

Clearing a Path for the Gospel

Instructor's Guide

The purpose of this course is to gain an understanding of five concepts: 1) the nature of apologetics, 2) the nature of truth, 3) revelation and the Lord God, 4) the proper use of science and scholarly research, and 5) the limitations of science and scholarly research. The instructor needs to invest sufficient time to comprehend the materials and present it in a way that people who do not have formal philosophical training can comprehend the important issues.

In teaching advanced topics, it is important for the instructor to realize the goal of his teaching. The saving truths are presented in the Scriptures, but they do not benefit a person's soul unless they are transcribed from the Scriptures onto the wall of faith in the mind and heart of the believer. Ideally, a Christian's faith will be a beautiful mural of all the teachings of the Bible appropriately linked with each other to give the Christian a perfect knowledge of God's will. This mural will never be completed in this world, but it is important that the Christian and those that teach him or her work to make it more complete. While pastors have a well-developed mural based on long and systematic training, laypeople often have scattered facts from the Bible placed here and there on their wall of faith. Sometimes they are misconnected with each other, and sometimes wrong information learned from non-Scriptural sources will be intertwined with Scriptural truth. In his presentation of the Scriptural material, the teacher will always try to guide his hearers so that they will put it into the correct place in the mural and make the correct attachments to the other materials that are there. This is what makes teaching the word of God and its defense challenging and rewarding.

For this course, which will study using reason to help people remove obstacles to giving the Scriptures a fair hearing, you will first need to discuss the ways in which scholars attempt to find and define truth. There are four fundamental ways that this is done: 1) theology, which is based on divine revelation, 2) philosophy, which is based on self-evident truth, 3) mathematics and formal logic, which are forms of deductive reasoning based on definition, and 4) science, which is a form of inductive reasoning based on observation. It is critical that the students grasp the differences among these approaches to truth, so they do not mix them. This is a challenging class, so it is essential to encourage students to stick with it and read the material several times, if necessary.

This course is set up to be taught in nineteen 90-minute sessions, but the material in the lessons can be regrouped for any number of class periods that are available, or it can be divided into sub-courses. From educational research we know that reading the material before the class, answering the study questions, and considering the issues that are being raised by the readings are essential to maximizing learning. Students should be strongly encouraged to do so. It is good to close the lessons with hymns written by Lutheran lyricists. The texts of suitable hymns are included in the student notes.

Note that the study questions and answers are inserted in the teaching text where they might be used, but they can be moved in the actual presentation or ignored.

Lesson 1 - Introduction

It is important to be blunt with the students about the difficulty of the course. There are great benefits to studying this material, but the operative word is “study,” not sit and listen and hope to learn something. It might also be useful to discuss the backgrounds of the authors of the book on which the course is based. These are senior men in the scholarly world. Each has significant experience in writing books and in presenting scientific and/or conference papers.

I. Nature of apologetics

A. Introduction to apologetics

1. Definition of apologetics (Greek *apologia* = to defend oneself) a) It is the defense of the Christian faith using Scripture and sound logic (not just hand waving). b) In the 16th and 17th centuries, European Lutherans published a great deal about apologetics, but somehow in the New World, the topic dropped off our radar screens. Americans have been concerned about other things. There has been constant change in the world, often meaning that nothing really gets accomplished.

Q5. What is the purpose of this book? A: To teach people how to apply reasoning properly to remove obstacles in their path to giving God’s Word a fair hearing.

To fill the void, one needs to understand the roots of theology. Lutheran theology is based on God’s Grace, with Scripture being used to interpret Scripture. Calvinistic theology is based on the supremacy of God, and reason is used to interpret Scripture. Arminian theology is “spirit-led,” so one’s indwelling spirit is used to interpret the Scriptures.

2. Why the book was written. a) The apologetics discussion in America today has been dominated by Reformed voices. b) Reformed thinking has had a dramatic impact on the way theologically conservative Lutherans, both laypeople and called workers, have addressed these challenges to Christian teachings. c) Lutherans need and want help explaining their faith to people who dismiss it or attack it. They need to get back to the basics because our reliance on non-Lutheran work will cause problems in the long run. d) Many Christian parents worry that their children will lose their faith while attending college or even in high school, and they want to prepare themselves to answer the tough questions and to guide their children in the way of God’s truth.

B. What is apologetics?

Q1. What is apologetics? A: The defense of one’s position using reason.

1. It is a defense. a) We Lutherans have a confession called the Apology to the Augsburg Confession. It is not a document that says, “We’re sorry we wrote the Augsburg Confession.” It is a document that defends what that earlier confession says. b) The concept of apologetics come from a Greek courtroom, in which people listen to an argument to find out what the truth is (forensic justification). It is talking about speaking in a way that persuades people of the truth. c) All true apologetics is about clearing a path for the gospel.

Q2. What is faith? A: The acceptance of something that is not seen.

2. The key point is that we attempt to explain the reason for the hope that we have. {“*Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for; the proof of what is not seen.*” Hebrews 11:1} **Most people do not have much practice with this.** a) We cannot convince anyone with a clever argument that Jesus paid for all the sins of the whole world or logically explain the doctrine of the Trinity. b) Faith is trusting in what we cannot prove. Faith is clinging to what God promises even when all the evidence we can see seems to contradict Him and all the people we most love tell us that we are wasting our time. **It is hard to contend with family and close friends.** c) Apologetics is not about winning arguments. It is not about convincing people that the Bible is true. It is about getting a hearing for the gospel. d) **Lutheran teaching is based on the law and the gospel.** People bring up all kinds of objections that are really designed to avoid the law and the gospel. Apologetics is about dispensing with those objections so that we can get down to the real conversation, “What has Jesus done for you?”

II. Strategy in apologetics **We have to play the ball where it lies in this world.**

A. Apologetics in a postmodern world **It would be a good idea to explain modernity at this point.**

Q3. What is postmodernism? A: A philosophy that different people can have different truths. People are their own standard of truth.

1. What is postmodernism? a) **Note that people really do not understand “multi-culturalism.”** It is the tremendous cultural shift that has taken place since the 1950’s. One of the things that is meant by this statement is that people’s standards for judging what is true have changed. b) Science and logic are being progressively discounted as the path to truth. **Despite tremendous advances in technology.** Many people today believe that truth is relative. “What’s true for you might not be true for me.” c) They may even say that they respect our position and admire our sincerity, but they disagree with us and insist that this is their right. **People avoid trying to reconcile differences.**
2. Where do they look for truth? a) Most Americans today would echo Obi-wan Kenobi and say one needs to stretch out with one’s feelings. **This is true both of Secular Humanism and Arminianism.** The only thing a person can count on as true is what is found in his or her heart. **Jesus said that out of the heart proceeds all evil.** b) People consider a church to be a community, a place of belonging. **Social Christians and Unitarians.** It speaks its own language and perpetuates its own traditions and maintains its own truth. This view fails to recognize that the church’s commission is to spread the message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

B. The issue of not knowing

Q4. Why is not knowing not always a handicap? A: Too much knowledge can cause us to look to ourselves rather than to God.

1. Information may be withheld for a purpose. a) We study God's Word, but although God always knows the answers, He does not always choose to tell them to us. Part of the genius of the Lutheran Reformation was the realization that there is some information that God just didn't give us. God knows what we need to know and what we do not need to know. [God knows; we should not worry](#). b) Young children ask all kinds of questions, but they often cannot understand a detailed answer. It could be confusing or possibly even unhealthy for a child to have too much information. In spiritual things, we are often like little children.

2. There is more to faith than intellectual understanding. [We do not like to trust God. Being curious in temporal matters is fine, but in spiritual matters it can be dangerous](#). a) When God doesn't give us the information or the evidence we would like to have, we are tempted to look to archaeology, history or science to supply the evidence needed to prove our faith. [i.e., buttress it](#). b) If we become obsessed with trying to find answers in these disciplines, we put our own faith at risk. [We try to leverage God](#). The most obvious way is that we begin to doubt God's Word, because we cannot prove it. [We must beware of doubting God; it is dangerous](#). c) Ignorance may cause us to engage in intellectual dishonesty. We may select facts from secular disciplines that seem to support what we believe and ignore those that don't. [It is essential that we do honest analysis](#). We build a fragile house of cards that needs constant reinforcement. d) Christians can say, "I don't know" when God chooses not to tell us something because we trust Him completely. He knows what is best to share with us. He will work to accomplish His purpose through His Word.

3. What were the authors trying to do? [Get rid of the chaff](#). a) The purpose of this book is to give apologists the tools they need to remove manmade obstacles which prevent people from hearing the message of Christ, thereby leaving the stumbling block of the cross itself as the only intellectual obstacle to faith. b) The tools in the book will aid the apologist in disarming bad arguments against God and his Word, in undermining bad presuppositions and worldviews that are at odds with the biblical message, and in stripping away all the peripheral attacks reason makes on the gospel, so that hearts may be confronted by the central claims of the gospel, both historical and theological, on its own terms. [In short, to get at the real issues](#). c) Nothing in the book conflicts with the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Scriptures or the Confessions of the Lutheran church. d) The highest standards of scholarship were used in writing the book. All materials were submitted to those with the expertise to judge the accuracy and quality of our work. All assumptions have been stated clearly and accurately to prevent false agreement or false conflict. [No polemics](#). e) The authors avoided using *ad hominem* arguments, creating **strawmen** to avoid our opponents' real positions, or engaging in lines of argumentation which they might reasonably recognize as containing fallacies. [Honest argumentation](#). f) The authors refrained from setting false targets. To edit what the adversaries have said, as TV shows often do, would make it easy to make unbelievers look foolish and all Christians look brilliant. That would be false security. [Respect opponents but keep them honest](#). When we came into actual contact with an unbeliever, we would not be prepared to address the questions and attitudes that were keeping him or her out of the kingdom of God. g) Apologetics requires calmness and a cool head. [i.e., the dedication and discipline of a scholar](#). It requires an ever-growing knowledge of what God actually says in his Word. It requires serious study of the world around us and a real world

understanding of the times we live in. It also requires an unflinching willingness to examine what we do say and to abandon favorite approaches that don't really help us in our efforts.

III. Common fallacies to avoid.

Q8. Why is it important to understand fallacies? A: To prevent using them. To recognize them in one's opponents' arguments.

Guilt by association: Because two things share or can be implied to share some property, they should be treated in the same manner. [People who like sauerkraut are like the Nazis because the Nazis liked sauerkraut.]

Psychogenetic Fallacy: If an idea arose from a biased mind, then the idea itself must also be faulty. [Compact cars are bad because Hitler started the use of them by promoting the Volkswagen.]

Appeal to Motive: An idea is dismissed based solely on the supposed motive of its proposer rather than on its merit. [Only someone who had something to hide would advance such an argument.]

Q7. What is a "strawman" in formal argumentation? A: A caricature of an opponent's argument that is much easier to attack.

Attacking a strawman: A caricature of an opponent's argument rather than the argument itself is attacked. [If enacted, the real effect of my opponent's proposal would be to starve the poor. No honest person could support such a proposal.]

Causal oversimplification: There is only one cause of an outcome when, in reality, there are numerous contributing causes. [Students go to Duke because it has a good basketball team.]

Chronological snobbery: The thinking, the art, or the science of an earlier time is inherently inferior (or better) to that of the present, simply by virtue of its temporal priority. [The Egyptians used hieroglyphic writing because they just hadn't thought of alphabetic script yet.]

Complex question fallacy: A complex issue of multiple components is framed in such a way that only a single answer is allowed. This answer, however, cannot address all the component issues. [Unless we redistribute all the wealth in America, our poor people will never have a chance to share in America's prosperity.]

Continuum fallacy: If doing something is possible, then doing a minute amount more of the something will also be possible. [If it is possible for a person to lift X pounds of sand, then it is possible for him to lift X pounds plus one grain of sand. This process can be continued until it would be claimed that he could lift a ton of sand.]

False analogy: An analogy is used that bears only a weak similarity to the case of interest. [Party balloons are full of helium. Hot air balloons are somewhat like party balloons. Therefore, hot air balloons are full of helium.]

False dichotomy: It is falsely asserted there are only two choices, either A or B, so that rejecting A is selecting B. [If you don't fly between Minneapolis and Chicago, you'll have to take a mule cart.]

Moving the goalposts: All evidence presented in response to a specific claim is dismissed and some other (often greater) evidence is demanded. [Your claim that Fred is a bad baseball player because he has a low batting average and makes a lot of errors doesn't really address the issue of his contributions to the team. More evidence is needed.]

Slippery slope: A relatively small first step inevitably leads to a chain of related events culminating in some significantly undesirable impact and thus the first step should not be allowed to happen. (Also called the **Camel's nose**) ******[This is not a fallacy if the step actually changes the underlying system, thereby causing it to be more susceptible to further change.]******

Special pleadings: There is something special about a particular case so that it cannot be evaluated in the usual way. [You cannot see the dragon that lives in my basement because he is invisible, and he does not leave footprints because he floats.]

Appeal to Common Practice: The correctness of a practice is asserted because it is commonly accepted or used. [Binge drinking can't be bad for your health because everybody's doing it.]

Appeal to The Masses: A proposition is true or good solely because the majority of the people in some group believe it to be true or good. [Four out of five left-handed plumbers recommend....]

Appeal to Novelty: Something is superior to the current approach solely because it is new or modern. [Try our new toothpaste with improved cleaning power.]

Appeal to Tradition: Something is true solely because it has long been held to be true. [We all know that if rain starts before seven, it ends before eleven.]

Flattery: The members of the audience are flattered to gain their support. [Smart people like you can see the importance of this proposal.]

Composition fallacy: Something which is true of a part must also be true of the whole. [Since auto windshields are made of glass, therefore, the whole auto must be made of glass.]

Vacuous Truth: Something is asserted that is technically true but meaningless because nothing is affected. [If there were unicorns in nature, they would all have single horns on their foreheads. True, by definition, but meaningless because there are no unicorns in nature.]

Out-of-context: Words are selected out of their context in a document in a way that distorts the passage's original meaning.

Q6. What is an *ad hominem* argument? **A:** An argument directed at the person, not at what he said.

Ad Hominem: An advocate attacks his or her opponent personally rather than the arguments that the opponent is advancing.

Personal Abuse: An advocate verbally abuses his or her opponent rather than refuting that opponent's argument. [My opponent is a disgusting excuse for a human being.]

Poisoning the well: (The advantage of speaking first.) Adverse information about an opponent in the debate with the intention of discrediting everything that that person says. [My opponent is a notorious liar.]

Lesson 2 - The Nature of Truth I

IV. The Use of Human Reason

Pilate's question "What is truth?" should not be taken lightly. While Pilate was being facetious, a method to determine "truth" is essential if we are to be able to say that something is true.

A. Introduction

Q1. What is the ministerial use of reason? A: Reason that is used to organize information and put it into a logical arrangement.

Q2. What is the magisterial use of reason? A: Reason that is used to judge whether information is correct.

1. Theologians and reason. a) The **ministerial use** of reason is its use as a servant. It recognizes that a master, namely Christ, is speaking in his Word and that all reason's efforts are under the authority of God's Word. It enables the workers in the LORD's kingdom to use the Word of God in sermons and classes and at the hospital bedside, at the graveside or in a counseling session. *This is like a banker teller and money; she handles it but does not change the nature of it.* b) The **magisterial use** of reason is its use in a judgmental way. It places human intellect and thought above the Word of God and subjects it to human evaluation. *This is like an appraiser, who sets a value on a piece of jewelry.*
2. Setting the Stage. a) It is necessary to establish the playing field by defining the terms and drafting the rules for discussion which we will use. Emotion can cloud our judgment. *Everyone needs to have the same rules to play a game.* b) How much and what kind of information do we need to have for a statement to be true? [People are asked to swear "to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth" in an effort to bracket what might be the actual truth in the matter at hand.] *Truth can be elusive.* c) Many people think that they can recognize truth when they encounter it, even if they cannot put a precise definition of truth into words. This is seldom the case. *Consider the truth of details versus the truth of gestalt, i.e., the forest verses the trees.* d) There are four common systematic approaches to searching for truth: deductive reasoning, inductive reasoning, philosophy, and theology.

B. Definition of terms

1. **Truth** is something that conforms to a given standard. *Belief never creates truth.* a) Something isn't true because we believe it is true or we want it to be true. It is true because we can compare it to a standard. [Any statement made about a triangle must be able to be validated against the definition of a triangle.] b) Something can be true compared to one standard but not true compared to another. [A word spelled correctly according to American English usage might be spelled incorrectly according to British English usage.]

Q3. What is a standard? A: A set of rules based on specific assumptions.

2. A **standard** is a set of rules and/or procedures which are based on specific assumptions. [The Internal Revenue Code is a standard by which all tax returns are judged to be correct (true) or incorrect (false).] *Hermeneutics is another example. It is always necessary to determine what the standard is.*
3. An **assumption** is something taken to be true based on its perceived reasonableness. a) It cannot be proved because there is no standard by which to compare it. [We assume, without verifying, the measuring devices which all the subcontractors use while building a house are correctly calibrated.] *It is always necessary to determine what the assumptions are.* b) *Every system of truth eventually reaches the point where faith is required.* c) A more restrictive assumption is often called a **premise** or a **proposition**. These are usually stated after the general assumptions are made. *i.e., first defining assumptions, then premises.* d) A correct assumption or premise is said to be **well-grounded**.
4. A **fact** in argumentation is something that everyone agrees is true. *A fact makes sense in light of what is known.* a) A “fact” may be true or not true. The participants merely must think it to be true, so that no further discussion of it is required. b) The veracity of a fact may change with time. [Six hundred years ago everyone believed that the sun orbited the earth, so it was a fact.] *The word “fact” is generally misused.*

Q4. How does evidence differ from facts? A: Evidence is information that is gathered according to a standard and whose details of collection are documented. Facts are what we all agree is true.

5. **Evidence** consists of specimens, artifacts, information and/or documents. a) It is collected or created according to a pre-established set of rules. b) The collector or creator must note the time, place, and circumstances of the collection or creation. c) The type and nature of the evidence will vary greatly, depending on the nature of the argument for which it has been gathered. *Evidence is real and unchanging, but more of it might be gathered.*
6. A **conclusion** is the outcome of a reasoning process. a) Assumptions are made, evidence is presented, and reasoning is done in an effort to determine the truth according to some standard. b) A conclusion is sometimes called a **consequent**. *A conclusion is the result of a process.*
7. A **line of argumentation** is the reasoning that connects the assumptions with the conclusion. *It takes us from situation A to situation B.* a) It is **valid** if it is free of inconsistencies and fallacies.
8. An **argument** consists of a set of assumptions (which may be supplemented with evidence), a line of argumentation, and a conclusion. a) It is **sound** if the assumptions are well-grounded and if the line of argumentation is valid. *Well-grounded premises, reliable evidence, and valid reasoning produce a sound conclusion.*

9. A **fallacy** is a mistake in drawing a conclusion either unsupported by the evidence, based on false premises or derived from faulty reasoning. It is essential to recognize fallacies to prevent being led astray.

V. Deductive Reasoning - Reasoning from the general to the specific

- A. Definition: In deductive reasoning one starts with known information, manipulates it by known rules and obtains a reliable and unique answer. One is therefore reasoning from general truth to specific truth. [If all positive numbers are greater than zero, five is greater than zero.] The set of information is “closed.” Nothing “new” can be determined.

B. Truth in Mathematics

1. Definition of terms. a) Greek word *manthano* (I know). Mathematics is based on universally accepted definitions. It is called *numeric* because it is based on numbers. b) A **domain** is the field of inquiry. It is defined to indicate what is within and what is outside it. [A domain could be the positive integers or all right triangles. Or the “back 40”] c) An **object** is something within a domain. [An object could be a number or a set of numbers. Or a tree] d) An **operator** is something which transforms one object in a domain into another. [The multiplication sign and square root sign are operators. On the back 40 a beaver is an operator turning a tree into a log.] e) Every **theorem** can be compared to the definitions that established the domain to prove whether it is true or false or indeterminate (i.e., no answer can be found). Property of a closed system. Its validity cannot be challenged by new discoveries of science or by new social theories. Mathematical truth is reliable and unchanging.
2. It is possible to have false answers in mathematics. a) If one starts with wrong data. To err is human. [If we measure a door as 7 feet 10 inches tall instead of 6 feet 10 inches tall.] [False Premise Fallacy] b) If one performs the operation wrong. [If we push the + instead of the x button on the calculator.] The reasoning (process) is not **sound**.

Q5. Define “population” and “sample.” A: A population is the whole or mass of interest. A sample is the part of the whole that is tested.

Q6. What is “cherry picking”. A: Selecting only such evidence that supports one’s hypothesis.

3. Probability and statistics are highly error-prone, sometimes even for the experts. a) The total pool of entities involved in a discussion is called the **population (domain)**, and the portion considered for analysis or presentation is called the **sample**. Might not be similar. b) Jim says he has two children and that his oldest is named Frank. Sally says she has two children and that one of them is named John. The probability that Jim has a daughter is 50%, but the probability that Sally has a daughter is 67%. This is the problem of selecting the correct pool, which has become known as the Monte Hall problem. c) If a sample is too small to represent the population, it is the fallacy of **hasty generalization**. d) If a sample is biased by an unrepresentative selection, then the error is the fallacy of **false attribution**; the sample’s characteristics do not match the population’s. e) If

one selects only the few entities that support an argument while the rest do not, the fallacy is **cherry picking**. Points b through e are common errors. f) To find the probability of something occurring, one must know all the pathways by which it could occur and then calculate the sum of the probabilities of it occurring by each of these pathways. This can be a difficult task.

4. Large numbers can give false impressions. a) If one subtracts two large numbers of almost the same value, one loses most of the significance and might only have the rounding error of the computer left. Curse of small differences. b) While only 1 chance in 100 billion may seem small, if one starts with a mole of a substance, that is equivalent to 6,000 billion molecules per mole. Intimidation of large numbers. c) Even a medical test that is 99% accurate will produce a large number of **false positives** if the prevalence of the disease is only 10 in 100,000. Curse of the false positive. d) Even if the probability is that 99.9% of a population will behave in one way, 0.1 % will still behave differently. This is called an **outlier**. In discussing the things of God, the introduction of numbers is often the fallacy of a **red herring**.

C. Formalized logic

1. **Non-numeric** a) A system is non-numeric if it involves establishing relationships without requiring numbers to do so. [A bulldozer is larger than a tricycle.] Mathematics is sound even without numbers. b) In some systems certain statements can be proved to be true where no numbers are involved. [One can prove that the base angles of isosceles triangles are equal.]
2. **Syllogistic logic** a) Syllogistic logic is a form of deductive reasoning involving a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion. Argument is from greater to lesser. b) The major premise makes a general statement (predicate & middle term). [All men die and decay.] It has a predicate [die and decay] and a middle term [all men]. c) The minor premise makes a statement about a specific subject. (subject and middle term) [Socrates was a man.] It has a subject [Socrates] and a middle term [was a man]. d) The conclusion states a relationship between the subject and the predicate by matching the middle terms. (subject and predicate) [Socrates died and decayed.] e) These three terms can be modified by the qualifiers “all,” “some,” “no(t),” or no qualifier. The use of qualifiers can make determining the soundness of the syllogism challenging. (Examples of modifiers: girls, all trees, some days, no Tuesdays)
3. Errors in logic – the **four-term fallacy** a) All men die and decay. b) Jesus was a man. c) Jesus died and decayed. d) This conclusion is false because the middle terms do not match. Jesus was God as well as man, so He does not match the “all men” of the major premise. This is a frequent issue in theological discussion.
4. Errors in logic – the **undistributed middle** a) Some Lutherans are tall. b) Trees are tall. c) Some Lutherans are trees. d) This conclusion is false because the major premise does not have a predicate, so it is impossible to use the middle term to attach the subject to the predicate. There are two major premises and no minor premise.

Q7. What is a false premise fallacy? A: Using incorrect information as an assumption or

evidence.

5. Errors in logic – the **false premise fallacy** a) All Lutherans speak Mongolian. b) Ben and Nancy are Lutherans. c) Ben and Nancy speak Mongolian. d) The logic is valid, but the conclusion is not sound because the major premise is false, that is, it is not well-grounded.
6. Errors in logic – the **affirming the consequent fallacy** a) If Pastor Schmidt preaches a long sermon, Frank takes a nap afterward. b) Frank is taking a nap this Sunday afternoon. c) Pastor Schmidt preached a long sermon Sunday morning. d) Simply because A causes B and B is true, it does not mean A is true. B may have other causes. $A \rightarrow B$ & B does not mean $B \rightarrow A$.

Q8. What is a *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy? A: Assuming that if something occurred after something else, it was caused by it.

7. Errors in logic – the ***post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy** a) When Abby goes to church on Sunday, the mail is not delivered that afternoon. b) Therefore, Abby's church attendance is preventing the delivery of mail. The parts of a) have no relationship to each other and behave independently.
8. Errors in logic – the **correlation implies causation fallacy** a) When people wear swimsuits on the beach, ice cream sales go up in the city. b) Therefore, ice cream vendors should promote the wearing of swimsuits. Simply because A and B are true at the same time does not mean one implies the other. Some other factor C might cause both.
9. Miscellaneous errors in logic a) Assuming a premise is significant, not just a token amount (1% change). b) **Non-sequiturs** break the logical chain between the premises and the conclusion by inserting something that sounds reasonable but does not follow from the previously advanced arguments. Red herrings or hand-waving. c) The protagonist in an argument has the burden of proof. Trying to shift this to the opponent is the fallacy called ***onus probandi***. "Make them deny it." d) The protagonist "dumps" a bunch of unconnected arguments on his opponent for the purpose of preventing rebuttal. This is called **kettle logic**. Overwhelm with irrelevant details. e) A **false compromise** is a seemingly middle position that, in reality, requires a debater to give up his or her key premise in the discussion. Example, Zwingli at Marburg.
10. Other types of formal logic. a) **Truth-functional logic** considers all possible combinations of truth or falseness of all the inputs to draw a conclusion. Example: truth tables. b) **Predicate calculus** is used to state the premises in an argument in algebraic form for the purpose of doing proofs as is done in geometry. Some might consider them like trig identities.

Lesson 3 - The Nature of Truth II

Reviewing deductive reasoning could be useful before starting the new material, in particular, the concept of moving from the general to the specific in deductive reasoning.

VI. Truth in Philosophy

A. History of Philosophy

1. The philosophical movement developed in Greece about four to five centuries before Christ. a) The goal was to find what was absolutely true about the universe so that mankind would be able to live in harmony with nature. *The Greeks believed that nature had harmony.* b) People's experiences were different, so their fundamental definitions also differed. Without a common definition base, finding knowledge of the absolute truth that was universal, necessary, and certain was impossible. *Definitions come from experience.* c) Various schools of philosophy developed, such as *Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism* and *Epicureanism*. These had very different views of nature and mankind's relationship to it. *They had different "first principles," that is, primary assumptions.*

Q1. What is self-evident truth? A: Truth that originates in the mind because it is so obvious.

2. Modern philosophy guided men like Jefferson. a) In the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson wrote, "We hold these truths to be *self-evident* that all men are...." Self-evident truth is a sense of truth that comes from within a person. *People naturally look to themselves.* b) Jefferson was not a Christian, and he believed that **philosophical truth** was formed directly in the human mind. *The glories of the mind.* {"*Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual sins, thefts, false testimonies, and blasphemies.*" Matthew 15:19}

B. Classical philosophy

1. The underpinnings of philosophy. a) The fundamental assumption of classical philosophy is that the human mind can grasp the standard of all truth because that standard is self-evident. *Truth will jump out at you.* The mind, by itself or with divine guidance, will know how to judge whether something is true and right or false and wrong. *That is, the human mind has the ability to judge.* b) Philosophical truth is governed by the phrase "It seems reasonable to me that...." Based on the inherent reasonableness of an idea or a set of principles, the philosopher will use various forms of valid logic to extend his or her system of truth to cover more cases. *In other words, extend principles by reasoning.*

Q2. Why do philosophers frequently reason to different conclusions? A: They start with different assumptions and definitions.

2. Lack of uniformity of definitions. a) Because what is reasonable depends upon a person's background, philosophers differ both in their approaches to and in their conclusions about issues. [Immanuel Kant, Karl Marx, Friedrich Schleiermacher] *Definitions lead to assumptions.* b) Approaches such as **modernity**, which appeals to science and reason, and **postmodernism**, which appeals to a sense of personal truth, each with numerous sub-schools of thought. *These trouble society today.*

Q3. Why is philosophical truth less reliable than theological truth? A: It is not backed by divine revelation.

3. Philosophy is weaker than other methods of seeking truth. *These are key points.* a) It lacks the divine authority of revelation. b) Philosophy does not have the precise and universally accepted definitions and operative rules of mathematics. c) Philosophical rationalizations can fall before the evidence of science, such as when Galileo's experimentation dethroned Aristotle's reasoning.
4. Misuse of philosophy. a) Politicians, editorialists, humanists, religious gurus, and media types often make statements that are inaccurate abstractions or overstatements. [The **appeal to emotion** fallacy.] *This is flim-flam, thinking with the heart.* b) These speakers try to get acceptance of their philosophy, and therefore, the truthfulness of their arguments, without providing well-grounded evidence or valid analysis. *They claim that their points are so important that evidence is not necessary. "Don't confuse me with evidence!"*
5. **Analytical philosophy** *This phrase is an oxymoron.* a) This approach emphasizes a more systematic use of logic and more rigorous definitions. *Effort to get agreement on terms.* b) The ideas of what is true still differ greatly and are deeply rooted in Humanism. This is dangerous when applied to matters of faith and morals. *Since no connection to objects exists. {"See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, which are in accord with human tradition, namely, the basic principles of the world, but not in accord with Christ." Colossians 2:8}*

VII. Inductive Reasoning

Inductive reasoning is used when the domain is too big to test systematically by any method.

A. Nature of inductive reasoning

Q4. What is inductive reasoning? *A: Reasoning from specific cases to all cases (generalization).*

1. Definition of inductive reasoning. a) **Inductive reasoning** goes from specific cases to a more general conclusion. *One measures a sample.* [Team X didn't reach the World Series this year, last year or in any year that I remember. Therefore, Team X will not make it to the World Series next year.] b) Generalized conclusions run the risk of not being true, even though all the premises are true. *Reasoning may not work, such as in particle physics where one must go around a particle twice to have it appear the same as it did initially (720° symmetry). Reason tells us something must look the same if we only go around it once (360° symmetry).*
2. Limits of inductive reasoning. a) Too little evidence may have been gathered to support the conclusion. [The **hasty generalization** fallacy.] *For example, can anyone in this room speak fluent Mongolian? If not, then no one in the world can speak fluent Mongolian.* b) The assumptions used to evaluate the evidence may not be true. [The **false premise** fallacy.] *For example, everything must be either a wave or a particle. But, light has properties of both a wave and a particle.* c) Even if the model fits all the evidence, it might still be incorrect. [The **affirming the consequent** fallacy.] *For example, simply because the sun rises after the roosters crow does*

not mean the roosters' crowing awakes the sun so that it rises, even though this is consistent with the evidence.

B. Science

Q5. What is the fundamental assumption of science? A: All observations of nature can be explained in terms of the inherent properties of matter, energy, space, and time.

1. The fundamental assumption of science is that all observations can be explained in terms of the inherent properties of matter, energy, space, and time. a) Corollary: **A corollary is something that follows logically by deductive reasoning.** There is no God who can interact with the physical universe. b) Corollary: The universe had to have evolved; there are no other options. c) Suppose the fundamental assumption of science is false. Then scientists would never know if what was observed in nature was caused by the laws of nature that they can model or the actions of a supernatural being which they cannot model. Scientific literature would consist of articles with the phrase, "Maybe God did it." **This is why scientists make the assumption.**
2. Scientific method. a) Scientists gather evidence based on well-established rules for documentation. These rules are established beforehand so that data is not "fudged." **This is necessary to prevent experimenter bias.** b) They developed a model to explain the evidence at hand. They test it on all available evidence, revising the model as necessary. **No cherry-picking of data to fit the model.** c) They report their model and evidence to other scientists, so these experts can attempt to disprove the model or the evidence. This is called the **falsification challenge**; it is key to all true scientific work. **All of us can miss something, even something big.** d) They refine the model to meet legitimate objections, or they discard it if it has been demonstrated to be faulty. (Steps a through d may be repeated, if necessary. **Models are not static.**) e) Scientific truth is governed by the phrase, "Based on the available evidence, it can be said that...." Therefore, scientific truth is only, at best, **provisional**. f) Without the falsification challenge, there is only **pseudoscience**. **This is the problem with creation science.** Those who refuse to present their work for others to examine are only "blowing smoke."

Q6. How does a soft science differ from a hard science? A: By its inability to isolate what is being studied from its environment.

3. Types of science. a) In a **hard science** [chemistry, physics] entities [oxygen atoms, electrons] can be completely isolated from the environment for study to eliminate interferences. b) In a **soft science** [sociology, pharmacology] entities [age, drug metabolism] cannot be completely isolated from other factors [muscle tone, emotional stress]. **Hard sciences and soft sciences are experimental.** c) In an **observational science** [cosmology, economics], observations are the result of happenstance. New cases cannot be produced through experimentation.

VIII. Revelation

Truth comes from outside man.

A. Finding God's truth

1. Sources. a) **Theological truth** must be revealed to us because we cannot rise up to God. {Romans 10:5-11} b) Gurus who claim insight of the divine. [the pope, the oracle at Delphi] c) Books of revelation which claim to be God's Word. [the Bible or the Qur'an] d) The only standard of theological truth is "Thus says the LORD."
2. Nature of Biblical truth - *Sola Scriptura*. **Why is the Bible different?** a) Only the Bible presents a God who freely delivers people from their sins and promises eternal salvation. b) The Bible declares people are **totally depraved** and have no works acceptable before the Lord. {Jesus said, "*I am the Vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him is the one who bears much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.*" John 15:5} **God does everything; man does nothing.** c) **Not a popular idea.** People reject this because they want to take some of their own good deeds to the judgment throne of God when they are summoned to appear before him.

B. Reasons for rejecting God's truth

Q7. What is a rationalized truth? A: Truth that can be changed by reason.

1. Rationalization. **is wanting to "shape" the truth.** a) Introducing components of philosophy as a companion to the biblical standard of truth muddies it. Some people seek a **magisterial rationalized truth** that is less clear-cut and leaves room for negotiation over issues of behavior and piety. b) Biblical truth becomes distorted when people try to mix philosophy derived from some form of self-evident truth into it. **It's like mixing powdered horse manure with brown sugar to put on one's oatmeal.** {Solomon said, "*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding.*" Proverbs 3:5}.
2. Editing the Scriptures. a) **Some never discuss certain portions.** Some teachers ignore portions of the Bible that they feel uncomfortable using. [Thomas Jefferson cut out those parts he did not like using a razor.] b) **Over-interpret or use analogy like Origen.** Some overemphasize portions of the Scripture and twist the rest to match. [Jehovah's Witnesses and the book of Daniel.] c) **Rank teachings in importance.** Some put two teachings of Scripture in opposition to each other and synthesize a compromise. [Matthias Loy's error in the Election Controversy] d) **Must be extremely careful.** We need to hold to the **narrow Lutheran middle**. {"*Do not add to the word that I am commanding you, and do not subtract from it.*" Deuteronomy 4:2}
3. Changing the Scriptures with time. a) Some claim that God gradually leads mankind to greater truth as man becomes better able to handle complex ideas. **This is a tenet of secularism. (George Holyoake and Charles Bradlaugh in the 1850's)** b) They argue that due to the way God needed to reach out to mankind in the past, some of the things in the Bible should no longer be accepted as true. **God got smarter by hanging around with humans.** c) This idea ignores the biblical teaching that God is outside of time and as such, never changes. {A psalmist wrote, "*Long ago you laid a foundation for the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain. All of them wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them, and they will be*"}

changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end.” Psalm 102:25-27} d) Scientific truth cannot trump revelation because it is only a human explanation of the world, and it is limited by its fallacies. *Man can only see what God lets him see in three dimensions and time.* {“*For the LORD of Armies has made plans, and who can stop him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back.*” Isaiah 14:27} The Lord is in control.

C. Giving Offense vs. Taking Offense

Q8. How does taking offense differ from giving offense? A: Taking offense: being insulted because of one’s own standards. Giving Offense: saying or doing things that might reasonably be taken as annoying.

1. Taking Offense. a) **Taking offense** means choosing to be offended over something God says that does not please. “*I want an excuse to....*” b) **Political correctness** is being used to censor our speech in the 21st century. *That is, to revoke the first amendment to the US Constitution.* The ever-present possibility that something we say or do might find its way onto the internet makes many people positively paranoid.
2. Giving Offense. a) **Giving offense** is saying or doing anything that hurts others so as to interfere with their ability to hear our witness. *Being careless with words.* b) We cannot worry about being humiliated in some forum by what people think of us. {Jesus warned us, “*Woe to you when all people speak well of you, because that is how their fathers constantly treated the false prophets.*” Luke 6:26} *Say what God does not require us to say.* c) The devil, the sinful world and the sinful flesh of every human being on this planet hate the gospel and much of what God says. If we are faithful to his message, at times people are going to take offense. *The gospel is offensive.*
3. Proper behavior in apologetics. a) Avoid giving offense by being rude or thoughtless. *Work to avoid triggers that set up obstacles.* [St. Peter said, “*Live an honorable life among the Gentiles so that even though they slander you as evildoers, when they observe your noble deeds, they may glorify God on the day he visits us.*” 1 Peter 2:12.] b) Interrupting the person with whom one is speaking, showing disinterest in what the other person has to say, or insulting or shouting at those with opposing views do not help the gospel cause. c) Racism, insulting people with special needs and devaluing women have no place in the church. These are sins which the devil can use very effectively to discredit our testimony.

Lesson 4 - The Existence of God I

It is advisable to move more quickly at the beginning of this session where the concepts are familiar so as to have more time at the end where they are more complex.

IX. God and gods

A. The three general types of gods

Q1. What are the three types of gods? A: 1) Generic, 2) private, 3) moral.

1. Generic gods. a) They are non-descript, and the extent of their power and influence is unknown even to those who make reference to them. Prayers to them are more wishes than serious efforts to influence the god involved. b) They do not form direct personal contact with people. [Mother Nature, the Creator God, the Final Scorer, Lady Luck, the Man Upstairs]
2. Private gods. a) These are things to which people devote a lot of time or on which they spend a large amount of wealth. [Such as favorite things or pastimes.](#) [A prized classic car, the pursuit of an outstanding physical appearance, a lucky pair of socks, a gorgeous vacation home or professional fame] b) This type of god is created by the individual who worships it. Lutheran theologians have called the service of these gods **secret idolatry**.
3. Moral gods. a) These are beings with whom people form a personal relationship through worship and prayer and from whom they expect to obtain blessings here and/or in the afterlife. They have specific powers and moral expectations of their adherents. b) These divine beings are the basis for the various organized religions. [I.e., to love, fear, trust, etc.](#) [The LORD, Allah, Brahma]

B. The God of the Bible

[Much more about God is presented in chapter 4, so the instruct should not go more deeply into the nature of God here than necessary.](#)

1. His essence. a) He exists and is a spirit. *{“Now to the King eternal, to the immortal, invisible, only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” 1 Timothy 1:17}* b) His name is Yahweh. *{“I am the LORD; that is my name.” Isaiah 42:8a}* c) He is supernatural, existing outside of the physical universe. *{“Long ago you laid a foundation for the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. they will perish, but you remain. All of them wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them, and they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end.” Psalm 102:25–27}* d) He is the only God. *{“I am the first, and I am the last. Except for me, there is no god.” Isaiah 44:6}*

Q2. What are essential attributes? A: [Attributes without which something cannot exist or function \(the head of a dog\).](#)

2. Attributes of the LORD. [We break God up into a series of attributes so that we can comprehend him, but all the attributes are really intermerged within God.](#) a) All God’s attributes are **essential attributes**. Collectively, they are His being. b) They include, but are not limited to, being omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, immutable, purposed, holy, just, wise, truthful, good, loving and merciful. c) He is in full control of the universe. {Jesus said, *“Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without the knowledge and consent of your Father.”* Matthew 10:29} [More in chapter 4.](#) d) The Lord is jealous for the honor of his godliness. *{“You shall have no other gods beside me. You shall not make any carved image for yourself or a likeness of anything in heaven above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under*

the earth. Do not bow down to them or be subservient to them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God.” Exodus 20:3-5a}

X. Proofs for the Lord’s Existence

A. The use of worldly proofs

1. Philosophy versus Revelation. a) Greek scholars had debated the existence of gods long before the time of Christ. b) In the Middle Ages, Catholic theologians mixed philosophy with religion and reintroduced philosophical arguments to prove the existence of God. *The problem with improper mixing is that it is rationalized truth.* c) Lutheran theologians scaled back the reliance on philosophical arguments.

Q3. What are the two ways we know of God from nature? A: 1) Existence of the universe, 2) conscience.

2. The natural knowledge of God. a) The existence of the universe supports the existence of an almighty God. {David wrote, *“The heavens tell about the glory of God. The expanse of the sky proclaims the work of his hands. Day after day they pour out speech. Night after night they display knowledge.”* Psalm 19:1-2} b) The presence of conscience indicates the existence of a just God. {*“Whenever Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature what the law requires—even though they do not have the law—they are a law for themselves. They demonstrate the work of the law that is written in their hearts, since their conscience also bears witness as their thoughts go back and forth, at times accusing or at times even defending them.”* Romans 2:14-15} c) These “witnesses” to the existence of God were written into man’s heart at the creation, but they have since been blurred by sin. These witnesses are theological proofs of the existence of God, but not philosophical proofs. *It is important to explain the difference between theological proof and philosophical proof.* {David wrote, *“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ ”* Psalm 14:1a}

B. Why worldly proofs fail

1. Man’s sinful heart. a) People sense God’s truth but suppress it [sin of rebellion]. *Satan snatches away the seed.* {*“God’s wrath is being revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who try to suppress the truth by unrighteousness.”* Romans 1:18} b) People are oblivious to God’s truth [sin of spiritual blindness]. {Paul said, *“In past generations he allowed all the nations to go their own ways. Yet he did not leave himself without testimony of the good he does.”* Acts 14:16–17a}
2. Man’s weakened senses. a) Man is psychologically blind to what happens in front of him. *Man’s mental processes are corrupt.* [An “invisible gorilla” walked through the middle of a basketball practice, and half the observers did not see it.] b) People’s minds are “scripted” to filter out what they do not think that they need to see or hear. [A person can filter out the sound of a cuckoo clock behind her.]

Q4. What is the cosmological argument for God’s existence? A: Humans by nature recognize the

existence of God from the grandeur of nature.

3. **Cosmological argument** a)+ (+ means positive evidence, - means negative evidence) The size and complexity of the universe speaks for itself. [The heavens at night on the Western prairies are incredible in scope.] b)+ Primitive people practiced idolatry, hoping to gain the attention of some divine helper. [Baal worship] c)- Human accomplishments in the last century undermine the argument that a divine builder of the universe was necessary. [Scientists develop new species of plants and animals, and engineers build things capable of flying in the air and traveling through space.] d)- The size and complexity of the universe are so great that no god could possibly be able to hold it “in the palm of His hand” and control it. [Flipping the warrant] e)+/- The grandeur of what we see in the natural world will always soar beyond what we can construct using the known laws of physics. The skeptic will point out this is an example of the **affirming the consequent** fallacy. “Being consistent with” is not the same as “proving.”

Q5. What is the moral argument for God's existence? A: Humans by nature recognize the existence of God from the moral prompting of conscience.

4. **Moral argument** a)+ People feel guilty when they sin. {“*They [Adam and Eve] heard the voice of the LORD God, who was walking around in the garden during the cooler part of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*” Genesis 3:8} b)+ People recognize that they have an obligation to their children. {Jesus said, “*Who among you, if his son asks him for bread, would give him a stone? Or who, if his son asks for a fish, would give him a snake? Then if you know how to give good gifts to your children, even though you are evil, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!*” Matthew 7:9-11} c)+ People acknowledge the justness of punishment. {“*The other criminal rebuked him. ‘Don’t you fear God, since you are under the same condemnation? We are punished justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for what we have done, but this man has done nothing wrong.’*” Luke 23:40-41} d)- Some argue that animals do have a limited understanding of evil. [A dog recognizes that its actions were wrong and senses estrangement from its master or as when the gorilla Koko mourned the death of its pet kitten.] e)+ There is a difference between emotion and conscience. Animals labor to survive the current day, the current cycle of life or the current season; they do not plan for a lifetime or an afterlife. **They lack a sense of history and purpose.** If they have a vague sense of guilt, it is transitory and does not have long-term repercussions. f)- Certainly, the existence of conscience is consistent with the existence of God. The problem again is one of **affirming the consequent**.

Q6. Why do natural arguments run afoul of affirming the consequent? A: “Being consistent with” is not the same as proving.

5. The frustration in trying to prove the existence of God. a) Natural man is incapable of accepting the truth of revelation from the Lord in any form because of his depravity. Biblical arguments do not help us much when it comes to dealing with skeptics in this world, especially skeptics who are anchored in Humanism and steeped in scientific theories. b) Skeptics believe they have found the origin of the universe in cosmological models. **(alternate model)** c) Skeptics question outright

whether all people really have a conscience and whether there is a universal moral code written into the hearts of men. [Secularism implies flexible morality.](#)

XI. Efforts to establish the existence of God

A. Narrowing the Focus

1. What are the objects of the proofs. [Know your goals!](#) a) Not private gods, which are the creation of the people who worship them. b) Supernatural beings who are not defined or constrained by the laws of the physical universe.

Q7. Why can't there be a scientific proof of God's existence? [A: No operator can connect the physical universe with the supernatural.](#)

2. Can mathematics or science be used to prove the existence of God? [They are limited by their definitions.](#) a) No. When using deductive reasoning, one can never prove the existence of something outside the domain in which one is working. [Within the domain of rational numbers, one cannot create an irrational number such as π .] b) No. Within the domain of the physical universe, there are no operators that can reach out from that domain into a supernatural domain in which God exists. c) No. If a supernatural being reached into the physical world, its action could not be recognized by science as anything but natural and of unknown cause. [There is no way to tell the difference between a natural event and a supernatural intervention.](#)

B. Philosophical proofs of the existence of God

1. Why all such proofs must fail. a) They are based on human reason instead of divine revelation. b) They have weaknesses, such as false premises, hidden assumptions, invalid reasoning or lack of physical evidence, which make the conclusions unsound. c) In arguing for the existence of God, the burden of proof lies on those who are proposing such existence. ****Opponents merely need to show fallacies exist.****

Q8. What is the ontological argument for God's existence? [A: One can imagine a perfect being so one must exist.](#)

2. **Ontological** Argument (St. Anselm). [Castles in the air.](#) a) It is possible to imagine a perfect being who has all the highest levels of the best characteristics of every good thing. To be perfect such a being must exist. b) Anselm illegitimately moved from the existence of an idea to the existence of a thing that corresponds to the idea. [**Mind projection** fallacy]
3. **Cosmological** Argument (Aristotle/Aquinas). a) Everything that moves must have a mover. If one chains back through all the [physical](#) movers to the first mover, one finds a mover nothing else moves. That mover can only be put into motion by God. [It is a hidden assumption that a supernatural being can move physical things.](#) b) There is a hidden assumption that there exists a supernatural realm that contains God. But this is what one is trying to prove. [**Begging the**

question fallacy] c) Newton's third law of motion states all objects in the universe apply forces to each other; $\therefore$ the first statement is false. [**False premise** fallacy]

4. **Cosmological** Argument (Leibniz). a) The non-existence of the universe would require no explanation, but the existence of the universe requires an explanation, and that explanation is a god. *Is non-existence really a possibility? It's debatable.* b) We have seen "existence" but never seen "non-existence." There is no inherent reason that perpetual existence is impossible. [**Wishful thinking** fallacy]
5. **Cosmological** Argument (Kalam/Craig). a) Syllogism: 1) Whatever begins to exist has a cause; 2) the universe began to exist; *This argument has a hidden assumption that time has always existed.* 3) therefore, the universe has a cause, which must be a god. b) "Began to exist" in 2) is *ex nihilo*. If "begins to exist" is *ex nihilo* in 1), then 1) is not **well-grounded**. If it isn't, there is a **four-term** fallacy.
6. **Teleological** Argument (William Paley). a) The cosmos is well ordered, well-balanced and extremely complex. *A clock and a snowflake both have great complexity. One has a human creator, and one does not.* Even minor changes in its natural constants would prevent life from existing and cause physical chaos. *Natural constants are such things as the speed of light, the universal gravitational constant, and the charge of the electron.* One can recognize the existence of a god from the precisely organized universe. b) No matter how improbable any universe is, the one we live in exists. Perhaps it is the only stable configuration that can exist. [**Argument from ignorance** fallacy]

Lesson 5 - The Existence of God II

Why are we attacking the arguments in favor of the existence of God? To show that it is not safe to rely on such arguments. Rather we must rely on the Scriptures.

XI. Efforts to establish the existence of God (cont.)

B. Philosophical proofs of the existence of God (cont.)

Q1. What is the thermodynamic argument? *A: Entropy increases so things need to degrade.*

7. **Thermodynamic** Argument. a) The second law of thermodynamics states that *entropy* must always increase. $\therefore$ complex molecules like DNA could not have come into existence from simpler ones by natural processes. $\therefore$ there must be a god. b) Entropy is a measure of the number of microstates in a particular system, not the degree of organization of any specific microstate in that system. $\therefore$ some components of a system can become more organized while others become less organized during a reaction process, as long as the entropy of the overall system remains constant or increases. [**False premise** fallacy] *Snowflakes, which have very low entropy, form*

spontaneously from clouds with very high entropy. Entropy is a measure of the overall randomness in a system like a foot is a measure of length. It is not a force of nature.

Q2. What is the experiential argument? A: "I have experienced divine things."

8. **Experiential** Argument. a) Many people claim to have had personal religious experiences with a god or other-worldly being, particularly in near-death situations. ∴ a god must exist. b) Not everything which a human mind is convinced it has experienced is based on reality. Dreams and hallucinations can seem very real. The mind has pre-stored scripts to handle stressful situations, such as dying, which overwhelm the senses when activated. [**Argument from ignorance** fallacy]

Q3. What does argument from ignorance mean? A: We don't know how it can happen; ∴ God must have done it.

9. **Pragmatic (Moralistic)** Argument. a) Human society requires an ethical basis to survive. Ethics are more effectively enforced if people fear a God and eternal punishment and have a hope for eternal life. ∴ God must exist because humans need to have such an ethical framework. b) The expediency of a belief does not prove its truthfulness. Moreover, even the promise of heaven and the threat of hell do not prevent crime or build just societies. The fear of immediate consequences and the promise of immediate reward are much stronger motivators. [**False premise** fallacy]
10. **Subjective Awareness** Argument. a) Subjective awareness, i.e., the weirdness of consciousness and our inability to understand, has given rise to the notion of substance dualism between the mental and the material. Subjective awareness had to be given to man by a supernatural being. b) The existence of something currently unexplained in the physical universe does not mean that it does not have a natural explanation. Most things known today were at one time mysteries to people. Subjective awareness could simply be an attribute caused by some gene in human DNA. [**Argument from ignorance** fallacy]
11. From the Christian viewpoint, the real limitations in these arguments are that they leave us no closer to proclaiming the message of Christ and that they may even ensnare us in other issues in the process of making such arguments. As such, they are of no value to us. *Using these arguments forces us to spend our time defending our arguments rather than the topic of interest. As such, they function as red herrings.*

XII. Efforts to Disprove the Existence of God

A. Nature of the refutation

Q4. What is the burden of proof? A: The evidence and logical argument to support a claim which the person challenging the status quo must produce to make his/her case.

1. What can be used? a) These arguments must be refuted philosophically, pointing out the fallacies of the proponents. b) The burden of proof is on those who deny the existence of a god because they are trying to establish their thesis. *i.e., the burden of proof is always on the protagonist, and*

we must not let them shift it to us. c) Scripture can be used in fashioning counterexamples. Because proponents are using deductive reasoning to establish their case, it must hold against all counterexamples, regardless of source.

2. What is the goal? a) The proponents must be required to disprove the existence of all gods, including the God of the Bible. b) We must beware not to mix theology with philosophy in our response and corrupt our standard of truth. We must keep these arguments separate even if they both apply. [We can use either to derail the proponents' case.](#)

B. Common challenges to God's existence

1. The **Omnipotence Paradox** a) If God were omnipotent, He could do anything. He could make a rock so heavy that He could not lift it. He would not be omnipotent if He could not make such a rock or if He could not lift it. Since God cannot be omnipotent in both of the only two possible cases, an omnipotent god cannot exist. b) The correct definition of omnipotence is that God can do anything *consistent with his will*. Since it is inconsistent with God's will to perform "parlor stunts" devised by sinful human beings, this argument can be rejected. [**False premise fallacy**]
2. **Existence of Evil** Argument. a) Because evil exists, God cannot be simultaneously omnipotent, omniscient, loving and good. Therefore, there is no god. b) Moral evil (i.e., sin) is whatever is against the will of God. It exists because the Lord initially gave humans the freedom to choose between good and evil, and they chose to sin. The "why and how" of God allowing this to happen is a theological issue on which we have limited revelation. [This is difficult argument because we are limited to what God has revealed.](#) c) Philosophical evil is defined relative to some human standard, for example, something regarded as being to the disadvantage of some or all people. [Humans have a high view of man versus other creatures.](#) There is no reason why what is evil by human standards cannot serve the will of a loving and good God. What if God regards some other species as His favorite and mankind as merely an invasive pest? The existence-of-evil argument is based on the fallacy of **wishful thinking**.
3. **Injustice** Argument. a) People are treated unfairly. The good and bad things of life are distributed either arbitrarily or with an advantage to those who already have good things. People suffer evil and pain independent of whether they deserve it or not. ∴ God cannot be omnipotent, omniscient, and just, and he does not really exist. [This is a demand for fairness, but what is fairness?](#) b) The psalmist Asaph wrote, "*For I envied the arrogant; I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*" {Psalm 73:3} Who gave frail human beings the right to impose their standards on the behavior of an omnipotent God? One can only grasp this in terms of how abhorrent sin is to God. In the eyes of a perfect God, all people, including their children, would be repugnant rebels. Bad things do not happen to good people; bad things happen to bad people because there are no good people by the standards of a perfect God. [**False premise fallacy**]
4. **Inconsistent Revelation** Argument. a) Since the various religions have Gods that differ widely in their attributes based on different sources of revelation, only one of these religions, at most, can be right about God. b) This argument is a **red herring** in the question of the existence of a God.

The real God will resolve claims about who is right in His court of justice. If He has told the people the truth, then it is the people's fault if they do not recognize this truth and instead believe in false and worthless deities.

Q5. What is Occam's Razor? A: The claim that the cause of something is that explanation that requires the fewest assumptions.

5. **Simplicity** Argument. a) Because god is undetectable by human observation or by laboratory instruments, and because the universe is no different if he exists or doesn't exist, ∴, by Occam's Razor, the simplest explanation must be correct, and that explanation is that no god exists. b) Occam's Razor is not a law or rule of nature or logic, but a practical guideline that doesn't always work, as every doctor, scientist, etc. knows. God's existence cannot be legislated away. There is no way to test whether the universe would be different with or without the existence of God. [False premise fallacy]

Q6. What are conflicting premises? A: Premises that cannot be true at the same time.

6. Philosophical arguments against the existence of a god invariably run into the fallacy of **conflicting premises**. a) One of their underlying assumptions is that only evidence that exists or has credence within the physical world can be considered. b) The other underlying assumption is that there can be no supernatural influence in the physical world. c) How can a supernatural god make itself known in the physical world if every action that it performs is regarded as an act of nature? This is an example of conflicting premises.
7. We have examined the question of the existence of God and have seen that that existence is unprovable through philosophical arguments. It is a matter of faith, and that is good. The security of revelation. If our faith in a supernatural being depended on making the right assumptions, then it would always rest on a human action. We could never be certain that what we believe today would not be shown to be false tomorrow.

XIII. False beliefs about the being of God

A. Agnosticism

Q7. What is agnosticism? A: The doubt or uncertainty that a god exists.

1. What is agnosticism? a) The belief that the existence and the identity of God cannot be determined. b) Agnostics believe that they can never find the truth about God with certainty. The existence of God becomes a matter of indifference. c) Agnosticism is becoming the default position of Americans today. d) Many hold "all roads lead to heaven" and "all gods are really the same." This is the way of least resistance in a pluralistic society.
2. Dealing with agnostics. a) Their beliefs can be challenged by death, disease, economic trouble, or relation-ship issues. Lack of certainty or continuity can make them better mission prospects. b) If the agnostic is able to see our confident Christian life, the time may come when he or she starts

giving subtle signals about being open to an “I’m a sinner; you’re a sinner” approach that will work to get them to open up about their hurts and fears.

B. Atheism

1. What is atheism? a) Atheism is the belief that there is no god with whom one can communicate. b) Some atheists are very hostile to God and attempt to spread their unbelief. **They claim the belief in “God” is dangerous.**
2. Dealing with hostile atheists. a) Attempting to reason with hostile atheists is like casting pearls before swine. b) **Secular Humanists are actively anti-god.** Our goal must be to prevent them from leading others astray through phony reasoning or bullying. We must not let them give the impression that they are the people with the enlightened arguments, while we are superstitious morons.
3. Dealing with other atheists. a) For those who have never thought much about God, we can explore the consistency of their atheism. What is the basis of their moral sense of right and wrong? **Almost everyone has some sense of right and wrong.** If we can reach a point with them where they acknowledge a sense of knowing that they ought to be held accountable on these matters, the door may be open to evangelism. b) Some atheists have suffered misfortune and feel that if a merciful God exists, the misfortune would not have happened. We can assure them the Lord does care about what happens in the world, but because He has given people the ability to make their own worldly decisions, He has to let things play themselves out. He is in control. He will judge everyone and reward His faithful ones. {“*We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God.*” Romans 8:28a} c) Some atheists have had bad experiences with organized religion or with a cult of some sort. We should assure such people that we are not a cult. **It is important in regard to this that we do not claim to have “secret knowledge.”** We are people with a message of good news for everyone, and spreading that message is our whole purpose. We should be ready to share with them any part of that message that they appear ready and willing to hear.

C. Private gods

Q8. What are private gods? A: Gods we create to waste our time by pretending they help us, e.g., a rabbit’s foot for good luck.

1. What are private gods? a) A private god is anything that takes our attention away from the LORD and His Word, such as a hobby, a possession, a TV program, the internet, children’s sports activities, or a job. **These are a temptation to us all.** b) Private gods often have socially acceptable names. [Zealous sports fan] **i.e., everyone is behaving in a certain way!** c) Things that make people think that being culturally part of a church and having a head knowledge of what the church professes are sufficient, even while their time and attention are directed elsewhere. **Social Christians.**

2. Dealing with worshippers of private gods. a) We need to point out to unbelievers that they really do have gods which gobble up their time and resources and which will be of no help to them when death arrives. b) Christian friends must be warned of the danger in devoting too much time and treasure to things that take them away from their Lord. [Psalm 1 warns us about becoming associated with world things, all of which are contaminated with sin.](#) We must make the case that one cannot love God and the things of this world. {[Jesus said,] *“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other; or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon.”* Matthew 6:24}

Lesson 6 - The Bible

In presenting our doctrine, it is important to say, “The Bible teaches (or says)..., not “We/I believe...” or “My church teaches...” Our ground of faith must be the Bible, not ourselves or our church, either of which might change.

XIV. The Bible as Revelation

A. Setting the stage

1. Introduction. a) Theological truth comes through revelation. Revelation is the standard by which all ideas about the nature of God and His will must be judged. b) Revelation must originate with God who works through a human or other agency to provide the divine message. [Revelation + Philosophy = Philosophy, the magisterial use of reason.](#) c) To defend the teachings of the Bible, one must know the teachings of the Bible. Most people who claim that they believe what the Bible teaches do not know what the Bible teaches, often even in critical matters of faith. [There is mass ignorance of the Scriptures.](#)
2. Getting the message right. a) It is easy to overstate or understate what the Bible really says. [One must think about the text.](#) b) How many wives did Adam have? a) one, b) unknown, c) at least one.

Q1. What is the difference between a “wonderer” and a “wanderer” to the apologist? [A: A wonderer is an interested unbeliever. A wanderer is a straying Christian.](#)

3. Deciding what we are defending and to whom. a) Defending the Bible as our source of revelation to an unbeliever. [Wonderer] b) Defending the integrity of biblical teachings to a nominal Christian who wants to keep a spiritual foot outside of the Holy Scriptures. [Wanderer]

B. Bible and its defense

Q2. What does it mean that “the Bible is self-authenticating”? [A: It itself convinces us that it is the Word of God.](#)

1. How we show it is the Word of God. a) Is Christianity based on the fallacy of **circular reasoning**? Christians claim to believe that the Bible is true because it is the Word of God, but they also believe in God because the Bible teaches about him. b) The Bible is **self-authenticating**. When we study it, the Holy Spirit works through what we read to convince us that it actually is the revelation of God. *The Bible convinces us it is God's Word.* c) We cannot prove the Bible is the Word of God based on external sources. If we could, then these external sources would be our real standard of belief and not the Bible itself. *This is like the fundamental assumption of science, which also is not proven.*

Q3. What is a cordon defense? *A: It is the defense of everything within a defensive perimeter.*

2. Defensive strategy. a) A cordon defense is used. The defensive perimeter is set so that everything of value is within the perimeter, and nothing outside the perimeter will be defended. We defend all the Scripture says and only what the Scripture says. *We need to stick to the Scriptures, which are our strength.* b) A defense-in-depth approach attempts to strengthen one's position by increasing the territory being defended. If the defenses in some areas are breached, one falls back to more essential positions, abandoning what can no longer be maintained. *In this approach, one tries to defend some territory of one's own choosing, but that is not what God asks us to do. Apologetics is not about us.*

C. **Biblicism** (the "Paper Pope")

Q4. What is the Vincentian Canon? *A: Truth is what has been believed everywhere, always, by all.*

1. Defending the whole Bible. a) Some "Christians" argue that we should soften doctrinal positions in the light of social changes. They insist that the Lord never intended that his Word should be bound but that it should have free course to reach people in every age. b) We reject this idea because it replaces the Bible as our standard of truth with the notion that consensus can be used as a standard of revelation (historically called the **Vincentian Canon**). *Christianity is not a consensus religion!* This is a logical fallacy called **appeal to the masses**.
2. Rejecting changes to the Bible. a) Our defense of the Bible is based on two unchangeables. First, God's will never changes. {Samuel said, "*The Splendor of Israel will not lie or change his mind, because he is not a man, who changes his mind.*" 1 Samuel 15:29} b) Man's nature also does not change, but it remains totally corrupt. {The LORD said, "*I will never again curse the soil anymore because of man, for the thoughts he forms in his heart are evil from his youth.*" Genesis 8:21b} *Each generation has the same issues; its members are sinners, although the most popular sins may vary.*

XV. The Nature of the Bible

A. The **Canon**

Q5. What was the original purpose of the Old Testament? A: To prepare a people (the Hebrews) for the LORD's coming.

1. Organization. a) The Bible centers on Jesus of Nazareth who is the **Christ** (Greek) or the promised **Messiah** (Hebrew). b) The Old Testament was intended to prepare one chosen group of people, so that they would understand the need for a Savior from sin and would be ready to accept Him and proclaim Him when he arrived. c) The New Testament is the record of the teachings and works of Jesus and of His personally chosen messengers, i.e., the apostles.
2. Authorship. a) While the Bible was written by numerous penmen, it had but one author, the LORD Himself. {*"No prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were being carried along by the Holy Spirit."* 2 Peter 1:21} **Verbal inspiration**. b) The Holy Spirit guided those assembling the Bible to choose all and only those books that the Lord wanted us to have. The Lord's plan of salvation would be worthless to mankind if mankind did not have a clear and trustworthy revelation of it. **Words of God in the styles of men**.

Q6. What is the "pseudepigrapha"? A: "Religious" writings that were not included in the canon of the Scriptures.

3. Apocryphal books contain inconsistencies with the theology of the Bible and/or with the history they present. **They are other writings of the same time period as the Bible was written**. a) The **apocrypha** are non-canonical books included in the *Septuagint*. b) The **pseudepigrapha** are spurious Old and New Testament writings.

B. The Authenticity of the Bible

1. Quality of the Biblical texts. a) While we do not have the original texts of the Bible, we have thousands of early copies of all or parts of the New Testament, and we can determine the copying chains through which the texts were produced. **Compared with other ancient manuscripts, we have an incredible number of copies**. b) Although there are variants among the copies, where the errors were introduced can generally be determined, and no variant has changed a single doctrine of the Bible. The overwhelming majority of the variants are spelling and word omission errors. c) We have strong confidence in the current Old Testament because 1) the Levitical scribes who copied the Hebrew text were obsessed with accuracy, 2) the Hebrew Bible text had to be verified to translate it into the *Septuagint*, and 3) the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other early Hebrew manuscripts. **Writers who lived shortly after the apostles were already quoting their writings**. This type of Scriptural review is sometimes called "lower criticism."

Q7. What is "higher criticism"? A: Applying magisterial reasoning to the Scriptures, so as to treat them as any other old book.

2. **Higher criticism** a) It questions whether God ever communicated directly with humans at all. It deems as absurd the idea that God gave every word of the Scriptures and rejects prophecy. **Magisterial use of reason**. b) It claims the Scriptures should be treated like any other ancient document. It uses extra-biblical references and accuses the Scriptures of error. **It is shocking how**

much is claimed on very little evidence. c) It views most of the Old Testament and significant parts of the New Testament as being the products of a long process of editing, merging and reediting documents. We must beware of **onus probandi** because there is no evidence.

C. Internal Conflicts

1. Apparent contradictions. a) There is a practice of assuming a contradiction must exist and then interpreting two sections of the Bible in such a way as to make them seem to conflict with each other. **Forcing a contradiction.** [Consider the creation accounts in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2.] b) Alleged contradictions are common any time two portions of the Bible discuss the same historical event. We must consider 1) the actors, 2) the recorders, 3) the audiences and 4) the purposes of the accounts. c) We must always ask, “What might have occurred that led to these apparently differing accounts?” rather than “How can I show that these accounts are in conflict?” The goal is to show a possible reconciliation. There is no way for anyone to know what actually happened. **We must ask, “How could this make sense?” Protagonists must disprove all possibilities.**
2. Cultural differences. a) Often apparent discrepancies in the Bible are the result of a lack of our knowledge of the culture of the people who recorded the events. For example, Matthew wrote that Jesus was on the cross at the sixth hour of the day, while John wrote that he was still before Pilate at the sixth hour. How could this be? **We must learn to think like ancient people.** b) The Bible was not written in the 21st century. There is only so much that the translators can do. The biblical writers penned their words assuming their readers possessed a particular set of knowledge. Today’s readers often lack that knowledge. **Lack of knowledge means that we cannot yet give an explanation.** We can frequently find the information we need, but not always. We must not let our challengers use the fallacious **appeal to ignorance** because we currently do not know the answer.

Q8. Why must the apologist be a minimalist? A: To prevent having to defend non-Scriptural materials and ideas.

3. Some Christians want to read things into the Bible that are not there. a) The “How many wives did Adam have?” question. **We must be careful not to jump to conclusions but think things through.** b) When Jesus said to Peter, “*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven,*” {Matthew 16:19} Roman Catholics want the word “only” to exist before “you,” and they mentally put it there. Yet, Jesus’ statement does not mean that he did not say similar things to his other disciples at other times. **The Bible records very little of what Jesus said.** c) The apologist must be a **minimalist**. While apologists must have due concern over subtracting from the Scriptures, they must have an even greater concern over adding to the Scriptures. Whatever is added to the Scriptures must be defended, and such defenses can set up apparent conflicts with things which really are mentioned in the Scriptures or which can be undeniably observed in the world. **As an apologist, it is important not to make your job harder.**

XVI. Other views of revelations

A. Judaism

1. View of the Bible. a) The Jews regard the Hebrew Bible, i.e., the Old Testament, as the Word of God. b) While religious Jews like to parade with the Torah, i.e., the five books of Moses, they do not accept what it says. Jews came to see the Law of Moses as no longer applicable to their lives after the destruction of the temple. *By the law of Moses, there is not one Jew in the world today who is "clean." For the Jews the Old Testament became a set of silly rules rather than saving doctrine.*
2. The Babylonian Talmud. a) It was developed in the 3rd through the 6th century AD. It is a 22-volume set of the opinions of the rabbis on the meaning of the Hebrew Bible. It often bears little resemblance to the literal meaning of the text in its historical setting. *Based on works, not grace.* b) The Talmud is a set of rules which are diametrically opposed to the grace of God as presented in the New Testament. Isaiah condemned such reliance on human teachings as false worship. {[The Lord said,] *"These people approach me with their words, and they honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is nothing but commandments taught by men."* Isaiah 29:13}.

B. Islam

1. The *Qur'an* of Islam. a) The Arab prophet Mohammed spoke the suras (i.e., sayings, chapters) which were eventually written down and became the holy book. *Mohammed was illiterate.* b) Mohammed claims that Abraham's son Ishmael was the real son of promise. The Arabs are descended from him. *This is distorted history.* Mohammed accepted many of the Old Testament and some New Testament biblical accounts, in somewhat altered form, and that Jesus was a great prophet (*important point*), the second greatest in Islam, who lived a sinless life.
2. Mohammed did not understand grace. a) Muslims must work hard and faithfully for their salvation, but there is no guarantee even then that they will receive it, unless they die in a holy war. *Religion of works.* b) Most sects of Islam have no formal clerical organization. Muslims revere the *Hadith* (accounts of Mohammed written by others) and other sources, depending on their sect. They have a high regard for Abraham and Jesus's holiness.

C. Other revelations

1. Mormonism. a) Joseph Smith claimed to have translated the *Book of Mormon* using a special pair of glasses. The book is the tale of a band of Jews who escaped Judah before the Babylonian Captivity and made their way to America, where they built a new temple and tried to establish a new Israel. *The book is an endless muddle of wars and misstatements about Biblical truths.* b) The *Book of Mormon* establishes the principle of continuing revelation through future prophets. Smith used this office to write many of the current teachings of Mormonism into a book called *Doctrine and Covenants*.
2. Miscellaneous. a) The sacred writings of other major religions can easily be found on the internet. *There is lots of stuff to choose from.* All these books share the goal of showing people how to

improve their behavior so as to build a better world and/or to gain eternal happiness. From the view of the apologist, therefore, they differ little. b) There is a movement among the world's intellectuals to push for the unity of all religions (e.g., COEXIST bumper stickers). It is a modern version of the effort to build the tower at Babel. "A Great Big Brotherhood of Man."

Lesson 7 - The Nature of the LORD God

Wrestling with the nature of God is an important thing for Christians to do. God asks us to place Him first in our lives, but to do that we must have as good an understanding of Him as possible. We can hardly relate to a nebulous God who does not have understandable properties. While we are in no way guaranteed that we can come up with a complete understanding of God, and in fact we cannot, nevertheless we must strive to learn as much as possible. It is similar to getting to know your spouse as well as possible after marriage so you can live together harmoniously.

XVII. Framing the Discussion

A. The LORD as the Supreme Being

Q1. Why is the LORD scary? A: He is overwhelming in every sense of the word. His size is beyond imagination.

It is essential that we place ourselves in the sandals of the biblical characters we read about so that we can learn how they felt when encountering God.

1. The LORD is scary. a) We hide with Adam in the bushes. b) We struggle with an overmatched Noah in an unbelievably strong storm. c) Our hearts pound as we accompany Abraham and Isaac to Moriah. d) We feel the shaking ground and see the raging smoke and fire from Mount Sinai.
2. The LORD is merciful. **We must see His grace in action.** a) He is willing to give the human race and its members undeserved grace. b) It is He who decides when and how and to whom His mercy will be extended. c) We must ride the clouds with Him and watch as He works His wonders.

B. The gods of society

Q2. What is deism? A: The belief in a creator god who provides moral guidance.

1. Deism. a) Intellectuals tried to "allow God to be God" without bothering men. They permitted Him to be the great Creator of the universe and the Giver of moral directives but then relegated Him to watching the universe run under the laws of nature, except for occasional tweaks to keep things from spinning out of control. **There is a song called the University Hymn which was once sung at graduations which has the line "The light comes down from heaven and enters where it may...."** b) Deism continued to guide the thinking in both Great Britain and the United States

during the nineteenth century. In Britain, it showed itself in the drive for obtaining “an empire on which the sun never sets”. In America, the same philosophy was carried out under the slogan of “manifest destiny.”

2. Supernatural forces. People say, “It is not an accident that....” a) Astrology is based on the idea that the celestial bodies control the lives and events of all the people on Earth. b) **Pantheism** means seeing “god” in all things or seeing the universe itself as god. c) “**The force**” is a power that moves through the whole universe and holds it all together. d) “The universe” can be a god wanting something or making something happen.
3. The nebulous god. People say, “Someone is out there.” a) The “I’m praying for you” crowd assumes that whatever god or god-like entity is out there will listen if we bother to pray to him, her, or it. b) “We’re sending good thoughts out” to the victims of some tragedy. c) “*In God we trust*” is applied to any old god people care to mention.

XVIII. The LORD God Almighty

A. The LORD’s power

Q3. How do people try to limit their gods? A: They want to remake God in their own image so as to restrict what He can do.

1. The “weak god” model. Making God in our image. a) People generally regard their god as capable of doing what they ask it to do, provided that they are not too greedy. b) Most try to keep their requests reasonable (at least in their own minds). c) People limit the power of their god, so as not to appear too helpless or too desperate in its presence. d) The smaller they have made their god, the less they are willing to bow to its perceived desires.

Q4. What does “the LORD is omnipotent” mean? A: He has all the power. Nothing else has any power unless He delegates power to it.

2. The Bible presents an almighty God. There is no upper bound on the LORD’s power. a) The LORD truly can do anything He pleases. {“*The LORD does whatever he pleases in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all the depths.*” Psalm 135:6} b) The LORD confused the languages at the tower at Babel, sent plagues on the Egyptians, parted the Red Sea, made an iron axe head float, and struck an entire army with blindness.
3. Nothing has any power except the LORD (**omnipotence**). He is not a “hey you” God. We should tremble because we “cannot lift a finger” without Him giving us the power. a) He demands that people call on Him by *His Name*, not by some pseudonym, because He will not recognize and respond to any other name. b) People think of God as only a terribly powerful dude, more powerful than anyone else, and this may cause them to approach Him with some respect. They do not comprehend that God really has *all* the power. Nothing else has *any* power at all.

4. Why doesn't God do more for us if He is almighty? **Our sins are responsible.** a) Due to sin, death and destruction exist throughout the natural world. The LORD abhors sin, and people are blockheads when it comes to listening. b) Consider the death and destruction God permits in the animal kingdom in which animals are just struggling to survive. **Animals didn't even sin.** c) How much of the evil that befalls people is their own fault because they do foolish or sinful things? People break laws. They engage in dangerous sports. They build houses on floodplains and hillsides. They spend more money than they make. They drink too much and take illegal drugs. They engage in things harmful to their health. **People are willfully stupid.** d) Should the ruler of the universe be enslaved by human desires and then accept criticism for not meeting their every wish? **Who do we think we are?** {The Lord said, "*You have turned things around, as if the potter were the same as the clay. How can what is made say about its maker, 'He didn't make me'? How can what is formed say about the one who formed it, 'He doesn't understand what he's doing.'*" Isaiah 29:16} e) Our suffering in this life is a warning of the far greater suffering that all will endure in hell if they do not repent of their sins and repudiate their shameful selves. **A reminder and a warning.**

B. The LORD's Knowledge

1. Human tracking of our activities a) Security cameras, archiving websites, automobiles, and cellphones are all used to track our movements. **People are more and more learning that they cannot hide.** b) Scammers are continually trying to learn people's personal information. **The safest communication device is the refrigerator door.**
2. The LORD's knowledge puts human actions to shame. a) The LORD literally knows everything about the universe. **He does not have to rely on devices.** {"*No creature is hidden from him, but all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.*" Hebrews 4:13} b) The LORD told Job that He had a thorough knowledge of the forces of nature. c) Jesus said that not a sparrow dies without the LORD knowing it. {Matthew 10:29}

Q5. Why does the omniscience of the LORD scare people? A: People do not like being watched.

3. The **omniscience** of the LORD. a) Because the LORD knows everything, He cannot be caught by surprise. b) He knows where every component of the universe is now and has been throughout its whole history. **Truly amazing.** c) Since He already knows all things, there is never anything new for Him to learn. d) He knows exactly how people would react to a situation, even if they never experience that situation. e) The omniscience of the LORD frightens many people. Some would like to hide from Him. Others would like to "educate" Him to their way of thinking. **People do not like this situation.** f) The LORD's perfect knowledge of the future makes people helpless to finesse Him. g) It is the fallacy of **wishful thinking** for people to try to reengineer the LORD into a god who has much less ability to thwart their plans. One cannot reduce the height of Niagara Falls to 5 feet by wishing.
4. Does the LORD use His omniscience for human good? a) If He knows about all the terrible things that are going to happen before they happen, why doesn't He stop them? b) Who knows how

many more disasters would have happened if God had not intervened—perhaps more than one a day. Perhaps He has blocked greater than 99% of the evil things that would have happened if He had not intervened. [We cannot peek behind God’s curtain like Toto did in the Wizard of Oz.](#) c) People are always willing blame God for the bad. {The LORD condemned the Israelites for blaming Him by saying, “*The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.*” Jeremiah 31:29} d) That the LORD is omniscient means that He can manage things for our ultimate good even when our path goes “through the darkest valley.” [We must accept this situation.](#) e) The important point is this: the LORD knows everything, and we know next to nothing. Let us rejoice in His knowledge and not berate Him for it.

C. The presence of the LORD

Q6. Why is the LORD’s omnipresence implicit in His sustaining presence? [A: He must be everywhere to act everywhere.](#)

1. How the LORD is present. [Reading the paper “The presence of the LORD” is important.](#) a) The Bible tells us the LORD is present in numerous ways, such as His presence in the Sacrament of the Altar, His presence within our hearts, His presence in the work of the church and His presence in the burning bush that confronted Moses. b) It is His sustaining presence, which underlies His omnipotence and omniscience, that most interests people and is what we call His **omnipresence**.
2. Where does God dwell? a) Eternity is where the LORD dwells in His full godliness. He is the only eternal being, so there is none other who can be in His presence in the eternal sense. [We do not understand God’s realm.](#) b) The LORD is not contained within physical space and time because He is not of the same substance as the matter and energy He created. [He is not confined.](#) c) He can act within time and space, as is often described in the Bible. While He allows the universe to change, the LORD is always the same (**immutable**). [He can act.](#) d) God has been able to foresee all of human history at once from His dwelling place, even before He had created the world. [He foreknew.](#) He chose people to carry out His plans, and He set them apart before they existed.

Q7. What is the meaning of omnichronic? [A: God fills all time. He does not move through time like we do.](#)

3. How is the LORD related to time and space? [He is completely present everywhere and everywhen.](#) a) He is **omnichronic**. He is completely present at each instance of time. b) God’s relationship to space is not the same as ours. We, and everything we can see or detect, occupy a defined amount of space at a fixed position. Two physical things cannot occupy the same space at the same time, and one object cannot be at multiple places at the same time. God, however, is completely present everywhere. The LORD not only fills all space, He saturates it with His presence.
4. Explaining God’s omnipresence. [He defies human terms.](#) a) How can anything be completely present everywhere at the same time? b) God cannot be defined in terms of “here” or “there,”

“was” or “will be.” c) We must realize that we play out our whole lives on a stage where God is sitting front row center, watching our every action.

5. Human reaction to God’s omnipresence. *Its makes them nervous.* a) Most ignore it, even if they nominally claim to believe it. b) They hope to avoid His parental gaze when they want to do something of which He does not approve. c) They only want God to be watching when they encounter a situation requiring His help. d) The God of the Bible is not someone who is absent except when summoned by a prayer. He is not off engaging in some more godly matters until we need Him. The LORD is always present with us, even though we cannot see Him. He is not invisible like air, however, because He is a spirit. *We must learn to accept and appreciate God’s attributes.*
6. Doesn’t the Bible talk about God having human qualities? a) Although the LORD has no physical body, He is all-powerful, so He is capable of assuming a physical form if He has a reason to do so. Such a physical form, however, is not His essential attribute. b) The Bible describes the LORD in human terms by talking about His eyes, His ears and His arms. It uses picture language to help us relate to God’s activities. *Anthropomorphism.*

XIX. The Jealous God

A. The jealousy of man

1. People are often jealous of those who have more. *Human jealousy is usually bad.* a) When we hear the word “jealousy,” our immediate response is predictably negative. Jealousy is something we project to others but rarely see in ourselves. b) We think of the “green-eyed monster” who wants everything for itself.
2. Jealousy can refer to wanting what has been earned. *i.e., a just recognition.* a) Suppose a man does a good deed, but it is credited to another. b) Is this a righteous form of jealousy for him under the circumstances?

B. The LORD’s jealousy

Q8. For what three reasons is God jealous? A: His godliness. His Law. His Gospel.

1. The LORD is jealous for His godliness. *Only He is God. He provides all.* a) He is the only God, and the Creator of all things. b) The LORD is not interested in sharing the credit for our blessings when it is only He who gives those blessings. c) Protestants – only 23% answering a survey were willing to give God first place.
2. The LORD is jealous about His law. *He created a perfect world.* a) He enacted a perfect law to preserve perfect harmony among His creatures. God wanted His law perfectly obeyed, and He gave His creation the ability to keep this law. The law is the image of the perfection of God Himself. b) The LORD is jealous of the fact that He gave man the way to happiness and life but

that man chose another way which leads to misery and death. He does not deserve blame for man's sins.

3. The LORD is jealous about His gospel. a) When man sinned, God immediately acted by promising a plan of complete and free salvation. b) God carried it out Himself because man was helpless to accomplish anything. He is not interested in sharing credit for His great plan of salvation. c) To allow everyone to learn about and accept this plan of salvation, the LORD commissioned believers to spread the news. d) He justly demands all the glory for providing a way for our salvation and for our accepting that salvation on His terms.

Lesson 8 - Creation and Science I

The nature of science can be confusing because the definition of science has changed over the years, and it still has different definitions in various areas of knowledge today. In this book science is regarded as what physical and biological scientists do. Note well that other fields also use this definition, but in the humanities, the term is sometimes used differently. It will be helpful to read chapter 11 of *Creation: In the Beginning and Afterward* to understand the parallels between science and theology.

XX. Overview of science

A. Framing the Discussion

Q1. Define science. A: Science is the systematic study of the universe.

1. What is science? a) Science is an approach or a methodology for exploring the physical universe. Science follows a zig-zag course. In the long run, scientific models get better, but in the short run, things are frequently messy and contentious. b) Secular Humanism falsely asserts that science can produce absolute truth.

Q2. How did Galileo differ from Aristotle regarding science? A: Galileo experimented with physical things to find the truth. Aristotle did not.

2. History of science. a) The sciences began as part of philosophy in ancient Greece. Philosophers like Plato and Aristotle crossed freely from one area of study to another. b) Experimental science using a more refined scientific approach was introduced in about 1600 by Galileo Galilei, Johannes Kepler and other inquisitive people. c) Isaac Newton developed calculus and formulated laws of nature that were easy for people to test, use, and teach. This began a revolution in scientific research, which became defined by the scientific method. Many Germans believe that Gottfried Leibnitz did more to develop calculus than Newton. d) Albert Einstein's four key papers in 1905 led to what is called "modern physics." Einstein won the Nobel Prize for the discovery of the photoelectric effect, not his more famous work on relativity. Research advances during World War II and the launching of Sputnik in 1957 caused the American government to train hundreds of thousands of scientists. e) Few people have enough knowledge and understanding to speak to

the theories and ideas that dominate scientific thought today. Scientific models are in a constant state of development, so continuing education is essential.

B. The Status of Science

1. A brief tour of the sciences today. a) **Physics** is the study of matter, energy, space, and time at their most basic level. Modern physics has more the feeling of being Alice in Wonderland: wave functions that collapse into matter only when they are observed, the “particle zoo,” time does not flow at a constant rate, matter tells space how to bend and space tells matter how to move. b) **Informatics** includes artificial intelligence, computer learning, simulation, modeling, information flow management, data concurrency, multiprocessing, numerical analysis, and systems design. *The information content of a system can be a measure of its entropy.* c) **Analytical Chemistry** develops and refines the measurement methodology and instrumentation to weigh, count, measure and identify substances for many of the physical and biological sciences, as well as their sampling strategies and their information validating criteria. d) **Geology** is the study of the earth, its functioning, and its physical history. The development of the plate tectonics model is supported by overwhelming evidence. Geology has become an experimental, evidence-based science. e) **Astronomy** is the study of what exists in the universe beyond the earth. Except for physical probes sent into near space, astronomers only have the radiation they can detect coming from the sky to analyze for their evidence. *This radiation, however, covers the whole spectrum of light from gamma rays to low-frequency radio waves.* f) **Cosmology** tries to explain the nature of the universe and its history. It faces severe challenges in data-gathering. Best known for the Big Bang theory, cosmic microwave background, dark matter, and dark energy. g) **Genetics** is the study of how traits are passed between generations. Genetic material is held in DNA molecules on genes that are part of chromosomes. h) **Molecular Biology** allows the molecules of life, particularly DNA, to be manipulated like other molecules. DNA material can now be cut and pasted to move genes from one species to another, thereby creating new forms of life. i) **Evolutionary Biology** tries to develop complete models of how life apparently developed through genetic mutations. It is a daunting project, but computing resources might facilitate rapid advances in this field.

Q3. What is the “fundamental assumption of science”? A: *All observations of nature are explainable in terms of the inherent properties of matter, energy, space, and time.*

Q4. What is the “falsification challenge”? A: *Presenting one’s theories and evidence to other scientists so that they can attempt to disprove them or show them lacking.*

2. Understanding how scientists seek truth. a) *It is absolutely essential that students understand and memorize this assumption.* The fundamental assumption of science is that all observations of nature can be explained in terms of the inherent properties of matter, energy, space, and time. b) **The interference by a supernatural being renders even the best scientific model only as reliable as that being wants it to be.** *This is an unavoidable limitation, and one of the reasons that scientific theories can never be known with certainty.* c) The scientific method requires scientists to gather relevant evidence under strict guidelines and produce models to explain the data. d) To prevent **confirmation bias**, scientists are required to submit their theories and data for review by the rest of the relevant scientific community (a **falsification challenge**). *This is the*

critical step that separates genuine science from pseudo-science. e) If the fundamental assumption of science is true, then there is no god and the universe must have evolved because there is no other alternative. This is why scientific theories favor the universe having evolved. It is the real reason scientists believe that evolution occurred. f) Simply because evidence is consistent with a model does not prove that model. Arguing otherwise is to commit the fallacy of **affirming the consequent**. Therefore, all scientific models can only be accepted **provisionally**. Science is always changing.

XXI. What is the Age of the Earth?

A. Defining the meaning of “age”

Q5. What is the difference between “actual age” and “apparent age”? A: The actual age is the time elapsed. The apparent age is the age that can be measured by our senses and instrumentation.

1. **Actual age and apparent age.** a) The actual age is the amount of time that has elapsed from when an entity came into existence until today. b) The apparent age is how old an entity seems to be based on a standard of measurement, either manual or instrumental.
2. What was the earth’s apparent age on day 7 of creation? That God gave the universe an apparent age that is different from its actual age is part of the foolishness of God. a) Adam – probably in his twenties. b) The birds and mammals – a few days to numerous years. c) The plants – a few days to numerous years. d) The soil – at least 3000 years, perhaps much more. e) The atmosphere – about 500,000,000 years. f) The stars – millions to billions of years. g) The sun – 5 billion years.
3. The implications of apparent age. God had His reasons. a) Positive, because on a completely new planet, nothing would grow, one could not breathe the air and the radiation levels would kill every living thing. b) Negative, because we are not given the actual age of the earth, so we have no counter age estimate to give. The LORD does not owe us an explanation of what He does or why He does it in a particular way.

B. How scientists measure the earth’s age.

Q8. What is a radioisotope? A: An isotope that decays via radiation of some type to a different isotope. Each radioisotope has its own half-life.

Q6. What does the “isotopic age of earth’s surface” mean? A: The apparent age of the earth based on those radioisotopes that exist and do not exist in the earth’s crust.

1. Isotopic age of earth’s surface. a) Some atomic isotopes are stable, while others have decay half-lives ranging from less than 10^{-20} second to more than 10^{20} years. b) After 15 half-lives, a radioisotope is reduced to the level of effective undetectability. Half-lives do not change because they are rooted in two fundamental forces of nature—the strong and the weak nuclear forces. c) Radioisotopes that do not exist naturally can be made in nuclear reactors. d) All radioactive

isotopes (30 of them) consistent with the earth being between 1.2 and 11 billion years old are found to exist. e) None of the radioactive isotopes (46 of them) consistent with the earth being less than 1.2 billion years old are found to exist.

2. Radioactive age of rocks. a) Rocks are gathered, and selective elements are chemically extracted that are in a radioactive decay series. [For example, uranium 238 and lead 206] b) The relative isotopic abundance of parent and daughter isotopes in the series is determined by mass spectrometry. [This is an extremely sound technology.](#) The older the rock, the higher the lead to uranium ratio. c) This analysis works because before rocks solidify, the decay products of radioactivity can escape, but once the minerals of the rocks solidify, the decay products are trapped in the rock's crystal structure until the rock erodes away or is analyzed.
3. Dating by geological processes. a) Objects can be dated based on their rate of mass wasting (e.g., rock splitting by the freeze-thaw cycle), erosion, and sedimentary buildup. b) These methods are less reliable because the rates at which these processes work can change. [Nevertheless, they can be extremely useful when properly employed.](#) c) They are useful if markers such as fossils of plants and animals are found in rock and soil layers and if the age of the fossil has been established because it is also found in rock formations datable by radiological methods.
4. The apologist must not get hung up on the apparent age of the earth. [It is important not to feel threatened.](#) a) The LORD gave the earth its apparent age. b) We need to accept estimates of its value that are the result of repeatable measurements made by a large number of highly trained people. c) We must remember that it is not inconsistent with the Bible because already in Genesis 1, an older apparent age of the earth is indicated.

XXII. Background information

A. Science and Revelation

Q7. Why do science and revelation often disagree? [A: They have different basic assumptions.](#)

1. Reviewing the meaning of truth. a) The scientific standard of truth is established in terms of what can be weighed, counted, measured and identified by reproducible measurements. Scientists cannot detect the hand of the LORD working in nature when that hand is supernatural and hidden. b) In contrast, the Christian standard of truth is the Bible, which is the Word of God. Therefore, it can, if God so chooses, give us information about the supernatural actions of God which scientists cannot see. (There is no "true science.")
2. There is no biblical mandate for science. [God hides Himself from the prying eyes and instruments of humans. He has not promised we will understand His ways by studying nature.](#) a) Intensive scientific investigation is not something commanded by the LORD. It thus has no promise attached to it. b) The LORD did not promise that He will allow man to determine how He actually made the world and manages it. By poking around in nature, we cannot force Him to allow us to discover if He is working naturally or supernaturally.

3. Science may be totally wrong. a) Scientists describe stars as orbs similar in many ways to the sun, but the Bible never gives a definition of a star. The only things scientists know about the spatial realm beyond our solar system are what they deduce from its radiation, neutrino bursts, and gravity waves that reaches the Earth. b) What if “the heavens” is merely an elaborate backdrop for the LORD’s stage set on planet Earth. How is that possible? Special effects are not necessarily limited to Hollywood film studios. c) Unless we learn some radically new laws of physics which would allow us to send probes over the great distances of space, we will never verify what is truly out there. d) Consider that the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil does not make either scientific or philosophical sense, but it was nevertheless a purposeful creation of the LORD. [God does things in His way, and we are left to scratch our heads about why.](#)

B. Carbon-14 Dating

1. How carbon-14 dating works. a) Carbon-14 is a replenishable radioactive isotope (**radioisotope**) produced by the collision of cosmic rays with nitrogen-14 in the earth’s atmosphere. b) Although its half-life is only 5,730 years, it maintains a steady concentration on the earth’s surface based on its rates of production and decay. c) Carbon-14 isotopes are chemically the same as stable carbon isotopes and are incorporated with them into the substance of living plants and animals based on what they draw from the soil or the air or otherwise consume. d) When a plant or animal dies, no more C-14 is added to the remains of, nor any product made from, that plant or animal. The C-14 isotopes decay back to N-14. e) Because N-14 is ubiquitous, one cannot measure the N-14 to C-14 ratio as is done in dating rocks. f) A date is calculated based on the ratio of the assumed initial amount of carbon-14 that existed when the plant or animal was alive and the measured amount in its remains or product made from it. [The C-14 content of the atmosphere, and therefore eventually living things, has been affected by nuclear testing and fossil fuel burning and perhaps numerous other factors of which we are currently unaware.](#)
2. There are obvious limitations to the use of C-14 dating. a) Because of its relatively short half-life, it cannot be used to date anything that appears to be more than 40 to 50 thousand years old. b) The assumption that the original fraction of carbon atoms that were C-14 has been constant throughout history may not be true, particularly for older samples. c) When materials of known ages are available, scientists can use them to calibrate their measurements to eliminate this problem. This is only doable for the last few thousand years for which we have materials of known ages. d) Trying to date non-carbon materials on the basis of carbon-containing materials found in their vicinity is questionable unless everything is found together in a sealed environment. This is because contamination can come from environmental carbon, particularly carbon ash from any fire.

Lesson 9 - Creation and Science II

[It is important in presenting this material not to try to build a defense of what the Bible teaches based on science. Scientists have a huge advantage in the evidence they have gathered and in their understanding of](#)

that evidence. Science in many areas changes frequently, and there is always more evidence to be gathered. The burden of proof is on the scientists, so we should not make claims that will force us to defend our ideas instead of Scripture. Unless something specifically contradicts some clear statement of Scripture, it is best to point to the inherent limitations of science and the power of God rather than battling scientists on their home turf.

XXIII. Evolution in the Physical World

A. The Big Bang Theory

Q1. What does the Big Bang Theory try to do? A: Explain the origin of the universe.

1. The theory. a) When the ten non-linear equations of Albert Einstein's theory of general relativity are solved for the universe as a whole, the solution indicates it must be either continually expanding or contracting. Evidence indicates it's expanding. b) Scientists have extrapolated the universe's history backward to the point where all the matter and energy in it would have been concentrated in a tiny ball. This happened about 13.8 billion years ago and produced the Big Bang.
2. The apologist's response. a) This theory is relatively young and highly likely to change. The theory requires that the laws of physics worked in the way that we now understand them under conditions which we have never seen. It has already been necessary to postulate dark matter and dark energy. b) The universe may only be a backdrop to the earth, which is the real stage of the human drama. {Isaiah wrote, "*All the stars in the sky will dissolve. The sky will roll up like a scroll, and its stars will all wither as leaves wither on the vine, and foliage on the fig tree.*" Isaiah 34:4}

B. Exoplanets

Q2. What is an "exoplanet"? A: A planet orbiting a star outside the solar system.

1. Finding planets with life on them is a holy grail of science. a) Many stars may have one or more planets, but measurements are extremely difficult to make. Due to the brightness of any star in comparison with any planet that might be orbiting it, planets can only be detected by indirect means, such as dimming of the star's radiation during **planet traversal**, **wobble** in the star's position or the **Doppler Effect**, all of which are very small. b) Learning much about the attributes of exoplanets is extremely challenging, and verifying the data is impossible because of the great distances involved.
2. The apologist's response. a) Earth has many special features that make finding a suitable twin planet exceedingly unlikely. [magnetic field, size, inclination of its axis, speed of rotation, surface temperature, abundance of water, distance from its star] b) Until evidence shows up, the ability for life to exist elsewhere must be regarded as pure speculation.

C. Fossils and Geology

Q3. Why are fossils so troubling to many people? A: They appear to indicate more primitive animals existed long ago.

1. Fossils. a) Only an extremely low percentage of living things became fossilized. Conditions needed to be within a narrow range in regard to many factors to permit fossilization rather than decay to occur. b) Evolutionists believe fossils are a record of the development of the plant and animal kingdoms since the beginning of life on Earth. Evolutionists use fossil data to develop a detailed history of the evolution of life. They date the fossils based on the time when the rocks holding them appear to have been formed.
2. The apologist's response. a) To the Christian, the source of these fossils is also clear; namely, the God of the Bible put them where we are finding them. We do not know how He did it. b) Fossils can be useful in showing us the relationship among the components of plants and animals and how the various parts in one species are manifested differently than in another. c) The Bible does not tell us when God buried the fossils. He could have done it at creation, after the fall, in conjunction with the Flood, or He could have done it over a period of many years. d) Did the animals and plants whose fossils we now find live at one time or are they just props scattered by the LORD? We do not know. We cannot constrain the LORD to act in the way we would like Him to act, nor can we explain how He acts when He does not tell us. By faith, we must let God be God.

XXIV. Evolution in the biological world

A. Life from Life

1. Science and the creation of life. a) Genesis 1 tells us that a specific kind of life can only come from that specific kind of life by natural means. {“*God made the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that crawl on the ground according to their kinds.*” Genesis 1:25} b) In the 1990s, chemists were able to synthesize enzymes from raw inorganic materials. c) Scientists can now cut apart DNA and paste it back together again. This allows genes to be reengineered and placed into chromosomes, changing the genetic characteristics of plants and animals. d) Useful genes can be moved between species. Cells can be assembled that act as chemical factories for synthesizing substances biochemically. Scientists have modified bacteria to commercially produce human insulin. They have created plants that are resistant to many adverse conditions and pests. e) Cells can be taken from adults, converted into stem cells and used to grow new tissue and even new organs. This is a big advantage.
2. The apologist's response. a) While the Bible is sometimes stating eternal truths, sometimes it is only giving an explanation of some principle in terms that were understandable to the people who first read or heard it. [It was true that Nicodemus did not know where the wind came from, but that is not true for meteorologists today.] b) At creation, life was a gift of God, extended to all plants and

animals. This does not mean that every living creature has some kind of “divine spark.” c) Man is unique in that he has a soul/spirit, but all living creatures have a life force that animates their bodies and that they pass on to their offspring. d) God never specifically said that only He can make a living thing in the immediate (i.e., without an agent) sense. Nothing in the Bible rules out that scientists will at some point make a totally new living creature out of inorganic materials. e) In Genesis 1:24, God stated that the animals would reproduce after their own **kind**, but the Bible does not define kind. When we breed two dogs, we will not get a pelican, but a donkey can mate with a horse to give a mule. f) The LORD does not tell us how we must act, but He has given mankind the right to rule over all the other creatures. Nothing in this “rule” prevents people from reshaping the “kinds” as long as they do not try to change the nature of man.

B. Irreducible Complexity

Q4. What is the argument behind “Irreducible Complexity”? A: Some things are too interrelated to have evolved independently of each other.

1. Are some things too complex to have evolved? a) The human body may be such an entity, with highly integrated anatomical components, biological mechanisms and chemical processes. b) In a symbiotic relationship, two organisms are linked in a mutually supportive affiliation, and, therefore, neither of them can live independently of the other. c) Would the evolution of such systems have been impossible because the components could not have evolved separately? [The **teleological** argument]
2. Logician’s response. a) The argument is based on the logical fallacy of **appeal to ignorance**. The claim that something cannot be true because we do not yet have an explanation for it is an example of what is known in mathematics as the **halting problem**. b) Counterexample: By 1900, efforts to explain certain observations of nature by Newtonian physics required such a high level of complexity that they seemed to be impossible. The development of quantum mechanics and the theory of relativity resolved these difficulties. It is common in science that when there is great complexity, the solution to the problem is to look at the problem in a completely different way.

C. Genetic Entropy

Q5. What is “Genetic Entropy”? A: The claim that the regeneration of cells is limited because the tails of DNA sequences shorten with each replication.

1. Genetic deterioration. a) In the reproduction of some chromosomes, the ends of their DNA tails are shortened, so a small part of the buffer regions in their tails is progressively lost with each reproduction. b) The negative changes to genes on chromosomes from errors or damage far outnumber the positive changes that occur. Species should deteriorate rather than to evolve to be genetically better.
2. Geneticist’s response. a) Genetic errors do occur, but living creatures have developed numerous processes to find and correct many of such errors. b) Reproduction occurs through special organs that generate the female eggs and male sperm cells. Only errors produced in these organs can

affect the genetic makeup of the offspring. The strong competition among the sperm cells to fertilize the available eggs favors those with the best characteristics. c) Genetically stronger members of animal species are at an advantage in this brutal world where many offspring never reach adulthood, and thus the stronger are left to breed the next generation. [**Natural selection**] d) People with health issues caused by negative genetic mutations rush to their doctors for help. People with positive genetic mutations don't. Positive mutations are therefore significantly underreported. (Fallacy of **appealing to the masses**). e) **The Bible does not say the universe and life could not have evolved through natural processes; it merely says they didn't.**

D. Research in Biological Evolution

1. Simple chemicals to primitive nucleic acid. a) This is a problem of chemical synthesis. Each individual step in the process is quite feasible at the molecular level, but the huge number of steps needed is mind-boggling. b) The process would have to occur in a confined space with structural catalysts and sufficient energy to facilitate the reactions, such as at a tectonic plate juncture on a mid-ocean ridge. c) It is still unclear if there are insurmountable barriers to this occurring. Those who argue it is statistically impossible are engaging in the **appeal to ignorance**.
2. Primitive nucleic or ribonucleic acid to cell reproduction. a) The genetic material would need to gain the ability to organize the chemical environment around it and produce a cell membrane. b) It would need to develop an enzyme environment to begin the process of absorbing nutrients to produce energy. **Most processes in living cells are carried out by enzymes.** c) It would need to start dividing into new cells.

Q7. What is "natural selection"? A: The better survival rate of the more fit members of a species.

Q6. What is the difference between a "phenotype" and a "genotype"? A: Phenotype is the physical manifestation within a creature. Genotype is the DNA of the creature.

3. Diversification of the original cells into the plant and animal species that exist today. a) Small differences among members of a species would lead to those members with better characteristics surviving to breed at a higher rate and become dominant. This is called **natural selection**. b) Natural selection works due to observable characteristics (**phenotype**), but the actual changes occur through the genetic code (**genotype**). This complicates things. When a caterpillar metamorphoses into a butterfly, it keeps its genotype but changes its phenotype. c) Evolutionary changes can occur through natural selection, **genetic drift** (pure chance), mutations in the germinal cells, population mating structure, and culture. d) Apologists should never draw a line in the sand and say, "It didn't happen because scientists will never be able to do X or explain how Y could have happened." **It is important for us not to set ourselves up for failure by adopting a stronger position than we need to.**

XXV. Concluding remarks

A. Dreamers, Pseudoscientists and Deniers

1. Dreamers. Some would use Carl Sagan as an example of a dreamer. a) Dreamers are scientists, humanists and writers who start with legitimate science and then create visions that may have little to do with what is possible. b) They talk of clean hydrogen fusion, efforts to colonize Mars, and finding intelligent life on planets. There is a big difference between predicting improvements in current technologies and fantasizing about inventing new technologies. The difference between these two things is critical to understand.

Q8. What is the difference between a “pseudoscientist” and a “denier”? A: The former refuses to submit his models and evidence for evaluation. The latter claims that scientific methods are inherently unreliable.

2. Pseudoscientists. a) Pseudoscientists are people who are not willing to have their claims tested in the laboratory by experts in the relevant fields. b) If creation science claims could be demonstrated experimentally, their advocates would gain considerable fame in the scientific community.
 3. Deniers. a) Deniers attack scientific methods by claiming that the scientists using them have made mistakes, so therefore the methods themselves are unreliable. Guilt by association. b) Deniers tell the Christian community what it wants to hear, often using **kettle logic** to put forth numerous, non-relevant arguments without showing that the measuring methods themselves are flawed even with proper use. The question is always in these situations whether things can be done correctly.
- B. The three limitations of science (i.e., inductive reasoning) These limitations cannot be overcome.
1. Scientists can never be completely sure of the validity of their models because they cannot examine all the possible cases which these models cover. This is why medical recommendations frequently change. This leaves them open to the fallacy of **hasty generalization**. [Provisional acceptance]
 2. Even if a particular model perfectly explains all observations, one cannot claim it is the true explanation without committing the fallacy of **affirming the consequent**.
 3. The Almighty God’s existence makes the fundamental assumption of science false. Other assumptions may be false as well. A **false premise** makes the meaning of all the carefully gathered evidence uncertain.

Lesson 10 - Miracles

When discussing miracles, the people need to be constantly reminded of the almighty God of Chapter 4.

XXVI. Setting the Stage

A. Introduction

1. Questions about miracles. **People want to know why about everything.** a) How are they possible? b) Are they a result of the ignorance of the observers? c) Are they fables to illustrate a point? d) Were they invented to bolster the reputation of Moses, Jesus, etc.?

Q1. What is a miracle? A: God doing something in a different way.

2. God and miracles. **This section is the basis of miracle apologetics.** a) Natural things act only at God's command and only with that power that He gives them. In fact, nothing even exists unless He gives it the power to exist. b) The God of the Bible makes Himself known to us as a being of habit. We call His habitual ways of behavior within our world "the laws of nature." c) Being almighty, God is able to do things in a different way if He chooses. This is no more difficult for Him to do so than for Him to do things in the "regular" way. When God does things differently, we call it a **miracle**. d) If one believes in the LORD, the God of the Bible, believing in miracles follows naturally. How can one believe that God is able to do miracles and that He claims to have done miracles but deny that He did do them?

B. Dealing with the Questions and Objections

Q2. Why do people question miracles? A: They are not common occurrences in today's world.

1. Why people question miracles. a) Most people don't really know that much about the Bible. **Sometimes the level of ignorance is hard to comprehend.** What they say about these miracles probably reflects what they have heard or read, not conclusions they have reached on their own. b) Skeptics often challenge biblical miracles as being scientifically impossible or lacking "real world" credibility. **This is arrogance because the almighty God does not need real world credibility. He owns the real world!** The biblical writers themselves were aware of how impossible these miracles were, but they recorded them, because they were part of God's message to His people, not because they were stupid.

Q3. Why is it not possible to discuss miracles with some people? A: They do not want to believe, so they make up excuses not to believe.

2. Helping people understand miracles. a) "What do you think a miracle is?" A miracle is just the almighty God doing things in a different way, but most people do not realize this. b) "What is your attitude toward God?" If people believe that a god or gods exist, then maybe one can discuss miracles. Otherwise, a different approach is needed. c) "Do you believe in a God you can interact with?" If not, then one must treat them as a deist and discuss that subject because miracles are not a key issue. d) "Do you have questions or doubts about just specific miracles or about all miracles in general?" If their concern involves specific miracles, these are discussed later in this chapter. e) "Can your God do miracles?" **If God could not do miracles, why would we pray? We might as well wait and let nature play out the situation.** What is the nature of their God? How did they learn about their God? One must categorize their God to proceed. f) If they claim that they are Christians, but they don't believe everything that the Bible says, one must discuss the nature of

the Bible. g) If they claim that they believe in Jesus but don't understand the how or why of miracles, the material from the beginning of this chapter will be very useful. If people trust God for their salvation, why not trust Him on miracles? **You can't have one and not the other.** h) If people have a different standard of religious truth, that issue needs to be addressed. i) Those who have created idols out of their own thoughts do not believe in miracles because they do not want to believe in miracles. There is nothing to discuss. **"My mind is made up..."**

XXVII. Specific Miracle Questions in the Old Testament

A. Early miracles

Q4. Why is "proving the flood" so important to so many people? A: They want to be able to rationalize their belief in biblical teaching. They want to disprove geology, anthropology, and archeology.

1. The Flood {Genesis 6:9-8:19}. a) The extensive geological evidence which has been found does not support the occurrence of an earth-wide flood happening 5000 to 6000 years ago. There is no legitimate reason to doubt the quality of the bulk of the scientific evidence, but there is good reason to doubt its relevance. b) With modern tools for construction, computer modelling, and ripple tanks to test prototypes, a boat 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high with three decks could be built. Noah's ark was not built to rest on land as a tourist attraction, but to float on an ocean under adverse conditions. He had to get it right the first time. c) Not by the clever construction of the ark, but by the Word of the LORD, Noah's family and the animals were spared. **This was God's show from the start to the finish. We need not know how He did it.** d) For a crew of 8 to manage the bodily needs of thousands of animals in crowded conditions where there was little or no light while on a rolling sea is unimaginable. The LORD's miraculous hand needed to be present to prevent disaster. e) There are more than 5,000,000 land animal species. It required a series of miracles by the LORD after the Flood to give us the present diversity of species.
2. The plagues on Egypt {Exodus 7:14-12:39}. a) The severity of the plagues and the swiftness of their beginnings and endings make them incompatible with a comet's tail sweeping through the earth's atmosphere or a volcanic eruption somewhere in the Mediterranean basin. **Other explanations are merely speculations, and anyone can speculate.** b) That the plague-masters Moses and Aaron were not seized and killed by the angry Egyptians undermines ascribing the plagues to natural causes. **God's hand protected them.**
3. The crossing of the Red Sea {Exodus 14:15-31}. a) The LORD opened a passage through the Red Sea to permit the Israelites to escape, and then He allowed the sea to flow back to drown the Egyptians. b) Any wind strong enough to part the waters is probably physically impossible and would have blown away the Israelites and their possessions too. c) As Lutherans, we know that when the Word of the LORD combines with a physical element, great things can be accomplished.

Q5. Why is the sun standing still such an incredible miracle? A: We know of no way to explain how this could happen.

4. The sun standing still {Joshua 10:12-14}. a) The sun and moon ceased to move across the sky for nearly a full day. b) If the earth had stopped rotating, it would have caused catastrophic results. The momentum of such a change is unimaginable. c) If time would have stopped at some places while continuing to flow at others, the concurrency problems would have been innumerable. Imagine the challenge of getting everything back in sync. d) The results of the battle that day could not have been completed in a normal day, so the LORD created an abnormal day. How? We do not know.

B. Later miracles

1. Jonah {Jonah 1-4}. a) “The LORD provided a great sea creature to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in its belly three days and three nights.” The Hebrew word translated “provided” implies this sea creature was especially chosen or created for this purpose. b) The LORD showed His complete control of nature by creating a severe storm to force the crew of a ship to jettison Jonah into the sea and then stopping the storm. c) The repentance of the blood-thirsty people of Nineveh, who killed and enslaved all their neighbors, was also a far greater miracle than the sea creature account. d) The miracle of the plant shows just how hard-hearted people can be even if they know the LORD and how He will intervene to bring them back to Himself. Jonah really did not want other people to have God’s grace.
2. Elijah and Elisha. The work of these prophets shows God’s efforts to call Israel to repentance. a) Elijah: A three-and-a-half year drought destroyed virtually all the vegetation in Israel. {1 Kings 17:1-18:2} b) Elijah: The LORD sent fire to consume an offering, which permitted Elijah to destroy the prophets of the idol Baal. {1 Kings 18:20-46} c) Elijah: When a king tried to have him arrested, he twice called down fire to destroy those seeking to take him into custody. {2 Kings 1:9-12} d) Elijah: God snatched him from the earth in a whirlwind. {2 Kings 2:11} e) Elisha: An iron axe head was lost, but a stick made it float. {2 Kings 6:6} f) Elisha: God restored a young boy to life. {2 Kings 4:32-37} g) Elisha: The LORD struck a whole army with blindness. {2 Kings 6:18}
3. Daniel in the lion’s den {Daniel 6:1-24}. a) Daniel was thrown to the lions for his loyalty to the LORD. b) The LORD had told His creatures they did not have His permission to eat Daniel.
4. The three men in the fiery furnace {Daniel 3:8-30}. a) No one could survive the flames in a superheated furnace which killed the guards who only came close enough to shove the prisoners into it. b) If God wanted to demonstrate to a king who thought that he had all authority on Earth that he didn’t really have such authority, what better way to do it than this?

XXVIII. Specific Miracle Questions in the New Testament

God tended to use miracles when He wanted to get the people’s attention.

A. Miracles proclaimed the Messiah.

Q6. When did the LORD most often use miracles in the Bible? A: When He had something important to communicate.

1. Miracles showed the fulfillment of the promise. a) The advent of the Messiah in the New Testament again caused the LORD to produce a flurry of overt miracles. He wanted to demonstrate that Jesus Christ was the one promised to Eve, Abraham, Moses, and David. b) Jesus did numerous miracles, a fact that annoyed His enemies because they could not deny them, although they tried desperately to do so. c) While His miracles benefited a relatively small number of people, their real purpose was to show the power of the One who was doing them to many more people both then and now.
2. Jesus walking on water {Matthew 14:24–26}. a) Walking on water is impossible because the density of people is nearly the same as that of water. To stand on the surface of the water would require that a person had no weight. Jesus cancelled the law of gravity to walk on the watery surface. b) Because the LORD controls the laws of nature and can abrogate any of them at will, this was a simple feat for Jesus and showed His deity. c) A much greater miracle occurred once He reached the boat: namely, the storm immediately stopped.

Q7. Why did Jesus perform miracles of healing? A: Physical healing parallels spiritual healing. It showed that He was God.

3. Curing diseases {Matthew 9:35}. a) Jesus cured paralysis, bleeding, leprosy, skin diseases and general maladies. b) People in the first century knew that it took time for a person to recover from a disease, and Jesus' cures were miraculous also in the sense that they happened instantaneously. c) A troubling question for scoffers. Where did an untrained country preacher get the knowledge to diagnose and treat so many people successfully through available natural remedies? If He were divine, of course, He would have had such knowledge. This shows His divinity.
4. Restoring normal function to body parts {Matthew 11:4–5}. a) The inability to see, hear, speak or walk are not short-term, easily addressed problems. Many of the handicaps dated back to birth or early childhood. b) Jesus' enemies are the best witnesses to His healing power. The religious leaders would have destroyed His reputation if they could possibly have done so.
5. Casting out demons {Luke 4:41}. a) Even if these people really were only mentally ill and not demon-possessed, then Jesus' curing them was still a significant miraculous feat. b) Demon-possession is almost unknown in the Scriptures. The LORD may have allowed demons to take possession of people at this moment in history to demonstrate Jesus' power over Satan's angels. c) The Bible indicates that sometimes physical illness and other types of suffering and loss were caused by the devil, whom the LORD had allowed to torment people. {Luke 13:10-17; 2 Corinthians 12:7} God permits evil to occur for His glory. We do not know the extent to which the agents of Satan are allowed to torment the people of the world, but it is clear that in at least some cases the LORD did permit it.

6. Feeding the hungry {Matthew 14:13-21; 15:32-39}. a) Jesus twice fed large crowds (thousands of men, women and children were involved). Each time He took a small amount of food and multiplied it. b) For the Creator of heaven and earth, adding a few thousand sandwiches to the material complement of the universe would have been child's play. [This was no biggie for the creator of everything.](#)

Q8. What were Jesus's most troubling miracles to the religious leaders? [A: The raising of the dead because it made their offices unnecessary.](#)

7. Raising the dead {Luke 7:11-17; Mark 5:35-43; John 11:38-44}. a) Jesus' raising people from the dead was the most troubling of His miracles to the Jewish religious leaders. Once people had died, their bodies were considered unclean. Anyone who came into contact with, or even into the close proximity to, a dead body would become ceremonially unclean. [This was a big deal to the Jewish leaders.](#) b) Only a priest was able to remove the uncleanness of death through the ritual sanctioned by God. Jesus made the dead clean by raising them. [This is an important theological point.](#) c) The terrible thing from the standpoint of the Aaronic priesthood was that the fears of the religious leaders were justified: Jesus had come to earth to give people a new way to become clean before God without their priesthood. [The Aaronic priesthood was no longer necessary.](#) d) Modern skeptics claim Jesus could not have raised to life any person who was truly dead because the death process is irreversible. Yet, if there was anything that the Jews would have wanted to make certain of, it was the death of a person. The issue of uncleanness forced them to be very careful. Death was a major inconvenience for the living. e) Jesus would not have gone near a dead body if He were not going to raise it, because doing so would have placed a seven-day crimp into His ministry while He purified Himself. He could not go shopping among the funeral processions, hoping to issue the call to life and find a respondent. [Jesus was changing the meaning of uncleanness – God alone could remove it.](#)

11. God's Plan of Salvation I

[At this point in the course, we change from talking about the Almighty God to the Savior God. This is a change for us, but God is always both.](#)

XXIX. The God of the Bible

A. The Triune God [This is confirmation instruction material.](#)

1. What God is. a) God is not aloof—far beyond any human experience or interaction. b) He is “**triune**,” a word coined so we don't have to constantly say “the God who is one and three” or “who reveals Himself as one God in three persons” or even “the God who is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Like numerous other theological terms, it does not occur in the Bible.

Q1. What are the two key points about the Trinity? [A: One essence, but three persons.](#)

2. The doctrine of the Trinity is what the Bible teaches. a) The Bible demonstrates the reality of the Trinity by balancing two truths: 1) there is one and only one God {“*The LORD is our God. The LORD is one!*” Deuteronomy 6:4}, and 2) the one God consists of three persons {“*Go and gather disciples from all nations by baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*” Matthew 28:19}. b) God has one essence or substance that cannot be divided. [Never 1/3 of God](#). c) The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are separate persons who cannot be interchanged or confused for one another.
3. The Trinity enters the creation. a) God created man in His own image, i.e., with an understanding of God’s eternal will and an ability to keep it. When man failed to keep God’s Law, he became subjected to God’s wrath. b) God did not abandon rebellious man but promised to provide a Savior who would rescue mankind from the punishment it deserved. God chose a special people, Israel, to be the instrument that He used to bring that Savior into the world. He used laws—ceremonial, civil and moral—to help them realize that they could never please Him on their own. c) The Son, the second person of the Trinity, became **incarnate**. He entered the womb of the Virgin Mary and assumed a real and complete human nature. At that moment, God gave Him a new name: Jesus.

B. The incarnate Son

Q2. What is “Christology”? [A: The study of how the two natures of Christ exist in one person.](#)

Q3. What does “personal union” mean? [A: The union of God and man in Christ.](#)

1. **Christology** [Only a very limited discussion is given here](#). a) The union of the Son of God with a human nature is sometimes called the **personal union**. He had all the qualities of God and of man, without mixing them into something new or existing as two separate beings joined together. Once Jesus died and rose, He ascended into heaven, where He continues to be God and man, united in one person, for all eternity. b) This union is different from those times in the Old Testament when God assumed a human form to interact with people. c) The Bible teaches that Jesus is true God in four ways: 1) It calls Him God {Matthew 1:23}; 2) it repeatedly ascribes to Jesus God-like qualities {Hebrews 13:8}; 3) it repeatedly depicts Jesus doing things that only God can do {Hebrews 1:3}; 4) it commands us to honor Jesus just as we do the Father {John 5:22-23}. d) The Bible teaches that Jesus is true man in three ways: 1) It calls Him a man {1 Timothy 2:5}; 2) it states He had a human body and soul {Luke 24:39}; 3) it tells us He did all the things a normal human being does: grew, slept, ate, died and more. He differed from us only in that He had no sin {Hebrews 4:15}. e) God could die because Christ was man and Christ died. A man could do miracles because Christ was God and Christ did miracles.

Q4. What was Jesus’s active obedience? Passive obedience? [A: Active obedience was keeping the Law perfectly. Passive obedience was atoning for the guilt of our sins.](#)

2. Jesus’s Active Obedience. [With this He gained the righteousness for the Great Exchange](#). a) The Savior had to be born of woman—he had to be a real human being. Why? So that He could fulfill

the law of God in our place. b) Gregory of Nazianzus (AD 329-390) said, “That which was not assumed by Christ was not healed.” Fulfilling God’s Law was His active obedience.

3. Jesus’s Passive Obedience. [With this He paid for the guilt of our sins.](#) a) The Savior we needed had to be able to cover the actual cost of our sin. He had to do it for the entire world. Only the blood of God’s Son could pay that debt. b) Only the Son of God could face the devil and be without sin. {Hebrews 4:15}. God gave us a Savior who is fully human and one who is fully divine so that He could accomplish our salvation.

XXX. The Law and the Gospel

A. Setting the Stage

Q5. What is the “Formula of Concord”? [A: A Lutheran Confession which presented the resolutions of various doctrinal questions troubling Lutherans in the sixteenth century.](#)

1. Distinguishing between law and gospel. a) Luther said, “Whoever knows well how to distinguish the Gospel from the Law should give thanks to God and know that he is a real theologian.” Ever since Christ preached both, people have wrestled to reconcile the two. b) The *Formula of Concord* says, “The distinction between law and gospel is a particularly glorious light. It serves to divide God’s Word properly and to explain correctly and make understandable the writings of the holy prophets and apostles.”
2. The knotty problem. a) Each doctrine is true in its own right, but it stands in opposition to the other. Luther said, “These two things are diametrically opposed: that a Christian is righteous and beloved by God, and yet that he is a sinner at the same time. For God cannot deny His own nature.” b) The most important word in this regard is not the Latin word *ergo* (“therefore”), but the German word *dennoch* (“nevertheless”). We cannot rest our theology on the conclusions of human reason but on the pronouncements of God. The “nevertheless” relationship between the law and the gospel is counterintuitive. [God is a contrarian. See *The Foolishness of God* by Siegbert Becker.](#)

B. Distinguishing Between the Law and the Gospel

Q6. In what two ways is the law of God given? [A: It was written in man’s heart at creation. It was given from Mount Sinai and in written form in the Bible.](#)

1. Where is each teaching written? a) The natural Law: Every human being is born with some knowledge of the **natural law**. God has also built a conscience into each individual. [Conscience is a preacher, and its text is the law written in the heart.](#) The conscience compares a person’s words and deeds and even thoughts and feelings with a standard of behavior, i.e., the law as he knows it. b) The given Law: To supplement the failures caused by sin, God gave the law a second time in His Word. The Bible also makes clear that there is a great difference between having the law and keeping the law. c) The Gospel: There is nothing natural about the gospel, which is why

it should not surprise us that unbelievers don't understand the gospel. God has to reveal it to us. He does that through His Word. The gospel is written only in the Bible.

2. Who does what to reach heaven under each teaching? a) **The Law:** Under the law, every person has to be perfect in his thoughts, desires, words and actions to reach heaven. There are no exceptions. There are no technicalities. There are no other options. God is perfect and He demands perfection. b) **The Gospel:** The gospel proclaims that God gives us that perfection because Jesus was perfect in our place. Jesus died to pay for our sin. Jesus rose and conquered death. {*"Just as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."* Romans 5:19}
3. What verdict does each teaching render on us? a) **The Law:** God uses the image of a courtroom because He is the eternal judge. Under the law, the verdict is simple: guilty. Nothing can hide our sinful words or deeds from God. He even knows our thoughts and feelings. {David wrote, "*God, you know my foolishness, and my guilty acts are not hidden from you.*" Psalm 69:5} b) **The Gospel:** *It is not an argument, but a judicial ruling.* The gospel offers a different ruling in God's court: not guilty. The Greek that lies behind the words "justify" and "justification" was used in court when the judge ruled a person not guilty. {*"They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."* Romans 3:24}
4. What does each teaching promise us? a) **The Law:** God's law condemns every sin and every sinner to death and hell. {*"For the wages of sin is death."* Romans 6:23a} **Physical death** is the separation of soul and body. **Spiritual death** is the sinner's separation from God. **Eternal death** is to be locked out of God's presence forever. b) **The Gospel:** The gospel promises free salvation. {*"The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Romans 6:23b} The gospel calls us holy and righteous in God's sight and promises us eternal life. The law and the gospel meet at the cross of Christ. This is the key to all apologetic efforts to dealing with questions of how the law and gospel relate. *One can put it this way. There are two windows at the judgment where one can try to reconcile with God. There is the mercy window, where all sins on the books have been washed away by Jesus' blood and entrance into heaven is guaranteed. There is also the justice window, where some people stop to pay off what they can with their good works and to find out how much mercy they need before going to the mercy window. Those who stop at the justice window find that all their sins are still on the books and are immediately carted to hell. Moral: Do not stop at the justice window!*
5. How does each teaching motivate us to live a Christian life? a) **The Law:** The law motivates us to obey out of fear. This is the *opinio legis*. We naturally think that if we do good, God will reward us, and that if we do bad, God will punish us. Fear of being smacked down by God or a desperate need to feel better becomes the driving motivation for living a better life. *God does not accept good works done based on guilt motivation.* b) **The Gospel:** The gospel motivates us to obey God out of a sense of joy and gratitude for what Jesus has done {Colossians 3:17}. More than that, the gospel changes us and drives us to be new and different people {2 Corinthians 5:14-15}. The law now serves as a guide to the Christian.

XXXI. Dealing with The Two Main Teachings in All of Scripture

A. Trying to resolve the two teachings

1. **Changing one or the other teaching.** a) Most people solve the problem of relating the law and the gospel by changing, weakening, or outright eliminating one or the other or both. b) Often this is done by portraying the Old Testament God as a God of wrath and punishment while portraying the New Testament God as a God of love and forgiveness. [This is what is done in Gnosticism.](#) c) The Old Testament law is represented as a new development in ethical thinking but still relying on threats and rules until Jesus came and introduced a religion of the heart.
2. **The apologist's response.** a) The law is found throughout the whole Bible. St. Paul and Jesus called people to conform their lives to God's Will as it is revealed in the Ten Commandments. {Jesus said, "*Until heaven and earth pass away, not even the smallest letter, or even part of a letter, will in any way pass away from the Law until everything is fulfilled. So whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.*" Matthew 5:18–19} [Jesus talked about hell more than anyone else in the Bible.](#) [His message: "Repent."](#) b) The gospel is also found throughout the whole Bible. [Beginning in Genesis 3.](#) {"*In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely. This is his name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.*" Jeremiah 23:6}

B. Making the teaching appear to evolve

Q7. What is "progressive revelation"? [A: That more of God's plan of salvation was revealed as time passed.](#)

1. **Progressive revelation** [Not theological evolution.](#) a) As God's people developed in their understanding of His plan and His purpose, He revealed more to them. God's religion did not change, in the sense that what He wanted from His people or His plan of salvation changed. What did change was the manner in which He taught His truths. b) Isaiah (lived around 700 BC) understood more of God's plan than King David did (lived around 1000 BC). King David understood more than Moses did (lived around 1500 BC). Moses understood more than Abraham did (lived around 2100 BC). c) As time passed, the LORD had His penmen write down more of His plan of salvation. God gave more and more of His Word to the prophets and then to the apostles to bring the people along to His pre-planned goal. The Old Testament believer had a more limited revelation, but he or she still had what God wanted them to know.

Q8. Why is there a "difference in tone" between the Old and New Testament? [A: The Old Testament makes a stronger statement of Law and the New Testament a clearer statement of the Gospel.](#)

2. **The difference in tone.** a) Someone might still ask why the tone of the Old Testament is so much harsher than that of the New Testament. While this observation is true, it is often overstated. b) The Old Testament has many rich expressions of God's love. {Psalm 23, Psalm 46, Lamentations 3:22-24 and Ezekiel 33:11} Nevertheless, much of the Old Testament was written to people who had

turned away from God and were hardening their hearts. [Isaiah called them “stiff-necked.”](#) God needed to wake them up so that they would be spared eternal judgment. c) The New Testament has texts which threaten God’s wrath. {Matthew 25:46, Romans 2:1-3 and 2 Thessalonians 1:6} The whole New Testament is directed to the church, which is made up of repentant believers. The assumption is usually made that God is dealing with weak believers, rather than those who have turned away. When hardened unbelievers or fallen away Christians appear, the apostles and even Jesus do sound an equally harsh note—because sin brings death and hell. {Matthew 23:13-39, Galatians 5:7-12, 1 Timothy 1:18-20, 2 Timothy 4:14-15 and 2 John 7-11} d) ****The apologist needs to remember that law and gospel fit together at the cross of Christ.**** The Old Testament was given before Jesus came, so God dealt with His people differently than He did after Jesus came. Nevertheless, His message is always that sinners deserve hell, but that the Savior rescues us.

12. God’s Plan of Salvation II

XXXII. Efforts to Weaken or Eliminate the Law

A. The Effect of Evolution on Guilt

1. Our obligation to obey God. a) The law-gospel dynamic is the heart of the Christian faith; therefore, it is under attack today. [People do not like rules.](#) The law and the gospel are often pitted against each other, and each teaching is denied at times. The more common attacks are against the law. b) The Bible teaches the Lord God is the Creator of the universe, both deserving and demanding our praise {Psalm 113:3} He is the Lawgiver and the Judge of the whole world, who should and must be obeyed. As a Father, He has given mankind His endless love and care. All sin really breaks the First Commandment. [It causes us to fail to honor God.](#)

Q1. What is the effect of evolution on personal guilt? [A: People have no obligation to a god, because they have no fear of being judged by him.](#)

2. Evolution removes this obligation. a) Evolution undermines our responsibility to the LORD. [It tries to escape obligation.](#) It says that man was not created to love and serve God. Human morality evolved because it was advantageous to have allies and family members one could trust. b) Sin is regarded as a church construct to explain plagues and natural disasters as the wrath of God. People do not have to answer to a holy God on Judgment Day.
3. It argues against guilt. a) Many claim the concept of sin is detrimental to society today. They want to free people from feeling guilty, not proclaim a law that compounds their guilt. [This is akin to the Theology of Glory.](#) b) Conscience, however, makes discarding sin difficult. Guilt is God’s warning system. Like physical pain, it tells us that there is a problem.

B. Denying Original Sin

1. Definition. a) Original sin means that we all inherit sinfulness from our parents. At his or her conception, every human being is a sinner, deserving eternal damnation. *This does not seem fair or to make sense, but not everything has to make sense to the human mind. Sin is like a genetic disease.* b) The Lutheran Confessions admit: “This inherited sin has caused such a deep, evil corruption of nature that reason does not comprehend it; rather, it must be believed on the basis of the revelation in the Scriptures.”

Q2. Why is original sin a difficult doctrine? *A: It seems unfair from a human viewpoint.*

2. Original sin is like genetic characteristics. a) Original sin is an entity that children inherit from their parents, just like eye color or musical ability. It is like a genetic defect. It is total corruption of the soul, although like other inherited traits, how it affects people may vary. b) Actual sin in thought, word and deed springs from the sin that we inherit. God holds us guilty for such sins. He also counts us as guilty already in the womb, before we have done anything good or bad.
3. It is a difficult doctrine. a) The heart of sin is selfishness. Babies are the most selfish people on earth. They want to be attended to now! Children don't have to be taught to be selfish. It is the result of original sin in every child's heart. b) “God doesn't create junk!” is a misleading statement. *We added the junk part.* God created Adam and Eve sinless. By sinning, people made all their children “junk” in God's eyes.
4. Semi-Pelagianism. a) But could original sin mean that we are not completely sinful, merely damaged? No! St Paul wrote, “*For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh.*” {Romans 7:18a} We often call this **total depravity**. b) What about unbaptized babies? *This is a hard question, and we must be careful not to speculate.* How could a just God punish these? Unbaptized babies of unbelievers are unbelievers. God does not speak to the situation of the unbaptized children of Christians in his Word, so we do not know. c) Isn't it unfair for God to condemn sin? **NO!** Forgiveness is really the unnatural thing. God overrides His justice by punishing his Son in our place. d) These issues are red herrings. *It is important not to get sidetracked. We know what God tells us in His Word. We cannot judge Him.* Who can truly stand before God and say, “I tried to be a good person”? Our consciences tell us that we are not good enough.

C. Disregarding the Law written in the Bible

1. Blanket denials. a) Some people will seriously argue that the Bible doesn't really condemn homo-sexuality. Moses wrote, “*If a man lies down with a male as one lies down with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They must certainly be put to death.*” {Leviticus 20:13} *Denialism is to deny what you refuse to investigate.* People change the clear message so that they can feel like they are “on God's side” and in tune with our society at the same time. b) Other people begin with the idea that there is no such thing as objective truth, so there is no such thing as an objective standard of right and wrong. Whatever the Bible says is the product of a more primitive understanding of religion. *In reality, the Bible is too deep for such people.*

Q3. How might we argue that there is an absolute morality? A: By pointing to cases that no one would dare to justify.

2. Defending absolute morality. a) The apologist must demonstrate moral absolutes by asking, “Was the Nazi extermination of the Jews wrong?” and then, “What made it wrong?” The answer given will have to appeal to a higher standard of right and wrong. *At some point everyone believes in absolute morality.* b) God says many things that are offensive to modern sensibilities. *Yet, objections to the law do not change the law.* The apologist needs to establish the law as a threat to the eternal life of the person with whom he or she is speaking, but we cannot win arguments on these points. We need to turn the conversation to Jesus and use the law the way God intended it to be used. It is the Holy Spirit working through the gospel that effects conversion.

D. Denying Hell and Judgment

Q4. Why are jokes about hell dangerous? A: There is nothing humorous about hell. Jokes lessen its horror.

1. Misrepresenting hell. a) While many people believe in some kind of afterlife, they imagine that death merely leads to just another plane of existence. *People want to turn down the fires of hell (denialism).* b) They do not believe in a final judgment at which Christ will raise the dead and purify this world. They believe in a gathering of all loved ones, or an opportunity to spend eternity doing the things that a person most liked to do. c) Some people who don’t believe in a specifically Christian afterlife do fear what’s coming. “God is going to collect what is due.”
2. Telling God how to be God. a) God is going to just take everyone to heaven. *People aren’t bad enough to go to hell.* It isn’t fair for God to condemn someone to eternal punishment for short-term sins. Yet momentary actions often have fatal consequences. All sin merits eternal punishment. b) People are basically good. Their sins are more “mistakes” than outright rebellion against God. Therefore, eternal punishment is inappropriate.

E. Misusing Old Testament Regulations

1. Dismissing them as no longer relevant. a) Some cite Old Testament dietary laws and purity laws and point out that they are out-of-date. *This is a faulty comparison.* Therefore, they argue that God will no longer use severe out-of-date punishment either. b) God has given different kinds of laws, just like civil authorities do. Some laws apply only in certain situations. Others are more general. Sometimes, one kind of law overrides another. Not every law God gave applies to every situation.

Q5. What three types of law are included in the “Law of Moses”? A: 1) Civil, 2) ceremonial, 3) moral.

2. Types of Old Testament laws. *Even today there are laws with different purposes, such as laws that only regard children.* a) **Civil laws** applied only while Israel was a functioning country. b)

Ceremonial laws applied only to Old Testament worship {Colossians 2:16-17}. c) **Moral laws** state God's standard of right and wrong and also announce what constitutes God's punishment for sin. Moral laws apply to all people everywhere at all times.

F. The command to exterminate the Canaanites

Q6. Why did God direct the Israelites to exterminate the Canaanites? A: As a judgment on them for their evil practices and impenitence.

1. Judgment versus genocide. a) Many people object that God commanded his people to exterminate the nations that were there when they conquered the Promised Land. They see this as the natural result of fundamentalism, whether Jewish, Christian, or Islamic and blame the law given by God for such excesses. **They jump to a conclusion.** b) The destruction of the Canaanite peoples was actually part of God's judgment on them for their unbelief and their religious practices. God simply will not tolerate idolatry. This idolatry presented a serious spiritual risk for the people of God.
2. The New Testament church and violence. a) The New Testament church was not commissioned to spread the gospel by force. The extermination of unbelievers is not part of the moral law. **By the Word, not the sword.** b) Defending God's law can lead to anger and condemnation from unbelievers. Jesus said: "*Blessed are you whenever people hate you, and whenever they exclude and insult you and reject your name as evil because of the Son of Man.*" {Luke 6:22}

XXXIII. Attempts to Weaken or Eliminate the Gospel

A. Introduction

1. Stoking unbelief. a) People disbelieve the gospel because it is not written in our hearts. Our old man has a tremendous advantage. It requires a miracle of grace to make a believer and God's continuous supernatural intervention to keep our faith alive. b) One of Satan's most effective strategies for attacking the gospel is to attack the law because the gospel means nothing if we aren't sinners. **If there is no law, then there is no gospel.**
2. Direct attacks on the gospel. a) Satan tries to convert it into a new law, like the Roman Catholic Church does with its "counsels" and many Arminian churches do with "What would Jesus do?" The axis of the Christian's faith is made to revolve around our actions. **These are clever ways to bury the gospel, such as "I" theology.** b) People claim, "The gospel doesn't make sense. How can one man's death pay for the sins of the whole world? Why does Jesus' death erase our sins? How could God be so cruel to His own Son?" **These challenge the behavior of God.**

B. Jesus as a Force for Change

Q7. What is the moral influence theory? A: Jesus' death was meant to cause us to be dedicated to our fellowmen.

1. Jesus' death redefined. a) People create an **atonement theory** to explain how Jesus' death wins us eternal life. *In so doing people try to define the nature of God.* Examples are the ransom theory, *Christus Victor*, the satisfaction theory, the governmental theory, and the scapegoat theory. There is danger in allegory. b) The **moral influence theory** holds that Jesus died to show us what real love is like and in the process, become a catalyst for societal change. *This is redefining Christ's mission.* There was no payment for sin. Executing someone for another's crime isn't regarded as justice.
2. How redemption works. a) Sinners do not have **free will**. Still, most people believe that they can choose to be good and, in the process, earn eternal life. Maybe they cannot earn it all, but they can at least contribute to some degree. This concept (synergism) is false, however, because we can contribute nothing. *It is the sure way to hell.* St. Paul wrote, "*For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh.*" {Romans 7:18a} b) We need **forensic righteousness**. In God's courtroom, every one of us would be guilty. He has all the evidence. We cannot escape the verdict of guilty. Jesus took the punishment we deserve, allowing us to be declared "not guilty." *It is all God's work; we do nothing.*

C. Attacks on the Ministry of Christ

1. Textual criticism – Scholars dissect the gospel accounts, argue about where this or that expression might have come from, and then eliminate those things they believe are wrong or inventions. They then present what Jesus should have said.
2. Cultural flaws in Jesus' actions. a) Jesus or His apostles are portrayed as being hopelessly male chauvinistic, or as viewing the world through a limited, first century Jewish viewpoint. *People don't understand how the message had to be imbedded in the culture to be understood.* b) Jesus preached a great deal of law during his ministry. Those who don't understand the gospel will argue that Jesus taught us a way to live, not about doctrine. *We cannot keep the law, which was Jesus' point.* c) Jesus accepts everyone *who repents*. Yet, Jesus does not excuse their sin. Jesus did not accept the religious leaders of his day because they did not think they were sinners; therefore, they were unwilling to repent. d) Jesus did not come to create social change or to subvert the institutionalized church. He came to lay down his life to win the world. Jesus accepts people solely on the basis of their justification. They believe and are counted righteous.

D. The Challenge of Universalism

1. Everyone gets into heaven. *This is an effort to "gang up" on God.* a) Universalism says that all roads lead to God. The Christian conception of God is just a human way of thinking about God who is far beyond our understanding. Therefore, people don't really need the gospel. b) Christianity is exclusive. God often claimed, "I alone am God and there is no other." Jesus said, "*No one comes to the Father except through me.*" {John 14:6} *It is necessary to emphasize that only a few get to heaven.*

Q8. Does the Gospel undercut the Christian life? Explain. A: No, but people who do not take sin seriously think it is a “get out of hell free” card.

2. The church should demand righteousness! a) Does the Gospel undercut the Christian life? Pelagius thought it made salvation “too easy.” If religion doesn’t make demands and if the church just forgives and lets people off, is it not encouraging sinful behavior? Paul said in Romans, “*And why not say (as some slanderously claim we say), ‘Let us do evil so that good may result.’ Their condemnation is deserved.*” {Romans 3:8} b) Sinners do try to use forgiveness like a get-out-of-jail-free card. For example, “I’m Lutheran; my ticket to heaven has been punched.” They do use it as a license to sin and to not think about how serious sin really is. This kind of misuse of the gospel is frequent among lapsed Christians. St. Paul dismissed the practice, and the charge that it is tolerated is blasphemy because true Christianity encourages a real Christian life. The gospel works not just to change behavior, but to change hearts.

13. Challenges from Archeology I

We return to science for the next four lessons, but it is a different type of science than people usually think of. Some of the rules are different, but the overall practice of gathering the best evidence and developing models for it persist.

XXXIV. Introducing History and Archaeology

A. History

1. Christianity and history. a) Christianity takes place in history. The church exists in the world. Events are dated throughout the Bible. Historical figures are referenced. Events take place in real geographical places. b) Many religions (like Shinto, Hinduism) set their great events in a mythical or legendary past. Some religions (like Islam and Buddhism) are also historical.

Q1. What are primary sources to historians? A: Any old things with writing on them.

2. What is history? a) History is the study of the past and is based on textual evidence. It is a record of what people claim happened. Historians put great emphasis on **primary sources**—records that come directly from what they’re studying. Eyewitness testimony is of greatest importance. b) It was practiced in ancient times. Some ancient historians did do research. Most of them were not historians by training and did little research. c) Historians often use an interdisciplinary approach to reach conclusions.
3. What do historians do? a) Historians ask: When and where was this document produced? By whom? What was its source? What was its original form? How credible is the author? One needs to know the quality of the sources. b) The further into antiquity one goes, the fewer the sources there are to work with, due to decay caused both by natural processes and ongoing human intervention. What is left of ancient Roman and Greek writings are often only mere fragments.

Q2. Why do we say there is an accidental quality to history? A: Our knowledge depends on what was preserved and has been discovered.

4. The accidental quality of history. a) What has survived is haphazard. They are the remnants of the past. What does the absence of records or evidence really mean? Weather, war, fire, insects, and rodents determine what survives. b) We say the Bible is inerrant even when it speaks of history and geography. Skeptics disagree. They consider the Bible to be one source among many and subject it to the kinds of analysis that they would apply to any other historical document.
5. Church history is really historical theology. It is the attempt to trace the finger of God as He fulfills his promises across the centuries. Because we live in this sinful world, the identification will always be halting and tentative. We will want to use the tools of academic history when appropriate, to see sin and grace as clearly as possible. Church history has a target in its investigations.

B. Archaeology

1. The role of archaeology. a) Archaeology cannot prove what God's Word says is true. It is limited by what remains in the ground which has not been disturbed for us to find. It therefore has a limited range. b) Archaeology is an observational science, where the primary source of information is the study of phenomena that the scientists happen to encounter.

Q3. What is the "2% rule"? Why is it used? A: Archeologists excavate 2% of 2% of the sites and find 2% of what was there.

2. Archaeology is the study of ancient things. a) It is the discovery and study of the material remains of past cultures. It focuses primarily on physical objects often called **artifacts**. It has limited materials. b) Archaeologists use the "2% rule": they excavate 2% of the area of 2% of the known sites and find 2% of what was once there.
3. Obstacles to archaeology. a) Ancient peoples almost never left valuable things lying around for future generations to discover, except when calamity struck (e.g., volcanic eruption or destruction in war) and burial treasures (e.g., in King Tut's tomb). The remains are of limited quality. b) In cities like Rome and Jerusalem, every time a new foundation is dug, the possibility exists that the workers will discover something apparently ancient. c) Archaeology is expensive and time-consuming. Some sites (e.g., the Temple Mount) have a political or cultural importance that makes excavation impossible.

Q4. What are the obstacles to good archaeology? A: Dating, artifacts removed without documentation, false artifacts, false provenances, cultural restrictions.

4. Results of archaeology. a) Pottery shards—pottery was the packaging of the ancient world. Some were used as notepads, called *ostraca* (singular *ostrakon*), and they are especially valuable. b) Dating of finds is an incredibly important and technical question, but it often can be done only to within a couple of centuries. c) "What archaeology yields is not facts, but artifacts, which then

have to be interpreted.” That interpretation depends on when and how the artifacts are found. Archaeologists talk about seeing an artifact *in situ* (Latin for “in its place”). [The nature of the artifacts is important.](#) d) Many artifacts in museums and collections all over the world – and on the antiquities market – were improperly collected and cannot be studied *in situ*.

Q5. What is a provenance? [A: A record of when and where an artifact was found.](#)

5. The quality of artifacts. a) Early efforts at archaeology did a poor job of documentation and often left sites contaminated and confused. They are now hard to understand. [Bad collections may look impressive but are of little use.](#) b) The modern antiquities market is poorly policed. Poor people do not preserve sites when they are look for something to sell. c) Sometimes, a real artifact has a fictionalized **provenance** to protect its illegal origin. [This is falsification in the bad sense of the word.](#) Sometimes, clever people pass off fake artifacts as genuine. Even very knowledgeable people are taken in, at times, by these deceptions. d) Archaeology once focused on rulers and military leaders. Now there is a much greater interest in the lives of ordinary people. [The focus is important in determining what is sought and what is found.](#)
6. People have begun to challenge the right of modern scientists to disturb the graves of their ancestors. [Ethical questions.](#) There is a push to return artifacts to the nations of origin.

XXXV. Biblical History and Archeology

A. The Purpose of history in the Bible [The Bible is not pure history but has a purpose for what it records.](#)

1. Fundamental purpose. a) Nothing in the Old Testament was not written as a purely historical document. The authors were not writing history the way that many authors do today. b) The Bible was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to give us a record of man’s sin and God’s grace. God was very selective about what he recorded. Historical research and archaeology can help us understand biblical accounts.

Q6. Why is the fallacy of confirmation bias a big problem in archaeological research? [A: People look for things that confirm their beliefs, ignoring what doesn’t. They bend their interpretation of the evidence.](#)

2. Problems with outside help. a) History and archaeology can give the false impression that we cannot understand the Bible without them. [The Bible does not depend on outside help.](#) The basic truths of grace and sin are clear without them. b) Research is often used to attempt to prove or disprove someone’s pet theory or belief. This is an example of the **fallacy of confirmation bias**.
3. Challenges to the faith. [People raise numerous issues for the purpose of challenging the validity of the Bible.](#) a) Denying miracles is common. Scholars argue that the worldview of the biblical authors included a belief that gods directly involved themselves in human affairs, sometimes even causing things to happen that are scientifically impossible. b) Challenges are made to dates, geography or genealogies that do not match non-biblical documents. c) Some words and actions of historical figures are only recorded in the Bible, such as proclamations made by heathen kings

or their interactions with Biblical figures. Historians challenge these. Why? Sometimes they rely on an **argument from silence**, which in classical logic is a fallacy. d) Some skeptics may express the belief that what is recorded is simply too fantastic to have really happened. At times, they seem to consistently assume that other sources are more accurate than the Bible.

4. Answering challenges. *To the Christian, the truth of the Scriptures is important.* a) Historians are more concerned with the worldviews of a society than with their truthfulness. We must ask the skeptic to articulate why events cannot be true. b) To simply dismiss the biblical account in favor of non-biblical sources because they are biblical is unethical. The purpose of an account is part of modern historical research, and we shouldn't be afraid to use that principle. c) We cannot answer every objection raised by historians or archaeologists because we don't know enough about the ancient world to give a definitive answer to every objection. *This is an important point.* That doesn't mean that archaeology disproves the biblical account. d) We need to be sure that we know the difference between data and interpretations, as well as the difference between evidence that presents difficulties and evidence that positively disproves something. It is wrong to force evidence to prove or to deny God's Word. Underlying biases, agendas and assumptions must not be allowed to make legitimate difficulties into clear proof that God's Word is false. *Biases are frequent because careers are at stake and because there is only a very limited ability to validate theories by experimentation.*

B. Is There Such a Thing as "Biblical Archaeology?"

Q7. How did the Empress Helena affect Biblical archaeology? *A: She set it in motion. She established questionable landmarks and relics.*

1. Looking for proof. *Some people want to find evidence to support the Bible and ignore what doesn't.* a) The Empress Helena, the mother of Constantine, traveled to the holy land from AD 326 to 328 to search for relics and to identify famous biblical sites. b) Christian groups continue to sponsor archaeological digs, hoping to find evidence documenting the biblical narrative. Most archaeologists today regard the Bible as a heavily theologized interpretation of reality rather than as a reliable guide.
2. What's in a name? a) Today "biblical archaeology" is called "Syro-Palestinian archaeology," The periodical *Biblical Archaeologist* has become *Near Eastern Archaeology*. b) The archaeological community views much of the Bible with skepticism. So far, archaeology has not produced direct evidence of many Biblical accounts. *Evidence is often hard to locate even if it exists.* c) Biblical sites are hard to identify; they lack signs with city names. When a site is excavated, there can be an intense debate about whether it is an Israelite or a Canaanite site or partly each.

C. The Role of the Media

Q8. How does the media confuse the public's understanding of archaeology? *A: 1) Lack of understanding, 2) lack of time and space, 3) profit motive, seeking promotion.*

1. News is often false. a) Reporters are not well-educated about scientific matters and often write stories which contain major misstatements. This misleads the general public. b) The news business is a time-sensitive occupation. When a disaster strikes or something dramatic happens, journalists have a very limited amount of time to collect and verify information. The story often changes between editions. [News is often only the best rumor at the time.](#) c) The media is a for-profit industry. The money comes in through advertising. The headlines are often misleading so as to draw readers/viewers in. People tend to cherry-pick their news feeds in order to validate their pre-formed opinions.
2. The difficulty of summation. a) Even when journalists are doing their best to give a clear and accurate explanation of what an archaeological discovery is and what it means, they do not have enough space/time to cover all the necessary details [A case of too little.](#) b) On 9/11/2001 the news media greatly overestimated the number of casualties in the attack on the World Trade Center because viewers/listeners wanted a number immediately, not careful analysis by experts. [A case of too much.](#) c) Stories frequently use the words “may” or “might” to technically avoid making a claim about something while convincing most people they had. d) The media loves “breaking news.” Most archaeological discoveries reported as “breaking news” were actually known about by archaeologists for many years before the media “discovered” them. e) Stories that seem to shake or confirm the foundations of the faith attract media attention. When it comes to archaeology—or any other complex issue in apologetics—the news media cannot be our first source of information.

XXXVI. Testimonies and Travails of History and Archaeology

A. Uses of archaeology

1. The practicality of archaeology. a) The gap between our culture and those the Bible originally spoke to is enormous. [It is important to bridge this cultural gap.](#) There have been many instances of historical texts and archaeology illuminating the past. Ancient records can give us information that the Bible omits. b) Biblical accounts frequently picture people undertaking everyday activities in work and trade and even relaxation. Archaeology can often give us a better idea of how these activities were actually carried out.
2. In the examples that follow, our goal is to get a sense of how archaeology is done and what the apologist can and cannot say about such cases.

B. The Dating of Jesus’ Birth

1. Information to note. [Understanding the issue.](#) a) Most scholars believe the Bible contradicts itself and history as a whole. Even Goldsworthy, who often uses the gospels and St. Paul’s writings as valid historical documents, subjects them to the analysis used by most secular historians. b) The date and circumstances of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth rely entirely on the Gospel accounts. They are not mentioned by any other sources until much later. c) Matthew 2:1 firmly dates the

Nativity to the reign of Herod the Great. Since Herod died in 4 BC, the probable date is between 7 to 4 BC.

2. The Quirinius issue. [Realizing that we probably lack some of the critical details.](#) a) Luke 2:1-2 states there was an empire-wide census while Publius Sulpicius Quirinius was governor of Syria. There is no record of such a single decree imposing a census. b) Quirinius was the legate of Syria and did conduct a census of Judaea, but not until AD 6. In 6 BC Publius Quinctilius Varus was legate of Syria. c) Goldsworthy argued that Luke probably confused the cultural memory of the outrage over Quirinius' census in 6 AD with what happened under Herod. d) Goldsworthy allows for further confusion caused by the fact that although Herod styled himself as a king, he was viewed by the Jews as a stooge of the Roman government and that maybe Luke and other Jews figured any census Herod would have conducted would have to have come from Rome originally. e) The records simply are too incomplete to definitively say what did or didn't happen. No one can demonstrate that a census of the Roman Empire did not take place sometime in the last couple years of Herod the Great's rule. f) Another explanation is that an early scribe incorrectly wrote Quirinius instead of Quinctilius in transcribing the text because he was confused by whom Luke meant. The apologist must insist that those who want to demonstrate that Luke is wrong actually do so.

14. Challenges from Archeology II

[Each topic takes investigation before the apologist can say anything specific. In general, God has arranged things as He pleased. We will have more evidence as time passes, but that does not mean that we will necessarily know more about how the Biblical events occurred. The past is hard to study accurately.](#)

XXXVII. The Dead Sea Scrolls

A. Discoveries – Qumran (south of Jericho) settlement 134 BC – 68 AD

Q1. What is in the Dead Sea Scrolls? [A: Hebrew Bible books, other religious and secular books.](#)

1. Early scrolls. a) First finds near Jericho occurred in AD 211–217. b) Arab hunters had found many Hebrew books inside caves about AD 800.
2. Modern finds. a) In 1946 a Bedouin shepherd found ten jars containing 7 scrolls in a cave. b) These were taken to scholars in Jerusalem for investigation. In April 1948, the discovery was announced to the world. c) Between 1947 and 1956, eleven total caves were discovered which contained manuscripts. (More than thirty others contained pottery.) d) At least 870 separate scrolls have been identified. Seven scrolls were intact.

B. What is in the scrolls?

1. Physical contents. a) The documents were mostly in Hebrew, but also Aramaic and Greek. b) Copies of books of the Bible, except Esther, and nonbiblical religious writings.
2. The significance of Biblical materials. a) They are 1000 year older than previous manuscripts but are very similar to them. b) They show that hand copying of the Bible did not change the content over this period. Jesus had the same Old Testament that we do.

Q2. Why do the scrolls and Masoretic Text sometimes differ? A: Minor copying errors. Major local editing changes.

3. Why sometimes the scrolls and Masoretic Text differ. a) Were different versions of the Hebrew text for a few books in wide circulation? *Did some communities try to make books like Esther more religious?* b) Did other Jewish communities recognize these alternate forms? We simply do not have the evidence to say as to where or why they arose. c) The overwhelming majority of the text of the Bible is not in doubt. None of the differences changes a single scriptural teaching.
4. Effects on the canon of the Scriptures. a) “The canon” is a specific set of writings identified as the inspired Word of God—there are 66 books and no others. b) The Dead Sea Scrolls contain numerous books that today are called apocrypha and pseudepigrapha. Did the Qumran sect view these writings as Scripture? c) The Qumran Sect preserved quite a large number of religious writings, not all of which are in complete agreement with each other. *Why were other books kept?* There are multiple copies of several sectarian works which clearly were influential in expressing their theological positions. Were these viewed as authoritative, descriptive, or novel?

XXXVIII. Various Cases

A. Jericho

1. Old Testament issues. a) Jericho is one of the oldest regularly inhabited sites in the world. Today it consists of a **tel** that has multiple layers of inhabited city beneath. b) Recent excavations have shown that the walls of the city fell down in the 1400’s BC. *This date makes it harder to deny the exodus.* They fell; they weren’t knocked down by siege engines. c) The excavation also showed that the site was not plundered or subject to a siege. It furthered showed that the site was burned. (Joshua 6) d) While we cannot *prove* from the archaeological evidence that the Joshua account is true, it is not *disproven* by the archaeological evidence either.

Q3. What is the New Testament issue with the archaeology of Jericho? A: Did Jesus meet a blind man going into or coming out of Jericho?

2. New Testament issues. a) Jesus healed a blind man named Bartimaeus. b) Matthew and Mark state that this happened as Jesus was *leaving* Jericho, but Luke states that it happened as Jesus *approached* Jericho. *This is a point of reference issue.* c) There are several tels at the Jericho site. At the time of Christ there was the ancient city that had been inhabited since the time of King

Ahab, as well as a Roman city, built by King Herod to collect tolls. Matthew and Mark might have looked at things from the Jewish viewpoint and Luke from the Roman viewpoint.

B. The Isaiah Bulla

Q4. What is the Isaiah Bulla? What is the problem with it? A: It is an impression made with a seal of Isaiah's name. It only has part of another word.

1. What was found. a) In 2018, Professor Eilat Mazar of Hebrew University of Jerusalem announced the discovery of a *bulla*—the impression made from a seal—that *might* have be-longed to the prophet Isaiah. A bulla was made by pressing a seal into clay. b) Bullae served several different purposes, such as signatures on documents or as receipts for payment. c) This particular bulla was found *in situ* in debris dated from the seventh or eighth century BC. About ten feet away, another bulla was found that clearly did belong to King Hezekiah, who often had dealings with Isaiah. d) There is a question about the Isaiah bulla—it's broken. It's only about half an inch wide. It clearly has the name "Isaiah" written in Hebrew characters and the beginning of another word which may be "the prophet."
2. Its meaning. a) It is the only archaeological discovery to date with Isaiah's name on it. **Does this prove Isaiah existed?** It might be physical evidence of a relationship between King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah, but that is not certain. b) At most it gives some pause to people who want to question whether there really was a historic Isaiah at all.

C. The James Ossuary

Q5. What is an ossuary? A: A box of bones.

1. What is an ossuary? a) An ossuary is a box that is filled with bones. b) At Christ's time, it was customary for Jewish families to lay their dead out in a tomb (usually a burial cave) and then to return when the flesh had decayed and to gather the bones into a box and often inscribe the name of the deceased on it.
2. What was found. a) An ossuary was found with an Aramaic inscription that read "James the son of Joseph the brother of Jesus." Was this the man who wrote the epistle of James? **There are three James mentioned in the New Testament.** b) If authentic and if it really is talking about the James of the New Testament, this would be the oldest known reference to Jesus outside the Bible. c) The ossuary did not come from an approved dig, so its provenance is unknown. The inscription is just twenty letters in Aramaic, but there is question whether it was forged at a later date.
3. Its meaning. a) The Israeli Antiquities Authority studied the issue and concluded the inscription was added later. Other scholars disagree. b) Even if it is authentic, what would it prove? "Jesus" was a very common name at the time of Christ, as were "Joseph" and "James." **Moreover, some people had two names such as Simon and Peter.**

D. The lost tomb of Jesus?

Q6. What is the lost tomb of Jesus? A: A cave of 10 ossuaries found in Jerusalem.

1. The tomb of Jesus. a) What is the correct location of Jesus' tomb? Significant archaeological evidence supports the location as being at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. b) In 2003 James Cameron and Simcha Jacobovici made a documentary called *The Lost Tomb of Jesus*. They claimed a tomb discovered in 1980 in Talpiot (in Jerusalem) was the family tomb of Jesus. Ten ossuaries were found in this tomb. They claimed that the James ossuary originally came from this tomb.
2. Is it real? **Made up history.** a) The archaeological community swiftly and completely rejected all these claims. None of what Cameron claimed held water archaeologically, historically, or theologically. b) Although it has been publicly debunked, it's the kind of sensational thing that people will remember and bring up, without knowing how ridiculous it is. The *Da Vinci Code* is a similar example. **You can fool all of the people some of the time, and once fooled, many people refuse to admit they were fooled.**

E. The Shroud of Turin

Q7. What is the Shroud of Turin? Is it really what its supporters claim it is? A: The alleged burial cloth of Christ; this is extremely unlikely genuine.

1. What is the item? a) The Shroud of Turin is a piece of cloth. It is 14 ½ feet long and 3 ½ feet wide. It is made of flax in a herringbone twill pattern. b) The two images on the Shroud are the front and the back of a naked man with his hands folded in front of his groin. The heads of the images are near each other in the middle. The feet are at opposite ends. The man has a beard and mustache and shoulder length hair, parted in the middle. He would have been almost six feet tall and is muscular in appearance. **The height of the man is an issue.** c) The Shroud is light brown in color with some reddish stains that some people believe are blood. It also has some holes where it was singed in a fire. d) Many people believe that it is Jesus' burial cloth and that the image was made when Jesus rose from the dead, presumably by a great flash of light.
2. Is it real? a) The shroud is consistent with the descriptions in Matthew, Mark, and Luke but not with that in John, who speaks of linen cloths. b) Our information on first century Jewish burial customs is limited. The practice of using ossuaries means that we don't often find a body still wearing its shroud. c) The Shroud of Turin is first mentioned in 1390. A letter from Pierre d'Arcis, the bishop of Lirey, France (where the Shroud was at that time) to Pope Clement VII calls it a forgery and says that the artist had confessed. **There is the smell of forgery about the shroud.** d) Radiocarbon testing was done on a fragment of the Shroud in 1988 by three separate laboratories. The tests yielded dates ranging from AD 1260-1390. e) Creating fake relics was a big business in the Medieval Ages. f) The Roman Catholic Church has never officially accepted nor repudiated the Shroud.

F. Noah's Ark

Q8. What is the problem with the search for Noah's Ark? A: Ararat is a very non-specific name.

1. Where might the ark be? a) Mt. Ararat is on the eastern border of Turkey (Genesis 8:4). Legends have proliferated that the remnants of the ark are there. *The place is in doubt.* b) The Hebrew actually speaks of "the mountains" in the plural, i.e., a mountain range. Due to name changes resulting from the many languages spoken in the region, the exact location is impossible to identify.
2. What has been found? a) Expeditions to Ararat have occurred periodically since the 7th century. Numerous claims have been made, but no verifiable remnants of the ark have been found. b) Various people have claimed to have seen the ark, but no reliable photographs exist. *Still, people keep looking.* Despite TV specials, claims that the ark has been found lack evidence. *It is like the Loch Ness monster.*
3. Verdict on the claims. a) It is difficult to take archaeological claims seriously when they cannot be verified. Even were the evidence compelling, we would still base our faith on what God says, while we rejoiced at his working to champion his truth. b) Another example of a quixotic quest is the Ark of the Covenant. *These are misguided efforts to validate the Bible by external evidence.*

XXXIX. Concluding Remarks

A. Meaning of archaeological finds

1. *The Bible was wrong. This would mean we are lost.* This is often the conclusion of scholars, media figures and even the man in the street. It's not an option for us. Faith is being certain of what is not seen. We accept what God says.
2. *The Bible was not wrong, but our interpretation of it was. People are always too eager to read things into the Bible.* We understood the biblical text as claiming something that, in fact, it does not. There are lots of reasons why this might be the case.
3. *The archaeologists' data is not wrong but their interpretation of it is. This type of error is common.* They draw conclusions from the data that it does not support. This goes back to the difference between facts and artifacts.
4. *The archaeologists' data is bad.* What they found was not what they thought they had found (hoaxes, false provenances, etc.). This is difficult for us to evaluate. It usually takes time for things like this to come out. *On further investigation....*
5. *With our present state of knowledge, we cannot reconcile what archaeology says with what the Bible says.* The apologist must remember the two per-cent rule and the accidental nature of nearly all historical and archaeological evidence. *There is always so much more to find, and what exists decays as time passes.*

B. Summary

1. Final comments about archeology. a) Artifacts, arguments, and “proofs” are all used in one way or another to attach a truth claim to a standard, or an implied standard. b) Archeology requires a certain level of professional expertise to use it properly. We need to do hard and honest work to evaluate the claims we hear in the media. [Understanding the evidence can be difficult, and getting things right can be complicated.](#)
2. Final comments about history. a) History rarely generates the media excitement that archaeology does. b) The biggest single challenge in historical studies comes from submitting the Bible to the critical analysis of scholars, as if it were any other document. c) While we dare not rest our faith on archaeology or historical research, we can use it to help us understand the times and the cultures in which the Bible was written. [We can use research but should not rely on its accuracy.](#)

Lesson 15 - Challenges from Cognitive Psychology I

Research in cognitive science both aids and troubles the apologist. It is helpful in that it shows the degree of unreliability and immorality which is inherent in the brain. On the other hand, it teaches how to use the gullibility and weakness of others to trick them. The apologist must be careful not to be deceived.

XL. The flavor of the field

A. Setting the stage

Q1. What would a *tabula rasa* in psychology be? [A: A blank slate, meaning a blank mind.](#)

1. From youth on. a) There is no such thing as a *tabula rasa*. At birth, children already have certain tendencies, including original sin, that will come into play when they are exposed to appropriate stimuli. Infants view the world only in terms of their own needs. [The brain has extensive neurological wiring.](#) b) Children also have the inherent ability to place things into categories. It becomes almost automatic as their minds attempt both to group things as similar for identification but also to subcategorize them for ease of retrieval. c) Some of this assignment is rule-based while other assignments are done through guessing. These approaches do not always work correctly, which is one reason why people sometimes misunderstand information.

Q2. What is a behavioral script? [A: A set of instructions for the mind of how something must be done or should happen.](#)

2. Building a mental matrix. a) As they age, children learn **behavioral scripts** by the same two mechanisms. Through reward, punishment, and observation a person develops a pattern of behavior which we call a **culture**, including attitudes toward religion. [Scripts come with prefilled blanks. These placeholders must be replaced by the attributes of an event or memories which will be recorded wrong.](#) b) Scripts are activated by specific **triggers** and are important to the brain's ability to address issues without excessive thought. Such scripts affect how a person will react to words such as “church,” triggering a series of images and feelings. c) Each person has an

established mental matrix of information in the form of categories and scripts guiding his or her beliefs and actions. People develop beliefs, scripts, and **mindsets** in an effort to deal with a world which is too complex to understand. *People's minds try to protect themselves against harmful surprises.* d) To present an appropriate and effective defense of biblical truths, the apologist must probe not only the person's beliefs but also the underpinnings of those beliefs, being cautious so as not to trigger defensive reactions.

B. Memory

1. Types of memory. a) **Long-term memory** stores processed information and scripts indefinitely in the **cortex**. It has an intricate retrieval system which allows the information and scripts to be brought into the subconscious or conscious mind for processing. b) **Short-term memory** is the repository in the **hippocampus** for information newly arrived through the senses. *It is like a large railyard.* It can hold about 7 chunks of information for up to 30 seconds. The information is then discarded or is transferred, after processing in which sleep plays an important role, into long-term memory. c) The **working memory** is of short duration and used for learning, reasoning and comprehension, such as adding numbers "in our head." It is located in the **prefrontal cortex** and is regarded as part of consciousness.

Q3. What are two limitations of our memory? A: 1) Limited capacity, 2) retrieval concerns.

2. Limitations of the memory. a) It is not a photographic array that records events as they happen. *Memory is therefore partial.* This is true both due to the physical limitations of the memory and because the mind at all levels is operating based on scripts to prevent being swamped by new inputs. b) While using its current script to interpret the sensory inputs, the brain may find there is a mismatch between the inputs and what the script expects. The brain requires a **metascript** to watch for deviations and to quickly switch scripts. *For example, a routine driving script must immediately be replaced with a crisis script if a ball is suddenly observed coming into the street.* c) If everything fits together, the sensory input is allowed to slide out of short-term memory and be forgotten. *Living on autopilot.* When a notable incident does occur, the brain transfers information about the event from short-term to long-term memory. d) The memory image of the event, however, is not necessarily a truthful representation of the event that occurred, but rather a blended representation of our sensory inputs with the details of our current script. *When we observe a crime, part of what we remember is reliable, part is filler from our internal script.* e) The poor blending of script and sensory input has produced many tragic consequences, like police shooting unarmed suspects. Moreover, all parties involved in an incident can genuinely remember the events differently based on their scripts.
3. Memory self-enhancement. a) Once an image is inserted into our long-term memory, our subconscious mind continues to refine the image to diminish our errors, remove our inappropriate actions or add positive information that didn't happen, but we wish would have. *Our memory tries to improve our self-image and adds details when asked.* b) We tend to see ourselves as more heroic or as more helpless. *We deceive ourselves.* Our brains may even replace actors in an incident with others it feels are more appropriate. All this is done subconsciously, making our

conscious mind really believe it. c) When we present correct reasoning on a troubling theological issue, someone might indicate understanding the argument at the level of working memory, but have it distorted by a processing script when it is stored. **People often do not hear what we say or accurately remember what they heard. This can create us versus them arguments later.** d) Due to original sin, we are all internally programmed to justify ourselves at the expense of others. It is not only a problem of our conscious minds, but it extends into all our subconscious memory processes. e) When we discuss a topic with someone with whom we expect to have a continuing dialogue or with whom we will need to follow up to see whether our previous efforts have been correctly internalized, it is useful to write a note to ourselves so that we will remember our impressions at the time of the conversation. Written notes don't change with time like our memories. **Our memory often tricks us.**

C. Personality types.

1. People's personalities differ greatly. a) Children do not respond in the same manner to similar stimuli. This trend continues into adulthood. b) People have different personalities, different goals, and different concerns. An apologist must recognize dissimilarities in people to be effective. c) Dr. Carl Jung developed four criteria that have guided subsequent work for classifying personality types: nature of a person's energy, his perception of information, his processing of information, and his use of the processed information. d) Types are often combined into four personality styles.

Q4. How does the personality of a decision-maker differ from that of an analyst? **A:** A decision-maker wants a little detail but mostly something to act on. An analyst wants a lot of detail and interrelationships among the details.

2. **The decision-maker** a) She wants the key information summarized so that a decision can be made, a plan put into place and an action accomplished. b) Christianity to this type of person is a group of clearly stated doctrines which have implications for personal behavior. (Business leaders and military officers)
3. **The analyst** a) She wants all the detail and a carefully reasoned presentation. Evidence is important, and its organization is critical. b) Christianity to this type of person is a set of interconnected doctrines, each related to the overall theme, which needs to be understood to be applied in the Christian's life. (Engineers and accountants)
4. **The communicator** a) She wants everyone to feel good about what is happening and needs to understand the people involved. b) Christianity to this type of person is a community in which correct doctrines are part of the bond between people. (Clergymen and social workers)
5. **The visionary** a) She sees the world differently than the obvious way it appears to others. She visualizes how things might be organized or done differently and sometimes seems completely detached from reality. b) Christianity to this type of person involves interacting with a dynamic God who is continually renewing His people and His creation. (Artists and inventors)

Q5. How do differing personality types affect the work of the apologist? A: How to approach someone properly to get a hearing.

6. Apologetic approach. a) Apologists must remember that they are not trying to convince themselves about the truths of God. They must shape their arguments to the nature of the person with whom they are dealing. b) Because few people are of one pure personality style, the apologist needs to probe to find which underlying personality type of the person is most easily reachable and which is dominating his or her view of the Gospel. c) If the person is approached from a different perspective, the ability to get a profitable hearing will be greatly diminished.

XLI. How We Make Decisions

A. The two-layer mind

Q6. What is mental System 1? A: The automatic brain which parallel processes sensory input.

1. System 1. a) System 1 (also called the “automatic brain”) simultaneously processes many inputs in a parallel manner and tries to synthesize the best solution based on the inputs and the accumulated biases that exist in its relevant script. b) It is automatic and often works below the level of our conscious awareness. It allows us to walk, ride a bicycle and drive a car. We cannot do these well if System 1 has not been trained on the proper responses to make. System 1 is like an executive secretary that 1) screens the inputs, 2) gets the plans ready, and 3) prepares our bodies for action.
2. System 2. a) System 2 uses serial processing to analyze the inputs that it receives, which means it must consider the merits of each input, one after the other, relative to the previous inputs and make decisions accordingly. We tend to think of System 2 as “us.” b) It may even have to backtrack to previous decisions based on the information. This makes System 2 much slower than System 1. Yet, it is through System 2 that we learn and do our deeper thinking and analysis.

Q7. How does System II manage System I? A: By training it through repetition and overriding it.

3. System 2 controls System 1. a) System 2 trains System 1 to handle as many tasks as possible. This is critical for daily life, but the shortcuts prejudice the decisions that System 1 makes. b) System 2 is the master; it can override System 1, but this requires a positive action by System 2. Since System 1 is faster than System 2, System 2 is in the position of having to change a decision that System 1 has already sketched out. For example, System 1 has us reaching for a cookie before System II can decide whether we should have one. c) If System 2 is distracted, unwilling to countermand that decision, or fatigued, the System 1 decision will prevail.
4. Points for apologetics. a) Both temptations from the devil and conversion by the Holy Spirit work with System 2. Apologists must direct their arguments for consideration by System 2. System 2 is our “thinking” mind. b) A large amount of a person’s behavior is preprogrammed into System 1. Even if the Holy Spirit converts a person to faith, the System 1 programming does not automatically change. It retains pre-Christian attitudes and scripts. This contributes to the loss of

new converts. c) Failure to give a new Christian adequate spiritual and emotional support can often lead to the new Christian's System 2 becoming weary and giving up.

5. Urgency of training. a) Children must learn their catechism and memory work lessons well enough so they are placed into long-term memory linked with processes in System 1. b) Jesus' followers must learn to serve Him through their actions by biasing their System 1 to automatically respond to the situations of life in a God-pleasing way that does not need conscious effort to take such actions. **We cannot think through every situation.** This requires constant study of God's Word so that Satan will not successfully corrupt Systems 1 & 2. **There is a limitation to training because it can induce cognitive dissonance by creating a conflict with senses and past history.**

B. Anchor (reference) points and deception

1. Definition of anchor point. **Understanding anchor points is where the action is.** a) An **anchor point** gives us a place from which to measure so that we can make judgments about such things as price, value, position or size. b) Appropriately setting scriptural anchor points and uprooting secular anchor points is an important task of an apologist.

Q8. Explain how anchor points are manipulated. A: New values are suggested that make things look more or less favorable.

2. Anchor point manipulation. a) Merchants often attempt to manipulate buying decisions and customer happiness by resetting their anchor points. Examples are sale prices, discounts, and extra charges that appear to make certain actions more favorable. **TV, advertisers, and false teachers try to reset our anchor points.** b) Secular Humanists attack Christianity by manipulating the meanings of the **Golden Rule** (treat others as you yourself want to be treated), the **Platinum Rule** (treat others as they want to be treated), and the **Rights Rule** (treat others as they have a right to be treated). **Moving the goal posts to leverage us.** c) Political correctness is just the "tradition of the elders" in another guise. There is a difference between taking offense and giving offense. **Manipulating the moral law.**
3. God and anchor points. a) The question "How can you believe in a God who does X or lets Y happen?" is used by Humanists to cause us to change our anchor points to exclude X and Y from what we would consider a God capable of doing. **In other words, to induce us to change the nature of the "God" we believe in.** b) Through progressively limiting suggestions by Humanists about God's nature (i.e., by their moving the anchor point of divine acceptability), most people have come to believe that God is much more humanistic than the Bible states.
4. Changing anchor points by false compromise. a) The apologist must attack the legitimacy of these new anchor points. He or she must show that Humanists have been trying to mess with our minds. b) The phrase "Certainly, we can agree that..." is often a false compromise to avoid the messy details that will call into question ideas Humanists want to use to induce our System 2 to train our System 1 to automatically reject anything that doesn't fit what they are trying to cover with their "agreement." **People can set logical traps for our thinking.** c) For example, what does "Certainly,

we can agree that everyone has a right to be treated with human dignity” mean? That no one should be starved or tortured or held without trial? That no matter how antisocial people act, they must be given total freedom and all the comforts of life? The Bible teaches that governments are to appropriately punish evil deeds. [We must beware of broad generalizations of one size fits all.](#) d) The apologist must raise the issue of whether people are to be afforded dignity based on some intrinsic property of being human or because people are a special creation of God for whom Jesus died. [The Christian reason.](#) We must avoid being backed into the trap of having to reject that which we had previously agreed was appropriate behavior or of having to reject some doctrine of the Scriptures that conflicts with it. [We must constantly identify and evaluate our anchor points, in our lives and in the church.](#)

Lesson 16 - Challenges from Cognitive Psychology II

[We should all times be aware that people are trying to manipulate our decisions and our beliefs about God. The devil is determined to destroy our faith by any means that he can.](#)

XLII. Considering the challenges

A. Birds of a Feather

1. Avoiding the gunfight. [Self-preservation argument.](#) a) We do not want to be forced into a do-or-die situation where we face some spiritual villain alone. b) We want allies. It would seem that the bigger the coalition that we can build, the better our chances to avoid the theological gunfight that we fear.
2. Unite to improve the world. [“Removing differences in the name of the common good” argument.](#) a) Those who wish to develop a temporal paradise want harmony among all religious groups to gain this purpose, by downplaying critical doctrinal differences. b) If we could assemble a larger group of the faithful, even if they have some diversity in beliefs, we could accomplish a great deal of good. This is the principle that if you are the enemy of my enemy, then you are my friend. c) Accepting the apologetic “help” of other Christian bodies by forming a common front on some doctrine is asking for trouble. Things become even worse when the burden of the battle is shifted to us, even though others also benefit. It’s the old “let’s you and him fight” because he is our common enemy.
3. Spiritual insurance for Judgment Day. [The leveraging God argument.](#) a) Many fear the scenario of arriving at Judgment Day and discovering that they have bet on the wrong religious horse or that their deeds are much worse in God’s sight than they had imagined. b) Such people reason, if we all agree to recognize each other as fellow children of God, then we can all stand together and present a united front before God when the moment of judgment occurs. They comfort themselves by the thought that God wouldn’t dare damn everyone.

Q1. What is the “common cause” trap of apologetics? [A: We are all against X. Let’s work](#)

together.

Q2. What is a false flag? A: Pretending to be something you are not.

4. Avoiding the trap of common cause. “Applying logic to morality” argument to gain an advantage over us. a) We all believe that we are strong enough not to fall into the trap of making common cause with false teachers, but they often apply social pressure. b) The trap can involve merely wasting time, immoral or criminal behavior, doctrinal compromise, or showing a **false flag**. We must not be taken in by, “What’s wrong with a little X?” c) When faced with the opportunity to flock together with other birds, we must be certain that they really have the same type of feathers.

B. Faith and the Goals Hierarchy

1. The Christian’s highest goal. **What matters eternally.** a) The Lord, the God of the Bible, expects the first place in our lives. From Mount Sinai He told the Israelites, “*Do not have other gods besides me*” (Exodus 20:3) b) Jesus said, “*If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, and even his own life—he cannot be my disciple*” (Luke 14:26).

Q3. What is the difference between intrinsic motivators and extrinsic motivators? A: Internal satisfaction vs. worldly acclaim.

2. Selecting other goals. **We must always ask, “Is it worth doing?”** a) People are naturally drawn to things that give them pleasure, and they learn to avoid things that cause them pain. The acceptable pain/pleasure ratio will vary by individual. b) Both intrinsic motivators (e.g., a sense of accomplishment, a feeling of guilt) and extrinsic motivators (e.g., public acclaim, financial loss) play a role in goal setting, with extrinsic motivators often trumping intrinsic motivators. c) The lure for the Christian to elevate temporal goals above spiritual goals is ubiquitous. (A new car, a college degree, the school sports program, better facilities) **Personal, but also for the church.** d) The sheer number of these that come cascading onto our list of goals can over-whelm our System 2s’ ability to properly evaluate their long-term significance. e) Psychological manipulation is used to create the illusion of urgency. Christians are led to put their faith on autopilot, permanently shifting their goals hierarchy.
3. Defending against goal-shuffling. a) When someone says, “I know that I should be more committed to God, to the church, to reading my Bible, etc., but ...,” what follows the “but” tells us how her heart has fallen under the psychological manipulation of the things of this world. **It identifies our idol.** b) The apologist must probe a person’s thinking with pointed questions to determine what factors people regard as important in establishing their goals hierarchy, so that the Law and/or the Gospel can be presented effectively. c) The Christian’s life strategy needs to involve the regular study of God’ Word, compiling a list of blessings and challenges, and deciding how each of the blessings will be used and how each of the challenges will be addressed. d) Priorities in terms of how these fit into a life of service to the Lord can then be established. The Lord will allow us to experience surprises. Having a plan, periodically revised, will prevent us

from succumbing to the tyranny of the urgent. Too often we say, “Here am I, but please send someone else. I am happy to serve, but preferably in an advisory capacity.”

Q4. What is a thought experiment? A: An experiment where one carefully thinks through the steps of an event without doing them.

4. **Thought experiments** as a tool. a) How can a high school lad pursue a particular secular career, while imagining how he can serve the Lord while in it, maintain church connection while in college, find a job near a faithful church, and be a good husband and father? b) Will the education cost so much money as to hamper his other goals? Will the career put him into situations that are risky for maintaining Christian ethics?” All these types of questions need to be thought through. c) Proactively strengthening someone’s intrinsic goals of the Christian faith vis-à-vis the extrinsic goals of the secular world will diminish the amount of work that is needed to later repair the damage done to their goals hierarchy by the world. *Life is a lot harder than we think it should be.*

C. Cognitive Lessons about Education

1. Chain yanking. a) Hidden messages are programmed into much of the communication that we get. b) Displays in stores are organized to encourage the purchase of specific items. c) News stories are written to elicit emotion as well as to provide information. d) Issues are framed to cause directed, rather than unbiased, decisions. *We are constantly being manipulated.*

Q5. In what ways do technical innovations challenge Christianity? A: They consume our time. We rely on them instead of God.

2. The problem of overload. a) While the brain has a large long-term storage capacity, it is not limitless. b) The organization of the information must be done by System 2, and this becomes more stressful as the amount of information grows. System 2 wears down so that it cannot handle other decision-making tasks. *We become “at loose ends.”* c) The amount of time and effort needed to gain technical knowledge is time and effort which is not available to study God’s Word. d) For many people, technology is becoming their real god. *Denying that it is does not change the situation.*
3. “Where did you hear that?” a) People can check on the truthfulness of any statement on the omniscient internet. However, simply because someone posted something does not make it true. b) The American public is highly gullible. The first thing people hear about a subject frequently sets the anchor point for judging all subsequent information. *Called the “first” bias.* c) It is important to collect knowledge *about* the sources of information so that the reliability of the information *from* the source can be determined. This is particularly true when someone claims that the Bible says a certain thing. d) ****The greatest lesson that one can learn from cognitive psychology is that failing to study is the surest way to be deceived.** e) ****Both failure to learn and learning from the wrong sources will place people’s souls at great risk. People must be urged to read sound religious materials at their level of comprehension on a continuing basis.**

XLIII. Other complications

A. Neural Research

1. The brain. a) The human brain is the center of the nervous system. It contains many billions of neurons. It is divided into sections, such as the cerebrum, thalamus, hypothalamus, tectum, tegmentum, cerebellum, pons, and medulla. b) The brain can be mapped by Computed Axial Tomography (CAT), Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), Magnetoencephalography (MEG) and Positron Emission Tomography (PET). These are now routine types of brain study.
2. Neural research on religious practices. a) Some researchers study the effects on the brain of performing certain religious practices. Such studies show consistent patterns for the various types of religious activities. Religious practices involve mental discipline. b) They showed religious practices were firmly rooted in brain activity. The patterns differed by the type of activities, but not necessarily by the beliefs of the subjects. c) Religious practices improve mental alertness and health, particularly among the senior population, but the effects seem independent of the belief system. d) The research indicated that religious activity activated those parts of the brain that increased contentment and a sense of well-being, but they were independent of the religion of the participants.

Q6. How does the neural functioning of the brain muddle our understanding of God? A: Various parts of the brain have different needs and seek a different type of God.

3. The brain and God. a) The brain changes our concept of god. The various parts of the brain want different types of “gods” to which they can relate. The parts of the brain seem to cause people to assign specific attributes to their image of god. b) Some brain patterns are more consistent with desiring an angry god that punishes its enemies, while other patterns correlate to seeking a god that is benevolent. This is of concern because it causes us to reshape God to meet our perceived needs at various times. c) People need to be taught that God can relate to them in the way that they need Him to establish a relationship with Him within the framework of His Law and Gospel. We need to start where people are so the Holy Spirit can bring them to where they need to be.

Q7. What is the cause of near-death experiences? A: A script prepared to anticipate death.

4. The near-death experience. a) The Lord did not create humans to die, but since the fall, death is inevitable. b) The human mind has developed scripts to deal with dying, just as it has developed scripts to deal with other scenarios from slipping on the ice to witnessing a bank robbery. c) The script for dying will be incomplete because no one has a lot of experience with dying. It will also be colored by the person’s culture and by what he or she has previously heard about dying. d) Some people who enter the near-death state will have their minds at some lower level implement such a script and begin feeding the conscious mind the information from the “dying” script. Things in the script will seem real. It is important not to believe death scripts. e) While what happens in the dying script seems very real to the person involved, the person is not really dead because the brain is still functioning at some level. f) The apologist should not interpret any figures or events in these near-death experiences as being real but should rather assure the person that at the time of death their soul will be brought before God for judgment. The apologist need

not challenge experiences which people believe that they have had. However, death scripts are phony because they only anticipate what death might be like.

B. Analytic Paralysis

Q8. What is Denialism? A: Being so certain of something that one will not consider contrary evidence.

1. Denial of reality. a) Our long-term memory is not reliable. Its mechanisms protect what we remember to be true from alteration by new evidence which we do not like. b) Healthy skepticism about new information is warranted to prevent being gullible and being blown to and fro by every wind of change. It is essential that people develop a way to evaluate new information. The unwillingness to consider or discuss an issue can be a sign of a deeper psychological problem. c) Denialism is rooted in the fallacy called the *appeal to absurdity*. Something is claimed to be absurd; so, it cannot be true. Example: Calvin and the real presence in the Sacrament. This mindset prevents people from even considering scriptural evidence that is opposed to their ideas of God. Delusionalism. d) Denialists often resort to another logical fallacy called *moving the goalposts*. They sometimes agree to consider evidence that could prove them wrong if it is produced. When such evidence is produced, they demand further evidence. They have a mental block against being shown to be wrong. e) If a position is truly denialist, the apologist will make no progress reasoning with the person because his or her heart will not accept scriptural arguments.
2. The grand conspiracy theory. a) Some people so strongly believe they are right about some matter that the only explanation why everyone does not think the same way is that they have been duped by a broad-based conspiracy which is suppressing their evidence. "People are all against me." b) Those who try to raise objections to this line of reasoning are accused of being part of the conspiracy. c) Conspiracy versus collusion. Certainly, there can be collusion, as when competitors divide up the market or an "old-boys' network" steers contracts to members of the club or people agree to hide evidence of a crime to shield a prominent person. These are small-scale operations with a very limited number of players, not grand conspiracies. For example, the "deep state." d) People will conspire and act dishonestly for their own advantage and to promote causes which are harmful to the faith of Christians. e) The LORD will not let the devil so organize the world against the beliefs of his elect so as to destroy them, but he will cause the hellish hosts to frequently fall all over themselves in their opposition to the divine will. Fear the devil, not man, but trust in God. f) **We should never claim something is based on malevolence that can be explained by mere incompetence or ignorance or assert that people's natural hostility to the Gospel must imply that they are part of a conspiracy. g) The Scriptures are the firm foundation against which even the gates of hell cannot prevail.
3. Summary. a) We should be aware of how easy it is to manipulate human thinking by altering its reference points and by changing decision environments. b) We are all gullible by nature, and it is even worse in matters concerning our souls, because Satan and his hosts are working to deceive us. c) As a result, we must study the Word of God diligently.

Lesson 17 - The Christian Church I

The next three lessons on the church are presented because the church is often misunderstood and frequently attacked because of such misunderstanding.

XLIV. The Invisible Church

A. What is a “church”?

1. Setting the stage. a) “Church” can mean a “building,” a “congregation,” a “church body,” a “denomination,” a “synod,” a “conference,” or all Christians. b) For Lutherans, the **Holy Christian Church** is a technical term that means all true believers in Jesus Christ of every time and place.

Q1. What is the invisible church? A: All believers and only believers of all times in all places.

2. The invisible church. a) In the Apostles’ Creed, we confess, “I believe in the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints.” The Christian church is an article of faith. b) The visible church is every congregation and church body we can see. The invisible church is everyone who shares faith in Christ. Only God can see it.

Q2. What are the marks of the church? A: God’s Word and the properly administered sacraments.

3. Marks of the church. a) The Gospel in Word and sacrament shows God’s power to accomplish His purpose. Wherever you find the Gospel (even if it is somewhat adulterated by false teaching), you can assume there are believers present. This is a weak assumption because of the problem of numerous people “having a veil over their hearts” when the Gospel is preached. b) A person’s confession of faith lets us make a provisional identification of who is and who isn’t a member of the invisible church.

B. Membership in a church

1. The dilemma of membership. a) When they claim membership in a church and/or other religious organization, many people today will say that it is generally accepted that someone might not agree with everything that a church or an organization says or does. b) Membership without complete commitment to a church’s teachings creates a dilemma. How does the world at large know which things a specific member agrees with and which ones he or she disagrees with?
2. The nature of membership. The matter of “social Christians.” a) A person’s confession is not a perfect indicator of faith. Some believers hide their faith. Some people join a visible church and echo its confession without actually believing it. However, membership in a visible church is a

confession of its faith. b) The invisible church (“the body of Christ,” “the household of God,” “the new Jerusalem,” “the people of God”) is made up of individuals who are true believers, but it is also a community interconnected in their faith.

Q3. Why is the Holy Christian Church “holy”? A: God proclaimed its members to be holy through Christ.

3. The nature of the church. a) The Holy Christian Church is holy not in the sense that we Christians stop sinning. It is holy in the sense that God declares us to be holy on the basis of the life, death and resurrection of Christ. b) The church is Christian in the simple sense that it hopes in Christ alone. [Be careful here](#). The modern emphasis on religious diversity and coexistence is not part of the Christian faith. Nevertheless, the Holy Christian Church transcends denominations. c) [We must stand up for scriptural truth](#). If this is true, why can’t everyone worship together? In heaven we will. We will enjoy perfect fellowship with all members of the Holy Christian Church. On earth, however, our church membership is still a part of our confession of faith. d) God tells us to watch out for those who teach things that are contrary to what we have learned and to avoid them. This means that we must not join with them in supporting common ministries or in proclaiming the Gospel. e) Because we cannot tell who truly has faith, we cannot separate the invisible church from the visible church. But God does know the difference. It is the believers within visible churches that make those bodies “church.” f) The power is in the Gospel, not in the preacher. As long as Christ is preached, the Holy Spirit works. That comforts us when we act as apologists. The Gospel is God’s power. It will accomplish His purpose. [Note well that the message must be understood, not just heard](#).

XLV. The Mission of the Church

A. Making Disciples

Q4. What are the two roles of the church? A: [Evangelism and discipling](#).

1. Proclaiming. a) The church exists to enlighten the hearts and minds of those who are inside of it and those who are not. The church exists to prick consciences in this world, like salt, by proclaiming the Law and the Gospel. b) When Jesus gave the Great Commission, He told us to make disciples of all nations by telling what He has done. Making disciples is more than just sharing the Gospel. It’s leading Christians to follow their LORD for as long as they live. [To follow means to hear and to do](#). c) Mission work is an essential part of the church’s work. It does this in different ways. Individual Christians simply talk about their faith. Congregations reach out into their own communities, and they support sending missionaries elsewhere. d) Churches should not engage in concerted efforts to “steal sheep” from other Christian congregations; however, they should accept members of other churches who feel they are not being well-fed there.
2. Discipling. a) [Instruction](#). We make disciples on numerous levels. Not only do we baptize our children, but we also teach them to know their Savior. God commands parents to raise their

children in the faith. b) **Discipline**. Another key component to making disciples is discipline. The purpose is love. Love demands that we risk wrath and hurt feelings by confronting issues of sin, before a lack of repentance destroys faith and robs that person of eternal life. c) **Comfort**. Part of making disciples is the church's ongoing need to provide comfort for the troubled and the afflicted. But we need to be careful here. The comfort of the Gospel is different from the comfort that comes from therapy. d) **Spiritual direction**. Many medical professionals point to studies that show that religious people often respond to treatment better than non-religious people and that pastoral care in the hospital can help with the healing process. However, the real work of a pastor in such situations is to point the sick and troubled to the LORD.

B. The Holy Ministry

1. What is the public ministry? a) St. Paul made it clear that the public ministry is God's will when he wrote that Jesus Himself gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. **Different skills**. He also asked how anyone can preach unless he is sent. **That is, received a call**. b) In the Lutheran church, the public ministry is focused on the work of pastors and teachers. The administration of the sacraments is generally a pastoral function. c) The Bible does not specify educational or organizational requirements for ministers. **Must be careful about "class."** The Bible does invest the Law-and-Gospel authority in the ministry. d) Ministers speak as Christ's representatives and point exclusively to Him. They are called to show the exact same kind of humility and self-sacrifice that He did. **They do not have a political calling**.

Q6. How does the world attack the public ministry of the church? A: Generalized claims of dishonesty, corruption, and hypocrisy.

2. Attacks on the ministry. a) **Discredit leadership**. Ministers are the most visible part of the church's operation, so it's not surprising that the ministry has often been a lightning rod for controversy and attacks. b) **Lies**. Attacks on institutionalized religion generally assume dishonesty by church leaders. They charge that the church is now all about power, not people. c) **Servant mentality**. Has the "institutional church" become obsessed with power? In some cases, yes. But Jesus warned those who lead that they were to be servants, not masters, just as he came to serve.

B. Miscellaneous issues

1. The Role of Women in the Church. a) The true purpose of the church is to rescue all people, male and female, slaves and free, of all races, from the power of sin. b) The holy ministry was established by Christ. **We must follow Christ's establishment**. Although some women supported Jesus' ministry, none were given ministry roles or called to be apostles. c) The ministry is an institution of service, not of power and glory. The role of a follower is no less important or less beneficial to the church than being a leader. God calls men and women to serve Him in different ways. d) God himself denies women any role in the church where they teach or exercise authority over men. Faith accepts God's words and plan; it does not distort them. **There is no evidence that this was ever done differently in the church**. e) The apologist would do well to distinguish between **role** and **value**. Every human being is worth the blood of the Son of God to the Father.

Yet not everyone is called to be a pastor. God has assigned different roles in life to different people. **Not everyone bears physical children.** f) Leaders must avoid the sin of chauvinism. Women are created by God and gifted, just as men are. We must commit ourselves to giving women the full scope of opportunities to serve that God allows in his Word.

Q5. How does the public ministry differ from the universal priesthood? A: The public ministry represents the church in public actions. The universal priesthood is all Christians.

2. The Priesthood of All Believers. a) The New Testament teaches that all believers have access to God. **This was not true in the Old Testament.** All believers can ask for forgiveness and approach Him directly. All believers can share the Gospel and apply it. b) “Christian vocation” is applied to secular jobs and even to different roles in life. Christian people serve the LORD when they fulfill their roles. c) Ministers serve as Christ’s representatives to the church and as the church’s representatives to the world. **This differs from point a.** They provide leadership in the visible church.
3. Public Sin in the Church a) God doesn’t call us to defend ourselves, except by the testimony of our lives. ****Our vindication comes when Jesus returns.** We may experience lies like Jesus Himself experienced. Our enemies know their claims aren’t true, but still make them. **Satan uses the world against the church.** b) However, we may need to present a defense because the attacks on the church have a purpose, namely, to discredit our message by discrediting the messenger. **We must guard the message.** c) Church members sometimes fall into public sin. **The church does not turn sinners into perfect people.** We cannot allow these public sins to be used to deny the truth of the Gospel. “Christians aren’t perfect, just forgiven.” We need to acknowledge sinful failings on the part of believers. d) Another attempt to discredit the church is to claim widespread corruption. Church leaders are painted as hypocrites who engage in illicit sex or financial shenanigans. We must point out that all Christians are not this way. e) Jesus certainly warned us about wolves in sheep’s clothing. **There are problem people.** We must point out that the vast majority of pastors ministers to congregations where fewer than 100 people gather for Sunday worship and are poorly paid. f) Corruption happens in all areas of life. **Sin is a universal problem.** Politicians get caught in compromising situations, and teachers sometimes go to jail for their misbehavior. God’s grace is independent of those who preach it. The Holy Spirit was still working.

XLVI. The Visible Church—A Broken Church?

A. Problems in the ancient church

Q7. What was Judaizing? A: Forcing Gentiles to observe ceremonial laws as necessary for salvation.

1. The time of the apostles and apostolic fathers. a) The ancient church was far from united. There were numerous false teachers. There was **Judaizing** and issues concerning what the Old Testament law means for the New Testament believer. b) **Gnosticism** became a major issue in the second century and divided the church. **It had multiple gods and a different Jesus.** Gnosticism was

a religious movement that burrowed into Christianity, introducing false teachings which then multiplied and mutated into various forms.

2. Controversies that divided the church in the third through fifth centuries. a) The Trinitarian Controversies dealt with what it means that we worship the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. [There were serious divisions](#). The Nicene Creed, written in AD 325 and enhanced in AD 381, represents the summary of the church's answer to this controversy. b) The Christological Controversies grew out of the Trinitarian Controversies. They dealt with what it means that Jesus is both God and man. They were resolved with a creed called the Definition of Chalcedon in AD 451.

B. The Great Schism

Q8. What was the Great Schism? [A: The East/West split of the church.](#)

1. Greek/Latin division. a) The church soon produced two great streams of theology and tradition, an East-ern stream of Greek-speaking theologians centered in Antioch and Alexandria and a Western stream of Latin speakers centered in northern Africa and Rome. b) In the East, the importance of the office of the bishop became the rallying point of the church against false doctrine. The bishops embodied the unity of the church. [There was an effort to “perfect” the teachings of the church](#). A major theologian was Ignatius. c) In the West, thinking about the church revolved around the doctrine of penance. Rather than something that involves the heart, it was conceived as a way to get back into God's good graces. A major theologian was Tertullian. He laid the groundwork that would develop into the Roman Catholic **penitential system**.
2. The rivalry. a) In both East and West, the episcopal structure became entrenched. There was a conflict over authority. The bishop of Rome claimed authority over the entire church. The bishops in the East regarded several key Eastern bishoprics as being equal to him. [There was a “party” spirit](#). b) In AD 1054, after centuries of doctrinal and practical disputes, the two churches separated. [This happened somewhat by accident \(see *Christian, Lutheran, Confessional*, chapter 6\)](#). They had much in common, but struggles over church politics and a *klecks* of doctrinal issues, [such as the church year](#), have kept them separate for a thousand years.

Lesson 18 - The Christian Church II

[Note that this lesson picks up in the middle of a section.](#)

XLVI. The Visible Church—A Broken Church? (cont.)

Q1. What are the three *sola*'s? [A: sola gratia \(by grace alone\), sola fide \(by faith alone\), sola scriptura \(by the Scriptures alone\)](#)

D. The Lutheran Reformation – based on three “*sola*'s”

1. **Sola gratia** - The Lutheran church understands grace as God's work and His alone. Any teaching that in any way makes human beings responsible for the things that God does runs contrary to all Lutheran and Biblical theology.
2. **Sola fide** - There is not any hint of merit on the part of fallen mankind. God saves the elect by faith. God calls them righteous by faith. Our Lutheran forefathers liked to call faith "the hand that grasps God's grace." *It is a hand that grasps but does not reach out looking for God's grace.* Faith is simply trust. God gives us faith.
3. **Sola scriptura** - The Scripture is inspired by God. He gave every word of the Bible (in its original languages) to the men who wrote it; therefore, it is the only source and standard for doctrine and a Christian life. *Must be studied through the ministerial use of reason.*
4. Post-Reformation events. a) The Lutheran Church has adopted a set of writings called the Lutheran Confessions to summarize its teachings. b) In the 17th century, **Pietism** arose in the Lutheran Church with a legitimate concern for Christians living their faith, but it fell into an indifference to doctrine.

E. Protestant Christianity

Q2. What is the TULIP principle? A: T – Total depravity, U – Unconditional election, L – Limited atonement, I – Irresistible grace, P – Perseverance of the saints.

1. **Calvinism** a) John Calvin's (1509-1564) approach to theology was different than Luther's. Calvinism is characterized by a rigorous intellectual approach to matters of faith. b) TULIP stands for **total depravity**, **unconditional election** (double predestination), **limited atonement** (Jesus died only for the elect), **irresistible grace** (God's call to faith cannot be resisted) and **perseverance of the saints** (a true believer cannot fall away, "once saved, always saved"). c) Calvin made human reason the judge of theology (the magisterial use of reason), *thereby attacking the person of Christ.* Lutherans have always acknowledged that Calvin's views are very logical, but they are simply not in accord with what the Bible says. d) Pure Calvinism is relatively rare today. The apologist should be aware of it because the elevation of reason, which is the heart of Calvinism, pervades our world today. *Reason dominates.* Rational people demand that God's Word make sense to them.

Q3. How does Arminianism differ from Calvinism? A: *It emphasizes feeling and election based on foreseen faith.*

2. **Arminianism** a) Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) rejected the TULIP principle and started a move-ment that exalts the role of feelings, which is why emotionalism is so prevalent in the church today. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was a major adherent. *Emotions dominate.* b) The whole Evangelical movement is Arminian in outlook, including Pentecostal/Charismatic groups, Holiness bodies, and Baptists. This strain of thought is the majority view of conservative, non-Catholic Christianity in America today. c) Most Arminians believe that sin damages us and leaves us in need of God's grace but that we still have some good left in us and can respond to

God's call. They do not believe that people are totally depraved. Their teaching on election is confusing. d) Arminians correctly argue that Jesus died for all people and acknowledge that believers can fall away. They replace irresistible grace with **decision theology**. e) Arminians have an imperfect understanding of the relationship between the Law and the Gospel. Lutherans preach the Law in order to be able to proclaim the Gospel. Evangelicals tend to be more concerned about improving people morally to make people more worthy of salvation. f) Arminian theology is very much a blend of reason, emotion, and subjectivity. This blend produces arguments that are only satisfying to someone who already holds to all the Arminian positions. It is strange thinking.

F. The Ecumenical Movement and Modern Liberalism in the Church

Q4. What was the Enlightenment? A: The movement in which people started seeing man as a totally rational creature in control of his own destiny.

1. The Enlightenment. a) The Enlightenment swept Europe in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. It entered the German universities as Rationalism, which sought to subject Christianity's truth claims to standards of human reason and knowledge. b) Rationalism developed theories about the composition of the Bible that assumed an evolution of the text, and it doubted or denied the authorship that many Biblical books claim for themselves. It accepted Darwin's theory of evolution. It falsely argues that reason should rule because people are "rational."

Q5. What is the ecumenical movement? A: A Protestant effort to unite the Christian church.

2. The Enlightenment splintered the church. a) In 20th-century America, churches went through theological struggles over the inspiration and authority of the Bible. Was it **plenary** or full inspiration of the Bible or was it general inspiration, requiring periodic reinterpretation? What is the nature of the standard being used? b) Lutherans experienced the same battles but were also influenced by the Confessional Awakening that took place in Germany in the 19th century. It arrived in America with the immigrants soon thereafter. c) The divisions in Lutheranism today derive directly from this debate. Liberal Lutheranism, like liberal Christianity in general, does not see the Bible as the inspired and inerrant Word of God nor the Confessions as timeless witnesses. d) Conservative Lutherans cling to the inerrancy of the Scriptures and the historical position of the Confessions. They have begun referring to themselves as "Confessional Lutherans." e) As time passed, the internal struggle within church bodies was replaced with a general division of churches between conservative and liberal bodies. Churches realigned; people moved. f) A general movement, called the **ecumenical** movement, was founded with the vision of uniting the Christian church on earth into one organization. g) The ecumenical movement downplayed doctrine, as had Pietism. Fundamental teachings like the Trinity and the Person of Christ have been reinterpreted by claiming that the Bible does not actually teach these doctrines, rather that they were developed by the early church. This was an effort to justify their teachings. h) The key issue is: can what the Bible says about God and about Christ be ex-pressed in a set of universally valid propositions, like the Nicene Creed? They answer "no". As Lutherans, we insist the only possible answer must be "yes." This is the battle line. i) The apologist needs to understand the scriptural basis for these teachings and to be able to demonstrate that this is what God's Word teaches. This reality allows us to view the human process that led to the creeds, with all the sinful

foibles of man that it exhibits, as a tremendous testimony to the grace of God. God led us to make clear statements. j) Skeptics look at the divisions in the Christian church and dismiss them as so much fighting about nothing. They see these things as sapping the life out of whatever efforts the church might undertake that would be of value. k) The apologist must understand that divisions in the visible church are inevitable so long as we live in a sinful world. The Bible tells us that the truth will always come under attack, not just by outside enemies, but also by some who are inside the visible church. Jesus told us to be prepared to face them. l) The apologist needs to understand the difference between the evolution of doctrine (with the implication that the church decides what to believe) and the growth in our understanding of scriptural truth. God's teaching does not change. This is why we study. m) We should not allow the skeptic to subject Christianity to a different standard than any other field of study. **We must insist that growing in our understanding of the message is very different from developing a doctrine or choosing what we will believe.**

XLVIII. The Church and Society

A. Distinction between church and state

Q6. What is the distinction between church and state? A: The church is concerned with things spiritual and pointing the way to heaven. The state is concerned about things physical, including good order and the general welfare.

1. Their basic relationship.
 - a) The church and the state are both agents of the LORD but assigned different missions by Him. The mission of the state is to maintain peace and security for those who reside within its dominion in this sin-riddled world.
 - b) From the description of their missions, it should be clear that the church and state are complementary organizations. One works in the spiritual realm and the other in the physical realm. Their purposes must be kept separate.
 - c) The church should not force its teachings on any who are not its members. The state should not create laws which inhibit the church from carrying out its mission or propagate its own standard of morality (e.g., *political correctness*).
 - d) Problems occur when one agent tries to use the other's influence to strengthen its position. Nations sometimes seek the blessing of the church's moral authority to strengthen their hands in certain policy areas. Churches sometimes seek the state's support to coerce obedience from their members or leverage their opponents.

Q7. What is moral suasion? A: Using one's position to encourage "appropriate" behavior.

2. Moral suasion.
 - a) The church must proclaim the moral law that forbids its members to engage in sinful actions mandated by the government. It also must remind the government that as God's agent, it does have specific responsibilities that it must carry out. Neither fear nor abet.
 - b) The church should never endorse any particular program of the government to meet its responsibilities. For example, the church might call upon the government to address the rise of crime in an area, but it must not lobby for specific solutions.

B. Religious Politics

1. Twentieth century history. **The church has become confused: making a better world versus saving the people of the world.** a) In the mid-20th century, liberal Protestant churches became involved in the civil rights and anti-war movements. This led many worshippers to have concerns over making common cause with political radicals and even revolutionaries. b) Then the religious right came into its own as a political force. Rooted in the Evangelical movement, the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition, and Focus on the Family made abortion and family values major political issues. c) The attempt to make Christian values a political issue opens a line of attack for enemies of the Gospel. Trying to advance a Christian agenda through political action undercuts its dependence on the Gospel to make disciples.
2. Apologetics. a) The sanctity of human life and of marriage, the sinfulness of sex outside of marriage, and the sinfulness of homosexual behavior are issues to which God's Word speaks. **We must preach God's law.** We need to debate these matters calmly, not with angry words. b) Debating homosexuality or gay marriage or abortion will not bring anyone into the kingdom of Heaven. Unbelievers have suppressed the natural law that God wrote in their hearts on these issues. **We must witness.** c) We will have more success focusing on things that the other person knows are wrong and feels guilty about. **We must convict them of common sins.** We can bring the Gospel to bear on these questions.

C. The Christian and the State

Q8. What is the difference between Christian liberty and civil liberties? A: Christian liberty is being free to choose how to serve the LORD. Civil liberties are the freedom to do as one pleases as long as others are not harmed.

1. The Christian as a citizen. **Christians are citizens of two kingdoms.** a) While the visible church's relations with the state must be restricted based on their differing missions, the church's members are integral parts of the state as well as the church and need to behave as good citizens of the state. b) This means that Christians must obey the laws of the state because each Christian serves the LORD by doing so. c) **Understanding "must" and "may."** A Christian must disobey the laws when the laws require the Christian to blaspheme the LORD or disobey his clearly stated will. Christians may not disobey laws simply because they don't like them or because the laws are "stupid." d) Christians may not refuse to pay taxes because some of the money is used for purposes they find immoral or reprehensible. Just because the state permits immoral behavior, however, does not mean that a Christian may engage in it. **State permission is not a license for Christians.**

D. Christian liberty versus civil liberties

1. **Christian liberty** **Choice, but with responsibility.** a) Christian freedom is a spiritual state that impacts almost all that we do and say as Christians. It is not the right to do whatever we want, so long as we don't hurt anyone. The Bible never speaks of freedom or liberty as a right. b) Christian liberty manifests itself in the freedom to choose how to behave in matters of **adiaphora**. The

Bible tells us that we should not judge others when they use their Christian liberty, even if we do not agree with their choices. c) The choices that a Christian makes should not be self-centered, but rather should reflect a heart changed by the Gospel to glorify God and to serve our fellowmen. [How to serve, not whether to serve.](#)

2. **Civil liberties** a) Although some people might prefer the word “freedoms” to “rights” when discussing what they feel their society owes them, everyone does expect some level of respect for their personal prerogatives by the nation in which they reside. [The state owes its citizens respect.](#) b) The church’s concern over civil rights is solely in regard to issues that affect its ability to carry out its mission and to the individual Christians’ ability to practice their religion. The church has no specific program concerning how secular societies should operate.

E. Religious Persecution

1. There is a long history of physical persecution against Christians by the state and by other religious groups.
2. Efforts to use psychological manipulation of popular opinion concerning authority and freedom date back to the French Revolution. Such tactics are being used to change the public perception of the proper role of the Christian church in society. [We must be aware of the efforts to manipulate our minds.](#)
3. Secularists hide behind legitimate political issues and use them to direct resentment against the Christian church as a pervasive bulwark of entrenched obstructionism. [Secularism is a religion.](#) The entertainment media has represented traditional Christians as bigots. Guarantees written in constitutions mean nothing if the public attitude changes to such an extent that everyone looks the other way when churches are restricted in their teachings.

Lesson 19 - Afterward & Appendix III

[Note that this lesson picks up in the middle of a section.](#)

XLVIII. The Church and Society (cont.)

F. Dealing with Malicious Attacks

1. The role of the apologist. a) The apologist needs to carefully untangle the knotty political and religious issues. [People have hidden agendas.](#) The structure of a government and the nature of the civil liberties it grants are legitimate political issues, with no direct bearing on the church. b) The apologist must be concerned because these efforts often try to influence Christian consciences and to impose legal restrictions on the teachings of the church.

Q1. What is the role of the apologist in dealing with malicious attacks? [A: Stick to the message](#)

and show that the opponents are dishonest.

Q2. How is guilt by association used against churches? A: Blaming all for the guilt of some.

2. Psychological tactics. a) Ascribing corporate guilt to the church by blaming church members as a whole for the sinful actions of a few or for historical events in which current members had no involvement. This is done to leverage the practices of the church or to undermine its legitimacy. **Guilt by association fallacy.** b) Merely because the church shares some of the same goals or opinions with some other person or some other group does not mean that it is of one mind with them in all matters. This is the **fallacy of the undistributed middle**. For example: *Some Norwegians are tall. Trees are tall. Therefore, some Norwegians are trees.* c) If we Christians are proclaiming God's truth in love, then we are not account-able before God if others take offense at what is being said. d) We must answer a Big Lie with the Big Truth, namely, that Jesus died for the sins of everyone. (A Big Lie is a lie repeated so often it has the appearance of truth.) If people have sinned, they need to repent, but if they are the victims of the lies of others, the Lord will judge the liars. e) Apologists must address *ad hominem* arguments by shaming the opponents for having such a weak case that they have to resort to such tactics.
- G. *We are in the fifth era of the Christian church.* Faced with utopian dreams wrapped around a godless morality, the apologist needs to remember the church's early history. True Christians will always be in conflict with those who want to build their own paradise because they do not want to hear that it can never happen. A comfortable Christianity is not Christianity at all. **The world may market to the middle, but the LORD looks for commitment in the extreme.**

XLIX. Afterward

A. The Importance of Personal Growth

1. Any of us can fall. *The devil will not leave us alone.* a) One of the subtle realities is that our faith never reaches a point of equilibrium. Again and again, we see great "heroes of faith" in the Bible confessing the LORD in one verse and falling into sin or tripping over their own weaknesses in the next. b) Practically speaking, there is a war going on in our hearts between our sinful nature and our new man, the believer that God put inside us. The war will only end with our dying or Jesus' return. c) *Being a Christian is a struggle.* The old man makes apologetics hard. He demands logical or scientific or historical facts that God simply doesn't give us. He raises doubts in our own minds—part of apologetics is dealing with our own weakness and doubt.

Q3. Why does God's Word make the apologist? A: It is the only weapon we have. Reason can play a limited role but only under the control of the Scriptures.

2. God's Word makes the apologist. a) To be a skilled apologist, a person needs to be in the Word, to personally read it regularly, to hear it preached, and to hear it taught regularly. The means of grace are the only way that God gives us to grow in our faith. b) Apologetics can be challenging. Success rarely comes from one conversation. People will repeatedly challenge what we say, but still they will leave the door open. To keep going, we must refresh our faith with the Gospel. c)

****Extremely important!**** We need to know what the Bible actually says so that we don't let skeptics set the terms of the debate. We need to be able to say to skeptics, "That's not what the Bible says. And if you don't believe me, I can show you."

B. Knowing the times in which we live

Q4. What does "we need to know the territory" mean? A: If one does not understand the environment of the discussion, one cannot make clear arguments.

1. We need to know the territory. a) **A case of being prepared.** We also need to know our audience. We need to be current on what is and isn't happening in our culture. When opinion-makers speak, other people accept their thoughts as authoritative. We need to address the real arguments they raise. b) We need to have an inquiring mind. No one can expect to become an expert in all these fields. We don't have to be experts if we understand what God really says and the assumptions that underlie science and history. **People are generally ignorant of assumptions.** c) It is worthwhile to do a little reading or take a course in areas of science and history from time to time, just to understand the context in which people are speaking.
2. Learning more about apologetics. a) There are numerous approaches to apologetics. Most of the apologetic material is not worth mastering. **Don't ride the wrong horse!** The Lutheran apologist must seek material that is well researched and reviewed by faithful Lutherans. b) The Reformed approach is not scriptural. It does not mesh with a Lutheran approach to God's Word. The basic question is the role of reason, which the Reformed tend to use in a magisterial sense. c) Human reason is a gift of God. It enables pastors to comfort people when they are afraid and call sinners to repentance. We must not use it to decide which parts of the Bible make sense and which parts do not. **Don't try to aid God!** d) Creation science is a good example of the problem. It tries to uphold faith with human arguments in an arena where even good arguments can fail. If they do fail, what happens to the faith of the people who rely on them? e) Our only refuge is the armor of God. (See Ephesians 6.) We must put on that armor if we are to be successful against the forces of Satan. We must trust in the Holy Spirit. We must engage the skeptic. The LORD will be with us.

L. Christian Freedom

A. The nature of our bondage

Q5. What is the bound will? A: The will is bound by the devil to always sin. It is helpless in spiritual things.

1. Freedom is only in Christ. a) **Christian freedom** (liberty) is a gift of God in Christ. A central teaching of the New Testament is that God has set us free through the work of Jesus. To understand this freedom, one must understand the nature of human servitude. b) Erasmus argued that people have a free will. Luther countered that people have no free will in spiritual matters. Luther insisted that mankind has a **bound will** or, in other words, is subject to the bondage of the will.

Q6. What is determinism? A: Everything follows from the previous state automatically.

2. The bondage of the will. a) The bondage of the will is a spiritual reality, not a physical one. It is not **determinism**, which means that God would ordain every action that every person ever does. It does not remove our ability to make temporal choices for our lives. b) This bondage means sinners have no ability to choose God. **This is essential for people to understand.** Thus, in conversion no human being can cooperate or “make a decision for Christ.” The whole being—the heart, mind and will, resists God’s call to faith with all its strength. c) When it comes to how he or she lives, the sinner cannot do anything but sin. Every choice is corrupt. **There are no “good” options that we can naturally choose.** Every desire in the human heart is based on selfishness and lust, even when a sinner chooses to do things that are outwardly good. d) The bound will means that all human beings by nature are slaves to sin, slaves to the devil, slaves to ego, and slaves to the sinful world. **We must serve evil and self.** The practical result is that people are born slaves to works. e) All human religions, in the end, are products of this slavery and create some kind of system to earn God’s favor and avoid his judgment by human efforts. **There is no freedom through self-effort.**

B. How Christians are free

1. Luther’s explanation. a) A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly free lord because God has declared us to be so. Peter calls us a royal priesthood. b) A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all. **They serve for Christ’s sake.**

Q7. Why did Luther say, “A Christian is a perfectly free lord, subject to none”? A: Christ has made us free from law.

2. Freedom in the Gospel. a) Christian freedom is finally the Gospel. God declares that in Christ all our sins are wiped away and that we are freed from all record of them. As a result, we are free from the need to satisfy God by works. b) We will not go to hell. **This is what freedom means.** No hardship of this life is punishment from God. God may use things of this sort to discipline us in this life, but He does so only to teach us to follow him here, not to punish us for what we did. c) Christian freedom means that the Christian—and only the Christian—is freed from the dominion of sin. Sin is still a power in our lives, and we have to wrestle with it every day. But the Christian no longer is a slave to sin. d) When the Holy Spirit worked faith in his or her heart, that Christian became a new creation. God placed a new man, i.e., a new nature, in the heart of that Christian. That new man lives for Christ.

Q8. Why did Luther say, “A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant, subject to all”? A: For Christ’s sake, we serve our fellowman.

3. Freedom from the Law. a) Christian freedom means finally that we are free even from the Law. We no longer have to work our way to heaven. Christ has done it all. This life, then, is not about constantly checking off lists and jumping through hoops. b) The Christian life is not one of servitude but one of free service to God. It is not about lists of rules but about a new spirit that joyfully seeks ways to serve God and our neighbor. **There is no divinely ordained pattern for our**

lives. c) Christian freedom is not a license to sin. It's a joyful embracing of God's will as the highest good and of all that is best for us. The Christian does study God's Law because in this life our knowledge of his will is still incomplete. d) It is freedom from the letter (but not from the spirit) of the Law that allows the Christian to be a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all. The Christian life is freedom, but freedom to serve God and our fellowmen with all that we are. It involves no *quid pro quo*.) e) Christian freedom even rejoices in poverty and humility for Christ's sake and knows that all that we face in this life is temporary. Our true home is in heaven.

LI. Summary

A. The measure of the book

1. The authors presented a great deal of information about many different topics. There is a lot to know. It may have seemed like too much, too fast. Sections may need to be read again.
2. The purpose was to help the reader get or strengthen his or her bearings, Biblically, theologically and also logically. In other words, to understand the battlefield. By this point the reader should have a better idea of what apologetics is and isn't.
3. This book will not be the last word on the subject. Until Jesus comes back, the topic of apologetics will be in constant flux as the devil and his hosts regroup and find new ways to attack the Gospel message. His purpose is to keep people out of heaven. Apologists need to keep studying.

B. The continuing battle

1. Words from St. Paul. a) *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek."* {Romans 1:16} Our witness about Jesus is the only thing that will change hearts. b) *"For although we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh, since the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds. We demolish arguments and every proud thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ."* {2 Corinthians 10:3-5}
2. The Gospel demolishes arguments. The Gospel takes every thought captive to Christ. We have no other purpose when we engage in apologetics than to give a clear testimony about Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. Our goal must be: *Clearing a Path for the Gospel*.