienting. But it doesn't stick around to explain it to us, to reintegrate us, to give new meaning to our existence. That's the problem with Darwinian theory, of course. It tells us our ancestors were kin to apes, the products of eons of ordinary biological processes of survival and reproduction, and not merely zapped into existence in the Garden of Eden, **but it doesn't tell us what that means** or what to do about it. It just walks away from the wreckage. And the question of who and what you are is not trivial (p. 222, emp. in orig.).

In *River Out of Eden*, Dawkins concluded:

...[W]hen the utility function—that which is being maximized—is DNA survival, **this is not a recipe for happiness. So long as DNA is passed on, it does not matter who or what gets hurt in the process.... Genes don't care about suffering, because they don't care about anything.... This is one of the hardest lessons for humans to learn. We cannot admit that things might be neither good nor evil, neither cruel nor kind, but simply callous—indifferent to all suffering, lacking all purpose** (1995, pp. 131,95-96, emp. added).

On September 11, 2001, America was attacked on her own soil by terrorists who commandeered airplanes and flew them into the two World Trade Center towers in New York City and the Pentagon near Washington, D.C. Thousands of people lost their lives as destruction rained from the crystal blue sky of that beautiful Tuesday morning. Almost immediately, a religious awakening of sorts began in our country. Members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives stood on the steps of the Capitol and sang "God Bless America." Marquees at fast-food restaurants, movie theaters, businesses, and church buildings across the country rang out with the words, "GOD BLESS AMERICA!" Suddenly it was fashionable to use God's name again—without actually blaspheming it. Practically overnight, it was acceptable to pray—in public no less! **Unless you had no personal belief system!**

Unfortunately, many do not. One such person actually chose to boast about it. Writing in the "My Turn" column of the December 10, 2001 issue of *Newsweek* (where readers are allowed to express their opinions in a three-column spread), Linda Sapienza penned a response to the "religious awakening" in the United States. Under the title of "'God Bless America?'—I Just Like the Tune," she explained how, when she was young, her mother took her to worship on Sundays. She also talked about her father: "A scientist by profession, his world was one of physics and logic." And, she admitted, "[w]hile my mother endeavored to bring me to God, my father taught me about the solar system and Newton's laws of motion."

Then, one day a “watershed” event occurred in her young life. When she was but seven years old, a Sunday school teacher forced her to give up the seat in which she was sitting. She remembered all too well how that, afterward in the morning worship assembly, “I sat next to my mother and sang ‘Onward Christian Soldiers.’ All the while my face grew hot under my Easter bonnet because I knew that someday I would have to confess my disbelief and disappoint her.”

Three years later, at the tender age of ten, she reached the conclusion that the “religious life” was not for her. Thus, when she ran into the preacher one day during a trip to the grocery store with her mother, she told him: “I don’t believe in God.” She then explained: “That night, I told my mother about our exchange and waited for her surprise or anger. She just sighed. She had seen it coming all along.” All of that would be sad enough. But the story does not end there. As Ms. Sapienza went on to write:

**I appreciate the power yielded by faith. I just don’t feel it myself.** My secularism doesn’t exclude me from the sadness and mourning that all Americans have experienced since September 11. I am shattered, and yet I don’t pray. “God Bless America” is soothing simply for its tune. **When the president invokes God or reads from Scripture it gives me no comfort.**

Ms. Sapienza ended her essay with a reference to the story she told in the first paragraph about the Sunday school teacher who made her give up her seat. She stated emphatically: “I’m hanging on to my seat. I won’t give it up twice” (2001, 138[24]:14, emp. added).

### Why Won’t People Believe?

That statement about faith—“I just don’t feel it myself”—says more than perhaps Ms. Sapienza intended. It is illustrative of so many people in today’s modern, twenty-first-century society. “Faith” (i.e., a belief system) may be all right for others, but it is not something they themselves have any desire to possess. For whatever reason(s), they feel they simply have no need for it. Pascal Boyer, in his book, *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought*, titled one of the chapters “Why Believe?” In the second paragraph of that chapter, he asked: “Why do some people believe and not others?... We would very much like to have a precise and meaningful answer to the question, Why does so-and-so have religious beliefs that leave others perfectly indifferent” (2001, pp. 297, 318). Good questions, those!

Frequently, there is no “single reason” as to why people choose not to believe. Theologian James A. Pike, in his classic text, *A Time for Christian Candor*, addressed this point when he wrote:

Often behind this calm attitude of indifference are specific factors in the personal histories of individuals which have set up blocks to current religious interest.... These roadblocks are: “Isn’t religion unscientific?”; “Which is the true religion?”; “Isn’t ethics enough?”; “Doesn’t evil disprove God?”; “I have my own religion....” Most people, however, are polytheists. They are under claim from various of these gods; no one single thing dominates, and their lives are torn.... One who worships many, is many (1964, pp. 14,16,23).

In his book, *Intellectuals Don’t Need God and Other Myths*, Alister McGrath observed:

Some people are searching for the meaning of life, for personal fulfillment, and for a belief system that will make sense of the world and their place within it. Others believe that they have found them and need search no longer.... It is quite possible that a person’s life is actually based on a whole set of unrecognized presuppositions... (1993, pp. 81,86).

Indeed, some people **are** searching. And yes, it is possible that what they believe—or refuse to believe—is “based on a whole set of unrecognized presuppositions.” I would like to explore here **why** this is the case. [NOTE: This examination of why people choose not to have a personal belief system is not intended to be exhaustive. Elsewhere (Thompson, 2000b, pp. 59-141), I have discussed numerous additional reasons for men’s unbelief—parents and upbringing, education, pride, immorality, intellectual intimidation, the hypocrisy of believers, unjust acts committed in the name of God, etc. The items below are intended to represent only a sampling of the excuses people frequently offer for their lack of belief.]



### “Where’s the Evidence?”

First, there are those who believe there is no justifiable reason to believe in God and an afterlife because, quite simply, there is no adequate evidence for such a belief system. A prime example of such an attitude can be found in the 1973 *Humanist Manifesto*, whose authors wrote:

**We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence** of a supernatural; it is either meaningless or irrelevant to the question of the survival and fulfillment of the human race.... Promises of salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful. They distract humans from present concerns, from self-actualization, and from rectifying social injustices. Modern science discredits such historic concepts as the “ghost in the machine” and the “separable soul.” Rather, science affirms that the human species is an emergence from natural evolutionary forces. As far as we know, the total personality is a function of the biological organism transacting in a social and cultural context. **There is no credible evidence that life survives the death of the body** (pp. 15-17, emp. added).

Lewis Thomas, the renowned medical doctor who served for many years as the director and chancellor of the famous Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in Manhattan, lamented: “We do not understand the process of dying, **nor can we say anything clear, for sure, about what happens to human thought after death**” (2002, emp. added). Harvard professor Steven Pinker (the former director of the Center of Cognitive Neuroscience at MIT), wrote in his book, *How the Mind Works*:

For anyone with a persistent intellectual curiosity, religious explanations are not worth knowing because they pike equally baffling enigmas on top of the original ones. What gave **God** a mind, free will, knowledge, certainty about right and wrong? How does he infuse them into a universe that seems to run just fine according to physical laws? How does he get ghostly souls to interact with hard matter?.... We feel cheated because no insight has been offered... (1997a, p. 560, emp. in orig.).

Belief in God (or life after death) is considered by many to be not only “a pursuit of the inconceivable,” but “a quest of the unknowable” as well. As Pike noted:

One of the first major beliefs to go for most people when they jettison a conventional authority-based scheme of doctrine is the conviction about life after death. The rejection is commonplace, regardless of how the matter has been viewed or phrased in the religious tradition or semantics of the person: whether as the resurrection of the body, as eternal life, or as immortality (1967, p. 112).

The atheist, agnostic, skeptic, and infidel have jettisoned such beliefs, and have complained that evidence for God is sorely lacking. Furthermore, they suggest that God represents little more than a “projected longing” on man’s part that no longer is defensible. As Pike went on to note, according to the cynics and critics, “[t]he cosmic projection of our ignorance and fears is no more” (1967, p. 177). Neither things nor deities, we are constantly reminded, necessarily exist merely because **we desire them**. [I might hasten to point out, however, that just because we **do** desire something does not mean necessarily that it **does not** exist! Additionally, one cannot help but wonder if the unbeliever cannot find God for the same reason the thief cannot find the policeman?]

### “Feeble Souls”

Second, there are some who are of the opinion that those who **do** possess a personal belief in God and an eternal afterlife are “feeble souls” who believe in such things “from fear or absurd egotism”—to use the words of the late, world-class physicist, Albert Einstein. Interestingly, it was Carl Sagan who quoted Einstein’s words in his posthumously published book, *Billions and Billions*: “Many of them [people concerned about Sagan’s ultimately fatal illness—BT] have asked me how it is possible to face death without the certainty of an afterlife. I can only say that it hasn’t been a problem.... I share the view of a hero of mine, Albert Einstein:”

I cannot conceive of a god who rewards and punishes his creatures or has a will of the kind that we experience in ourselves. Neither can I nor would I want to conceive of an individual that survives his physical death; **let feeble souls, from fear or absurd egotism, cherish such thoughts**. I am satisfied with the mystery of the eternity of life and a glimpse of the marvelous structure of the existing world, together with the devoted striving to comprehend a portion, be it ever so tiny, of the Reason that manifests itself in nature (1997, p. 221, emp. added).

As long ago as 1878, anthropologist Max Muller noted that some people view faith as an “infantile disease.”

Every day, every week, every month, every quarter, the most widely read journals seem just now to vie with each other in telling us that the time for religion is past, that faith is a hallucination or an infantile disease, that the gods have at last been found out and exploded (as quoted in Evans-Pritchard, 1965, p. 100).

The famous satirist H.L. Mencken put it this way: “The most common of all foibles is to believe passionately in the palpably not true. It is the chief preoccupation of mankind.... Theology is the effort to explain the unknowable in terms of the not worth knowing” (as quoted in Pinker, 1997a, pp. 554,560). Boyer observed:

As for evidence...whatever believers consider to be “evidence” for the existence of gods, spirits and ancestors as well as their powers has always struck all outsiders as evidence for no such thing. In fact, it is evidence only at the price of violating the requirement that we should only have refutable beliefs.... Religious claims are not refutable at all in this sense.... **[S]keptics tend to see belief as a form of mental negligence.** People are said to believe in supernatural agents because they are superstitious, they are led astray by their emotions, **they are not mentally balanced**, they are primitive, they do not understand probability, they are not scientifically trained, they are brainwashed by their culture, they are too insecure to challenge received wisdom. In this view, people believe because they fail to (or forget to, have no time to, are unwilling to, or just cannot) censure ill-formed or poorly justified thoughts. The beliefs would vanish if people were more consistent in applying commonsense principles of mental management like the following: only allow clear and precise thoughts to enter your mind; only allow consistent thoughts; consider the evidence for a claim before accepting it; only consider refutable claims (2001, pp. 300,299, parenthetical item and first ellipsis in orig., emp. added).

The sad fact is, there are some people who think that belief in God is indicative of some kind of “inner weakness” based not on any actual **evidence**, but rather on a conspicuous **lack** of evidence. As one English schoolboy put it, “Faith is believing what you know ain’t true.” Perhaps it was this kind of thinking that caused Steven Pinker to write:

People everywhere beseech gods and spirits for recovery from illness, for success in love or on the battlefield, and for good weather. **Religion is a desperate measure that people resort to** when the stakes are high and they have exhausted the usual techniques for the causation of success—medicines, strategies, courtship, and, in the case of the weather, nothing.... Believers also avoid working out the strange logical consequences of these piecemeal revisions of ordinary things. They don’t pause to wonder why a God who knows our intentions has to listen to our prayers, or how a God can both see into the future and care about how we choose to act. **Compared to the mind-bending ideas of modern science, religious beliefs are notable for their lack of imagination** (pp. 556,557, emp. added).

Ah, yes. Religion—a “desperate measure” of “feeble minds” that possess a “lack of imagination.” Or, as Karl Marx put it, “Religion is the opiate of the masses.”

### “Who Needs God?”

Third, there are those who believe that man needs no personal belief system because he is able to say, as the infidel poet William Ernest Henley did in his famous composition, *Invictus*, “I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul.” Such people simply have no need for God. They can, as it were, pull themselves up by their own bootstraps and stand on their own two feet. The famed evolutionist of Harvard, George Gaylord Simpson, ended one of his books with these words: “Man is his own master. He can and must decide and manage his own destiny” (1953, p. 155). In his book, *A New Reformation*, John A.T. Robinson listed “three motives which have impelled men, particularly over the past hundred years, to question the God of their upbringing and of ours.” Included among those three reasons were these two: “God is intellectually superfluous” and “God is emotionally dispensable” (1965, p. 107; the third was that “God is morally intolerable”). The late, eminent United Nations biologist, Sir Julian Huxley, wrote: “The God hypothesis is no longer of any pragmatic value for the interpretation or comprehension of nature, and indeed often stands in the way of better and better interpretations” (1957, p. 58). Dietrich Bonhoeffer, while in a Nazi prison, wrote:

Man has learned to cope with all questions of importance without recourse to God as a working hypothesis. In questions concerning science, art, and even ethics, this has become an understood thing which one scarcely dares to tilt at any more. But for the last hundred years or so it has become increasingly true of religious questions also; it is becoming evident that everything gets along without "God," and just as well as before. As in the scientific field, so in human affairs generally, what we call "God" is being more and more edged out of life, losing more and more ground... (1958, p. 145).

Atheist Antony Flew of Reading University in England suggested that God no longer is required by the human race because for quite some time He has been "dying by inches"—what Flew referred to as "the death of a thousand qualifications" (1955, pp. 96-97). Or, as Carl Sagan put it, "There seems less and less for God to do" (Shklovskii and Sagan, 1966, p. 19). The French infidel, François Marie Arouet (better known by his pen name, Voltaire), once remarked: "If God did not exist, we should have to invent Him." Today, that dictum has been reversed to say, "If God did exist, we should have to **abolish** Him!" As Boyer observed: "We humans are generally not very keen on **invisible hand** explanations" (p. 298, *emp. in orig.*).

The late psychologist Carl Jung stated, "The decisive question for man is, 'Is he related to something infinite or not?'" (1961, p. 325). That may or may not have been considered an accurate assessment in Jung's day, but in the view of many, it certainly does not appear to be such today. As James Pike wrote in his book, *If This be Heresy*: "The common response is the declaration—even by some theologians and clergy—that **it really doesn't matter**, one way or the other" (1967, p. 164). As Pike went on to note: "If He was, He is; if He isn't, He wasn't" (p. 178). For many people today, He "isn't." End of discussion.

### "Science Makes God Unnecessary"

Fourth, there is a prevailing view—especially in our age of advanced technology—that science somehow has made God unnecessary. As I pointed out in chapter 9, our English word "science" derives from the Latin *scientia*, meaning "knowledge." The procedures of study and investigation that lead man to a proper understanding of the world in which he lives we properly designate as science.

Science is indeed a wonderful enterprise, and those who are its practitioners are on an admirable quest. These dedicated men and women labor diligently to comprehend the intricacies and complexities of our Earth and Universe, and to explore and explain their multitudinous mysteries. The reward of their unending search—knowledge that can impart wisdom—is well worth the time and effort expended in the quest. Who among us can doubt the value of the scientific endeavor?

Within the past several hundred years, science has made great strides that have affected men's lives in both a permanent and positive fashion. Germ theory was developed, antibiotics were discovered, vaccines were invented, and life-saving surgical techniques were pioneered. Within the lifetimes of many who read this chapter, science has performed feats so amazing that at times they seem both to defy description and strain credulity. The genetic code has been elucidated, smallpox has been eradicated worldwide, successful manned space flights have been dispatched to the Moon, and robotic rovers have scoured the surface of Mars. Rarely does a day go by that we are not reminded of scientists' successful search for the knowledge that has become so highly prized by the human race—and so beneficial to its continued existence on this planet. Hardly a day passes that man's future does not grow brighter as a result of the passing of these scientific milestones, and the use of the wisdom they have imparted to humanity.

As I also pointed out in chapter 9, to some, the implication of science's many unqualified successes is that man, as a result of such scientific advancements, **can**, and indeed someday **will**, find the answers to life's most pressing questions. There are indeed clear and compelling indications that as mankind's scientific prowess has grown, our ever-increasing knowledge of the creation has diminished, or replaced completely, our knowledge of the Creator. This situation has manifested itself in the secular realm via the concept known as materialist reductionism, wherein everything of ultimate importance in the world is relegated to the discipline of science, and where God, by definition, is excluded.

Rarely do you find a materialist who is willing to confess openly that he or she is willing to accept the inevitable consequences of reductionism. But on occasion, one sallies forth to do just that. In chapter 2, I quoted from evolutionary geneticist Richard Lewontin of Harvard, who explained in blunt, forceful terms exactly why the scientific materialist takes such a view. Lewontin wrote:

Our willingness to accept scientific claims against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science *in spite* of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, in spite of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, *in spite* of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because **we have a prior commitment, a commitment to naturalism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes** to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door (1997, p. 31, italics in orig., emp. added).

The “God hypothesis” (to employ Sir Julian Huxley’s wording) represents the “Divine Foot in the door.” And that is something that scientific materialism simply cannot allow. As Pike explained:

In our scientific age, there are many who claim that they accept only things which can be demonstrated. Such a one knows what the melting point of a particular metal is because, in identical tests conducted many times in the laboratory, samples of this particular metal have melted at that particular temperature. He cannot find the nature and attributes of God—or find God at all—in the same manner; hence, he does not see how he can believe. The syllogism is, in effect:

All that can be believed is that which can be demonstrated by methods like those appropriate to the laboratory sciences;

The articles of the Christian Faith cannot be so established;

Therefore, the articles of the Christian Faith cannot be believed (1964, p. 17).

Three years later, he followed up that assessment with these comments.

With the development of science, attention was naturally paid first to the more obvious and predictably recurring material items. This preoccupation, vindicated by its fruitful results, actually tended to block the exploration into less external things not plainly visible.... [N]o longer, either in the ranks of professional sciences or among educated people, can an area of purported reality be taken seriously which claims to transcend the natural; no longer will an –ology be regarded as legitimate which does not proceed by the empirical method; and not for much longer will generic affirmations—no matter how long held, religiously or otherwise—receive general acceptance unless they can qualify as plausible inferences from established data (1967, pp. 121,122).

Andrew Newberg and Eugene D’Aquili, in their book, *Why God Won’t Go Away*, confirmed and reiterated Pike’s assessment.

As centuries passed, and science and philosophy found more and more rational explanations for mysteries which once could be explained by a divine presence, thinking people found it increasingly difficult to maintain their belief in God. Then in the mid-nineteenth century, science produced two revolutionary theories that seemed to make God irrelevant in the scientific age.

The first appeared in Charles Lyell’s book *Principles of Geology*, published in 1830. Lyell’s research showed that the contours of the natural landscape were shaped by geological forces, not by the hand of God, and that the earth was much older than Bible stories claimed. Twenty-nine years later, *The Origin of Species* was released, and the world was rocked by Darwin’s revolutionary theories that life-forms evolved through impartial biological adaptation over a span of millions of years, and not in a single flash of divine creative activity.

In the midst of this scientific revelation, Nietzsche proclaimed God dead. **It’s important, however, to realize that the God he thought science had killed, the God that was no longer compatible with rational thinking, was the personal Creator God of the Bible....** Science...is based on a foundational assumption: **All that is real can be verified by scientific measurement, therefore, what can’t be verified by science isn’t really real** (2001, pp. 169, 171, first emp. added, last emp. in orig.).

Eventually—at least in the minds of many people—science eclipsed religion completely. And, admittedly, at times, certain religionists didn’t help matters. Whether it was the Catholic Church’s embarrassing censure of Galileo, or the Church of England’s insistence upon the false concept of “fixity of species,” science “won” and religion “lost.” As evolutionist Boyer depicted the scenario:

In every instance where the Church has tried to offer its own description of what happens in the world **and** there was some scientific alternative on the very same topic, the latter has proved better. Every battle has been lost and conclusively so.... Science showed not only that some stories about the formation of planets were decidedly below par but also that there was something dramatically flawed **in principle** about religion as a way of knowing things and that there was a better way of gathering reliable information about the world (2001, pp. 320,321, emp. in orig.).

McGrath concluded: “Most people have a popular and mythical conception of science that bears little relation to the reality. For them, science is capable of uncovering the mysteries of the world, laying bare its laws and principles with absolute certainty—and thus totally overshadowing Christianity’s claims to truth” (1993, p. 79).

### “If There is a God, Why is the World in Such a Mess?”

Fifth, there is the perennial problem of evil, pain, and suffering. Consider, for example, an article—“For These Girls, It Is All Happening”—that appeared in the March 5, 1964 issue of the London *Daily Mirror* by reporter Marjorie Proops. Ms. Proops interviewed a nineteen-year-old British girl, and asked her: “Do you believe in God?” The girl’s response was: “No. I used to, but not now. I don’t see how there can be a benevolent God. There are too many tragedies—personal, and in the world. Religion is disgusting” (as quoted in Pike, 1967, p. 174). “Too many tragedies.” How many times have people echoed that same refrain—whether they live in London or Lexington? In addressing God’s existence as it relates to the problem of evil, pain, and suffering, James A. Pike asked: “To put it bluntly, if He’s all that strong, all that smart, and all that nice, why are so many things such a mess?” (p. 175). Pinker wrote: “Most perplexing of all, if the world unfolds according to a wise and merciful plan, why does it contain so much suffering? As the Yiddish expression says, ‘If God lived on earth, people would break his windows’ ” (1997a, p. 560).

### “I’m Afraid...”

Sixth, as odd as it may sound, there are some people who simply are afraid to believe. And, given the commitment that belief entails, I suggest we should not be shocked at such a fact. The Gospel makes a powerful claim on the life of its adherents. Christ made that clear when He said:

If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.... So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:26-27,33).

Alister McGrath wrote:

The specificity of the gospel to the life of an individual is too easily compromised through a failure to think through its relevance in a given situation. The gospel does indeed talk about—and offer!—liberation. But from what does a person need to be liberated?... From the fear of death?... From the paralyzing fear of guilt? (1993, p. 73).

There are occasions when fear—blinding, paralyzing, strangling fear—freezes us in place and prevents us from doing what we should (and know we ought to) do. In his book, *Afraid God Works, Afraid He Doesn’t*, Terry Rush spoke to this very point.

Something happened in the garden that sent a negative rippling effect down through each generation.... When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, a phenomenal paradox took place. Their eyes were opened, causing them to see a segment of reality they had been blind to. Simultaneously, they were blind to a portion of reality they had previously seen....

When they sinned, **their eyesight was impaired by being opened to see more**. At the same time, they apparently lost the ability to see what is now the invisible world.... One thing clearly took place. As soon as Adam and Eve possessed this alternative view, an entirely foreign sensation emerged. **Fear**. And to this day it has plagued our efforts to walk with the Creator. “And he said, ‘I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself’ ” (Gen. 3:10).

**We have hidden ever since**, all because we are afraid.... Blindness to the unseen activity leaves us mistaken and terribly disoriented.... Faith or fear. Belief or cynicism. Fruitfulness or caution. The equation seems to be consistent (1991, pp. 10,11,13, emp. added).

Man—whether he likes to admit it or not—is incapable of guiding himself successfully through the vicissitudes of life. The prophet Jeremiah, in the great long ago, wrote: “The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23). Humanism and its concordant cousins suggest otherwise, of course. The 1973 *Humanist Manifesto* boldly asserted:

Human life has meaning because we create and develop our futures. Happiness and the creative realization of human needs and desires, individually and in shared enjoyment, are continuous themes of humanism. We strive for the good life, here and now. The goal is to pursue life’s enrichment despite debasing forces.... **Reason and intelligence** are the most effective instruments that humankind possesses. There is no substitute: neither faith nor passion suffices in itself (pp. 17-18; emp. in orig.).

But what has “striving for the good life, here and now” gotten us? Drug addictions. AIDS. Clinical depression. Unwanted pregnancies. Venereal diseases. Overcrowded jails and prisons. World wars. Need I go on?

Jesus said that He came that we “may have life, and may have it abundantly” (John 10:10). The apostle Paul spoke of the fact that faithful believers who live “in Christ” would possess “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). But in order to obtain that “abundant life,” in order to possess “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,” the fear-filled person first must acknowledge his dependency upon God and, second, be willing to “commit all” to a personal belief system based on the existence of that God and the truthfulness of His Word. No easy task, that. It does indeed come down to “faith—or fear.” Far too many choose fear, to the detriment of faith.

#### **“Boring Eternal Happiness?”**

Last, as strange as it may sound, there are those who choose not to believe because they fear that eternal life would be “boring.” British astrophysicist Sir Fred Hoyle lamented:

I should like to discuss a little further the beliefs of the Christians as I see them myself. In their anxiety to avoid the notion that death is the complete end of our existence, they suggest what is to me an equally horrible alternative. If I were given the choice of how long I should like to live with my present physical and mental equipment, I should decide on a good deal more than seventy years. But I doubt whether I should be wise to decide on more than 300 years. Already I am very much aware of my own limitations and I think that 300 years is as long as I should like to put up with them. Now what the Christians offer me is an eternity of frustration. And it is no good their trying to mitigate the situation by saying that sooner or later my limitations would be removed, because this could not be done without altering *me*. **It strikes me as very curious that the Christians have so little to say about how they propose eternity should be spent** (1950, p. 141, italics in orig., emp. added).

The well-known atheistic scientist, Isaac Asimov (who was serving as the president of the American Humanist Association when he died in 1992), wrote: “I can’t help but believe that eternal happiness would eventually be boring. I cannot grasp the notion of eternal anything. My own way of thinking is that after death there is nothingness. Nothingness is the only thing that I think is worth accepting” (1982, 2[2]:10). As the old saying goes, “To each his own.”



## CHAPTER 13

### DEFENDING THE GENESIS ACCOUNT OF CREATION [PART VI]

#### THE BENEFITS OF BELIEF

But why believe? Why commit? Why strive to overcome fear? Why admit to actually **needing** a personal belief system based on God and His Word? The age-old question, “What’s in it for me?,” begs to be asked. Are there benefits to believing? Is there something “in it for me”? The answer to both questions is “yes.” An examination of the benefits of belief makes for a rich and rewarding study.

First, however, we need to ask this question: Doesn’t it make sense that if God created men and women in His image, then we should **want** to relate to Him in some way? I suggest that it does. As McGrath observed:

If we are indeed created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27), is it surprising that we should wish to relate to him? Might not a human desire for God be grounded in the fact that he brought us into being, with an inbuilt capacity to relate to him? (1993, p. 97).

Is this not the very point of Ecclesiastes 3:11, where the inspired writer wrote that God “hath set eternity in their heart”?

Man may “refuse to have God in his knowledge” (Romans 1:28), but his religious inclination is undeniable nevertheless. As one writer observed, all the available evidence reveals that “no race or tribe of men, however degraded and apparently atheistic, lacks that spark of religious capacity which may be fanned and fed into a mighty flame” (Dummelow, 1944, p. ci). Even unbelievers end up admitting as much, albeit inadvertently (and, at times, begrudgingly). Evolutionist Pascal Boyer, in *Religion Explained*, complained:

There is no religious instinct, no **specific** inclination in the mind, no particular disposition for these concepts, no special religion center in the brain, and religious persons are not different from nonreligious ones in essential cognitive functions.... [P]eople who are shocked or repulsed by religion would like to find the **single** source of what is for them such egregious error, the crossroads at which so many human minds take the wrong turn, as it were. But the truth is that there is no such single point, because many different cognitive processes conspire to make religious concepts convincing.

Yet he then went on to admit:

Religious concepts and norms and the emotions attached to them seem **designed** to excite the human mind, linger in memory, trigger multiple inferences in the **precise** way that will get people to hold them true and communicate them. Whoever designed religion, or designs each religion, seems to have uncanny prescience of what will be successful with human minds (2001, pp. 329,330, emp. in orig.).

What did he say? Religious concepts seem “designed”? Yes, but inherent design demands a designer. One does not get a painting without a painter, a poem without a poet, or a law without a lawgiver. And one does not get design without a designer. **Who** designed man’s “religious concepts”? Who is it, exactly, that “seems to have an uncanny prescience of what will be successful in human minds”? Could it be the Creator of those minds—the One Who “hath set eternity in their heart”? The evidence—which I have discussed at length elsewhere (see Thompson, 2000b, pp. 123-181)—is overwhelming. God **does** exist. And belief in Him **is** justified. But are there actual **benefits** that accrue as a result of belief? Yes, there are. Consider just a few of them.

#### **Belief in God and His Word Allows Us to Understand Sin, Its Effects, and Its Cure, and to be Free from the Guilt Associated with It**

Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, used the freedom of choice with which God had endowed them to rebel against their Maker. And people after them have done no better. Mankind has made some horribly evil choices, and as a result has entered the spiritual state biblically designated as “sin.” The Old



Testament not only presents in riveting fashion the entrance of sin into the world (Genesis 3), but also alludes to the ubiquity of sin within the human race when it says: "There is no man that sinneth not" (1 Kings 8:46). The Old Covenant discusses time and again both sin's presence amongst humanity and its debilitating consequences. The prophet Isaiah reminded God's people: "Behold, Jehovah's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear" (59:1-2).

The New Testament is equally clear in its assessment. The apostle John wrote: "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). Thus, sin is defined as the act of transgressing God's law. The apostle Paul observed that "where there is no law, neither is there transgression" (Romans 4:15). Had there been no law, there would have been no sin. But God **had** instituted divine law. And mankind willfully chose to transgress that law. Paul reaffirmed the Old Testament concept of the universality of sin when he stated that "all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

As a result, mankind's predicament became serious indeed. Ezekiel lamented: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (18:20a). Once again, the New Testament writers reaffirmed such a concept. Paul wrote: "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned" (Romans 5:12). He then added that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). James commented: "But each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death" (1:14-15). As a result of mankind's sin, God placed the curse of death on the human race.

The reality of sin surrounds us, and its effects are ever present in our world. By sinning, man created a chasm between himself and God. Unless remedied, this condition will result in man's being unable to escape the "judgment of hell" (Matthew 23:33) and in his being separated from God throughout all eternity (Revelation 21:8; 22:18-19). Disease and death were introduced as a direct consequence of man's sin (Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:12). And, man generally is without the peace of mind for which his heart longs. Isaiah opined: "They have made them crooked paths; whosoever goeth therein doth not know peace" (59:8; cf. 57:21).

Belief in God allows man to acknowledge sin, recognize its effects, understand its cure, and be free from the guilt associated with it. In his book, *Does It Matter What I Believe?*, Millard J. Erickson wrote:

A correct understanding of sin will keep us on guard against it. Sin, as we have seen, includes far more than wrong actions; it is, in fact, defined as any lack of conformity to God's will, which in turn is an expression of his nature. Thus it is possible to sin not only through rebellion and disobedience, but also through neglect, indifference, or even proper action from wrong motivation. Moreover, sin extends to our thoughts and attitudes....

All of this awareness of sin and its consequences would be a disturbing and even frightening prospect if it were not for the biblical teaching about Christ. As we reflect upon the truth of who Jesus is, our awe of and love for our Lord will grow. The perfect, fully divine Second Person of the Trinity was willing to leave the splendors and glory of heaven to come to earth and give his life for us. In him who loved and died for those who did not love him we will recognize the perfect example of true love....

Our amazement at salvation will never cease to grow as we reflect on the meaning of what has happened to us and is continuing to happen. A true understanding of the sin in ourselves and in the human race in general could bring us to a point of despair. Many have become cynics in the face of their own propensity for doing the wrong thing and the human race's history of warfare and violence. Our despair upon realizing we can never be good enough on our own is overcome, however, when we realize that God has already provided the righteousness of Christ.... To have our guilt wiped away and our sins canceled by Christ's perfect righteousness is surely not a cause for pride, but for continuing gratitude. Although we may find it difficult to believe that we do not have to pay the penalty for our sins, it is the truth nonetheless (1992, pp. 170,171,173).

Man was in sin. The problem thus became: How could a loving, merciful God pardon rebellious humanity? Paul addressed this topic in Romans 3. How could God be just, and yet a justifier of sinful man? The answer: He would find someone to stand in for us—someone to receive His retribution, and to bear our punishment. That "someone" would be Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The apostle John wrote: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1

John 4:10). A propitiation is a substitutionary sacrifice. And that is exactly what Christ became; He personally would pay the price for human salvation. In one of the most moving tributes ever written to the Son of God, Isaiah summarized the situation like this:

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all (53:5-6).

Jehovah's intent was to extend His grace and mercy freely—through the redemptive life and death of His Son (Romans 3:24ff.). As a member of the Godhead, Christ took upon Himself the form of a man. He came to Earth as a human being (John 1:1-4,14; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Timothy 3:16), and thus shared our full nature and life-experiences. He even was tempted in all points, just as we are, yet He never yielded to that temptation (Hebrews 4:15).

But what has this to do with us? Since Christ was tried (Isaiah 28:16), and yet found perfect (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22), He alone could satisfy Heaven's requirement for justice. He alone could serve as the "propitiation" for our sins. Just as the lamb without blemish that was used in Old Testament sacrifices could be the (temporary) propitiation for the Israelites' sins, so the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29) could be the (permanent) propitiation for mankind's sins.

In the gift of Christ, Heaven's mercy was extended; in the death of the Lamb of God, divine justice was satisfied; and, in the resurrection of Christ, God's plan was documented and sealed historically forever! I repeat: Belief in God allows man to acknowledge sin, recognize its effects, understand its cure, and be free from the guilt associated with it. This was exactly Paul's point in Romans 6:17: "But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness." No unbeliever ever can be free from sin, or the guilt of that sin. That alone is reason enough to believe!

### **Belief in God and His Word Provides a Legitimate Basis for Morality**

Moral values reflect humanity's understanding of the nature and purpose of the world—and of human beings' place within it. Philosopher Basil Mitchell observed: "Any worldview which carries with it important implications for our understanding of man and his place in the universe would yield its own distinctive insights into the scope, character and content of morality" (1990, p. 56). A world view that does not provide for belief in God does indeed carry "important implications" about morality. So does a world view that provides for such belief. Compare, then, the implications of two world views—one that **excludes** belief in God, and one that **includes** belief in Him.

The eminent humanistic philosopher, Will Durant, concluded: "By offering evolution in place of God as a cause of history, Darwin removed the theological basis of the moral code of Christendom. And the moral code that has no fear of God is very shaky. That's the condition we are in..." (1980). Durant was much too kind in his assessment. A moral code without God is not just "shaky." It is vacuous and impotent. Canadian philosopher Michael Ruse and Harvard entomologist Edward O. Wilson inadvertently expressed just how vacuous and impotent evolutionary "morality" is when they wrote under the title of "Evolution and Ethics": "Morality, or more strictly **our belief in morality, is merely an adaptation put in place to further our reproductive ends...**" (1985, 208:51-52, emp. added).

Earlier, I quoted anthropologist Jonathan Marks about some of the implications of believing in atheistic evolution. Marks admitted:

That's the problem with Darwinian theory, of course. It tells us our ancestors were kin to apes, the products of eons of ordinary biological processes of survival and reproduction, and not merely zapped into existence in the Garden of Eden, *but it doesn't tell us what that means or what to do about it. It just walks away from the wreckage* (2002, p. 222, italics in orig., emp. added).

While Marks is incorrect about Darwinian theory confirming that "our ancestors were kin to apes," he is quite correct in his assessment that Darwinian theory "doesn't tell us what that means or what to do with it." And he is equally correct in asserting that Darwinian theory "just walks away from the wreckage." As Pike remarked: "The consequence of belief is action" (1964, p. 22). What the Darwinian believes deter-

mines how he acts. And in the Darwinian scheme, “anything goes.” Survival of the fittest rules. “Nature is red in tooth and claw” (to quote British poet Alfred Lord Tennyson). It’s a dog-eat-dog world—every man for himself. Might makes right. The strong subjugate the weak. The late George Gaylord Simpson, the renowned paleontologist of Harvard, was forced to conclude: “Discovery that the universe apart from man or before his coming lacks and lacked any purpose or plan has the inevitable corollary that the workings of the universe cannot provide any automatic, universal, eternal, or absolute ethical criteria of right and wrong” (1967, p. 346).

Can this be right? Even Charles Darwin—while contemplating belief in God and the implications that flow from such a belief—once inquired: “[C]an the mind of man, which has, as I fully believe, been developed from a mind as low as that possessed by the lowest animals, be trusted when it draws such grand conclusions?” (as quoted in Francis Darwin, 1898, 1:282). If man is, as anthropologist Desmond Morris labeled him in his book by the same title, “the naked ape,” what “grand conclusions” **could** he rightly draw? As Pinker observed:

A final conundrum is morality. If I secretly hatchet the unhappy, despised pawnbroker, where is the evil nature of that act registered? What does it mean to say that I “shouldn’t” do it? How did **ought** emerge from a universe of particles and planets, genes and bodies? (1997, p. 558, emp. in orig.).

Yet the importance and relevance of morality is obvious. Erickson wrote: “A proper understanding of human nature will bear upon our attitudes and actions toward others” (1992, p. 170). Yes, it will. Individuals, and societies, need moral values to direct their actions. Individuals, and societies, need a “Moral Governor” to Whom they can turn for laws that are just, and verdicts that are fair—just as they do in everyday life. As Durant went on to say: “I don’t think man is capable yet of managing social order and individual decency without fear of some supernatural being overlooking him...” (1980). What will be the end result if we do not possess a “proper understanding of human nature”?

Belief in God and His Word provides the Moral Governor. As McGrath noted: “Christianity offers a worldview, which it declares to be true on the best of authorities, and which in turn leads to the generation of moral values and ideals that are able to give moral meaning and dignity to our existence” (p. 74). When Dr. McGrath suggested that Christianity offers a world view that it “declares to be true on the best of authorities,” he is absolutely right. That “authority” is God Himself. True morality is based on the fact of the unchanging nature of Almighty God. He is eternal (Psalm 90:2; 1 Timothy 1:17), holy (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8), just and righteous (Psalm 89:14), and forever consistent (Malachi 3:6). In the ultimate sense, only He is good (Mark 10:18). Furthermore, since He is perfect (Matthew 5:48), the morality that issues from such a God is good, unchanging, just, and consistent—i.e., exactly the opposite of the relativistic, deterministic, or situational ethics of the world.

There is within each man, woman, and child a sense of moral responsibility which derives from the fact that God is our Creator (Psalm 100:3) and that we have been fashioned in His spiritual image (Genesis 1:26-27). As the potter has sovereign right over the clay with which he works (Romans 9:21), so our Maker has the sovereign right over His creation since in His hand “is the soul of every living thing” (Job 12:10).

Whatever God does, commands, and approves is good (Psalm 119:39,68; cf. Genesis 18:25). What He has commanded results from the essence of His being—Who He is—and therefore also is good. In the Old Testament, the prophet Micah declared of God: “He showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and walk humbly with thy God” (6:8). In the New Testament, the apostle Peter admonished: “As he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, ‘Ye shall be holy: for I am holy’ ” (1 Peter 1:15).

The basic thrust of God-based ethics concerns the relationship of man to the One Who created and sustains him. God Himself is the unchanging standard of moral law. His perfectly holy nature is the ground or basis upon which “right” and “wrong,” “good” and “evil” are determined. The Divine will—expressive of the very nature of God—constitutes the ultimate ground of moral obligation. Why are we to pursue holiness? Because God is holy (Leviticus 19:1; 1 Peter 1:16). Why are we not to lie, cheat, or steal (Colossians 3:9)? Because God’s nature is such that He cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). Since God’s nature is unchanging, it follows that moral law, which reflects the divine nature, is equally immutable.

Miethe and Habermas were correct when they suggested in their book, *Why Believe? God Exists!*, that “naturalism is not even close to being the best explanation for the existence of our moral conscience” (1993, p. 219). Naturalism simply “walks away from the wreckage.” It is left to Christianity to undo that damage.

### **Belief in God and His Word Inspires Us, Gives Us Vision, and Allows Us to Trust**

Earlier, I mentioned a woman, Felice Gans, who was afflicted with a terminal illness. She tearfully acknowledged to the reporter who interviewed her shortly before her death that many days brought her nothing but “stark terror,” and that she spent “part of every day mourning my own death.”

Mrs. Gans was not alone in her mourning. There are millions of unhappy, distraught, depressed, sad people in the world who live a life day by day that, in their view, hardly is worth living. It may well be a life filled with stark terror. It may be a life of utter hopelessness. It may be a life of failed dreams, broken promises, and lost aspirations. It may be a life of complete emptiness or mind-numbing loneliness. For many, the three great questions of life—“Whence have I come?,” “Why am I here?,” and “Where am I going?”—have no answer. Such people wander aimlessly—from cradle to grave—in a sea of uncertainty, doubt, and misery. Their present lives are dreary, and their futures bode no better. They, like the patriarch of old, believe that “man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). Or, they, like that ancient sage, may echo the refrain: “Vanity of vanities,...all is vanity. What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?” (Ecclesiastes 1:2, NKJV).

What a sad and pitiful existence. And how unnecessary! How much better to say, as Habakkuk did so many years ago, “I will rejoice in Jehovah, I will joy in the God of my salvation. Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength” (Habakkuk 3:18-19). The apostle Paul wrote:

Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. Let your forbearance be known unto all men.... In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things (Philippians 4:4-8).

People who believe in God, and who take Him at His word, have no reason to be depressed, dreary, or lonely. Quite the opposite, in fact. As Erickson noted:

...[I]f we correctly understand God, we will not fear or be lonely. We will recognize that when we think we are alone or in danger, he is always there, knowing our situation and caring for us.... Recognition that God is the Creator of everything will spare us from the hopelessness and despair that is so common in our world. For us, life can never be merely a maze of meaningless wandering. Someone supremely wise and powerful is in control, and is planning our days and our ways. It is a comfort to know that whatever happens in our lives is not the result of chance factors.... We can have the assurance that we are constantly being changed for the better. The work begun continues. Whether or not we feel good about ourselves on a given day, God is at work within us. And we can have the assurance that one day the process will be complete (1992, pp. 168,169,173).

McGrath commented:

Christianity offers a vision—a vision of God’s gracious intervention in our sinful lives, of his forgiveness of our sins through the death of Christ, of the continued presence and power of God in our lives, and of our entry into the glory of the kingdom, where we share in the resurrection of Christ. That vision keeps us going and keeps us hoping—yet it is a vision grounded in the hard-headed realism of the gospel (1993, p. 75).

We, like the apostle to the Gentiles, “know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). We realize that we are but “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” and that we, like those spoken of by the writer of the book of Hebrews, “are seeking after a country” of our own.” We “desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city” (11:13-16).

No unbelievers have such a promise, or such a hope. For them, it is “you live, you die—end of story.” As the writer of Ecclesiastes said, “All are of the dust, and all turn to dust again” (3:20). Paul spoke of some who were “strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). What a fitting description of the person who has no personal belief system in God and His Word. Read again the quotations above from people like Dawkins, Weinberg, and Davidson about the “drabness,” “meaninglessness” and “pointless nature” of the Universe and existence within it. Then compare that to the “peace that surpasses understanding.” Which would **you** prefer?

### **Belief in God and His Word Helps Us Cope with Evil, Pain, and Suffering**

Let’s face it. Things do not always go our way. Plans go awry. Fortunes are forfeited. Friendships are broken. Wars are fought. Lives are lost. Illnesses occur. People suffer. People die. The sufferings of this life are real. They are painful. And no one—young or old—is exempt. No one!

The unbeliever points to evil, pain, and suffering and uses it as a reason not to believe in God. No “good God” would allow, much less create, a world filled with such atrocities, goes the argument. I have dealt with this more extensively elsewhere in this volume, so my comments here will be brief.

The fact that man possesses personal volition explains much of the evil, pain, and suffering found in today’s world. The Scriptures explain that since God is love, and since love allows freedom of choice, God allows freedom of choice (cf. Joshua 24:15; John 5:39-40). God did not create men and women as automatons to serve Him mindlessly with no free moral agency on their part. Man reaps the benefits of the **use** of freedom of choice, but he also reaps the consequences of the **misuse** of that freedom of choice. The apostle Peter wrote: “Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men’s matters” (1 Peter 4:15). Suppose a man freely chooses to rob a convenience store? When he is apprehended, tried, convicted, and sentenced, is it “God’s fault”? Of course not. When a person freely chooses to maliciously murder another human being and then is sentenced to death by the state or federal governments for having done so, is it “God’s fault”? Again, no, it is not. The misuse by humankind of freedom of choice is responsible for much of the suffering in our world.

Too, there are times when we suffer because of the wrong choices of generations long since gone. Children starve to death in third-world countries today because their ancestors ignored God’s divine law about worshiping idols. In the midst of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, God issued this warning regarding idols: “Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them, for I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me” (v. 5). The “iniquity” of the fathers (viz., the consequences of sin) fell upon future generations who turned to the false concept of reincarnation and, as a result, will not eat food animals (pigs, cattle, chickens, etc.) because they wrongly believe they are someone’s long-dead, now-reincarnated ancestors. Is it “God’s fault” that tiny children starve? One last time, no, it is not.

Furthermore, God created a world ruled by natural laws established at the Creation. If a man steps out of an airplane at 10,000 feet with no parachute, gravity will pull him to his death below. If a girl steps in front of a moving automobile, since two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time, the car will strike the child and likely kill her. The same laws that govern such things as gravity, matter in motion, or similar phenomena also govern weather patterns, water movement, and other geological/meteorological conditions. Truth be told, **all** of nature is regulated by these laws—not just the parts we find convenient. And **everyone** (believer and unbeliever alike) must obey them or suffer the consequences. In Luke 13:2-5, Jesus told the story of eighteen men who perished when the tower of Siloam collapsed. Had these men perished because of their sin? No, they were no worse sinners than their peers. They died because a natural law was in force. Fortunately, natural laws work continually so that we can understand and benefit from them. We are not left to sort out some kind of haphazard system that works one day but not the next.

When all is said and done, the most important issue is not why “this” or “that” evil thing occurred, but rather, “How can we as humans understand what has happened, and how should we react to it?” As McGrath put it:

The sufferings of this earth are for real. They are painful. God is deeply pained by our suffering, just as we are shocked, grieved, and mystified by the suffering of our family and friends. But that is only half of the

story. The other half must be told. It is natural that our attention should be fixed on what we experience and feel here and now. But faith demands that we raise our sights and look ahead to what lies ahead. We may suffer as we journey—but where are we going? What lies ahead? (1993, pp. 105-106).

McGrath went on to say:

The love of God, then, is not some happy-go-lucky outlook on life that makes hedonism its goal. It is a divine love that proceeds from God and leads back to God, that embraces suffering as a consequence of the greater gifts of life and freedom. Real life implies suffering. Were God to take suffering away from us, he would take away that precious gift of life itself.... Suffering is not pointless, but leads to glory. Christianity has been unequivocal on this point, and its voice must be heard (pp. 104,105).

Karl Marx regarded such an outlook on life as “nauseating sentimentality.” To him (and thousands of other unbelievers like him), any promise of present or future “glory” represented little more than idealistic “pie-in-the-sky-by-and-by-when-you-die” emotional baggage that served no purpose except to distract humans from more pressing concerns in the here and now. But is that necessarily true?

No, it is not. As much as the unbeliever hates to admit it, there **are** times when suffering actually is **beneficial**—both physically and mentally. Think of the man whose side begins to ache at the onset of acute appendicitis. Think of the woman who blacks out unexpectedly due to an undiagnosed brain tumor. Is it not true that pain often sends us to the doctor for prevention or cure? Is it also not true that at times suffering helps people develop the traits that humankind treasures the most? Bravery, heroism, altruistic love, self-sacrifice—all flourish in less-than-perfect environments, do they not? Whom do we respect and admire more? Is it the woman who day after day lovingly cares for her ailing husband who is afflicted with the Alzheimer’s disease that is robbing him of his mental and physical health? Or is it the young couple that abandons their newborn Down-Syndrome child to die on a cold, stainless-steel table in a cubicle next to the delivery room because they do not want to be “bothered” by having to care for that child in the years to come? Is it not people who exhibit honor and valor in seemingly impossible circumstances who are considered to have gone “above and beyond the call of duty”? Was this not the very point Christ was making when He said: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13)?

Instead of blaming God because evil, pain, and suffering exist, we should turn to Him for strength, and let tragedies, of whatever nature, remind us that this world never was intended to be a final home (Hebrews 11:13-16). Our time here is temporary (James 4:14), and with God’s help, we are able to overcome whatever comes our way (Romans 8:35-39; Psalm 46:1-3). With Peter, the faithful believer can echo the sentiment that God, “who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall himself perfect, establish, strengthen you” (1 Peter 5:10).

### **Belief in God and His Word Provides Us with the Benefits of Being a Part of the “Body of Believers”**

As the first man, Adam, previewed the animals in the Garden of Eden in his search for a mate (Genesis 2:18-20), it became clear to him that he was “alone.” Among all the animals that God had created, there was none that corresponded to him. Not one sufficed to remove him from his personal isolation of being “alone” (Genesis 2:18). Millennia later, the apostle Paul, writing through inspiration, commented on the human condition when he observed that “none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself” (Romans 14:7). How true an observation that is. Recluses generally are few and far between. Man rarely does well when isolated from others of his kind. As God looked down from His heavenly estate on Adam, He remarked: “It is not good that man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18).

Nothing has changed since that initial divine diagnosis. From the beginning to the end of this pilgrimage we call “life,” we interact with those around us. We move beyond childhood and adolescence to adulthood. And as is often the case, we fall in love, marry, form a home, bear and rear children, and possibly even become grandparents or great-grandparents. In short, with few exceptions, humans need, and thrive on, contact with one another.

But generally it is more than just “contact” that we crave. We desire fellowship, camaraderie, and friendship. And there are times when we not only “desire” it, but also **need** it. When the vicissitudes of life engulf us, when calamity strikes, when illness ensues, when health fails, when death visits, and when sorrow

overwhelms, mere “association” is not what we so desperately desire. In fact, it is not even sympathy for which we yearn. We want **empathy**. We need to know that somebody “feels our pain.” We need to know that others have “walked a mile in our shoes.” We need to know that someone else has “been there, done that,” and come out on the other side better for it. We need to see their tears, to feel their tender embrace, and to hear their gentle voice as it reassures us, comforts us, and strengthens us.

To whom does the unbeliever turn for such consolation? A coworker? An acquaintance from the local Rotary Club? Another unbeliever? And what does this fellow traveler on the road of unbelief have to say? Are there some special sentiments he or she can offer to make the haunting death of a parent, spouse, or child—whom the unbeliever “knows” he never will see again in this world or the next (because for him, or them, there is no “next!”)—any more bearable? As Pike observed: “There is an area of **silence**, however, which corresponds precisely to the most poignant concern of the typically bereaved person. The really important question is just this: Will he go on as a person? Will I see him again?” (1967, p. 13, emp. added).

I suspect that many **believers** rarely give this much thought. I admit that I had not—until my own Father died unexpectedly. He went in for heart surgery, and had come through the surgery in fine form. But as he was being wheeled to the recovery room, a blood clot that had formed (unbeknownst to the doctors) broke loose, hit his brain, and sent him into a coma from which he never awoke. Ten days later, he was dead.

The day of his funeral, as we were riding in the car following the hearse on the way to the cemetery, I leaned over the funeral director and said, “Would you mind if I asked a somewhat personal question?” He was very gracious in his response when he said, “I wouldn’t mind at all.” I asked, “Could you tell me how atheists handle an occasion such as this?” As long as I live, I never will forget his answer. He looked me squarely in the eye and said very simply yet very emphatically, “They **don’t**! How could they? To whom can they turn for help?” That statement—“To whom can they turn for help?”—has haunted me ever since.

Believers, on the other hand, **never** are alone. Even when they **think** they are, they really are not. As the writer of the book of Hebrews said in speaking of Christ, “I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5). Furthermore, fellow believers will spare no effort or cost to provide assistance. The psalmist of old wrote: “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread” (37:25). Why is this the case? As Erickson commented:

There is also the assurance that **we are not called to be solitary believers**, for we are part of the body of Christ, the church. While each of us lacks much of what is needed for fulfilling Christ’s expectation of us, we are part of a body in which all the necessary gifts are present. **What we cannot do alone, we can do collectively**. The encouragement, instruction, and correction offered by other believers are a powerful incentive to our lives. Teaming with others makes possible the service of which we are not capable alone (1992, p. 174, emp. added).

Christ died alone on the cross—so that we **never** would have to be alone. His Father forsook **Him** (Matthew 27:46) so that He never would have to forsake **us**. “With his stripes, we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). He paid the debt we could not pay, and a debt He did not owe, to make it possible for us to be—as a part of His body—an eye, an ear, a hand, a leg, or a foot (1 Corinthians 12:12-26). In this fashion, then, “the members should have the same care one for another; and whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it” (v. 25). No unbeliever can say that—ever!

### **Belief in God and His Word Helps Us Avoid the Fear of Death, and Promises Us Eternal Life**

In the chapter titled “Life After Death” in his book, *If This be Heresy*, James A. Pike included a section heading labeled “The Fear of Death.” He began that section as follows:

The phenomenon of death and its inevitability is in everyone’s mind—although not so frequently in the conscious mind, because either we deliberately suppress it or our automatic processes keep it repressed—most of the time. But it is never far beneath the surface. Nor is the corollary: the fear of death. Not very profound reflection is required to perceive what it is that is actually feared.... For many, it is **the fear of the absolute end of one’s conscious existence as a person** (1967, p. 114, emp. in orig.).

Indeed it is. The writer of the book of Hebrews spoke to this very point when he wrote of those “who, **through fear of death**, were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (2:15). A sad existence—to live an entire lifetime “subject to bondage” because of the “fear of death.”

In his book, *How the Mind Works*, psychologist Steven Pinker discussed several “puzzles” about humankind that members of “that group” have yet to solve. He listed among those problems:

...consciousness in the sense of sentience.... How could an event of neural information-processing cause the feel of a toothache or the taste of a lemon or the color purple? How could I know whether a worm, a robot, a brain slice in a dish, or you are sentient? Is your sensation of red the same as mine, or might it be like my sensation of green? **What is it like to be dead?**

Another imponderable is the self. **What or where is the unified center of sentience that comes into and goes out of existence**, that changes over time but remains the same entity, and that has a supreme moral worth?... **People have thought about these problems for millennia but have made no progress in solving them. They give us a sense of bewilderment, of intellectual vertigo** (1997, pp. 558,559, emp. added.).

“Fear of death.” “Lifetime of bondage.” “Sense of bewilderment.” “Intellectual vertigo.” And all so unnecessary! God never intended that we live like that, which was exactly Paul’s point in Romans 5:1: “Being therefore justified by faith, **we have peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” God wanted us to know—and went to great lengths to ensure that we did—that we are made in His image and likeness. As He is an eternal spirit Who never will die (Revelation 1:8; Psalm 90:2), so, we, too, possess within us an immortal soul that never will perish (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Paul went on to write:

Behold, I tell you a **mystery**: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:51-58, emp. added).

Jesus Himself said: “Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food **which abideth unto eternal life**.... They said therefore unto him, “What must we do, that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said unto them, “**This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent**” (John 6:27-29, emp. added). As Erickson explained:

Human experience tells us that death is sure for each of us. But what lies beyond that? The Bible tells us that death is but the transition to an eternal existence. Those who die in Christ will go to be in the presence of God.... **This is a source of immense comfort to us**. We can know that Christian loved ones who have died are now in the presence of the Lord. We can be assured that there is a judgment coming in which the apparent inequities of life will be righted (1992, pp. 174-175, emp. added).

Writing in the book of Revelation, the apostle John described in incomparable language the destiny of the righteous when this world finally comes to an end: “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them” (21:3, RSV). Thousands of years earlier, God’s pledge to Abraham had foreshadowed just such a covenant relationship. Moses recorded: “And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you” (Genesis 17:7, NKJV). Paul spoke of the fact that “if ye are Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise” (Galatians 3:29), and referred to those who serve Christ faithfully as “heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:7). James rejoiced in the fact that those who were “rich in faith” would be “heirs of the kingdom that he promised to them who love him” (James 2:5). The writer of the book of Hebrews spoke of Christ as having become “unto all them that obey him, the author of eternal salvation” (5:9). Paul told the first-century Christians in Corinth: “God both raised the Lord, and will raise up us through his power” (1 Corinthians 6:14). God raised Christ, and we have His promise that He will raise us as well: “Knowing that he that raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also with Jesus” (2 Corinthians 4:14).



No doubt that is exactly what John had in mind when he went on to say in Revelation 21: “He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son” (vs. 7). God will be Father to the man or woman who demonstrates faith in Him, perseveres to the end, and lives in humble obedience to His divine will. Such is the promise of sonship to believers. God will welcome those who believe in and obey His Son as “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17), and will—according to His promise—bestow upon them all the riches and blessings of heaven. Paul told the Christians in Thessalonica: “Comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:18). The faithful **are** comforted by them.

The unbeliever, however, is not. His fate is radically different. John, in recording the words of Christ on this subject, wrote: “He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but **he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him**” (John 3:36, emp. added). Notice how disobedience is tied to unbelief? In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus described exactly what would happen to the wicked—whom He termed “goats”—on the great Judgment Day yet to come: “And these shall go away into **eternal** punishment” (v. 46).

## CONCLUSION

Belief, or unbelief? Peace that “surpasses understanding,” or “fear of death” during “a lifetime subject to bondage”? Eternity in paradise, or eternity in punishment? How difficult a choice is this?

But, some might say, “believing does not make it so.” True, very true. The idea that **any belief—held with sincerity**—may be regarded as true, is not itself true. British philosopher of religion John Hick summarized the absurdity of such a view when he wrote: “To say that whatever is sincerely believed and practiced is, by definition, true, would be the end of all critical discrimination, both intellectual and moral” (1974, p. 148).

But this is not what Christianity advocates. One of the laws of thought employed in the field of logic is the well-known Law of Rationality, which states that one should accept as true only those conclusions for which there is adequate and justifiable evidence. This is sensible and reasonable, for accepting as true a conclusion for which there is no evidence, or inadequate evidence, would be irrational. And Christianity is not irrational. It is not, as some have suggested, “the power of believing what you know isn’t true,” or “an illogical belief in the occurrence of the improbable.”

It is quite the opposite, in fact—which is where the discipline of Christian apologetics comes into play. It seems fitting that I end this book by repeating several points that I made in chapter 1. The English word “apology” derives from the Greek *apologia*, which means to “defend” or “make a defense.” The New Testament employs the word in this manner, in fact. Two examples are noteworthy. Peter stressed the importance of a rational foundation upon which to build saving faith when he exhorted Christians: “But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: being ready always to **give answer** to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15). Paul recognized this obligation, and said that he was “set for the **defense** of the Gospel” (Philippians 1:16-17). His epistles teem with sound arguments that are intended to provide a rational undergirding for his readers’ faith.

As I also noted in chapter 1, the Christian Faith is not a vague, emotionally based belief-structure that is intended for uncritical simpletons. Rather, it is a logical system of thought that may be both accepted and defended by analytical minds. One does not have to have formal training, of course, to understand or defend the Gospel. But Christianity is capable of rational defense. The “case for Christianity” involves presenting the evidence for the existence of God, creation at the hand of God, the inspiration of the Bible, the deity of Jesus Christ, and the uniqueness of Christianity as the one true religion of the one true God (see Thompson, 2000a, 2002b).

Christianity’s distinctive position (as the only religion approved by God) is substantiated overwhelmingly by the New Testament. Since Jesus truly possesses all authority (Matthew 28:18), it stands to reason that His religion is the only one divinely authorized. Jesus spoke of building His church (Matthew 16:18). That church is His body (Ephesians 1:22-23), and there is only **one** body (Ephesians 4:4). The suggestion that man is free to “attend the church of his choice” is an insult to the One Who died for the sins of the whole world and gave His blood to purchase the church (John 1:29; 3:16; 14:6).

When the Lord asked in John 5:44, “How can ye believe, who receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not?” He summed up one of the main reasons why many are unprepared to believe in God. Man is so busy seeking and reveling in his own glory that he has neither the time nor the inclination to offer glory to His Maker. An unhealthy lust for power wrapped in a cloak of pride breeds unbelief.

And what of those who resolutely reject God’s message? King Solomon wrote: “This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). John discussed the fate of those who do not believe when he stated: “But for the fearful, and **unbelieving**, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8). God did indeed create men with “eternity in their heart” (Ecclesiastes 3:11), but some have steadfastly “refused to have God in their knowledge” (Romans 1:28). Paul, writing to the first-century Christians in Rome, warned:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness; because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools (Romans 1:18-22).

It is no wonder that the world is filled with people like Felice Gans who, in their private moments of reflection, agonizingly admit: “I sometimes wish I had a belief system.” Such individuals **could** have a belief system—based on the triple truths of God’s existence, Christ’s Sonship, and the inspiration of the Bible. Yet they freely choose **not** to believe. Surely, the words of poet John Greenleaf Whittier mentioned earlier are appropriate here: “For all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: ‘It might have been.’”



## REFERENCES

- Abelson, Phillip (1964), "Bigotry in Science," *Science*, April 24.
- Ackerman, Paul D. (1986), *It's A Young World After All* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Adams, J.Q. (1883), *American Antiquarian*, 5:331-332.
- Adams, Marilyn McCord (1990), "Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God," *The Problem of Evil*, ed. Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams (Oxford: Oxford University Press; originally published in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1989, 63S:297-310), pp. 207-221.
- Adler, Jerry (1980), "Is Man a Subtle Accident?," *Newsweek*, November 3.
- Ager, Derek V. (1993), *The Nature of the Stratigraphical Record* (New York: John Wiley & Sons).
- Aitchison, Jean (2000), *The Seeds of Speech: Language Origin and Evolution* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press).
- Allen, Steve (1990), *Steve Allen on the Bible, Religion & Morality* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus).
- Allen, Steve (1993), *More Steve Allen on the Bible, Religion & Morality* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus).
- Ambrose, E.J. (1982), *The Nature and Origin of the Biological World* (New York: John Wiley & Sons).
- Ammerman, Nancy Tatom (1990), *Baptist Battles—Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press).
- Anderson, Alan (1991), "Early Bird Threatens Archaeopteryx's Perch," *Science*, 253:35, July 5.
- Anderson, J.N.D. (1969), *Christianity: The Witness of History* (London: Tyndale).
- Anderson, Norman (1985), *Jesus Christ: The Witness of History* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), second edition.
- Andy (1998), "No Greater Sacrifice," *Widdershins*, 4[4]:no page numbers, [On-line], URL: <http://www.widdershins.org/index.html>.
- Archer, Gleason L. (1982), *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- Armour, M.C. (1988), "Issues in Interpretation," presented at 1988 Abilene Christian University lectureship.
- Arndt, William (1932), *Bible Difficulties* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia).
- Arndt, William (1955), *Does the Bible Contradict Itself?* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia).
- Arndt, William, F.W. Gingrich, and Frederick Danker (1979), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press).
- Asimov, Isaac (1968), *Asimov's Guide to the Bible: Volume One—The Old Testament* (New York: Avon).
- Asimov, Isaac (1981), "The Genesis War," *Science Digest*, 89[9]:82-87. [NOTE: This is a written debate with creationist Duane Gish.]
- Asimov, Isaac (1982), "An Interview with Isaac Asimov on Science and the Bible," Paul Kurtz, interviewer, *Free Inquiry*, 2[2]:6-10, spring.
- Assmuth, J. and E.R. Hull (1915), *Haeckel's Frauds and Forgeries* (New York: Abelard-Schuman).
- Ayala, Francisco J. (1968), "Genotype, Environment, and Population Numbers," *Science*, 162:1436.
- Ayala, Francisco, J. (1970), *Philosophy of Science*, March.
- Ayala, Francisco J. (1974), *American Scientist*, November/December.
- Baird, James O. (1978), "The Trials and Tribulations of the Church from the Beginning," *The Future of the Church*, ed. William Woodson (Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman College).
- Baker, John R. (1986), "Fundamentalism as Anti-Intellectualism," *The Humanist*, 46:26-28,34, March/April.

- Balcolm, Margaret (1967), in *The Christian Century*, May 3.
- Bales, James D. (no date-a), *Forty-Two Years on the Firing Line* (Shreveport, LA: Lambert).
- Bales, James D. (no date-b), *The Originality of Christ* (Searcy, AR: Privately published by author).
- Bales, James D. (1971), "The Theory of Evolution: A Philosophic Problem," *The Spiritual Sword*, 2[3]:1-4, April.
- Bales, J.D. (1976), *Evolution and the Scientific Method* (Searcy, AR: Privately published by author).
- Bales, J.D. and R.T. Clark (1966), *Why Scientists Accept Evolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Barclay, William (1974), *New Testament Words* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster).
- Barfield, Kenny (1988), *Why the Bible is Number 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Barker, Dan (1992), *Losing Faith in Faith* (Madison, WI: Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc.).
- Barnes, Albert (1972a reprint), *Barnes' Notes on the Old and New Testaments: Samuel-Esther* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Barnes, Albert (1972b reprint), *Barnes' Notes on the Old and New Testaments: Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Barnes, Albert (1997), *Barnes' Notes* (Electronic Database: BibleSoft).
- Barzun, Jacques (1958), *Darwin, Marx, Wagner* (New York: Doubleday).
- Bass, Thomas (1990), "Interview with Richard Dawkins," *Omni*, 12[4]:58-60,84,86-89, January.
- Beardsley, Tim (1986), "Fossil Bird Shakes Evolutionary Hypothesis," *Nature*, 322:677, August 21.
- Beare, Francis Wright (1962), *The Earliest Records of Jesus* (New York: Abingdon).
- Begun, David (2001), "Early Hominid Sows Division," [On-line], URL: [http://bric.postech.ac.kr/science/97now/01\\_2now/010222c.html](http://bric.postech.ac.kr/science/97now/01_2now/010222c.html).
- Bell, Graham. (1982), *The Masterpiece of Nature: The Evolution and Genetics of Sexuality* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).
- Bengtson, Stefan (1990), "The Solution to a Jigsaw Puzzle," *Nature*, 345:765-766, June 28.
- Bernstein, Richard J. (1967), *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "Dewey, John," ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan and the Free Press), 7:179-180.
- Bethell, Tom (1976), "Darwin's Mistake," *Harper's*, February.
- Bethell, Tom (1985), "Agnostic Evolutionists: The Taxonomic Case Against Darwin," *Harper's*, 270[1617]:49-52,56-58,60-61, February.
- Bettenson, Henry (1956), *The Early Christian Fathers* (London: Oxford University Press).
- Bettenson, Henry (1961), *Documents of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford University Press).
- Blaiklock, E.M. (1970), *The Archaeology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- Blanchard, John (2000), *Does God Believe in Atheists?* (Auburn, MA: Evangelical Press).
- Blechsmidt, Erich (1977), *The Beginnings of Human Life* (New York: Springer-Verlag).
- Blomberg, Craig L. (1987), *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press).
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich (1958), *Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York: Macmillan).
- Bonner, John Tyler (1961), "Review of *The Implications of Evolution*," *American Scientist*, 49:240, June. [See Kerut (1960) for the publication data of the book Dr. Bonner was reviewing.]
- Bowden, Malcolm (1977), *Ape-Men: Fact or Fallacy?* (Bromley, England: Sovereign Publications).
- Boyd, Robert (1969), *A Pictorial Guide to Biblical Archaeology* (New York: Bonanza Books).
- Boyer, Pascal (2001), *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought* (New York: Basic Books).

- Britten, Roy J. (2002), "Divergence between Samples of Chimpanzee and Human DNA Sequences is 5%, Counting Intels," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 99:13633-13635, October 15.
- Bromling, Brad T. (1991), "The Prophets' Portrait of Christ," *Reason & Revelation*, 11:45-47, December.
- Bromling, Brad T. (1992), "Who Sent the Hurricane?," *Reasoning from Revelation*, 4:17, September.
- Brown, Andrew (1999), *The Darwin Wars* (New York: Simon and Schuster).
- Brown, Colin (1984), *Miracles and the Critical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).
- Brown, Philip J. (2000), *Dionysus* [On-line], URL: <http://www.belinus.co.uk/mythology/Dionysus.htm>.
- Bruce, F.F. (1953), *The New Testament Documents—Are They Reliable?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), fourth edition.
- Bruce, F.F. (1967), *The New Testament Documents—Are They Reliable?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), fifth edition.
- Budge, E.A. Wallis, Trans. (1960), *Papyrus of Ani: The Egyptian Book of the Dead* (New York: Gramercy, 1999 reprint).
- Burns, George W. (1973), *The Science of Genetics: An Introduction to Heredity* (New York: MacMillan), third edition.
- Butt, Kyle (2000), "The Historical Christ—Fact or Fiction?," *Reason & Revelation*, 20:1-6, January.
- Butt, Kyle (2002) "Jesus Christ—Dead or Alive?," *Reason & Revelation*, 22:1-7, February.
- Campbell, Alexander (1827), *The Christian Baptist* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate, 1955 reprint).
- Cavalli-Sforza, Luigi Luca (2000), *Genes, Peoples, and Languages* (New York: North Point Press).
- Chain, Ernest (1970), *Responsibility and the Scientist in Modern Western Society* (London: Council of Christians and Jews).
- Chapman, Colin (1981), *The Case for Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).
- Chatterjee, Sankar (1991), "Cranial Anatomy and Relationships of a New Triassic Bird from Texas," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London (biology)*, 332:277-346.
- Childers, Jeff W., Douglas A. Foster, and Jack R. Reese (2001), *The Crux of the Matter* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press).
- Clarke, Adam (1996), *Adam Clarke's Commentary* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft).
- Clark, Gordon H. (1957), *Thales to Dewey—A History of Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980 reprint).
- Clark, Gordon H. (1964), *The Philosophy of Science* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press).
- Clark, W. LeGros (1955), *The Fossil Evidence for Human Evolution* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press).
- Clayton, John N. (1976), *The Source* (South Bend, IN: Privately published by author).
- Clayton, John (1977), "The Origin of Satan," *Evidences of God, Volume I* (South Bend, IN: Privately published by the author), pp. 154-155.
- Clayton, John N. (1978), *The Source* (South Bend, IN: Privately published by author), second edition.
- Cloud, John (2000), "A Kinder, Gentler Death," *Time*, 156[12]:60-67, September 18.
- Coffman, Burton (1993), *Commentary on II Kings* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press).
- Crick, Francis (1981), *Life Itself: Its Origin and Nature* (New York: Simon and Schuster).
- Crick, Francis (1994), *The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul* (New York: Simon & Schuster).
- Criswell, W.A. (1972), *Did Man Just Happen?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- Crukowski, Kenneth L., Mark W. Hamilton, and James W. Thompson (2002), *God's Holy Fire* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press).
- Daley, Janet (1996), "Interview" in *Daily Telegraph* (London), May 1.

- Dalton, Rex (2003), "Flat-faced Man in Family Feud," [On-line], URL: [www.nature.com/nsu/030324/030324-10.html](http://www.nature.com/nsu/030324/030324-10.html), March 28.
- Daniel-Rops, Henri, (1969), "Silence of Jesus' Contemporaries," *The Sources for the Life of Christ*, ed. Henri Daniel-Rops (New York: Hawthorn).
- Darlington, P.D. (1980), *Evolution for Naturalists* (New York: John Wiley & Sons).
- Darrow, Clarence and Wallace Rice (1929), *Infidels and Heretics: An Agnostic's Anthology* (Boston, MA: Stratford).
- Darwin, Charles (1859), *The Origin of Species* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons), sixth edition.
- Darwin, Charles (1956 edition), *The Origin of Species* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons).
- Darwin, Charles (1962 reprint), *The Origin of Species* (New York: Collier Books, sixth edition).
- Darwin, Francis (1898), *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin* (London: Appleton).
- Davidheiser, Bolton (1969), *Evolution and Christian Faith* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed).
- Davidson, B. (1963), *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (NY: Harper & Brothers).
- Davidson, Keay (1999), *Carl Sagan: A Life* (New York: John Wiley & Sons).
- Davies, Paul (1988), *The Cosmic Blueprint: New Discoveries in Nature's Creative Ability to Order the Universe* (New York: Simon & Schuster).
- Davies, Paul and Phillip Adams (1998), *More Big Questions* (Sydney, Australia: ABC Books).
- Davis, Bernard (1985), "Molecular Genetics and the Foundations of Evolution," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, winter.
- Davis, John Jefferson (1985), *Evangelical Ethics* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed).
- Davis, Wendy (1995), "As Old as the Moon: Sacrifice in History," *Widdershins*, June 21, 1[2]:no page, [On-line], URL: <http://www.widdershins.org/index.html>.
- Dawkins, Richard (1986), *The Blind Watchmaker* (New York: W.W. Norton).
- Dawkins, Richard (1989), *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press).
- Dawkins, Richard (1995), *River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life* (New York: Basic Books).
- de Grazia, Alfred, R. Juergens and L. Stecchini, eds. (1966), *The Velikovsky Affair* (Hyde Park, NY: University Books).
- DeHoff, George W. (1944), *Why We Believe the Bible* (Murfreesboro, TN: DeHoff).
- Demoulin, Vincent (1979), "Protein and Nucleic Acid Sequence Data and Phylogeny," *Science*, September 7.
- Denton, Michael (1985), *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* (London: Burnett Books).
- Denton, Michael (1998), *Nature's Destiny: How the Laws of Biology Reveal Purpose in the Universe* (New York: Simon & Schuster).
- Dewar, D. and H.S. Shelton (1974), *Is Evolution Proved?* (London: Hollis and Carter).
- Deweese, Joe and Bert Thompson (2000), "Questions and Answers," *Reason & Revelation*, 12:93-94, December.
- DeWitt, David A. (2002), "Hox Hype," [On-line], URL: [http://www.answersingenesis.org/docs2002/0215hox\\_hype.asp](http://www.answersingenesis.org/docs2002/0215hox_hype.asp).
- Dillow, Joseph C. (1982), *The Waters Above* (Chicago, IL: Moody).
- Doane, T.W. (1882), *Bible Myths and Their Parallels in Other Religions* (Kila, MT: Kessinger).
- Dobzhansky, Theodosius (1955), *Evolution, Genetics and Man* (New York: John Wiley & Sons).
- Dobzhansky, Theodosius (1956), *The Biological Basis of Human Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press).
- Dobzhansky, Theodosius (1962), *Mankind Evolving* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).

- Dobzhansky, Theodosius (1967), "Changing Man," *Science*, 155:409-415, January 27.
- Dose, Klaus (1988), "The Origin of Life: More Questions than Answers," *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*, 13[4]: 348.
- Douglas, Erwin, James W. Valentine, and David Jablonski (1997), "The Origin of Animal Body Plans," *American Scientist*, 85:126-137, March/April.
- Dummelow, J.R., editor (1944), *The One Volume Bible Commentary* (New York: Macmillan).
- Durant, Will, ed. (1932), *On the Meaning of Life* (New York: Long and Smith).
- Durant, Will (1961), *The Story of Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster).
- Durant, Will (1980), "We Are in the Last Stage of a Pagan Period," *Chicago Tribune Syndicate*, April.
- Eccles, John C. and Daniel N. Robinson (1984), *The Wonder of Being Human: Our Brain and Our Mind* (New York: The Free Press).
- Eccles, John C. (1992), *The Human Psyche* (London: Routledge).
- Eckelmann, Herman J. (1991), "Some Concluding Thoughts on Evolutionary Belief," *Evidence for Faith: Deciding the God Question*, ed. John W. Montgomery (Dallas, TX: Word).
- Edwards, Rem (1972), *Reason and Religion* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich).
- Ehrlich, Paul R. (2000), *Human Natures: Genes, Cultures, and the Human Prospect* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press).
- Ehrlich, Paul R. and Richard W. Holm (1963), *The Process of Evolution* (New York: McGraw-Hill).
- Ehrlich, Paul R. and L.C. Birch (1967), "Evolutionary History and Population Biology," *Nature*, 214:352.
- Eiseley, Loren (1957), *The Immense Journey* (New York: Random House).
- Elliott, Ralph H. (1961), *The Message of Genesis* (Nashville, TN: Broadman).
- Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1981), (Chicago, IL: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.), fifteenth edition.
- Environmental Mutagenic Society (1975), *Science*, 187:503-504, February 14.
- Erickson, Millard J. (1992), *Does It Matter What I Believe?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Evans-Pritchard, E.E. (1965), *Theories of Primitive Religion* (Oxford, England: Clarendon).
- Evolution* (n.d.), (Ontario, Canada: International Christian Crusade).
- Feduccia, Allan (1993), "Evidence from Claw Geometry Indicating Arboreal Habits of *Archaeopteryx*," *Science*, 259: 790-793, February 5.
- Fenter, Randy (1989), "Do not Go Beyond What is Written," *Image*, 5[8]:9-10,31; 5[9]:9-11.
- Fix, William (1984), *The Bone Peddlers* (New York: Macmillan).
- Fletcher, Joseph (1979), *Humanhood: Essays in Biomedical Ethics* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus).
- Flew, Antony G.N. and Alistair C. MacIntyre, eds. (1955), *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (New York: Macmillan).
- Fosdick, Harry Emerson (1938), *A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (New York: Harper & Brothers).
- Foster, R.C. (1971), *Studies in the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Fox, Sidney and Klaus Dose (1977), *Molecular Evolution and the Origin of Life* (New York: Marcel Dekker).
- Frair, Wayne A. and Percival Davis (1983), *A Case for Creation* (Chicago, IL: Moody).
- Frame, John M. (1994), *Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing).
- Franklin, Stephen T. (1993), "Theological Foundations for the Uniqueness of Christ as Hope and Judge," *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 17[1]:29-53, January.



- Freke, Timothy and Peter Gandy (1999), *The Jesus Mysteries* (New York: Harmony Books).
- Friend, Tim (1993), "Clues to Human Development Float in Nature's Gene Pool," *USA Today*, p. 5-D, July 27.
- Fuller, B.A.G. (1945), *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt, revised edition).
- Fuller, Harry J. and Oswald Tippo (1961), *College Botany* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston).
- Futuyma, Douglas J. (1987), "World Without Design," *Natural History*, 96[3]:34, March.
- Gardner, Eldon J. (1968), *Principles of Genetics* (New York: John Wiley and Sons).
- Garrett, Leroy (1987), "In What Way is the Bible Authoritative?," *Restoration Review*, March, 29:43.
- Garrett, Leroy (1991), "The Church Preceded the New Testament," *Restoration Review*, 33:133-136, September.
- Gaussen, L. (1949), *The Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*, trans. David D. Scott (Chicago, IL: Moody).
- Gee, Henry (1999), *In Search of Deep Time* (New York: Free Press).
- Geisler, Norman L. (1976), *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Geisler, Norman L. (1978), *The Roots of Evil* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan).
- Geisler, Norman L. and Ronald M. Brooks (1990), *When Skeptics Ask* (Wheaton, IL: Victor).
- Geisler, Norman L. and William E. Nix (1986), *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago, IL: Moody), revised edition.
- George, T.N. (1960), *Science Progress*, 48[1]:1-5, January.
- Gish, Duane T. (1973), *Evolution: The Fossils Say No!* (San Diego, CA: Creation-Life Publishers).
- Gish, Duane (1981), "The Genesis War," *Science Digest*, 89[9]:82-87. [NOTE: This is a written debate with evolutionist Isaac Asimov.]
- Gish, Duane T. (1995), *Evolution: The Fossils Still Say No!* (El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research).
- Glass, H. Bentley (1953), "The Genetics of the Dunkers," *Scientific American*, August. Reprinted in *Human Variation and Origins* (San Francisco, CA: W.H. Freeman), pp. 200-204.
- Goldsmith, Donald (1997), *The Hunt for Life on Mars* (New York: Dutton).
- Gould, Stephen Jay (1977a), *Ever Since Darwin* (New York: W.W. Norton).
- Gould, Stephen Jay (1977b), "Evolution's Erratic Pace," *Natural History*, 86[5]:12-14, May.
- Gould, Stephen Jay (1977c), *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
- Gould, Stephen Jay (1977d), "The Return of Hopeful Monsters," *Natural History*, 86[6]:22-30, June-July.
- Gould, Stephen Jay (1980), "Is a New and General Theory of Evolution Emerging?," *Paleobiology*, 6:119-130, winter.
- Gould, Stephen J. (1987), "Darwinism Defined: The Difference Between Fact and Theory," *Discover*, 8[1]:64-65, 68-70, January.
- Gould, Stephen Jay (1990), "An Earful of Jaw," *Natural History*, 99[3]:12-23, March.
- Gould, Stephen Jay (1994), "The Evolution of Life on Earth," *Scientific American*, 271:85-91, October.
- Gould, Stephen Jay (1997), "Nonoverlapping Magisteria," *Natural History*, 106[2]:16-22, March.
- Gould, Stephen Jay (1999), "Dorothy, It's Really Oz," *Time*, 154[8]:59, August 23.
- Gould, Stephen Jay (2002), *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
- Grassé, Pierre-Paul (1977), *The Evolution of Living Organisms* (New York: Academic Press).
- Graves, Kersey (1875), *The World's Sixteen Crucified Saviors* (Escondido, CA: The Book Tree, 1999 reprint).
- Graves, Robert (1960), *The Greek Myths* (New York: Penguin).

- Green, D.E. and R.F. Goldberger (1967), *Molecular Insights into the Living Process* (New York: Academic Press).
- Greenleaf, Simon (1995), *The Testimony of the Evangelists* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Classics).
- Gribbin, John (1981), "Of a Comet Born," *Science Digest*, 89[3]:14, April.
- Grigg, Russell (1996), "Ernst Haeckel: Evangelist for Evolution and Apostle of Deceit," *Creation Ex Nihilo*, 18[2]: 33-36, March-May.
- Grigg, Russell (1998), "Fraud Rediscovered," *Creation Ex Nihilo*, 20[2]:49-51, March-May.
- Grizzell, Gary L. (1986), "Rahab the Harlot and Situation Ethics," *The Defender*, 15[9]:66-67,70,72, September.
- Guthrie, Donald (1990), *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press).
- Habermas, Gary R. (1984), *Ancient Evidence for the Life of Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson).
- Habermas, Gary R. (1996), *The Historical Jesus* (Joplin, MO: College Press).
- Haley, John W. (1951 reprint), *Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate).
- Hall, Marshall and Sandra Hall (1974), *The Truth: God or Evolution?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Ham, Ken (1987), *The Lie: Evolution* (El Cajon, CA: Creation-Life Publishers).
- Hardy, Alistair (1965), *The Living Stream* (New York: Collins).
- Harold, Franklin M. (2001), *The Way of the Cell* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press).
- Harris, R. Laird, Gleason Archer Jr. and Bruce Waltke, eds. (1980), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody).
- Harrison, E.F. (1968), *A Short Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).
- Harrison, R.K. (1982), "Firmament," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).
- Harrub, Brad and Bert Thompson (2001), "Archaeopteryx, Archaeoraptor, and the 'Dinosaurs to Birds' Theory" [Parts I & II], *Reason & Revelation*, 21:25-31,33-39, April and May.
- Harrub, Brad and Bert Thompson (2002), "An Examination of the Medical Evidence for the Death of Christ," *Reason & Revelation*, 22:1-7, January.
- Harrub, Brad and Bert Thompson (2003), *The Truth About Human Origins* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).
- Harvey, A.E. (1982), *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster).
- Hawthorne, J.N. (1960), *Questions of Science and Faith* (London: Tyndale).
- Hayden, Thomas (2002), "A Theory Evolves," *U.S. News & World Report*, 133[4]:42-50, July 29.
- Hayward, Alan (1985), *Creation or Evolution: The Facts and the Fallacies* (London: Triangle Books).
- Heeren, Fred (1995), *Show Me God* (Wheeling, IL: Searchlight Publications).
- Hefley, James C. (1986), *The Truth in Crisis*, volume I (Hannibal, MO: Hannibal Books).
- Hefley, James C. (1986-1991), *The Truth in Crisis*, volumes I-VI (Hannibal, MO: Hannibal Books). [NOTE: Volume six in the series is titled, *The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention*.]
- Helfinstine, Robert F. and Jerry D. Roth (1994), *Texas Tracks and Artifacts* (Anoka, MN: Privately published by authors).
- Hendrix, Eddie (1976), "What About Those Copyist Errors?" *Firm Foundation*, 93[14]:5, April 6.
- Hick, John (1974), *Truth and Dialogue* (London: Sheldon Press).
- Hickman, Cleveland, Larry Roberts, and Allan Robertson (1996), *Integrated Principles of Zoology* (Dubuque, IA: William C. Brown).
- Hitching, Francis (1982), *The Neck of the Giraffe* (New York: Ticknor and Fields).

- Hoffman, John S. (1987), *Grand Canyon Visual* (San Diego, CA: Arts and Crafts Press).
- Holding, James Patrick (2001), "Copyist Errors," [On-line], URL: <http://www.tektonics.org/copyisterrors.html>.
- Horgan, John (1996), *The End of Science* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley).
- Horne, Thomas H. (1841), *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), 1970 reprint.
- Horne, Thomas H. (1970 edition), *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Howard, Ted and Jeremy Rifkin (1977), *Who Should Play God?* (New York: Dell).
- Howells, W.W. (1944), *Mankind So Far* (New York: Doubleday).
- Hoyle, Fred (1950), *The Nature of the Universe* (New York: Harper and Brothers).
- Hoyle, Fred (1981a), "The Big Bang in Astronomy," *New Scientist*, 92:521-527, November 19.
- Hoyle, Fred (1981b), "Hoyle on Evolution," *Nature*, 294:105,148, November 12.
- Hoyle, Fred (1982), "The Universe: Past and Present Reflections," *Annual Review of Astronomy and Astrophysics*, 20:16.
- Hoyle, Fred and Chandra Wickramasinghe (1981), *Evolution from Space* (New York: Simon & Schuster).
- Hoyle, Fred and Chandra Wickramasinghe (1991), "Where Microbes Boldly Went," *New Scientist*, 91:412-415, August 13.
- Huff, Darrell (1959), *How to Take a Chance* (New York: W.W. Norton).
- Hughes, Norman (1984a), "Monism, Belief, and Scientific Explanations," *Does God Exist?*, John N. Clayton, ed., September/October, 11[5]:12-18.
- Hughes, Norman (1984b), Personal correspondence with Wayne Jackson. See: "A Pepperdine Professor and Evolution," *Christian Courier*, December, 20[8]:31.
- Hughes, Norman (1986), "Letter to the Editor," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, December, 38[4]:282.
- Hull, David (1974), *Philosophy of Biological Science* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall).
- Humanist Manifestos I & II* (1973), (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus).
- "Human-Like Tracks in Stone are Riddle to Scientists" (1938), *Science News Letter*, pp. 278-279, October 29.
- Hunt, Dave (1996), *In Defense of the Faith* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House).
- Hurst, William Randolph Jr. (1971), "Editor's Report," *The [Los Angeles] Herald-Examiner*, November 14.
- Huxley, Aldous (1966), "Confessions of a Professed Atheist," *Report: Perspective on the News*, 3:19, June.
- Huxley, Julian (1946), *Rationalist Annual*. See also: L.M. Davies (1947), "The Present State of Technology," *Transactions of the Victoria Institute* (London: Victoria Institute), 79:70.
- Huxley, Julian (1957), *Religion Without Revelation* (London: Max Parrish), second edition.
- Huxley, Julian (1958), *The Wonderful World of Life: The Story of Evolution* (Garden City, NY: Garden City Books).
- Huxley, Julian (1960a), "'At Random': A Television Preview," *Issues in Evolution*, [Volume 3 of *Evolution After Darwin*], ed. Sol Tax (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), pp. 41-65.
- Huxley, Julian (1960b), "The Emergence of Darwinism," *The Evolution of Life* [Volume I of *Evolution After Darwin*], ed. Sol Tax (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), pp. 1-21.
- Huxley, Julian (1960c), "The Evolutionary Vision," *Issues in Evolution*, [Volume 3 of *Evolution After Darwin*], ed. Sol Tax (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), pp. 249-261.
- Ingalls, Albert G. (1940), "The Carboniferous Mystery," *Scientific American*, 162:14, January.

- Jackson, Wayne (1980), "Earthquakes—A Biblical Perspective," *Christian Courier*, 16:6-7, June.
- Jackson, Wayne (1986), "From Our Mail," *Christian Courier*, 22[6]:23, October.
- Jackson, Wayne (1990), "Defending the Faith with a Broken Sword," Parts I-III, *Christian Courier*, 26:1,6-7,10-11, May, June, and July.
- Jackson, Wayne (1991), "Josephus and the Bible" [Part II] *Reason & Revelation*, 11:29-32, August.
- Jackson, Wayne (1997), "The Value of Human Suffering," *Reason & Revelation*, 17:25-27, April.
- Jackson, Wayne, and Bert Thompson (1992), *In the Shadow of Darwin—A Review of the Teachings of John N. Clayton* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).
- James, Robison B. and David S. Dockery, eds. (1992), *Beyond the Impasse?—Scripture, Interpretation, and Theology in Baptist Life* (Nashville, TN: Broadman).
- Jastrow, Robert (1977), *Until the Sun Dies* (New York: W.W. Norton).
- Jevons, W. Stanley (1928), *Elementary Lessons in Logic* (London: MacMillan).
- Johanson, Donald C. and Maitland Edey (1981), *Lucy: The Beginnings of Humankind* (New York: Simon & Schuster).
- Johnson, Phillip E. (1991), *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press).
- Jones, Steve (1996), *In the Blood: God, Genes, and Destiny* (London: HarperCollins).
- Josephus, Flavius (1957 reprint), *The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus*, trans. William Whitson (Philadelphia, PA: John Whitson).
- Josephus, Flavius (1988 reprint), *Josephus: The Essential Writings*, trans. Paul L Maier (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel).
- Jung, Carl (1961), *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*, Aniela Jaffé, ed. (New York: Random House).
- Kähler, Martin (1896), *The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ*, trans. Carl E. Braaten (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress), 1964 reprint.
- Kaiser, Walter (1983), *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- Kane, J. Herbert (1975), *A Global View of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Keeton, F. (1973), *Elements of Biological Science* (New York: W.W. Norton).
- Keil, C.F. and Franz Delitzsch (1949), *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).
- Keil, C.F. and Franz Delitzsch (1982 reprint), *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).
- Keil, C.F. and Franz Delitzsch (1996 reprint), *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson).
- Keil, C.F. and Franz Delitzsch (1996), *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft), new updated edition.
- Keith, Arthur (1932), *The Human Body* (London: Butterworth).
- Kelcy, Raymond C. (1968), *The Living Word Commentary: The Letters of Paul to the Thessalonians* (Austin, TX: Sweet).
- Kennedy, D. James and Jerry Newcombe (1994), *What If Christ Had Never Been Born?* (Nashville, TN: Nelson).
- Kenyon, Frederic (1939), *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode).
- Kerkut, George A. (1960), *The Implications of Evolution* (London: Pergamon).
- Key, Bobby (1982), "Sin Is a Reproach to Any People," *Four State Gospel News*, 21[12]:2, December.
- Key, Howard Clark (1970), *Jesus in History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World).

- Kimura, Motoo (1976), "Population Genetics and Molecular Evolution," *The Johns Hopkins Medical Journal*, 138 [6]:253-261, June.
- Geisler, Norman L. and J. Kirby Anderson (1987), *Origin Science* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Kiss, Ferenc (1949), *History*, April.
- Kitts, David G. (1974), "Paleontology and Evolutionary Theory," *Evolution*, 28:458-472, September.
- Klausner, Joseph (1989), *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Bloch).
- Klotz, John W. (1970), *Genes, Genesis and Evolution* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia).
- Klotz, John (1985), *Studies in Creation* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia).
- Koestler, Arthur (1978), *Janus: A Summing Up* (New York: Vintage Books).
- Koster, John (1989), *The Atheist Syndrome* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt).
- Kurtz, Paul (1973), "Scientific Humanism," *The Humanist Alternative*, ed. Paul Kurtz (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Press).
- Kushner, Harold (1981), *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (New York: Schocken Books).
- Lammerts, Walter, ed. (1976), *Why not Creation?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), pp. 185-193.
- Lavalley, Louis (1986), "The Early Church Defended Creation Science," *Impact* [#160], (El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research), October.
- Leach, James W. (1961), *Functional Anatomy—Mammalian and Comparative* (New York: McGraw-Hill).
- Leadership* magazine (2002), 20[2]:73-75, spring.
- Leakey, Louis S.B. (1966), "*Homo habilis*, *Homo erectus*, and *Australopithecus*," *Nature*, 209:1280-1281.
- Leakey, Mary D. (1971), *Olduvai Gorge* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press).
- Leakey, Mary D. (1979), "Footprints in the Ashes of Time," *National Geographic*, 155[4]:446-457, April.
- Leakey, Meave, et al. (2001), "New Hominin Genus from Eastern Africa Shows Diverse Middle Pliocene Lineages," *Nature*, 410:433-440, March 22.
- Leakey, Richard (1978), *People of the Lake* (New York: E.P. Dutton).
- Leakey Richard and Roger Lewin (1977), *Origins* (New York: E.P. Dutton).
- Leonard, Bill J. (1990), *God's Last & Only Hope—The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).
- Lenski, R.C.W. (1943), *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg).
- Lester, Lane P. and Raymond Bohlin (1984), *The Natural Limits of Biological Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- Leupold, H.C. (1971), *Exposition of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), one-volume edition.
- Lewis, C.S. (1952), *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan).
- Lewis, Joseph (1985), *Ingersoll the Magnificent* (Austin, TX: American Atheist Press).
- Lewis, Warren (1972), "Every Scripture Breathed of God is Profitable," *Mission*, January.
- Lewontin, Richard (1997), "Billions and Billions of Demons," *The New York Review*, January 9, p. 31.
- Lindsell, Harold (1976), *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- Linton, Irwin H. (1943), *A Lawyer Examines the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), sixth edition.
- Lipson, H.S. (1980), "A Physicist Looks at Evolution," *Physics Bulletin*, p. 138, May.
- Little, Paul (1967), *Know Why You Believe* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books).

- Lloyd, Steven M. (1990), "Answering False Doctrines Relating to James," *Studies in James*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications).
- Løvtrup, Søren (1987), *Darwinism: The Refutation of a Myth* (London: Croom and Helm).
- Lubenow, Marvin (1992), *Bones of Contention* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Lygre, David (1979), *Life Manipulation* (New York: Walker).
- Lyons, Eric and Bert Thompson (2002a), "In the 'Image and Likeness of God'" [Part I], *Reason & Revelation*, 22: 17-23, March.
- Lyons, Eric and Bert Thompson (2002b), "In the 'Image and Likeness of God'" [Part II], *Reason & Revelation*, 22: 25-31, April.
- Macbeth, Norman (1982), "Darwinism: A Time for Funerals," *Towards*, 2:22, Spring.
- Mackie, J.L. (1990), "Evil and Omnipotence," *The Problem of Evil*, ed. Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams (Oxford: Oxford University Press; originally published in *Mind*, 1955, 64:200-12), pp. 25-37.
- Maddox, John (1994), "The Genesis Code by Numbers," *Nature*, 367:111, January 13.
- Maddox, John (1998), *What Remains to be Discovered* (New York: The Free Press).
- Major, Trevor (1995), "What Happens to Faith When We Doubt?," *Reason and Revelation*, 15:94, December.
- Margulis, Lynn and Dorion Sagan (1995), *What is Life?* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).
- Margulis, Lynn and Dorion Sagan (2002), *Acquiring Genomes: A Theory of the Origins of Species* (New York: Basic Books).
- Marks, Jonathan (2002), *What It Means to be 98% Chimpanzee* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).
- Marsland, Douglas (1969), *Principles of Modern Biology* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston).
- Martin, C.P. (1953), "A Non-Geneticist Looks at Evolution," *American Scientist*, Vol. 41.
- Marx, Paul (1975), *Death Without Dignity* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press).
- Matthew, William D. (1939), *Climate and Evolution* (New York: New York Academy of Sciences), second edition.
- Maunder, E.W. (1939), "Astronomy," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).
- Mayr, Ernst (1963), *Animal Species and Evolution* (Boston, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University).
- Mayr, Ernst (1965), *Animal Species and Evolution* (Boston: Harvard University Press).
- Mayr, Ernst (2001), *What Evolution Is* (New York: Basic Books).
- McCabe, Joseph (1993), *The Myth of the Resurrection and Other Essays* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, reprint of 1926 edition).
- McClintock, John and James Strong (1879), *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1970 reprint).
- McCord, Hugo (1979), "Internal Evidences of the Bible's Inspiration," *The Holy Scriptures*, ed. Wendell Winkler (Fort Worth, TX: Winkler Publications).
- McCormick, Richard (1974), "To Save or Let Die—The Dilemma of Modern Medicine," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 229:172-176.
- McFadden, Johnjoe (2000), *Quantum Evolution: The New Science of Life* (New York: W.W. Norton).
- McGarvey, J.W. (1886), *Evidences of Christianity* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard).
- McKinsey, C. Dennis (1995), *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Errancy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus).
- McKown, Delos B. (1985), *With Faith and Fury* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus).

- McKown, Delos B. (1993), *The Myth-Maker's Magic—Behind the Illusion of "Creation Science"* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus).
- McDowell, Josh (1999), *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Nashville, TN: Nelson).
- McDowell, Josh and Bill Wilson (1988), *He Walked Among Us* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers).
- McGarvey, J.W. (1875), *The New Testament Commentary: Matthew and Mark* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light).
- McGarvey, J.W. (1958 reprint), *Sermons* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate).
- McGrath, Alister (1993), *Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern Myths* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- McKechinie, Jean L., ed. (1978), *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Collins World).
- McNichol, Allan J. (1989), "Theological Method on the Bible Among Churches of Christ: A Proposal," *Christian Scholars Conference Papers* [Part II], presented on July 21 at the annual Christian Scholars Conference.
- Meier, John P. (1990), "Jesus in Josephus: A Modest Proposal," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 52:76-99.
- Metzger, Bruce M. (1965), *The New Testament—Its Background, Growth, and Content* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon).
- Metzger, Bruce M. (1968), *The Text of the New Testament* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press).
- Miethe, Terry L. and Gary R. Habermas (1993), *Why Believe? God Exists!* (Joplin, MO: College Press).
- Miller, Clyde M. (1991), *The Living Word Commentary on the Old Testament—I & II Kings* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press).
- Miller, Dave (2003), "Modern-Day Miracles, Tongue-Speaking, and Holy Spirit Baptism: A Refutation," *Reason & Revelation*, 23:17-23, March.
- Miller, Eddie J. (1983), "Did God Approve Rahab's Lie," *Words of Truth*, 19[12]:4, March 25.
- Miller, Kenneth R. (1999), *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution* (New York: Cliff Street Books).
- Milner, Richard (1990), *The Encyclopedia of Evolution* (New York: Facts on File).
- Mitchell, Basil (1990), *How to Play Theological Ping Pong* (London: Hodder and Stoughton).
- Monastersky, Richard (1997), "When Earth Tipped, Life Went Wild," *Science News*, 152:52, July 26.
- Monastersky, Richard (1999), "Waking Up to the Dawn of Vertebrates," *Science News*, 156:292, November 6.
- Monod, Jacques (1969), *From Biology to Ethics* (Salk Institute for Biological Studies), October.
- Monod, Jacques (1971), *Chance and Necessity*, trans. A. Wainhouse (New York: Knopf).
- Monser, J.W. (1961), *An Encyclopedia on the Evidences; or Masterpieces of Many Minds* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Montagu, Ashley (1960), *Human Heredity* (New York: Mentor Books).
- Moody, Paul A. (1962), *Introduction to Evolution* (New York: Harper & Row).
- Moore, John N. (1973), *American Biology Teacher*, January.
- Moore, John N. and Harold Slusher (1977), *Biology: A Search for Order in Complexity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- Moorhead P.S. and M.M. Kaplan, eds. (1967), *Mathematical Challenges to the neo-Darwinian Interpretation of Evolution*, Monograph #5, (Philadelphia, PA: Wistar University Press).
- Morgan, Elaine (1989), *The Aquatic Ape: A Theory of Human Evolution* (London: Souvenir Press).
- Morgan, T.H. (1923), "The Bearing of Mendelism on the Origin of Species," *Scientific Monthly*, March.
- Morris, Henry M. (1963), *The Twilight of Evolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Morris, Henry M. (1966), *Studies in the Bible and Science* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).

- Morris, Henry M. (1974a), *Many Infallible Proofs* (San Diego, CA: Creation-Life Publishers).
- Morris, Henry M. (1974b), *Scientific Creationism* (San Diego, CA: Creation-Life Publishers).
- Morris, Henry M. (1977), "Circular Reasoning in Evolutionary Geology," *Impact* [#48] (El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research), June.
- Morris, Henry M. (1982), *Evolution in Turmoil* (San Diego, CA: Creation-Life Publishers).
- Morris, Henry M. (1984), *The Biblical Basis for Modern Science* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Morris, John D. (1994), *The Young Earth* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books).
- Muller, Hermann J. (1950), "Radiation Damage to the Genetic Material," *American Scientist*, 38:33-50, 126, January.
- Muller, Hermann J. (1966), as quoted in *Arkansas Gazette*, p. 2, June 28.
- Murray, N. Patrick and Neal D. Buffaloe (1981), *Creationism and Evolution* (Little Rock, AR: The Bookmark).
- Myers, Edward P. (1988), "Christian Apologists Influenced Caesar," *Gospel Advocate*, 80[7]:18-19, July.
- Myron, Harold (2001), "Gill Slits in Humans," [On-line], URL: <http://Newton.dep.anl.gov/askasci/zoo00/zoo00105.htm>.
- Nash, J. Madeleine (2002), "Inside the Womb," *Time*, 160[20]:68-78, November 11.
- Newman, H.H. (1932), *Evolution Yesterday and Today* (Baltimore, MD: William & Wilkins).
- Newberg, Andrew, Eugene D' Aquili, and Vance Rause (2001), *Why God Won't Go Away* (New York: Ballantine).
- Niebuhr, Reinhold (1949), *A Comparison of Christian and Modern Views of History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons).
- Nilsson, Heribert (1954), *Synthetische Artbildung* (Lund, Sweden: Verlag CWE Gleenrup).
- Novikoff, Alex (1945), "The Concept of Integrative Levels of Biology," *Science*, 101:212-213, March 2.
- O'Hair, Madalyn Murray (1983), "Introduction," *Sixty-Five Press Interviews with Robert G. Ingersoll* (Austin, TX: American Atheist Press).
- O'Hair, Madalyn Murray (1999), *Leadership Journal*, 20[2]:75, spring.
- O'Hear, Anthony (1997), *Beyond Evolution: Human Nature and the Limits of Evolutionary Explanation* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Oppenheimer, Jane (1967), *Essays in the History of Embryology and Biology* (Boston, MA: MIT Press).
- O'Rahilly, Ronan and Fabiola Müller (1992), *Human Embryology and Teratology* (New York: John Wiley & Sons).
- "Ordovician Hammer Report" (1984), *Creation Ex Nihilo*, 2[3]:16-17, February.
- Orgel, Leslie E. (1994), "The Origin of Life on Earth," *Scientific American*, 271:77-83, October.
- O'Rourke, J.E. (1976), "Pragmatism Versus Materialism in Stratigraphy," *American Journal of Science*, 276:51, January.
- Osborn, Henry Fairfield (1918), *The Origin and Evolution of Life* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons).
- "Osiris" (1997a), *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (London: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.) 8:1026-1027.
- Oswalt, John N. (1998) *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* [New International Commentary on the Old Testament] (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).
- Otten, Herman J. (1965), *Baal or God* (New Haven, MO: Leader Publishing).
- Otto, M.C. (1940), *The Human Enterprise* (New York: Crofts).
- Oxnard, Charles E. (1975), "The Place of the Australopithecines in Human Evolution: Grounds for Doubt?," *Nature*, 258:389-395, December.
- Pack, Frank (1975), *The Gospel According to John* (Austin, TX: Sweet).



- Pache, Rene (1971), *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).
- Paine, Thomas (1795), *Age of Reason* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1924 reprint).
- Patterson, Colin (1981), Speech given in November at American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Quotations are from audio tape transcript. See Bethell (1985) for a report on Dr. Patterson's speech.
- Patterson, Colin (1982), "Cladistics," Interview on British Broadcasting Corporation, March 4; Peter Franz, interviewer; Brian Lak, producer.
- Patterson, Colin (1999), *Evolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), second edition.
- Payne, Franklin E., Jr. (1985), *Biblical/Medical Ethics* (Milford, MI: Mott Media).
- Pennisi, Elizabeth (1997), "Haeckel's Embryos: Fraud Rediscovered," *Science*, 277:1435, September 5.
- Penzias Arno, (1992), as quoted in *Cosmos, Bios, and Theos*, ed. Henry Margenau. and Abraham Varghese (La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishers).
- Perkins, Sid (2000), "The Making of a Grand Canyon," *Science News*, 158:218-220, September 30.
- Peseley, G.A. (1982), "The Epistemological Status of Natural Selection," *Laval Theologique et Philosophique*, Vol. 38, February.
- Pike, James A. (1964), *A Time for Christian Candor* (New York: Harper and Row).
- Pike, James A. (1967), *If This be Heresy* (New York: Harper and Row).
- Pike, Nelson (1990), "Hume on Evil," *The Problem of Evil*, ed. Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams (Oxford: Oxford University Press; originally published in *The Philosophical Review*, 1963, 72:180-197), pp. 38-52.
- Pilbeam, David (1982), "New Hominoid Skull Material from the Miocene of Pakistan," *Nature*, 295:232-234, January.
- Pilbeam, David and Elwyn Simons (1971), "A Gorilla-Sized Ape from the Miocene of India," *Science*, 173:23, July.
- Pinker, Steven (1997a), *How the Mind Works* (New York: W.W. Norton).
- Pinker, Steven (1997b), "Interview," *Sunday Telegraph* (London).
- Pinnock, Clark H. (1971), *Set Forth Your Case* (Chicago, IL: Moody).
- Pitman, Michael (1984), *Adam and Evolution* (London: Rider).
- Poole, Michael (1990), *A Guide to Science and Belief* (Oxford, England: Lion).
- Popper, Karl R. (1972), *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press).
- Porter, Walter L. (1974), "Why Do the Innocent Suffer?," *Firm Foundation*, 91[30]:467,475, July 23.
- Price, Reynolds (1999), "Jesus of Nazareth—Then and Now," *Time*, 154[23]:84-94, December 6.
- Provine, William B. (1988), "Scientists, Face It! Science and Religion are Incompatible," *The Scientist*, 2[16]:10, September 5.
- Rajak, Tessa (1984), *Josephus: The Historian and His Society* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress).
- Rall, Harris (1936), *Faith for Today* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury).
- Ramm, Bernard (1953), *Protestant Christian Evidences* (Chicago, IL: Moody).
- Raup, D. (1979), "Conflicts Between Darwin and Paleontology," *Field Museum of Natural History Bulletin*, 50[1]: 24-25.
- Rawlings, Jennifer, (2000), "Letter to the Editor," *Newsweek*, 135[16]:17, April 17.
- Rehwinkel, Alfred M. (1951), *The Flood* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia).
- Reichenbach, Bruce (1976), "Natural Evils and Natural Laws," *International Philosophical Quarterly*.
- Repetski, John E. (1978), "A Fish from the Upper Cambrian of North America," *Science*, 200:529-531, May 5.

- Rennie, John (2002), "15 Ways to Expose Creationist Nonsense," *Scientific American*, 287[1]:78-85, July.
- Ricci, Paul (1986), *Fundamentals of Critical Thinking* (Lexington, MA: Ginn Press).
- Richardson, Michael (1997a), "Embryonic Fraud Lives On," *New Scientist*, 155[2098]:23, September 6.
- Richardson, Michael (1997b), "Heterochrony and the Phylotypic Period," *Developmental Biology*, 172:412-421.
- Richardson, Michael (1998), "Haeckel's Embryos, Continued," *Science*, 281:1289, August 28.
- Richardson, M., J. Hanken, L. Selwood, G.M. Wright, R.J. Richards, C. Pieau, A. Raynaud (1998), "Haeckel, Embryos, and Evolution," *Science*, 280:983-984, May 15.
- Ritland, R. (1982), "Historical Development of the Current Understanding of the Geologic Column: Part II," *Origins*, 9:28-47.
- Rimmer, Harry (1936), *The Harmony of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).
- Roberts, Alexander and James Donaldson, eds. (no date), "Introductory Note to Irenaeus *Against Heresies*," *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).
- Robinson, John A.T. (1965), *A New Reformation* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster).
- Robinson, John A.T. (1976), *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster). See also: "The New Testament Dating Game," *Time*, p. 95, March 21, 1977.
- Roth, Ariel A. (1998), *Origins: Linking Science and Scripture* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association).
- Rusch, W.H. Sr. (1970), "Human Footprints in Rocks," *Creation Research Society Quarterly*, 7:201-213.
- Ruse, Michael (1995), *Evolutionary Naturalism* (Routledge: London).
- Ruse, Michael and Edward O. Wilson (1985), "Evolution and Ethics," *New Scientist*, October 17.
- Rush, Terry (1991), *Afraid God Works, Afraid He Doesn't* (West Monroe, LA: Howard).
- Russell, Bertrand (1935), *Religion and Science* (London: Oxford University Press; reprinted in 1961).
- Sagan, Carl (1996), "In the Valley of the Shadow," *Parade*, March 10, pp. 18-21.
- Sagan, Carl (1997), *Billions and Billions: Thoughts on Life and Death at the Brink of the Millennium* (New York: Random House).
- Sagan, Carl and Ann Druyan (1990), "The Question of Abortion," *Parade*, pp. 4-8, April 22.
- Sanders, E.P. (1993), *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (New York: Lane-Penguin).
- Sanderson, Ivan T. (1967), *Uninvited Visitors* (New York: Cowles Education Corporation).
- Sapienza, Linda Angeloff (2001), "'God Bless America'? I Just Like the Tune," *Time*, 138[24]:14, December 10.
- Sarfati, Jonathan D. (2002a), "15 Ways to Refute Materialistic Bigotry," [On-line], URL: [http://www.answersingenesis.org/news/scientific\\_american.asp](http://www.answersingenesis.org/news/scientific_american.asp).
- Sarfati, Jonathan (2002b), *Refuting Evolution 2* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books).
- Sartre, Jean Paul, (1961), "Existentialism and Humanism," *French Philosophers from Descartes to Sartre*, ed. Leonard M. Marsak (New York: Meridian).
- Sartre, Jean Paul (1966), "Existentialism," Reprinted in *A Casebook on Existentialism*, ed. William V. Spanos (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell).
- Schadewald, Robert J. (1983), "The Evolution of Bible-Science," *Scientists Confront Creationism*, ed. Laurie R. Godfrey (New York: W.W. Norton).
- Schaff, Philip (1910), *History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons).
- Schaff, Philip (1913), *The Person of Christ: The Miracle of History* (New York: American Tract Society).

- Schaff, Philip & N.M. Roussel (1868), *The Romance of M. Renan and the Christ of the Gospels* (New York: Carlton & Lanahan).
- Schonfield, Hugh J. (1965), *The Passover Plot* (New York: Bantam).
- Schwartz, Jeffrey H. (1999), *Sudden Origins* (New York: John Wiley & Sons).
- Schweitzer, Albert. (1964), *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* (New York: Macmillan).
- Scott, Andrew (1985), "Update on Genesis," *New Scientist*, 106:30-33, May 2.
- Suetonius (1957 reprint), *The Twelve Caesars*, trans. Robert Graves (London: Penguin).
- Sewell, E.G. and David Lipscomb (1921), *Questions Answered* (Nashville, TN: McQuiddy).
- Sheler, Jeffery L. (1990/1991), "A Rift Over the Book," *U.S. News and World Report*, December 31/January 6 (combined issue).
- Sheler, Jeffery L. (2000), "In Texas, a Battle for the Baptists' Soul," *U.S. News and World Report*, 129[19]:34, November 13.
- Shermer, Michael (2001), *The Borderlands of Science: Where Sense Meets Nonsense* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press).
- Shklovskii, I.S. and Carl Sagan (1966), *Intelligent Life in the Universe*, (New York: Holden-Day).
- Simon, W.M. (1967), *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "Renan, Joseph Ernest," ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan and the Free Press), 4:179-180.
- Simpson, George Gaylord (1944) *Tempo and Mode in Evolution* (New York: Columbia University Press).
- Simpson, George Gaylord (1947), "The Problem of Plan and Purpose in Nature," *Scientific Monthly*, pp. 481-489.
- Simpson, George Gaylord (1949), *The Meaning of Evolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).
- Simpson, George Gaylord (1953), *Life of the Past* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).
- Simpson, George Gaylord (1964a), "The Nonprevalence of Humanoids," *Science*, 143:769-775, February 21.
- Simpson, George Gaylord (1964b), *This View of Life* (New York: Harcourt-Brace).
- Simpson, George Gaylord (1965), *Life: An Introduction to Biology* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World).
- Simpson, George Gaylord (1960), "The World into Which Darwin Led Us," *Science*, 131:966-974, April 1.
- Simpson, George Gaylord (1967), *The Meaning of Evolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), revised edition.
- Simpson, George Gaylord and W.S. Beck (1965), *Life: An Introduction to Biology* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World), second edition.
- Sinnot, Edmund (1953), *Two Roads to Truth* (New York: Viking).
- Sinnot, E.W., L.C. Dunn, and T. Dobzhansky (1958), *Principles of Genetics* (Columbus, OH: McGraw Hill) fifth edition.
- Sippert, Albert (1989), *From Eternity to Eternity* (North Mankato, MN: Sippert Publishing).
- Snelling, Andrew A. (1995), "The Whale Fossil in Diatomite, Lompoc, California," *Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal*, 9[2]:244-258.
- Sockman, Ralph (1961), *The Meaning of Suffering* (New York: Women's Division, Christian Service Boards of Missions, The Methodist Church).
- Solomon, David (1972), "Procurator," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Cecil Roth (Jerusalem: Keter).
- Speiser, E.A. (1964), "Genesis," *The Anchor Bible Commentary* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday).
- Spence, H.D.M. and J.S. Exell (1950), *The Pulpit Commentary—I & II Kings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).

- Spence, H.D.M., and Joseph S. Exell, eds. (1978), *The Pulpit Commentary, Ruth, I & II Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).
- Sproul, R.C., John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley (1984), *Classical Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: MI: Zondervan).
- Stott, John (1971), *Basic Christianity* (Downers Groves, IL: InterVarsity Press).
- Strausburg and Weimer, (1947), *General Biology* (New York: John Wiley & Sons).
- Sunderland, Luther D. (1982), "Evolution? Prominent Scientist Reconsiders," *Impact* [#108], June (San Diego, CA: Institute for Creation Research).
- Sunderland, Luther (1984), *Darwin's Enigma* (San Diego, CA: Master Books).
- Tacitus, Cornelius P. (1952 reprint), *The Annals and the Histories*, trans. Michael Grant (Chicago, IL: William Benton), Great Books of the Western World Series, vol. 15.
- Talbott, Stephen L., ed. (1976), *Velikovsky Reconsidered* (New York: Warner).
- Taylor, Ian (1984), *In the Minds of Men* (Toronto, Canada: TFE Publishing).
- Teaching Science in a Climate of Controversy* (1986), (Ipswich, MA: American Scientific Affiliation).
- Thaxton, Charles, Walter L. Bradley, and Roger L. Olsen (1984), *The Mystery of Life's Origin* (New York: Philosophical Library).
- Thiede, Carsten Peter and Matthew D'Ancona (1996), *Eyewitness to Jesus* (New York: Doubleday).
- Thomas, Lewis (2002), "On Science and Uncertainty," [On-line], URL: <http://www.philosophy-religion.org/handouts/uncertainty.htm>. [This is a reprint of an article by Dr. Thomas that appeared in *Discover* magazine, 1:58-59, October 1980.]
- Thompson, Bert (1990), "Does Human Suffering Disprove the Existence of a Benevolent God?," *Giving a Reason for Our Hope*, ed. Winford Claiborne (Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman College), pp. 280-285.
- Thompson, Bert (1991a), "Questions and Answers: Did Darwin Repent?," *Reason & Revelation*, 11:5-6, February.
- Thompson, Bert (1991b), "Questions and Answers: Madalyn Murray O'Hair's FCC Petition," *Reason & Revelation*, 11:19-20, May.
- Thompson, Bert (1993), "Do Natural Disasters Negate Divine Benevolence?," *Reason and Revelation*, 13:65-69, September.
- Thompson, Bert (1994a), "Faith and Knowledge," *Reason & Revelation*, 14:14-27,29-31, April.
- Thompson, Bert (1994b), "Famous Enemies of Christ—Ancient and Modern," *Reason & Revelation*, 14:1-7, January.
- Thompson, Bert (1999a), "Questions and Answers," *Reason & Revelation*, 19:89-94, December.
- Thompson, Bert (1999b), Questions and Answers: Has NASA Discovered Joshua's 'Lost Day'?, *Reason & Revelation*, 19:14-15, February.
- Thompson, Bert (2000a), *Creation Compromises* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).
- Thompson, Bert (2000b), *Rock-Solid Faith: How to Build It* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).
- Thompson, Bert (2002), *Rock-Solid Faith: How to Sustain It* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).
- Thompson, Bert (2003), *The Bible and the Age of the Earth* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press), second revised edition.
- Thompson, Bert (2004), *The Scientific Case for Creation* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).
- Thompson, Bert and Wayne Jackson (1992), *A Study Course in Christian Evidences* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).
- Thompson, Bert, Brad Harrub, and Branyon May (2003), "The Big Bang Theory—A Biblical Critique," *Reason & Revelation*, 23:65-71, July.

- Thompson, Keith S. (1982), "The Meanings of Evolution," *American Scientist*, September/October.
- Thompson, W.R. (1956), "Introduction," *The Origin of Species* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Sons), pp. vii-xxv.
- Thornhill, Randy and Craig T. Palmer (2000), *A Natural History of Rape* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).
- Thornhill, Randy (2001), "A Natural History of Rape," Lecture delivered at Simon Fraser University. See full transcript on-line] at URL: [http://www.harbour.sfu.ca/general-info/psa/psych/Thornhill\\_on\\_rape.pdf](http://www.harbour.sfu.ca/general-info/psa/psych/Thornhill_on_rape.pdf).
- Till, Farrell and Norman L. Geisler (1994), Debate held at Columbus College (Columbus, GA) on March 29. Quotations are from written transcript of the debate.
- "A Tiny Worm Challenges Evolution" (no date), [On-line], URL: <http://www.cs.unc.edu/plaisted/ce/worm.html>.
- Topoff, Howard (1997), "A Charles Darwin (187th) Birthday Quiz," *American Scientist*, 85[2]:104-107, March-April.
- Torrey, R.A. (1907), *Difficulties and Alleged Errors and Contradictions in the Bible* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell).
- Trench, R.C. (no date), *Christ the Desire of All Nations; or the Unconscious Prophecies of Heathendom* (Searcy, AR: Bales Publications).
- Trout, Virgil R. (1970), "Some Relationships of the Bible and Science," *Spiritual Sword*, 1[2]:47-49, January.
- "Unicorn" (1997), *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (London: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.), 12:129.
- Van Bebber, Mark and Paul S. Taylor (1995), *Creation and Time: A Report on the Progressive Creationist Book by Hugh Ross* (Mesa, AZ: Eden Communications).
- Velikovsky, Immanuel (1984), *Stargazers and Gravediggers* (New York: Quill).
- Vine, W.E. (1981), *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell).
- von Braun, Wernher (1969), in *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 19, p. 5.
- von Fange, Erich A. (1974), "Time Upside Down," *Creation Research Society Quarterly*, 11:19, June.
- Walker, Marshall (1963), *The Nature of Scientific Thought* (New York: Prentice-Hall).
- Warner, Wayne, ed. (1972), *One Thousand Stories and Quotations of Famous People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Wasserman, Aaron O. (1973), *Biology* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts).
- Watson, D.M.S. (1929), "Adaptation," *Nature*.
- Watson, James D. (1968), *The Double Helix* (New York: Atheneum).
- Watson, James D. (1987), *Molecular Biology of the Gene* (New York: W.A. Benjamin).
- Watson, Lyall (1982), "The Water People," *Science Digest*, 90[5]:44, May.
- Webster, Allen (1993), "Did God Approve of Rahab's Lie?," *Words of Truth*, 29[25]:2,4, June 18.
- Weinberg, Steven (1977), *The First Three Minutes* (New York: Basic Books).
- Weisz, Paul (1965), *Elements of Biology* (New York: McGraw-Hill).
- Wells, Albert (1962), *The Christian Message in a Scientific Age* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press).
- Wells, H.G. (1931), *Outline of History, Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind* (Garden City, NY: Garden City Publishing).
- Wells, Steve (2001), *Skeptic's Annotated Bible*, [On-line], URL: <http://www.Skepticsannotatedbible.com>.
- Wesson, Robert (1997), *Beyond Natural Selection* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).
- Whaling, Thornton (1929), *Science and Religion Today* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press).
- Whitcomb, John C. and Henry M. Morris (1961), *The Genesis Flood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- White, Lynn Jr. (1979), "The Ecology of Our Science," *Science* 80, premier issue, November/December.
- White, Tim (2003), "Early Hominids—Diversity or Distortion?," *Science*, 299:1994-1995, 1997, March 28.

- White, William (1976), "Firmament," *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- "Whose Ape Is It, Anyway?" (1984), *Science News*, 125[23]:361, June 9.
- Wilder-Smith, A.E. (1970), *Man's Origin: Man's Destiny* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw).
- Wilder-Smith, A.E. (1975), *Man's Origin: Man's Destiny* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship).
- Wilken, Robert L. (1990), "The Piety of the Persecutors," *Christian History*, 9:16.
- Williams, Glanville (1957), *The Sanctity of Life and the Criminal Law* (New York: Knopf).
- Willis, John (1979), *Genesis—Living Word Commentary* (Austin, TX: Sweet).
- Wilson, Edward O. (1978), *On Human Nature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
- Wilson, Edward O. (1998), *Consilience* (New York: Knopf).
- Wilson, Robert Dick (1929), *A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament* (New York: Harper Brothers).
- Wilson, William (n.d.), *Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies* (McLean, VA: MacDonald).
- Winchester, A.M. (1951), *Genetics* (Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin).
- Wise, Kurt (2002), *Faith, Form, and Time* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman).
- Wolthius, Enno (1963), *Science, God & You* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Woods, Guy N. (1976), "Man Created in God's Image," *Gospel Advocate*, 118[33]:514,518, August.
- Woods, Guy N. (1982), "'And be not Conformed to this World,'" *Gospel Advocate*, 124[1]:2, January 7.
- Woodson, William (1994), *Changes Agents and Churches of Christ* (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications).
- Woodward, Kenneth L. (1999), "2000 Years of Jesus," *Newsweek*, 133[13]:52-63, March 29.
- Woodward, Kenneth L. (2000), "The Other Jesus," *Newsweek*, 135[13]:50-60, March 27.
- Workman, Gary (1991), "What is the 'Firmament' Spoken of in the Bible?," *The Restorer*, 11[4]:14, May/June.
- Wright, Sewall (1997), "The Role of Mutation, Inbreeding, and Selection in Evolution," *Evolution*, ed. Mark Ridley (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press), pp. 32-40.
- Wysong, R.L. (1976), *The Creation-Evolution Controversy* (East Lansing, MI: Inquiry Press).
- Yamauchi, Edwin M. (1995), "Jesus Outside the New Testament: What is the Evidence?," *Jesus Under Fire*, ed. Michael J. Wilkins and J.P. Moreland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- Young, Edward J. (1964), *Studies in Genesis One* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed).
- Young, Edward J. (1969), *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).
- Youngson, Robert (1998), *Scientific Blunders: A Brief History of How Wrong Scientists Can Sometimes Be* (New York: Carroll and Graf).
- Zacharias, Ravi (1990), *A Shattered Visage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Zerr, E.M. (1952) *Bible Commentary* (Bowling Green, KY: Guardian of Truth Foundation).
- Zirkle, Conway (1959), *Evolution, Marxian Biology, and the Social Scene* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press).
- Zomberg, Don (2000), "Letter to the Editor," *Newsweek*, 135[16]:17, April 10.
- Zuckerman, Solly (1970), *Beyond the Ivory Tower* (New York: Taplinger).