

LSI Journal



Build Your Creation Apologetic

spring 2023

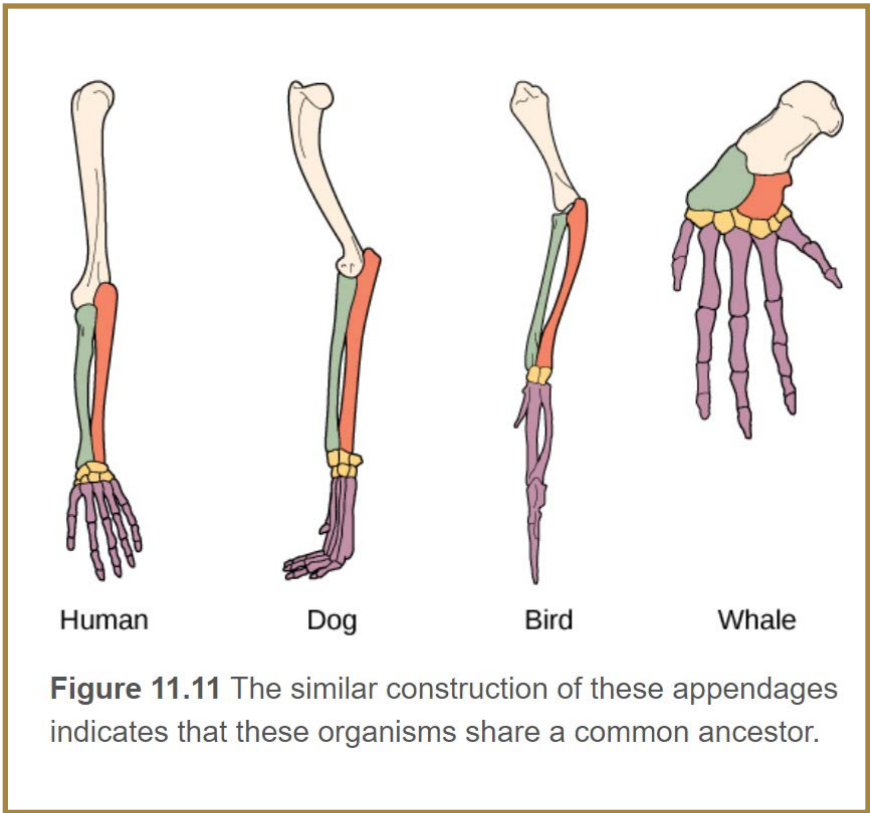


Figure 11.11 The similar construction of these appendages indicates that these organisms share a common ancestor.

Biology Textbook Claim

The most frequently provided evidence for common descent is to show similarities between living things, such as this graphic does. Skeletal structures, eyes and other organs, DNA, and so much more are very similar as we compare animals with other animals—and as we compare animals with people. These similarities are evidence for common descent, but they are also evidence that God used a common design. Evolutionists are forced by their “no Creator” assumption to reject the possibility that God used a similar body design when creating animals and people. After rejecting the truth—creation by kind—evolutionists are left to choose between false ideas.

*“Similar body parts” is very weak evidence.
Why do evolutionists think it is so strong?
See pages 18–19 for an answer.*

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Build Your Creation Apologetic

—Your Lutheran Response to Evolution¹

Mark Bergemann

You can learn a solid response to evolution, and use that apologetic with confidence, even if you know little or nothing about science. There is no need to learn hard-to-understand scientific arguments against evolution or for creation.

Chapter 1 lays a Biblical foundation for building such a creation apologetic. The other chapters suggest how to apply those Biblical truths in your apologetic—in your defense of the Christian faith.

All 31 quotes in the main body of this article are from WELS² and ELS³ authors (some quotes in the footnotes are not). These authors explain the suggested apologetic approaches, often more clearly than I have. Their words demonstrate that this article’s apologetic thoughts are not new to the WELS or to the ELS. Also, chapters 2, 4, and 6 have excerpts from *LSI Journal* articles which demonstrate some of the ways I have applied these apologetic ideas.

There is a wide variety of apologetic views held and methods used in our circles—especially regarding creation apologetics. It is hoped that this article may serve as a discussion starter. Do some of the suggestions in this article make sense to you? Do other suggestions seem less so? Consider discussing some or all of this article during school faculty and church staff meetings, in family settings, or in other contexts.

¹ Most of these apologetic ideas were previously published, without quotations or examples, in three pages under the title, “Evolution—Key Concepts for a Lutheran Response,” in the fall 2019 *LSI Journal* www.LutheranScience.org/2019fall and again as “18 Key Concepts for a Lutheran Response in the *LSI Lesson Book* 2nd ed. www.LutheranScience.org/LessonBook.

² Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, www.WELS.net (accessed 02-27-23).

³ Evangelical Lutheran synod, www.ELS.org (accessed 02-27-23).

Chapter 1

Biblical Foundations

- God works only through the gospel in Word (the Bible) and sacrament (Baptism and Holy Communion) to create and strengthen faith (Romans 10:17; 1 Cor 1:21; 1 Pet 3:21; Mat 26:26–28).
- Apologetics is defending the Christian faith, often using extra-biblical arguments (presenting claims from logic, science, history, etc.). Even though extra-biblical arguments do not in any way increase the effectiveness of the gospel, Scripture shows a place for them in our apologetic.

The ELS published a study document from its doctrine committee which puts the above paragraphs in these words,

6. The Holy Scripture is the word of God and therefore is inherently powerful and self-authenticating. Historical and other external evidence and argument from sources apart from Scripture are a useful and important part of Christian apologetics in that they lay bare and condemn the presumption of unbelief and skepticism, but they neither verify nor authenticate Scripture as God’s revelation.

8. The cause of conversion or regeneration is not to be sought in the human presentation of evidence and argument, as important as they are, but only in the inherent power of God’s word of the gospel (2 Cor 4:6; Eph 2:8,9; 2 Tim 3:15; 1 Pet 1:23).

9. The Christian confession and defense will always be done with the understanding that regeneration is only the work of the Holy Spirit working through the means of grace, word and sacrament, and is not aided or effected by man. The absolute predominance of *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, and *sola Scriptura* (*solus Christus*) will always be made clear in carrying out the apologetic task.⁴

⁴ “Apologetics Study Document of the Doctrine Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod,” points 6, 8, and 9 of “Appendix A” in Allen Quist, “The Doctrine of Creation in Lutheran Apologetics,” *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* vol. 55, no. 1 (March 2015): 41–42 <https://blts.edu/lsq/lsq-archive/> (accessed 3-3-23).

- Extra-biblical arguments have the role of removing barriers to the gospel. Arthur Eggert and Geoffrey Kieta state this positively, apologetics is “clearing a path for the gospel.”⁵

- In ministry to believers, apologetics can remove barriers to the gospel by blunting temptation.

Erling T. Teigen (then a Bethany Lutheran College professor) mentions using apologetics in ministry to believers,

While we usually think of apologetics as an engagement with unbelief, it may also be a part of the Christian’s engagement with other Christians, for example in matters involving human life, human sexuality and marriage, and, certainly, creation.⁶

Wade Johnston (assistant professor of theology at Wisconsin Lutheran College and co-host of the podcast “*Let the Bird Fly*”) points out the importance of ministering to Christian youth with creation apologetics,

I think it’s important to equip our young people to wrestle with creation and evolution, as often Christians are led to question their faith because of such debates.⁷

- In ministry to unbelievers, apologetics can remove barriers to the gospel, leading the unbeliever to listen to the gospel message (Acts 2:14–15; 14:15–17; 17:22,23,28).

- While witnessing to unbelievers, our goal is to present the gospel message (not to discuss creation or evolution).

Valerie Locklair (fellow of the International Academy of Apologetics, Evangelism, and Human Rights in Strasbourg, France) puts it this way,

Our goal is to get people as quickly as possible to the cross of

5 Arthur A. Eggert and Geoffrey A. Kieta, *Clearing a Path for the Gospel—A Lutheran Approach to Apologetics* (Sun Prairie WI: In Terra Pax Lutheran Publishing, 2019).

6 Erling T. Teigen, “Reaction to the 2014 Reformation Lectures,” *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* vol. 55, no. 1 (March 2015): 50 <https://blts.edu/lsg/lsg-archive/> (accessed 3-3-23).

7 Wade Johnston, *Let the Bird Fly: Life in a World given Back to Us* (Irvine CA: 1517 Publishing, 2019), 97.

Christ and bring them up short before their Savior. ...Your job is not to convert anybody (that's the job of the Holy Spirit). Your job is not to win arguments or give the most eloquent defense. Dr. Angus Menuge, a prominent professor of philosophy and an adept apologist, sums it up beautifully: "We aren't called to be successful. We are called to be faithful."⁸

Alan Quist (adjunct professor of apologetics at Bethany Lutheran College) makes the same point about witnessing to unbelievers,

The power of God to save sinners is in the Gospel and only in the Gospel. ...Our goal with apologetics, always, is effectively presenting the saving message of Jesus Christ to all who are lost.⁹

Arthur Eggert and Geoffrey Kieta put it this way (*bold highlight not in original*),

People don't want to believe that they are sinners who need a Savior so that they will not go to hell. ...Instead, they 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 to the real conversation**, "What has Jesus done for you?"¹⁰

Articles in the *LSI Journal* regularly mention several of the points we have so far examined. One that discusses all of the points is "Can Witnessing a Miracle Lead to Faith?" in the winter 2020 *LSI Journal* (www.LutheranScience.org/2020winter).

• "We are ambassadors for Christ, inasmuch as God is making an appeal through us" (2 Corinthians 5:20a, EHV). Never demean evolutionists: Always remember that you are Christ's ambassador to the world, meaning you are God's representative to everyone, including evolutionists. Do not belittle those to whom you represent God. Reflect the love of Christ as you minister to both creationists and to evolutionists.

⁸ Valerie Locklair, *Called to Defend—An Apologetics Handbook for the Middle School Student* (Irving, CA: NRP Books, 2017), 66, 154.

⁹ Allen Quist, *The Reason I Believe—The Basics of Christian Apologetics* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 15.

¹⁰ Eggert and Kieta, 4.

Ryan MacPherson (Bethany Lutheran College professor and director of Bethany’s Apologetics and Worldview Studies) concurs with being proper ambassadors for Christ,

Do not ridicule those who misuse science to attack Christianity, but rather speak the truth patiently, loving.¹¹

- While human knowledge constantly changes, including science, God’s knowledge never changes. God never learns anything, since He already knows everything. God’s Word, the Bible, never has to be revised or updated. The Bible is correct in everything it says (Hebrews 13:8; Malachi 3:6; 1 John 3:20; John 10:35; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 Peter 1:23–25).

- **Some parts of the evolution story go against Scripture**—such as millions of years and common descent (Genesis 1:24-25). **We can be certain that those parts of evolution are wrong**, because God’s Word is true (John 17:17).

Arthur Eggert affirms that we reject the parts of evolution that go against Scripture (“macroscopic evolutionary models”) *because* they conflict with Scripture,

Scientists explain their observations by developing models (also called theories and laws). ...With the public school systems teaching macroscopic evolutionary models and the media publicizing them, evolution has become a growing challenge to the faith of many who otherwise accept the teachings of the Scriptures. ...Regardless of their degree of sophistication, however, such models violate the clear teachings of the Scriptures and must be rejected.¹²

11 Ryan Cameron MacPherson, “The Church and Science Through The Ages: Seven Key Questions From the History of Science,” in *Here We Stand—A Confessional Christian Study of Worldviews*, ed. Curtis A. Jahn (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2010), 219.

12 Arthur A. Eggert, “Creation, Science, and Our Approach in Apologetics,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* vol. 112, no. 4 (fall 2015): 252-253.

Chapter 2

Science and Truth

• Science is often seen as an unbiased producer of truth. In reality, science is neither unbiased nor a producer of truth. Prominent scientists, including those who champion evolution, describe science as a biased and subjective process producing knowledge that is constantly changing.

Paul Boehlke (then a Doctor Martin Luther College science professor) agrees,

Science changes; new ideas replace the old. Science does not generate truth, but rather, useful explanations. Our students need to know about how science works.¹³

Arthur Eggert and Geoffrey Kieta explain it with these words,

First, scientists can never be completely sure of the validity of their models. ...Second, even if a particular model appears to perfectly explain all observations, scientists cannot claim it is the true explanation without committing the fallacy of affirming the consequent. Something other than the proposed explanation might be the real explanation of the observations.¹⁴

Apologetic Use of science's ever-changing "truth"

The following four paragraphs are taken (slightly modified) from pages 13 and 30–31 of the winter 2021 LSI Journal www.LutheranScience.org/2021winter. For a fuller treatment, see the entire 31-page article, which covers many related apologetic aspects under the title, "What is Science?"

¹³ Paul R. Boehlke, DINOSAURS, GOD'S CREATURES, *The Lutheran Educator*, 31 no. 3 (February 1991): 57, <https://mlc-wels.edu/library/portfolio-item/volume-31-1990-91/>. Republished by LSI as, Paul R. Boehlke, "Dinosaurs, God's Creatures," *LSI Journal*, 32 no. 4 (fall 2018): 12, www.LutheranScience.org/2018fall (both links accessed 02-24-2023).

¹⁴ Eggert and Kieta, 135.

Is ever changing “truth” good? Secular science experts agree that the ever changing, self-correcting nature of science is the primary reason why we should trust science over other ways of knowing, even over revelation from God in Scripture. By its own admission, science does NOT provide final truth.¹⁵ On the other hand, we can be certain that what God reveals to us in the Bible is FINAL TRUTH and reflects true reality. The Bible is final and ultimate truth, and truth does not need correcting. Yet so many people, even many Christians, reject the truth about how God created the world. They replace changeless final truth revealed by God with flawed, human-reason generated, ever changing scientific conclusions.

If you remain in my word, you are really my disciples. You will also know the truth, and the truth will set you free (John 8:31b-32). Your word is truth (John 17:17).

In today’s world, most people view science as “Final Truth.” This includes [*four categories of Christians and non-Christians are described in the article*]. These people usually have too high a view of science, and that affects how they view the origin of the world. Your discussions with each of these groups would be different, but it could begin by pointing out that science is not the source of truth they think it is. Science is amazing and has done great things, but it is often wrong.

We should compare the truth claims of the Bible to the truth claims of science. Science claims it does not produce final truth, that it is ever changing and self-correcting in pursuit of truth that it never achieves. The Bible claims to be final truth and to reflect true reality. The Bible does not need error-correcting. A central claim of Christianity is that it is true. Jesus really died for our sins and rose from the dead. The Bible is a book of truth, because it is the Word of the one and only true God, who created the universe.

¹⁵ Science is “an intrinsically flawed process that will not achieve certainty on anything,” James C. Zimring, *What Science Is and How it Really Works* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2019), 100.

Chapter 3

Science and Nature Are Different

• Science is not the same as nature. God made nature. God did not make science. Science is mankind’s flawed and incomplete study of nature.

Ryan MacPherson cautions,

Do not carelessly link God’s name to scientific theories, as if, for example, Newton’s laws are necessarily God’s laws. ...God’s name is not something that you and I should go about attaching to one scientific theory or another—no matter how closely that theory seems to fit with God’s work as revealed in Scripture.¹⁶

Paul Boehlke describes how our Lutheran schools should teach science (*bold highlight not in original*),

Science should be presented from an explicit scriptural viewpoint:
—seeing science as a creative human activity,
—seeing science historically as a changing body of knowledge,
—recognizing that **the laws of science are not the laws of nature**,
—recognizing that all creation is suffering because of sin, and
—recognizing that **scientific ideas and the Scriptures should not be confounded**.¹⁷

Martin Sponholz (then a Martin Luther College science professor) writes,

Nature and science are different. This difference is simply that, since the Fall of mankind, nature and science cannot be the same until we take up residence in our new heaven and new earth. Teaching that this difference cannot be overcome must dominate

¹⁶ MacPherson, 219, 223.

¹⁷ Paul Boehlke, “Teaching Science in the Lutheran School,” in *Discovering God’s Creation—A Guidebook to Hands-on Science* ed. Paul Boehlke, Roger Klockziem, John Paulsen (New Ulm MN: Martin Luther College The Print Shop, 1997), xix <https://mlc-wels.edu/math-science/discovering-gods-creation/> (accessed 02-28-23).

the science classroom of the Christian teacher.¹⁸

It is an error to teach a brand of science in the name of Christian education that bears no relationship to the main stream of science in our society.¹⁹

- Science is a consensus among experts about how nature works, limited to natural explanations, a self-correcting process that changes its claims over time and generates useful explanations (not final truth). This is how secular experts define science.²⁰ This definition is something with which we as Christian creationists can agree.
- It is not surprising that science sometimes conflicts with what God reveals to us in Scripture, as science does when it claims that fish evolved into people over millions of years. Some Christians think that science and Scripture should always agree with each other. They try to make science conform to Scripture by redefining science. They declare that any part of science that goes against Scripture is “false science” and the remaining parts of science are “true science.”²¹

Ryan MacPherson explains the problem encountered when one uses the “True Science” creation apologetic (*underline not in original*),

Once a person concedes that theology and science must be harmoniously integrated, then one has already agreed to adjust one to fit with the other. Adjusting science to fit with Scripture will

18 Martin Sponholz, “Different!” in *Discovering God’s Creation—A Guidebook to Hands-on Science* ed. Paul Boehlke, Roger Klockziem, John Paulsen (New Ulm MN: Martin Luther College The Print Shop, 1997), xvi <https://mlc-wels.edu/math-science/discovering-gods-creation/> (accessed 02-28-23).

19 Martin Sponholz, “The Saving Waters— Implications of the Noachic Flood from a Biblical and Scientific Standpoint” (paper presented to the Minnesota State Teachers’ Conference, Trinity Lutheran School, Belle Plain, MN, Oct. 16, 1986), 14. <http://www.lutheranscience.org/home/180015283/180015283/180153907/WLS%20SponholzWaters%201986.pdf>

20 See extensive quotes from two secular experts (in books published by MIT and Cambridge) in “What Science Is” on pages 5-12 (especially page 8) in the winter 2021 *LSI Journal* at www.LutheranScience.org/2021winter.

21 The “True Science” creation apologetic is explained in the video and transcript, “Creation Apologetics Used in the WELS,” www.LutheranScience.org/WELSapologetics.

not work well, since both Christians and non-Christians agree that science is supposed to be based upon data gathered from observation and experiment, rather than from passages quoted out of the Bible. The only way to integrate science and Scripture while also maintaining scientific respectability is to revise one's interpretation of Scripture when a new consensus among scientists emerges—such as the consensus reached during the late 19th century in favor of evolution. If one does not want to be stuck in the position of having to revise one's interpretation of Scripture in light of science, then one would be wise not to try to integrate science and Scripture in the first place. Conservative Lutherans, in fact, have adapted precisely that strategy.²²

LSI articles and videos regularly point out that science and nature are different. For example, see the LSI video apologetic course and Bible study #5 “The Nature of Science” at www.LutheranScience.org/LBvideos.

Chapter 4

Unprovable Assumptions

- You do not need to know detailed scientific arguments against evolution or for creation. Such scientific arguments can have a place in apologetics, but there are more powerful lines of reasoning, which are much easier to make, which will be solid arguments for decades to come, and for which most evolutionists have no prepackaged answer. Pointing out the unprovable presuppositions on which the evolution story is based is that simple yet powerful apologetic.
- Unprovable presuppositions direct and constrain ALL science. Evolutionary science has more unprovable presuppositions than other branches of science like physics and chemistry. The starting assumptions of evolutionists require that creation be rejected. Creation is rejected NOT on the basis of scientific conclusions, but on the basis of unprovable a priori assumptions.

²² MacPherson, 208-209.

• The three primary unprovable assumptions of evolutionists are: 1) No Creator,²³ 2) No Flood, and 3) “Deep time,” meaning billions of years. We know for certain (from Scripture) that all three of these assumptions are false. Every conclusion based on a false assumption is considered invalid,²⁴ so the theory of evolution is invalid. Pointing out the assumptions of evolutionists is a strong apologetic statement, and one that is relatively easy to make. On the other hand, pointing out scientific problems with evolution is often more difficult and is more easily countered by the evolutionist.

Arthur Eggert and Geoffrey Kieta discuss what the previous paragraph calls the “no Creator” assumption of evolutionists. That indeed is the fundamental presupposition of ALL science, as these authors report (*words in italics are not in the original—they are my summary of the authors’ preceding sentences*),

Third, the fundamental assumption of science implies there is no god, but as any fundamental assumption, it is unprovable and may be false. Apologists can point out that if an Almighty God exists, then the fundamental assumption of science is indeed false, and the meaning of all the carefully gathered evidence is uncertain. In short, apologists must emphasize that all science, even that of much practical value, is limited by its two inherent fallacies [*science models are only provisionally true, and also, they may be the wrong explanation*] and by the validity of its fundamental assumption. No amount of research, no matter how good, can remove these limitations.²⁵

23 *Even Christian evolutionists allow only natural causes—no miracles—when writing the evolution story. In this way these Christians follow the “no Creator” assumption. When a Christian who believes God used evolution to create studies the origin of life, of Earth, or any other part of nature, he does NOT look to Scripture, he looks for natural explanations. He may later see how he can rewrite Scripture to accommodate the evolution story. So even though he believes in a creator god who at least initiated the Big Bang, he excludes any activity of God while studying/writing the evolution story.*

24 *Technically, a deductive argument with a false premise is “unsound,” and an inductive argument with a false premise is “uncogent.” For simplicity, let’s use the term “invalid” for both cases.*

25 Eggert and Kieta, 135.

Arthur Eggert further elaborates about pointing out this fundamental assumption of science in his fall 2020 *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* article,

Point out that if the fundamental assumption of science and/or other key assumptions made by the experimenters are incorrect (false premise fallacy), then the data might have another meaning or no meaning. Scientists make this argument against the work of their fellow scientists all the time, so it is intellectually acceptable to make it.²⁶

Apologetic Use of evolution's unprovable assumptions

The easiest and most common procedure is to simply make the general statement, “Evolution assumes that everything came about in a natural way without any miracles from a god. If that unprovable presupposition is wrong, then evolution theory is invalid. In other words, if the Bible is true, then the major parts of evolution, including common descent, never happened.”

The simple statement above is powerful all by itself. Several more detailed versions are shown below for those who may be interested.

The following two paragraphs are taken from pages 23–24 of the winter 2021 LSI Journal www.LutheranScience.org/2021winter.

Evolutionist Response: Now, an evolutionist may respond by agreeing that *if* God created the world thousands of years ago, then evolution would be false. He would then state that the evolutionary assumptions of 1) no Creator, 2) no Flood, and 3) deep time have been **validated as true** by more than a century of scientific observations and conclusions. That response has a major logical flaw. The “century of scientific observations and conclusions” were all constrained by the three assumptions in question. Those assumptions directed the entire scientific process used to write the evolution story (evolutionists call evolution a “historical narrative”). Those assumptions determined what was to be observed and what

²⁶ Arthur A. Eggert, “Genesis 1 and Science,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* vol. 117, no. 4 (fall 2020): 266.

was not to be observed, even changing how to observe (such as changing how to take measurements, forcing them to conform with the assumptions). Those assumptions determined which methods, models, and calculations could be used, and which had to be rejected. Those assumptions determined which conclusions would be allowed and which would not be allowed. *Those assumptions forced the evolution story to conform to the assumptions themselves. In light of this, one cannot claim that these assumptions have been validated as true.*

Greenland Ice Dating: Ice core dating is a good example of how the “no flood” and “deep time” assumptions drastically change scientific procedures and conclusions. Evolutionists assume that the middle and lower layers in the Greenland and polar ice sheets have been compressed for long ages (the deep time assumption), with the lowest layers compressed nearly paper-thin.²⁷ Lines between each “annual” layer in middle and lower depths eventually become impossible to see,²⁸ so assumptions must be made to measure the thickness of each layer. Evolutionists force their measurements so that the thickness of each annual layer does not significantly vary from the assumed thickness for that layer (nearly paper thin in some cases). If the ice actually accumulated over the few thousand years since Noah’s Flood, then those layers would NOT be compressed nearly that much and would have to be measured differently, resulting in much younger dating.

The following five paragraphs are taken from the article, “What Evidence Do Evolutionists Give for Common Descent?” on pages 5–22 of the summer 2022 LSI Journal www.LutheranScience.org/2022summer. Refer to the entire 18-page article for more details.

²⁷ “1,400 years per meter” meaning each annual layer is 0.028 inches thick, the thickness of about 6 pieces of paper. M Casado, AJ Orsi, and A Landais, “On the limits of climate reconstruction from water stable isotopes in polar ice cores,” *Past Global Changes Magazine*, 25 no. 3 (2017): 146. <https://doi.org/10.22498/pages.25.3> (accessed 3-4-23).

²⁸ “The ice flow leads to annual layer thinning that together with diffusion ultimately leads to a loss of the annual signal with depth.” Sune O. Rasmussen, A. Svensson, and M. Winstrup, “State of the art of ice core annual layer dating,” *Past Global Changes Magazine*, 22 no. 1 (April 2014): Figure 1 page 26. <https://doi.org/10.22498/pages.22.1> (accessed 3-4-23).

In their attempt to show that common descent is true, evolutionists point to many features of the natural world. These observations must be interpreted, and there are multiple conclusions that can be made. Evolutionists use many unprovable assumptions to narrow down possible conclusions. Evolutionists reject the possibility of a creator god, and they reject the possibility of a global flood, before they examine any evidence—even before they begin to make observations. Such unprovable presuppositions force them to reject the true origin of life—the Creator God of Scripture. Evolutionists then must choose between many false guesses for the origin of life. We will see how that plays out in the rest of this article.

As we examine the evidence for common descent, we will notice that much of it is also evidence for biblical creation. Even books written to defend evolution from 6-day creation, primarily provide evidence that points to both evolution and to biblical creation.

Similar Body Parts: This is the first category of evidence we will examine in this article. Much of the evidence presented for the claim that common descent is true involves the similarities between living things. Skeletal structures, eyes and other organs, DNA, and so much more are very similar as we compare animals with other animals—and as we compare animals with people. These similarities are evidence for common descent, but they are also evidence that God used a common design. Evolutionists essentially say, “Common descent is true, and creation by kind is false, because all creatures have similar body parts.” The weakness of this claim can be seen by noticing the exact opposite claim can also be made, “Common descent is false, and creation by kind is true, because all creatures have similar body parts.” Claims that can be turned around like this are logically considered to be “arbitrary.” The claim is based on subjective personal choice instead of being based on logic. It is a type of circular reasoning. There are countless versions of the “similar body parts” claim. Let’s examine a few of the most common ways evolutionists use this argument as evidence that common descent is true.

Similar Forelimb Bones: Possibly THE most frequently provided evidence for common descent is to show that the forelimbs of several animals have the same bones as a human arm. Six of the seven college biology textbooks in my library—and both of my college textbooks on

evolution—present such a graphic as evidence of common descent. So do two books that the National Academy of Sciences wrote to defend evolution from creationist claims. When two different animals have a similar body part, evolutionists assume it is the result of either: 1) Those body parts evolving independently in two different animals (“convergent evolution” of “analogous structures”), or 2) Those two animals descended from a common ancestor (inheriting “homologous structures”). Evolutionists are forced by their “no Creator” assumption to reject a 3rd possibility—that God used a similar body design when creating animals and people.

Why Do Evolutionists Think Their Evidence Is Strong? Evolutionists assume that life began and evolved naturally—without any involvement by a god. This unprovable presupposition leaves evolutionists with two possibilities: 1) Life on Earth began only once, so all plants, animals, and people have a common ancestor, or 2) Life on Earth began multiple times, so some creatures are not related. When choosing between these two options, the fact that all creatures and people have similar body parts points to #1: All creatures have a common ancestor. That is why evolutionists think that “similar body parts” is strong evidence that all life evolved from the first life-form: a bacteria-like creature. To an evolutionist, the 3rd choice (God created unrelated kinds of creatures) does not exist, because they rejected that option before considering any evidence. If you wish to understand why evolutionists present weak evidence, yet think they are presenting strong evidence, then this point is essential. To an evolutionist, there are only choices 1 and 2 (life evolved naturally without any involvement by a god). Choice 3 (God created unrelated kinds) does not exist.

Chapter 5

Describe Evolution Correctly

- Carefully avoid speaking incorrectly about evolution and about science in general. Stay within the limits of your scientific knowledge. Speaking incorrectly about science (including evolution) can harm our gospel ministry. People may wonder, “If this person is wrong about science, are they also wrong about Jesus?”

- If you use scientific terms, use them correctly. The words “theory,” “law,” and “fact” have a different meaning in science than they do in everyday conversations. Never say, “Evolution is just a theory, it is not proven.” Never say “Evolution is taught as fact when it is only a theory.” Never say, “There is no evidence for evolution.” Such statements show a misunderstanding of scientific terminology.²⁹
- If you speak about a particular part of evolution, make sure you correctly describe that part of evolution.

LSI articles and videos regularly teach various aspects of evolution theory. For example, LSI video apologetic course and Bible study #2 “*Evolution and Creation Contrasted*” and #7 “*Natural Selection*” at www.LutheranScience.org/LBvideos.

Chapter 6

Parts of Evolution Are True

- Avoid even implying that all of evolution is wrong: A creationist can agree with much of evolution theory. This is especially true of the core evolution teaching of natural selection. Natural selection really does produce new species, but always within their biblical kind.
- The evolution story is a mixture of reality and fabrication. True parts of evolution are often used as proof that the false parts of evolution are also true.
- Natural selection is a significant scientific discovery. It helps us better understand how the biblical kinds of plants and animals diversified into so many species. Evolutionists correctly point out that natural selection produces new species within their kind. Then they ask us to imagine that natural selection can also produce new kinds.

²⁹ “*Scientific theories do not become laws when they accumulate additional evidence. Rather, the laws and the theories of science are considered scientific facts simply because those laws and theories are overwhelmingly accepted as such by the scientific community. In science, the terms ‘theory,’ ‘law,’ and ‘fact’ are all treated as temporary truth, which can be overturned at any time and replaced with another temporary truth.*” LSI video Bible study leader guide, page 16, www.LutheranScience.org/LBvideos.

Apologetic Use of natural selection

The following three paragraphs are taken (slightly revised) from pages 17, 19, 27, and 28 of the spring 2019 LSI Journal www.Lutheran-Science.org/2019spring. For more details see the entire 14-page article, “Evolutionists and Creationists Often Agree.”

Books written by evolutionists to defend evolution against creationist claims so often describe the science of evolution in ways with which a creationist can agree. So much of what evolutionists see as the proof of evolution are scientific conclusions which do not go against Scripture. Evolutionists regularly discuss natural selection in ways that conform with a young earth and created kinds. Then evolutionists move to claims that go against Scripture. Evolutionists, in essence, claim that since natural selection can produce new species within each biblical kind, that proves that natural selection can also produce new biblical kinds.

Let’s see what Richard Dawkins has to say about natural selection in his NY Times best seller *The Greatest Show on Earth—The Evidence for Evolution*, which he says he wrote to prove that evolution is true. We’ll summarize what he says about natural selection, while emphasizing the reasons given to convince the reader that evolution is true. We will cover his introductory chapter one, and the three chapters devoted to natural selection (chapters 2, 3, and 5). We will see that the creationist can agree with most of what Dawkins says about natural selection in these 124 pages.

Dawkins provides 28 reasons why he believes evolution can and did change fish into people. Twenty-one of these 28 are examples of plants and animals *changing within their own kind* (something that creationists can agree actually happened). Every now and then, he asks his readers to *imagine* evolution producing new kinds of plants or animals—of course he does not use the Biblical term “kind.” Aside from asking us to *imagine it is true*, the only reason Dawkins provides for the ability of natural selection to produce new kinds of plants and animals is his faulty appeal to authority—that scientists believe common descent is true).

- The geologic column is a significant scientific discovery. It helps us better understand the original diversity of creation. So many amazing and

unique plants and animals which God created have gone extinct. Evolutionists correctly point out that the geologic column has a sequence of fossil-containing rock layers. Then they ask us to imagine that the plants and animals that left these fossils descended from a bacteria-like common ancestor.

Apologetic Use of the geologic column

The following seven paragraphs (slightly revised) are taken from pages 27–30 of the summer 2022 LSI Journal www.LutheranScience.org/2022summer. For more details, see the entire 9-page article, “Has Common Descent Become Unfalsifiable?”

Since the time of Darwin (mid-1800s), paleontologists have known that the fossil record does not show gradual change as they expected based on evolution theory. The fossil record (the geologic column) shows the opposite: Species are essentially unchanged for the span they appear. Famous zoology professor at Harvard, Stephen J. Gould, devotes 20 pages of quotations to documenting the fact that paleontologists knew this, but avoided public disclosure of the static nature of species in the fossil record. Gould titles those 20 pages, “What Every Paleontologist Knows.”³⁰

Early in their careers (1972), two soon-to-be very famous evolutionary biologists, Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge, proposed a solution to the missing fossil problem. They named their solution, “punctuated equilibrium.” Punctuated equilibrium is the claim that biological evolution often happens very rapidly between long periods of stability (of “stasis”). Long stable periods of “equilibrium” are occasionally interrupted (“punctuated”) by a short period of rapid change. Punctuated equilibrium addresses the lack of fossil evidence by claiming that one kind of plant or animal evolved into another kind so fast that it left no fossil evidence (or so few fossils that we have not yet found any).

It took some time for punctuated equilibrium to be accepted by the scientific community, but today it is mainstream. College textbooks now teach that change from one species into another can progress quickly

³⁰ Stephen Jay Gould, *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ Press, 2002), 745–764.

(punctuated equilibrium) or gradually, depending on environmental conditions.

By accepting punctuated equilibrium, the evolutionist community (which is the scientific community) has finally publicly admitted that the fossil record does not show gradual change in species: It shows the opposite—unchanging species.

So, based on a lack of the expected transitional fossils, evolutionists have modified the common descent part of the evolution story so that one species can descend from a different ancestral species either gradually or rapidly. In that way, common descent will now reflect the fossil record—whatever fossil evidence is found—many transitional fossils or none. Whether fossils are found or not found, either way, evolutionists view the common descent evolution story as being confirmed by the fossil evidence.

Common descent has been broadened to make it so flexible, that it cannot be falsified, no matter what observations are made (fossils or no fossils). A college evolution textbook (which teaches evolution as being true) points out that scientific models (hypotheses, theories, laws) that cannot be falsified are considered to be unscientific.³¹

Every Christian, but certainly those who are tempted by evolution, should become acquainted with the unprovable assumptions on which evolution is based, and the overall weakness of evolutionary claims. In doing so, the temptation to think that God used evolution to create is greatly reduced.

- Radiometric dating is a useful tool. Carbon dating provides reasonably accurate, *actual ages* for the remains of once living things like wood, bones, shells, and peat—as long as those plants and animals lived well after the Flood. Other radiometric dating methods provide reasonably ac-

³¹ “Hypotheses constructed so that they can never be refuted (‘falsified’ according to philosopher Karl Popper) are not considered scientific. ...Nevertheless, crucial as these philosophical objections appear, they have not much influenced the practice of evolutionists. ...Biologists continue to undertake evolutionary investigations ...whether the methodology is philosophically correct or not.” Monroe W. Strickberger, *Evolution*, 2nd ed. (London: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 1996), 16-17.

curate *relative ages* for some kinds of rocks. Evolutionists go further and claim that carbon dating provides ages up to 50,000 years, and that other radiometric dating methods provide not just *relative* ages, but *actual* ages (up to billions of years). All dating methods are based on unprovable presuppositions. Evolutionists are aware that some of their presuppositions are often false, so they put great effort into minimizing errors due to false assumptions. Even so, they admit that their assumptions are unprovable and commonly false.

John Brug has a Ph.D. in ancient Semitic languages and archaeology from the Center for Ancient Studies of the University of Minnesota. He participated in excavations at Tel Michal, Tel Gerisa, and Jaffa, Israel.³² He describes carbon-14 dating, its usefulness in archaeology, and its limitations and problems,

Such methods can distinguish ancient finds from modern fakes and can place plant remains into their general time periods. ... [carbon dating] is being used as a cross check in some of the disputes about the early or late dating of the emergence of the Kingdom of Israel, but it is doubtful that it is precise enough to give definitive answers to questions about strata from historical periods. ... We said previously that in the earliest periods of pre-history, there is a six thousand to eight thousand year discrepancy between archaeological and biblical dating. ... [for most of this period] scientists rely primarily on carbon-14 dating. ... [Carbon dating] is only as valid as its basic assumptions, namely, that trees growing ten thousand years ago took in carbon-14 at the same rate as living trees today. If this assumption is wrong, the entire system is invalid.³³

Apologetic use of dating methods is demonstrated in the LSI video apologetic course and Bible study #9 “Dating Methods” at www.LutheranScience.org/LBvideos and on pages 8–32 in the summer 2019 *LSI Journal* as www.LutheranScience.org/2019summer.

³² Meet the Editors, Wartburg Project, <https://wartburgproject.org/about/meet-the-editors/> (accessed 3-5-23).

³³ John F. Brug, *Digging for Insights—Using Archaeology to Study the Bible* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2010), 145, 156–157.

Chapter 7

Apologetic Strategies

- Creationists and evolutionists often agree. Point that out as you minister to creationists and to evolutionists. Discuss some of those points of agreement as a path to discussing the assumptions which guide and constrain evolutionary science.
- Listening is a very important part of witnessing, and even more so, crucial to apologetics. If we carefully listen and then inquire what the person means by what they say, we can show genuine concern, respect, and love for that person. Never simply assume you know a person's view in general nor on any particular point. People commonly hold to unexpected mixtures of viewpoints, even holding to multiple views that conflict with each other. Careful, loving listening and asking questions is essential to learning what a person actually thinks and believes.

Luke Thompson (a Martin Luther College professor) advises,

Listen to and take seriously the skeptic's critique of the man in the sky, and so talk instead about the Son of Man who publicly walked the earth.³⁴

David C. Thompson (former Bethany Lutheran College professor and also organizer of Bethany's annual Confessional Worldview Seminars) cautions,

Just because a person (or organization or institution or group) subscribes to one or more assumptions or methods of a worldview does not mean he can be identified with that worldview. ...Believing the earth is billions of years old does not make one a full-fledged proponent of Naturalism or even Darwinism. ...People are not necessarily or even usually consistent with the worldview they profess. They may hold a number of contradictory assump-

³⁴ Luke Thompson, "BIBLE SKEPTICS TALKING TO CHRISTIANS," in *quick to listen—UNDERSTANDING VIEWPOINTS THAT CHALLENGE YOUR FAITH* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2018), 176.

tions from different worldviews and not even know it.³⁵

- Avoid making *only* arguments that can also be used to claim that God used evolution to create, particularly when ministering to Christians. The fine-tuning of the universe, the positions of the earth and moon in our solar system, the impossibility of nonliving chemicals self-assembling into the first living thing, irreducible complexity, intelligent design, and other arguments can have a place in your apologetic, but theistic evolutionists like Lee Strobel (*The Case for a Creator*) use these very same arguments to claim that God used billions of years of evolution to create. These apologetic arguments do not help a Christian who is tempted to think that God used evolution to create.

- If an atheist says that his belief in science keeps him from believing that there is a god, you may want to consider using a somewhat unexpected tactic. Mention that many scientists believe God is the driving force behind evolution. They do not see any conflict between their faith in God and their faith in science. Even the National Academy of Sciences (2,000 eminent scientists who advise the US president) states that there is no conflict between faith in God and faith in science.³⁶ Since prominent scientists believe in God, would you be willing to hear about Jesus Christ and how He loves you? In this way, evolution is no longer a barrier to the gospel. We do not even have to show that evolution is wanting as an explanation of origins. This is a quick and easy way to clear a path for the gospel. We can leave talk about evolution until after God brings this person to faith in their Savior. If an unbeliever is ready to seriously listen to the law and gospel—if there is no barrier to his hearing the gospel—then apologetics is not needed (or if apologetics was used, it has done its job). Quickly move

³⁵ David C. Thompson, *What in the World Is Going On?—Identifying Hollow and Deceptive Worldviews—A Guide For Christian Parents, Churches, and Schools* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2010), 79.

³⁶ “Acceptance of the evidence for evolution can be compatible with religious faith. ...Scientists and theologians have written eloquently about their awe and wonder at the history of the universe and of life on this planet, explaining that they see no conflict between their faith in God and the evidence for evolution. ... Attempts to pit science and religion against each other create controversy where none needs to exist.” National Academy of Sciences, *Science, Evolution, and Creationism* (Washington D.C.: The National Academy Press, 2008), 12. Free pdf at <https://doi.org/10.17226/11876> (accessed 02-28-23).

to ministering with law and gospel. We should never think that an atheist must first become a creationist, then become a Christian. It is almost always the other way around. Christian first, creationist (maybe) second.

Samuel Degner (a Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professor) writes (*bold highlight in original*),

Jesus didn't tell us to go and make creationists. He said to make disciples (Matthew 28:19) and to do so with the gospel. We won't be ashamed to teach everything he has commanded us, including a six-day, miraculous creation. But we don't have to start there. . . . The truth is, as gravely dangerous as it is to explain away the first two chapters of the Bible, you **can** believe in God and evolution. That is, it is definitely possible, and many do.³⁷

David Valleskey (then a Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professor) comments on the role of apologetics while witnessing,

Apologetics can properly serve a helping role in evangelism. It can assist in clearing away misconceptions that may have resulted in a person being unwilling to listen seriously to what the Scriptures say. . . . In my experience [of calling on the unchurched], the best place for such apologetics is in response to objections that arise in the course of witnessing. In other words, one doesn't set out to prove the divine origin of Scriptures, or a six-day creation, or a worldwide flood. One simply tells what the Word says. In doing so the evangelist may meet with objections, which often stem from faulty information the person has received from one source or another. Somewhere along the way, for example, someone has told him that the Bible has been copied so many times that no one can know for sure that it really says. For the evangelist to take a few minutes to show how the manuscripts of the Bible have been preserved over the years—that is the role of apologetics. It won't make a Christian of the person, but it may result in his willingness

³⁷ Samuel Degner, "EVOLUTIONISTS TALKING TO CHRISTIANS," in *quick to listen—UNDERSTANDING VIEWPOINTS THAT CHALLENGE YOUR FAITH* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2018), 51, 55-56.

to keep listening. If apologetics has done that, it has done its job.³⁸

Wade Johnston explains,

I think it's important to equip our young people to wrestle with creation and evolution, as often Christians are led to question their faith because of such debates, but when it comes to dealing with my unbelieving neighbor, my hope is to get to Christ as quickly as possible. I've also found that those who have been brought to faith in Christ as their crucified and risen Savior are a lot more willing to consider the creation account through the lens of God's Word and not merely according to human reason and modern scientific claims. ...If I can get a person considering the gospels and the Christ they proclaim from the get-go, that's where I'd rather start.³⁹

- We often think of apologetics as clearing a path for the gospel, but there is another form of apologetics. Scripture itself often weaves together the gospel with evidence for that gospel. Mary and the disciples were eyewitnesses of the resurrected Lord. When they told others what they saw, the Holy Spirit used that testimony (that evidence of the resurrection) to bring some to faith. Much later, that eyewitness testimony was recorded in Scripture. In this case, the evidence for the gospel (eyewitness accounts of Jesus' death and resurrection) became the gospel itself.

Luke Thompson refers to this form of apologetics, where Scripture mixes evidence with gospel message, even using certain *evidence as* the gospel message. He suggests that the best way to witness to a Bible skeptic is to talk like the Apostle Paul did in Acts 26 (*bold in original*),

When Paul stood on trial before a Roman governor and local king, both unbelievers, Paul reminded them that what he held to be true was based on his actual experiences with a God who entered time and space hidden behind the visible flesh of Jesus. Instead of

³⁸ David J. Valleskey, *We Believe—Therefore We Speak: The Theology and Practice of Evangelism* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1995), 111-113.

³⁹ Wade Johnston, *Let the Bird Fly: Life in a World given Back to Us* (Irvine CA: 1517 Publishing, 2019), 97-98.

saying, “You’ve just got to believe,” and nothing more, Paul said, “I saw.” And Paul reminded them that all the events surrounding Jesus were not done in a corner. Instead of saying, “You’ve just got to have faith,” and leave it at that, Paul said, “What I am saying is true and reasonable. . . .None of this has escaped [the king’s] notice, because it was not done in a corner” (Acts 26:25,26). Paul’s faith did not float in the clouds of unprovable and relative but, rather, was rooted in observable history. It was not based on events that only occurred in some fanatical believers’ minds, but on very public happenings, matters of public record. We might not be able to say with Paul, “I saw,” and “none of this has escaped your notice.” But we can say with confidence, “**They saw**” and “none of this escaped **their** notice.” Listen to and take seriously the skeptic’s critique of the man in the sky, and so talk instead about the Son of Man who publicly walked the earth.⁴⁰

Allen Quist points out,

The Christian faith is not a blind, uninformed, or based-on-experience kind of faith. It is faith based on genuine history and in many ways is based on solid evidence.⁴¹

Lyle Lange (then a professor at Martin Luther College) refers to this wide view of apologetics when he writes (*bold italics in original*),

It is evident, then, that apologetics is Christocentric in nature. It flows from sanctifying Christ in our hearts. It gives a defense of the hope that we have in Christ. This hope is objective, not subjective in nature. The Christian faith is based on the historical events of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. Apologetics is a natural outgrowth of our faith in Christ. Christians do apologetics. Apologetics has often been called “pre-evangelism.” I would rather put it this way: Apologetics may involve “pre-evangelism”

⁴⁰ Luke Thompson, 176.

⁴¹ Allen Quist, “The Doctrine of Creation in Lutheran Apologetics,” *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* vol. 55, no. 1 (March 2015): 18 <https://blts.edu/lsq/lsq-archive/> (accessed 3-3-23).

(removing obstacles which prevent us from sharing the gospel). However, Lutheran (biblical) apologetics *is* evangelism.⁴²

Allen Quist expounds on the previous quote of Lyle Lange (*italics in original*),

As Professor Lange mentions above, apologetics takes two forms. The one is removing obstacles to the Christians faith. The other is evangelism itself; that is, presenting the evidence that substantiates the truth of the gospel message of Christ. To present the evidence for the gospel message is to present the message itself, and that is evangelism. The gospel message of Christ contains its own evidence, especially that of the resurrection. Paul appealed to this evidence in his speech at the Areopagus when he said, “For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). In Romans Paul said, “[He was] declared with power *to be* the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4). *The primary evidence for the truth of the message of Christ is in the message itself, it is in the resurrection. The doctrine and the proof are intertwined.*⁴³

Ryan MacPherson briefly mentions that apologetics can clear a path for the gospel, then he details how apologetics can do more than that. He shows from Scripture that Jesus and the apostles repeatedly presented apologetic evidence in service to the gospel. Here are some excerpts from his excellent article (*underline not in original*),

Apologetics—evidence for the truth of Christ—can point to, imply, or confirm the truth of Christ and His Gospel. This is how Jesus Himself and His apostles made use of evidence. ...So why present evidence? Why should Lutherans use apologetics? Clear-

42 Lyle W. Lange, “Lutheran Apologetics: From Our Classrooms and into the World,” *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* vol. 51, no. 4 (December 2011): 334–335 <https://blts.edu/lsq/lsq-archive/> (accessed 3-3-23).

43 Allen Quist, “The Doctrine of Creation in Lutheran Apologetics,” *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* vol. 55, no. 1 (March 2015): 12–13 <https://blts.edu/lsq/lsq-archive/> (accessed 3-3-23).

ly apologetics is an evangelism method in Scripture, especially in the Gospels and Acts. It approaches our neighbor with what God has given them: senses and reason. Christ and His disciples appeal to human senses and reason despite the fact they are limited and corrupted. In a world that continues to ask the age-old question “What is truth?” we not only have the truth but also that which points to, implies, and confirms it. Apologetics remains a serving platter on which the Gospel can be placed. Is there some sort of danger in using apologetics? No more than sharing the law or even the Gospel. They also can be misapplied by the presenter or misinterpreted by the hearer. What we confessional Lutherans have with apologetics is a biblically demonstrated way to communicate with a desperate and dying world. We can explain to our neighbor his sin, forgiveness in Christ, and the evidence that says this is certainly true. We then leave it in the hands of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴

Closing

Your Creation Apologetic

We started with the hope that this article might serve as a discussion starter. Think of people in your life with whom you might talk about the topics we covered.

Also, consider the suggested apologetic ideas while you minister to creationists and evolutionists, Christians and non-Christians, young and old, the people God places in your life.

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⁴⁴ Ryan MacPherson, “Saved by Apologetics?” *The Lutheran Sentinel* vol. 105, no. 4 (July-August 2022) <https://luthेरansentinel.els.org/pdf-archive/> (accessed 3-3-23).

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