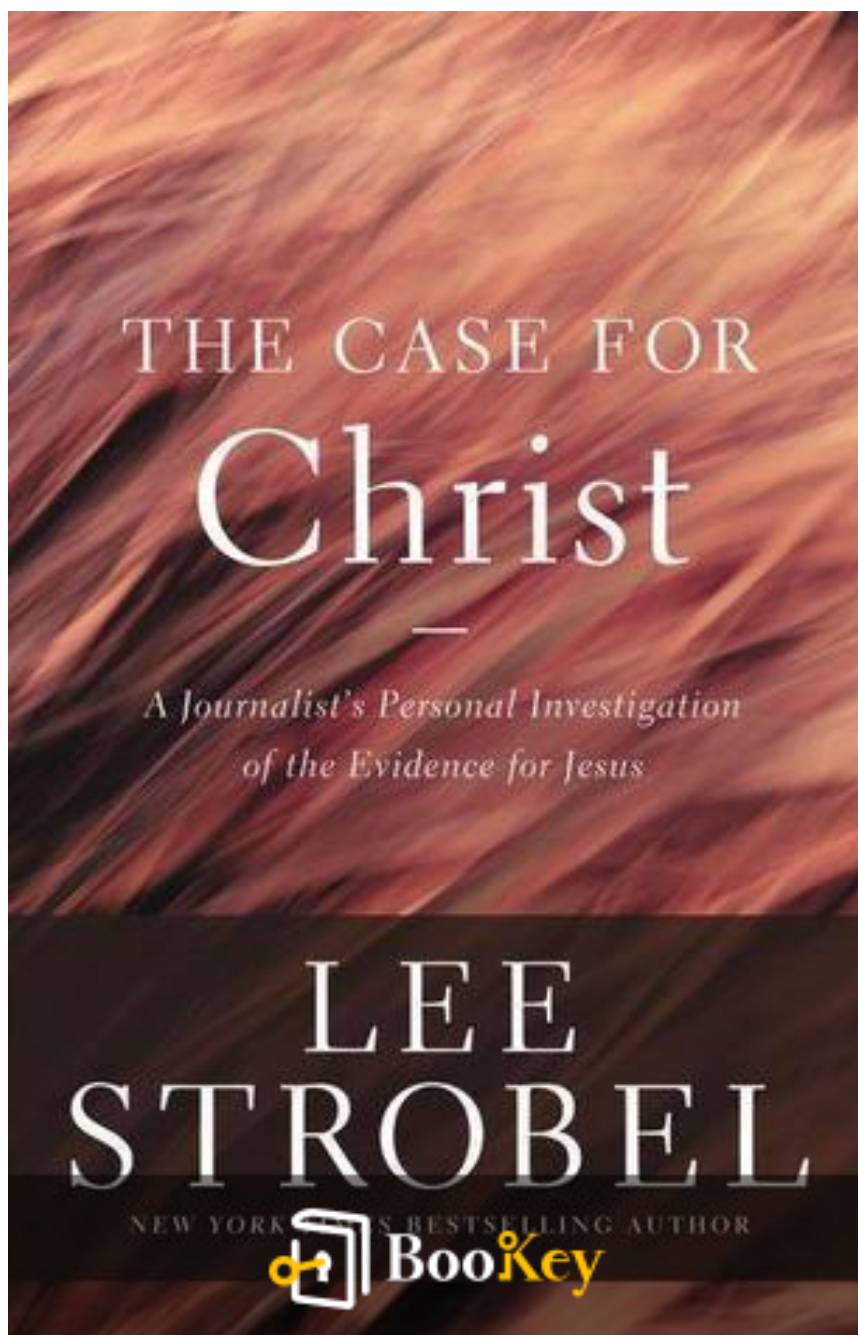


# The Case For Christ PDF (Limited Copy)

Lee Strobel



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# The Case For Christ Summary

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"Investigating Historical Evidence for Jesus' Resurrection."

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## About the book

In "The Case for Christ," former atheist and award-winning journalist Lee Strobel embarks on a gripping, investigative journey to uncover the factual truth about the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Utilizing his seasoned journalistic skills, Strobel meticulously examines historical evidence, interviews leading scholars and experts in theology, history, and archaeology, and navigates the riveted debates around Jesus' existence. As he dives into various disciplines, from manuscripts to medical evidence, Strobel's search is not just intellectual, but profoundly personal, pushing readers to question preconceived notions and ponder life-altering decisions. Whether you're a skeptic, a curious seeker, or a believer wanting to reaffirm your faith, "The Case for Christ" promises to challenge your perspective, compelling you to delve deeper into what could be the most transformative story in history.

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## About the author

Lee Strobel, a renowned American author and investigative journalist, is widely recognized for his works exploring the veracity of biblical claims and the Christian faith. Born on January 25, 1952, in Arlington Heights, Illinois, Strobel earned a degree in journalism from the University of Missouri and later pursued a Master of Studies in Law at Yale Law School. With a storied career as a journalist, including a stint as the legal editor for the Chicago Tribune, Strobel's background in law and journalism seasoned him with exceptional investigative skills. Initially a staunch atheist, Strobel embarked on an exhaustive journey to scrutinize Christianity's central claims, which serendipitously led to his conversion—a transformative experience that underpins much of his writing. His bestseller, *\*The Case for Christ,\** is a testament to his meticulous approach and narrates his personal voyage from skepticism to faith, reflecting his dedication to uncovering truth through journalistic rigor.

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# Chapter 1 Summary:

## Summary of Chapter 1: The Eyewitness Evidence

The chapter begins with the poignant story of Leo Carter, a brave young man from Chicago who played a critical role in convicting three murderers through his compelling eyewitness testimony. Despite being injured during a retaliatory attack, Carter's eyewitness account was so convincing that it successfully put the perpetrators behind bars. This story sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the reliability of eyewitness testimony, particularly in historical contexts, such as in the examination of the gospels that recount the life of Jesus Christ.

The author introduces Dr. Craig Blomberg, a respected scholar and expert in the historical reliability of the gospels, as a key source to probe the question: Can the biographies of Jesus be trusted? Blomberg, with his extensive background in biblical studies, offers a perspective on the historical authenticity and authorship of the gospels. The discussion revolves around whether it is reasonable to believe that the gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—were indeed written by or based on the accounts of those closely associated with Jesus.

Blomberg explains that although the gospels are technically anonymous,

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early church testimonies uniformly attribute them to these figures. He emphasizes that there would have been no motive to falsely attribute these writings to relatively less notable figures unless they were genuinely the authors. He discusses potential anomalies, such as the debate over whether the gospel of John was written by the apostle John or another John, but asserts that the evidence supports apostolic eyewitness accounts.

To further validate the reliability of these texts, the conversation delves into the dating of the gospels, arguing that they were written within the lifetimes of eyewitnesses, thus minimizing the potential for legendary distortion. He compares this to historical figures like Alexander the Great, whose biographies were accepted as credible despite being written centuries later. This comparison underscores the relatively short timeline between the events of Jesus' life and the recording of the gospels, enhancing their historical credibility.

Blomberg also tackles the issue of theological bias, arguing that while the gospels do have a theological agenda, their writers were motivated to record accurate history to validate their beliefs, much like Jewish scholars documenting the Holocaust to preserve historical truth. He supports this with the presence of creeds in Paul's letters that date back to shortly after the resurrection, confirming early theological positions and the authenticity of reported events.

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The chapter concludes with a reflective pause, noting the importance of testing the eyewitness accounts against rigorous standards to determine their reliability. The questions and references for further reading encourage readers to critically engage with the evidence regarding the historical reliability of the gospels, echoing the chapter's investigative theme.

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## Chapter 2 Summary:

The chapter titled "Testing the Eyewitness Evidence: Do the Biographies of Jesus Stand Up to Scrutiny?" delves into the reliability of the gospel accounts of Jesus Christ by examining them through a series of evidential tests, much like a court scrutinizes eyewitness testimony. It opens with a poignant anecdote about sixteen-year-old Michael McCullough, whose testimony led to the conviction of the youths who paralyzed him, underscoring the strength of credible eyewitness evidence. This anecdote sets the stage for the chapter's examination of gospel reliability.

The author, likely a journalist or investigator, engages with Dr. Craig Blomberg, a renowned biblical scholar, to test the historical accuracy of the gospel accounts through eight specific criteria. Each test is designed to scrutinize the gospel writers' intentions, abilities, consistency, bias, and more.

1. **The Intention Test** investigates whether the gospel writers aimed to accurately document historical events. Blomberg argues that the Gospel of Luke explicitly indicates an intention for accuracy, and despite lack of similar statements in other gospels, their literary genre suggests similar intentions.

2. **The Ability Test** questions whether the disciples had the capacity to

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accurately preserve Jesus' teachings. Blomberg explains the role of oral tradition in an ancient culture skilled in memorization, likening it to the disciplined transmission of the Old Testament by rabbis.

3. **The Character Test** assesses the moral integrity of the gospel writers.

Blomberg contends they were upright individuals who risked their lives for their beliefs, suggesting a commitment to truthfulness.

4. **The Consistency Test** addresses alleged contradictions among the gospels. Blomberg suggests that differences can often be reconciled through understanding cultural storytelling norms and the flexible nature of oral tradition.

5. **The Bias Test** explores whether personal affiliations affected the writers' objectivity. Despite the potential for bias, Blomberg believes the authors' devotion likely reinforced their commitment to accurately recording Jesus' life.

6. **The Cover-Up Test** evaluates whether the authors included embarrassing details that might harm their narrative. Blomberg points out many uncomfortable truths within the gospels, arguing that had they wished to falsify stories, they would have omitted these details.

7. **The Corroboration Test** checks external evidence supporting gospel

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narratives. Blomberg notes archaeological findings corroborating biblical details, notably in the Gospel of John, revered for its historical authenticity despite skepticism.

8. **The Adverse Witness Test** considers opposition from contemporaneous figures. Blomberg notes that even critical Jewish writings acknowledge Jesus’ miracles, avoiding outright denial and thus indirectly affirming gospel accounts.

Throughout, the chapter emphasizes the scholarly approach to resolving apparent discrepancies and corroborating accounts. Blomberg's responses and the author’s investigative direction build a case for the historical reliability of the gospels, suggesting an enduring testament to their veracity.

In conclusion, the chapter invites readers to reflect on how these evidential tests might affect their understanding of the gospels, encouraging them to consider both the historical context and the enduring implications of the gospel accounts. It highlights resources for further study, asserting the importance of ongoing exploration into the evidence supporting the life and teachings of Jesus.

Test Type	Description
The Intention Test	Assesses whether gospel writers intended to accurately document historical events. Gospel of Luke shows intent for accuracy, genre of

Test Type	Description
	other gospels suggests similar intentions.
The Ability Test	Explores disciples' capacity to accurately preserve Jesus' teachings through oral tradition, emphasizing memorization in ancient cultures.
The Character Test	Evaluates the moral integrity of gospel writers, focusing on their willingness to risk lives for beliefs as indicative of truthfulness.
The Consistency Test	Analyzes alleged contradictions among gospels, suggesting cultural norms of storytelling and oral traditions explain differences.
The Bias Test	Considers potential bias from personal affiliations; argues devotion reinforces commitment to accurate accounts of Jesus' life.
The Cover-Up Test	Evaluates inclusion of embarrassing details that would be omitted if stories were falsified, suggesting authenticity.
The Corroboration Test	Confirms external evidence supporting gospel accounts, citing archaeological findings, especially in the Gospel of John.
The Adverse Witness Test	Examines opposition from contemporaneous figures, noting critical texts acknowledge Jesus' miracles, hinting at underlying truth.

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# Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The Intention Test and Historical Accuracy

**Critical Interpretation:** Understanding that the primary intention behind the gospel writers' narratives was to deliver an accurate historical account of Jesus' teachings offers us a compelling perspective. It encourages you to look at these accounts with a critical yet open mind, recognizing the earnest dedication of the authors to truthfully document Jesus' life. In your own life, this inspires a commitment to truth and integrity. Whether in recording personal experiences or sharing testimonies with others, strive to preserve accuracy and honesty. Just as the gospel writers did, focus on unearthing and communicating truths that resonate personally and universally, building a foundation for trust and understanding among others.

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## Chapter 3 Summary:

In the chapter "The Documentary Evidence: Were Jesus' Biographies Reliably Preserved for Us?" the author, a journalist by profession, sets out on an investigative journey to determine the reliability of the New Testament documents. His experiences as a "document rat" at the Chicago Tribune, where he often dealt with uncovering hidden truths behind corporate and legal documents, serve as a backdrop for his inquiry into the authenticity of biblical texts.

The narrative describes his encounter with an eminent scholar, Bruce M. Metzger, a revered authority on the New Testament text, who is well-known for his contributions to biblical scholarship. The discussion with Metzger revolves around the preservation and authenticity of Jesus' biographies in the Bible, specifically the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Metzger outlines that, although the original manuscripts have been lost to history, the New Testament is supported by a remarkable number of manuscripts and translations. These documents, written in Greek and translated into many other languages, were copied over centuries, enabling cross-verification and establishing textual integrity. Compared to other ancient writings, the New Testament boasts over 5,000 Greek manuscripts, a vast number compared to other historical texts, such as those by Tacitus or Josephus.

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Metzger assures that the high number of manuscript variants does not undermine the reliability of the New Testament. Variants are often minor, such as differences in spelling or word order, and none impact any central Christian doctrines. This robust textual tradition, which stands unparalleled in the ancient world, allows modern scholars to confidently affirm the New Testament's authenticity.

The chapter also touches upon the selection process of the New Testament canon. Metzger explains that early church leaders used criteria like apostolic authority, conformity to the Rule of Faith, and widespread usage among Christians to determine which texts were included. This resulted in the four canonical gospels being recognized for their authenticity over other writings, like the Gospel of Thomas, which was dismissed due to inconsistencies with the early Christian belief system.

In the end, Metzger reflects that his life's work in New Testament scholarship has only strengthened his personal faith, demonstrating that the foundations of Christianity, as depicted in the biblical texts, are both historical and trustworthy. The conclusion is that while controversies over biblical canon and authenticity persist, the overwhelming manuscript evidence supports the credibility and integrity of the New Testament documents as key historical sources.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The New Testament's Unparalleled Manuscript Evidence

**Critical Interpretation:** Imagine a world where historical truths hinge on frail, ancient manuscripts tenuously preserved through centuries. Yet, in this fragile landscape, you discover that the New Testament stands as an unparalleled testament of historical integrity, backed by over 5,000 Greek manuscripts. This extraordinary abundance and the meticulous care taken through centuries of copying allow you to understand the enduring resilience of these sacred texts. Recognizing this could inspire a profound trust in the foundational stories of faith, leading you to explore your own beliefs with a renewed sense of assurance. The notion that these accounts of Jesus' life and teachings have traversed time with such fidelity could embolden you to embrace and embody the messages within, knowing they are rooted not only in spirituality but fortified by history's testament.

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## Chapter 4:

In the chapter "The Corroborating Evidence" from the book under discussion, the author navigates several layers of historical inquiry to explore the question of whether there is credible evidence for Jesus outside the biblical accounts, specifically the Gospels. The narrative is cleverly paralleled with a crime story set in 1970s Chicago involving a notorious hitman, Harry Aleman, whose conviction was ultimately secured through corroborative eyewitness testimony—a powerful testament to the importance of supporting evidence in making a case secure.

The focus then shifts to a deep investigation of historical documentation for Jesus Christ outside of religious texts. The author visits Edwin M. Yamauchi, Ph.D., a preeminent scholar in ancient history, to explore what non-biblical sources contribute to our understanding of Jesus. Yamauchi, an established academic with a wide array of interests and achievements, has devoted much of his scholarly career to uncovering historical truths.

Yamauchi explains that while the Gospels provide a comprehensive view of Jesus, several non-biblical sources do offer corroboration of key aspects of his life and the early Christian movement. One such pivotal source is Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian. Josephus mentions Jesus in a couple of instances, referring to him as a wise teacher and acknowledging both his crucifixion under Pontius Pilate and his ongoing following.

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Yamauchi explains that while some phrases in Josephus' accounts may have been embellished by later Christian copyists, the core references are widely regarded as authentic among scholars.

Moreover, the Roman historian Tacitus provides crucial external evidence by documenting the persecution of Christians under Emperor Nero and explicitly stating that Jesus was executed during the reign of Tiberius by Pontius Pilate. Pliny the Younger further corroborates the widespread presence and belief of early Christians who worshipped Christ as a deity, even under threat of execution.

The chapter also addresses Jewish sources, such as the Talmud, which indirectly acknowledge Jesus' influence and the nature of his works, albeit from a critical perspective. Yamauchi posits that although these references are sparse, they collectively paint a portrait of Jesus that aligns with the biblical narrative regarding his life, death, and the fervent spread of Christianity.

In the course of the discussion, Yamauchi illustrates how the writings of Paul, the apostolic fathers, and various early Christian creeds serve as additional verification of Jesus' life and impact. Particularly significant is Paul's transformation and missionary zeal, which underpin the truth of Jesus' divine claims and resurrection, as deeply held by early believers even in the face of persecution.

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Importantly, Yamauchi asserts that the documentary evidence for Jesus exceeds that of other religious founders from antiquity, placing the historical Jesus within a well-supported framework that transcends the biblical text.

In summary, through carefully gathered non-biblical evidences and the scholarly interpretations provided by Yamauchi, the chapter contends that there is substantial corroborative material confirming the pivotal figures and events described in the Gospels. This evidence aids in constructing a historically reliable account of Jesus' existence and the foundational impact of his teachings. The chapter ultimately underscores the significance of corroborative evidence in both historical inquiry and personal faith.

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## Chapter 5 Summary:

The narrative begins with a vivid recollection of Dr. Jeffrey MacDonald's infamous murder case, illustrating the role of scientific evidence in his conviction. MacDonald claimed innocence, alleging drug-crazed hippies were responsible for murdering his family, but scientific evidence, particularly involving the analysis of blood types and fabric traces, contradicted his story and led to his conviction. This case underscores the power of scientific evidence in verifying or debunking claims—a principle that the author applies to explore whether archaeology corroborates or contradicts the New Testament accounts of Jesus.

The text transitions into an exploration of how archaeology acts as a scientific tool to evaluate the historical credibility of the gospels. Dr. John McRay, a respected biblical archaeologist, becomes the focus as the narrative examines whether archaeological findings support the New Testament accounts. McRay, with extensive expertise and a measured approach, underscores that while archaeology can't confirm spiritual truths, it can verify historical and geographical accuracy, enhancing confidence in the biblical narratives.

The author delves into specific examples, such as Luke's accuracy as a historian. Archaeological discoveries repeatedly affirm Luke's detailed accounts in the gospel and Acts, elevating his reputation as a meticulous and

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reliable narrator. Similar validations arise for other gospel writers like John and Mark, with archaeology confirming locations and details once thought erroneous, thereby reinforcing the credibility of their accounts.

Three puzzles further anchor the exploration: the census at Jesus' birth, the existence of Nazareth, and Herod's massacre in Bethlehem. McRay offers plausible explanations grounded in archaeological evidence and historical context, suggesting that while direct evidence is scant or disputed, these accounts remain credible within their historical milieu.

A particularly intriguing exploration involves the Dead Sea Scrolls. Although they don't mention Jesus directly, these ancient manuscripts provide rich context for Jewish customs and beliefs around the time of Jesus, indirectly affirming gospel narratives and offering insights into Jesus' messianic claims.

The narrative contrasts the corroboration of the New Testament with the lack of archaeological evidence for the Book of Mormon, arguing for the former's reliability due to consistent archaeological affirmation. This bolsters the case for the historical accuracy of the New Testament, despite acknowledging the ongoing debates and critiques in academia.

In concluding, the text urges readers to assess how archaeological evidence influences their perception of the gospels and considers the implications of

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such evidence on one's confidence in the New Testament's reliability. It proposes further reading for those keen on exploring this intersection of archaeology and scripture.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Archaeology Enhancing Credibility of Gospel Narratives

**Critical Interpretation:** Imagine standing amidst the ancient ruins where biblical history unfolded, feeling the weight of history under your feet. Chapter 5 of 'The Case for Christ' invites you to envision archaeology as a bridge between the past and present, where each artifact becomes a piece of a larger historical puzzle. This chapter argues that the gospel accounts gain depth when archaeological discoveries confirm their details, like Luke's accurate descriptions of locations and events. As you embrace this lens, it inspires a reassessment of your faith's foundation, nurturing a richer understanding of its historical roots. You find yourself not just believing, but exploring history's footprint, which in turn strengthens your belief with tangible connections to the times of Jesus. This journey of discovery becomes more than just validation of texts; it becomes a remarkable way to experience the spiritual and historical journey of your faith in the modern world. Every archaeological confirmation isn't just a nod to accuracy but an invitation to deepen your knowledge, enhancing your life's tapestry of belief with threads of history.

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## Chapter 6 Summary:

The narrative begins with a gripping courtroom drama that serves as an analogy for the quest for historical truth about Jesus. In a rare twist of events, an eyewitness, Ed Passeri, confesses to a crime for which his friend, Richard Moss, is on trial. Despite the courtroom shock and Passeri's own admission, prosecutors rely on strong rebuttal evidence to secure Moss's conviction, highlighting the critical role of solid evidence over unsupported claims.

This courtroom analogy transitions into an exploration of the Jesus Seminar, a self-appointed group of scholars that has sparked widespread media attention and controversy by questioning the authenticity of most of Jesus' sayings in the gospels. The Seminar popularizes its findings through sensational methods, such as voting with colored beads to determine if Jesus likely said something attributed to him in the gospels. According to them, Jesus only said 2% of the words attributed to him in the Bible. Their results have heavily influenced public perception, even though their participants represent a small fraction of New Testament scholars.

The investigation then shifts to Dr. Gregory Boyd, a theologian and scholar who vehemently opposes the Jesus Seminar's conclusions. Boyd considers the Seminar's methodologies flawed and biased, arguing that they begin with an a priori dismissal of the supernatural, which colors their conclusions

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about Jesus. Boyd suggests that their criteria, such as "double dissimilarity" and "multiple attestation," are skewed, ignoring the historically reliable nature of the gospels.

Boyd also addresses comparisons made by the Seminar between Jesus and figures like Apollonius of Tyana or themes from mystery religions, arguing that these parallels are overblown or misinterpreted. Apollonius, for example, is documented less reliably and much later than Jesus, while mystery religions lack the historical anchoring of the New Testament narratives.

Boyd insists that the historical Jesus and the Jesus of faith are inseparably linked, with Christianity's core truths based on historical events, such as Jesus' resurrection. This stands in stark contrast to the Seminar's portrayal of Jesus as a mere symbolic figure. Boyd's view is echoed by other scholars like Dr. Luke Timothy Johnson, who also dismiss the Jesus Seminar's work as irresponsible scholarship.

The chapter concludes with questions encouraging readers to critically assess the importance of a historically grounded Jesus versus a symbolic one and to consider the implications of supernatural events in their understanding of Jesus' life and teachings. Further resources for a deep dive into the topic are suggested for continued exploration of the historical and theological aspects of Jesus.

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## Chapter 7 Summary:

In the chapter "The Identity Evidence: Was Jesus Really Convinced That He Was the Son of God?" the author delves into the question of Jesus' self-understanding, drawing parallels with the methods of John Douglas, a famed FBI psychological profiler known for deducing criminal profiles from crime scene behavior. Douglas' premise that "behavior reflects personality" sets the stage for understanding Jesus' identity through his actions and words.

John Douglas is celebrated for his ability to profile criminals through behavioral analysis. He successfully predicted characteristics of the "Trailside Killer" using this method. This backdrop introduces a similar approach to understanding Jesus: by examining his behavior, intentions, and relationships, scholars aim to determine whether Jesus thought of himself as the Son of God or merely an itinerant teacher. This is crucial because some argue that the divinity of Jesus was a later addition by his followers, rather than a claim by Jesus himself.

To explore this, the author visits Ben Witherington III, an esteemed scholar in Christology, at Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky. Witherington has extensively studied Jesus' self-perception through his writings, including "The Christology of Jesus." He argues that Jesus' actions, relationships, and words are indicative of someone who saw himself as more than just a

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teacher or prophet.

Witherington notes several pieces of evidence pointing to Jesus' self-understanding as divine. Firstly, Jesus' distinction from the Twelve Apostles suggests a role similar to God forming Israel in the Old Testament. Secondly, his interactions with John the Baptist and his radical teaching on purity laws position him as someone with divine authority. Finally, his relationship with Roman authorities and events like his crucifixion underline the perception of Jesus as a significant threat or figure.

Further examining Jesus' miracles, Witherington highlights that Jesus saw them as signs of God's kingdom, setting him apart from other miracle-workers of the time. Jesus' use of "Amen" and "Abba" in his teachings and prayers, respectively, signal a unique authority and intimacy with God, implying that Jesus had a special role in introducing a new covenantal relationship with God.

The chapter also addresses the Gospel of John's portrayal of Jesus, which boldly claims Jesus' divinity. Witherington, among other scholars like Raymond Brown, believes that such depictions align with the historical Jesus' self-perception. Despite works like those of John Hick suggesting otherwise, Witherington argues that early traditions and accounts strongly support the view of Jesus as divine and self-aware.

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The narrative closes by reaffirming the evidence from history and theology that Jesus believed he was the Son of God. Scholars like Witherington and William Lane Craig find the evidence of Jesus' divine self-perception compelling, asserting it is reflected in both his actions and followers' early proclamations. With a concluding nod to Jesus' enduring legacy and perceived divinity, the chapter sets the stage for further exploration into Jesus' psychological profile in subsequent interviews and chapters.

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## Chapter 8:

In this chapter, the discussion centers on whether Jesus was mentally unstable when he claimed to be the Son of God. The text opens with a humorous anecdote about a proposed amendment in New Mexico that sarcastically suggested mental health experts should dress like wizards when testifying in courts. This reflects a general skepticism toward psychiatric testimony concerning defendants' insanity. However, the author acknowledges the importance of psychological assessments in understanding the mental state of individuals on trial.

The chapter transitions into an exploration of Jesus' mental state through an interview with Dr. Gary R. Collins, a respected psychologist with extensive experience in human behavior and a prolific author in the field. Collins argues that Jesus exhibited no signs of mental illness. Unlike those suffering from delusions or psychosis, Jesus demonstrated appropriate emotional responses, clear and logical thinking, and maintained deep, healthy relationships. His anger was directed at injustices, not random irritations.

The author explores the skepticism Jesus faced during his time, noting that some contemporaries accused him of being "demon-possessed and raving mad." However, these accusations are contextualized as reactions to Jesus' profound teachings, which were beyond their understanding, rather than evidence of mental instability. Crucially, Jesus' claims were supported by

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miraculous acts and unprecedented teachings, lending credibility to his assertions of divinity.

The chapter then addresses alternative explanations for Jesus' miracles, such as the placebo effect and hypnosis. Collins acknowledges that some healings could have been psychosomatic. However, this does not explain the instantaneous and complete nature of Jesus' healings, nor his control over nature and resurrection, which go beyond mere psychological influence. Collins dismisses the idea that Jesus was a hypnotist as being flawed, citing the improbability of hypnotizing large crowds and skeptics, the lasting results of his miracles, and the lack of hypnotic behavior in gospel accounts.

The chapter briefly touches on Jesus' exorcisms, with Collins asserting, based on his theological beliefs, that while demons are real, caution must be taken not to over-attribute occurrences to demonic activity. The growing societal openness to spirituality and supernatural concepts among psychologists is noted as well.

Ultimately, the chapter argues that Jesus' actions and teachings are inconsistent with mental illness. Instead, they reflect profound wisdom and psychological health. The upcoming task involves assessing whether Jesus embodied the attributes of God, for which the author plans to consult theologian D. A. Carson. Throughout the chapter, Jesus is portrayed as possessing unparalleled insight and balance, refuting claims of insanity and

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reinforcing his divine identity.

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## Chapter 9 Summary:

The chapter delves into the question of whether Jesus fulfills the attributes of God as depicted in the Bible, exploring various theological and scriptural analyses. It begins with an analogy to forensic sketch artists who create likenesses from witness descriptions to identify suspects, suggesting that the Bible offers a "sketch" of God's characteristics that Jesus must match to substantiate his divinity claims.

The author engages with Dr. D. A. Carson, a noted theologian and scholar, to tackle complex theological questions surrounding Jesus' divinity, addressing attributes such as omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, eternity, and immutability.

Carson argues for Jesus' divinity by citing his acts of forgiving sins and asserting his own sinlessness, traits belonging solely to God. The discussion transitions to the concept of the Incarnation, where the divine became human. This theological mystery challenges believers to accept that Jesus, in becoming human, may have voluntarily limited his divine attributes without losing his inherent deity.

Several biblical passages are scrutinized, including John 3:16's mention of Jesus as the "only begotten Son" and Colossians 1:15's "firstborn over all creation," which are explained in the Greek context to mean Jesus is unique

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and supreme, not created. Similarly, verses appearing to question Jesus' divinity are contextualized, revealing no contradiction to his deity.

In dealing with the disquieting notion of hell, Carson interprets hell as the outcome of continued defiance against God rather than a place for those with mere disbelief. It underscores the justice of God in eternity, where all judgments are deemed fair.

Furthermore, the chapter touches on Jesus' stance on slavery, noting the transformation brought by Christian teachings rather than a direct overthrow of systems. Jesus focused on changing individuals' hearts, leading to broader social changes, as exemplified by historical abolition movements driven by Christian revival.

Carson's responses, buttressed by scriptural evidence, aim to demonstrate Jesus' perfect alignment with God's attributes, affirming his divinity. The chapter concludes with a reflection on biblical descriptions of God, finding each paralleled in New Testament depictions of Jesus, suggesting that knowing Jesus is to know God. This theological inquiry invites readers to reflect on the profound mystery of the Incarnation and the fulfillment of God's attributes in Christ.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Jesus' Incarnation represents voluntary divine limitation without losing deity.

**Critical Interpretation:** You are invited to consider the profound implication of the Incarnation, where Jesus voluntarily limited his divine attributes during his time on Earth, yet remained fully God. This concept challenges you to embrace the mystery that God, in His infinite power, chose to humble Himself and walk among humanity as Jesus. This can inspire your life by showcasing the extent of divine love and humility—qualities worth striving for in your own journey. By reflecting on this immense act of divine condescension, you are encouraged to practice selflessness and humility, understanding that true strength often lies in restraint and compassion.

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## Chapter 10 Summary:

The chapter "THE FINGERPRINT EVIDENCE" intertwines a historic criminal case involving fingerprint evidence with the spiritual journey of Pastor Louis S. Lapidès, drawing an analogy between the scientific certainty of fingerprints and the prophetic evidence for Jesus as the Messiah.

In 1910, Clarence Hiller was murdered in Chicago, leading to the first use of fingerprint evidence in a U.S. murder trial. Thomas Jennings was convicted because his fingerprints were found at the crime scene. This case marked a pivotal moment in forensic science, establishing fingerprints as reliable evidence due to their uniqueness to each individual.

The narrative then shifts to the concept of a "figurative fingerprint" from the Jewish Scriptures, referring to dozens of major prophecies about the Messiah. These prophecies serve as a unique identifier, meant to verify the true Messiah and differentiate him from impostors. The Greek term for "Messiah" is "Christ," and the chapter explores whether Jesus uniquely fulfilled these ancient prophecies.

The author introduces Louis S. Lapidès, a Jewish Christian pastor with deep theological training who once embarked on a personal journey to determine if Jesus was truly the Messiah. Raised in a Jewish family in Newark, Lapidès initially disregarded religious teachings, feeling disconnected from God after

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his parents' divorce and struggling with a sense of spirituality during the Vietnam War.

Lapides' journey took a decisive turn when he encountered Christians who pointed him to messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. His study of Scriptures, notably Isaiah 53's depiction of a suffering servant, convinced him of the parallels to Jesus' life and sacrifice.

Initially skeptical, Lapides sought authenticity by comparing Christian interpretations with Jewish scriptures to disprove what he suspected was Christian tampering. However, he confirmed the consistency of these prophecies within Jewish texts. Despite feeling conflicted about the social and personal implications, namely regarding his Jewish identity, Lapides eventually embraced Christianity after a transformative experience in the Mojave Desert.

Lapides' story illustrates a personal and intellectual odyssey from skepticism to faith, supported by the alignment between Jesus's life and prophetic predictions. The author underscores that such spiritual transitions are not uncommon, citing other Jewish individuals who, upon investigating the messianic claims, similarly concluded Jesus met the criteria of the prophecies.

Supplementary questions explore what barriers one might face in accepting

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religious faith, such as cultural heritage or misconceptions about Christianity as intolerant. Suggested readings provide further exploration into Jewish perspectives on Jesus as the Messiah, encouraging personal investigation into spiritual beliefs.

Overall, the chapter suggests that just as fingerprints provide undeniable evidence in the legal system, the prophecies concerning the Messiah offer profound confirmation of Jesus's identity for those who examine them with an open mind.

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## Chapter 11 Summary:

In the chapter titled "The Medical Evidence," the author explores the claims surrounding the death and alleged resurrection of Jesus Christ, examining whether the event was a genuine occurrence or a cleverly orchestrated hoax. The narrative begins in the waiting room of a distinguished forensic pathologist, Dr. Robert J. Stein. Known for his expertise in uncovering truths from post-mortem examinations, Stein's career highlights the significance of medical evidence in criminal investigations, such as his role in convicting John Wayne Gacy.

The discussion then delves into the enduring "swoon theory," which suggests that Jesus merely fainted on the cross rather than dying, and later revived. This theory, despite being discredited by reputable scholars, has persisted through history, fueled by interpretations from various authors like D.H. Lawrence, Hugh Schonfield, and others. These narratives postulate different scenarios, ranging from Jesus fleeing to India to him being revived in the tomb, but they ultimately lack substantial evidence.

To address these claims, the author interviews Dr. Alexander Metherell, an expert with extensive study in the historical and medical aspects of Jesus's crucifixion. Metherell provides a detailed account of the events leading up to Jesus's death, explaining the severe physical trauma he endured. Beginning with the psychological stress causing hematidrosis (sweating blood), the

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narrative progresses to the brutal Roman flogging, which would have left Jesus in a critical state even before the crucifixion.

Metherell vividly describes the crucifixion process itself, noting the excruciating pain from the nails driven through the wrists and the agony from the dislocation of shoulders while hanging on the cross. Death, typically resulting from asphyxiation, is examined through a medical lens, with Metherell pointing out the physiological effects, including respiratory acidosis and eventual heart failure. He highlights the spear wound, which confirms death through the release of pericardial and pleural effusions, aligning with gospel descriptions.

The chapter confronts objections to the crucifixion's authenticity, such as whether nails were used or if Roman soldiers accurately declared Jesus dead. Metherell addresses these issues with archaeological evidence confirming nail use and arguing the soldiers' expertise in execution.

For skeptics who propose that Jesus survived the crucifixion, Metherell outlines the implausibility of Jesus evading death after such physical trauma. He concludes that a person in such a condition could not inspire followers to proclaim him the Lord of life. Metherell asserts that Jesus's willingness to endure such torture stems from a mission of redemption through love.

The chapter closes by challenging readers to reflect on the symbolic

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significance of the cross and the motivations behind Jesus's actions. It raises questions about willingness to suffer for others and contemplates the nature of forgiveness exemplified by Jesus during his crucifixion. The chapter urges further exploration through recommended scholarly resources, reinforcing the medical consensus that Jesus did indeed die on the cross, thereby dismissing theories of survival and emphasizing the depth of his sacrifice.

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## Chapter 12:

The chapter explores the compelling evidence for the resurrection of Jesus, beginning with an analogy to a famous unsolved disappearance—that of Helen Vorhees Brach, whose body was never found. In contrast, the gospels present accounts where Jesus was seen both dead and alive again, post-crucifixion, creating a foundational claim for Christianity that revolves around an empty tomb as proof of resurrection. This chapter underscores that the Resurrection is not a mere final chapter of Christian belief, but — as articulated by theologian Gerald O'Collins and the apostle Paul — the essence of Christianity itself.

The narrative progresses with an interview with William Lane Craig, a noted scholar on the Resurrection. Craig provides insight from a debate where he effectively argued the case for Christianity, persuading skeptics, agnostics, and atheists of the strength of the resurrection evidence—an outcome bolstered by how comprehensively the arguments against atheism were dismantled.

The interview with Craig traverses the historical debate over Jesus' burial. Traditionally, crucified criminals were often discarded anonymously, prompting some scholars like John Dominic Crossan to speculate about undignified endings for Jesus' remains. However, Craig points to the specific biblical evidence, notably an early Christian creed in I Corinthians 15,

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affirming that Jesus was indeed buried, specifically naming Joseph of Arimathea as responsible for the interment, an unlikely fictional invention given he was a member of the Sanhedrin who condemned Jesus.

Craig argues for the historical reliability of the burial account, citing early accounts and lack of opposing traditions. He mentions that skeptics' emphasis on contradictions in gospel accounts often overlooks the confluence in core details — like the empty tomb being discovered by women. Craig disputes alternative explanations for the empty tomb, such as tomb robbery or conspiracy, arguing that even early opponents of Christian claims had to contend with the fact of its vacancy.

Certain questions about discrepancies between gospel accounts are addressed: divergences in the timelines and the number of angels, for instance, are classified by Craig as secondary, not undermining the essential historical core of an empty tomb found by Jesus' followers. He emphasizes that these details, when viewed as witnesses' variances, actually support the narrative's authenticity, much like independent testimonies in a legal context.

Craig also discusses the improbability of the empty tomb being a misconstrued location, noting the undebatable familiarity of both Christians and Jews with the site, ensuring any error would have been promptly rectified by contemporaries. Craig posits that the empty tomb, affirmed even

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by Jewish polemics and early critics, remains the bedrock of resurrection claims.

Ultimately, William Lane Craig concludes that belief in the resurrection hinges on the philosophical openness to miracles rather than purely

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## Chapter 13 Summary:

In this chapter, "The Evidence of Appearances," the author delves into the question of whether Jesus was seen alive after his death on the cross. To explore this, he introduces the case of Addie Mae Collins, a fourteen-year-old victim of an infamous church bombing. Her empty grave stirred speculation, yet no one suggested resurrection—highlighting that an empty grave doesn't necessarily imply resurrection, a concept central to examining Jesus's empty tomb.

The author recounts a conversation with Dr. William Lane Craig, who emphasized the importance of the empty tomb as evidence for Jesus's resurrection. However, the author acknowledges that this alone isn't conclusive proof, prompting him to seek further evidence. This leads to a trip to Virginia to meet Gary Habermas, a prominent scholar who has extensively studied the Resurrection.

Habermas is portrayed as a combative yet personable academic, known for his rigorous defense of the Resurrection, particularly in debates against noted atheists like Antony Flew. Habermas's arguments often prevail, gaining recognition even from skeptical scholars.

During the interview, Habermas addresses the absence of direct eyewitness accounts of the Resurrection itself, drawing parallels with scientific methods

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that rely on evidence of causes and effects rather than direct observation. He posits two critical questions: Did Jesus die on the cross, and did he appear later to people? With consensus among historians that Jesus was crucified, the focus shifts to evidence of his post-crucifixion appearances.

Habermas presents the I Corinthians 15 creed as a foundational piece of evidence. This early Christian creed, traced back to within a few years of the Resurrection, claims Jesus appeared to key figures like Peter and Paul, and to over five hundred people at once. Despite its singular mention in ancient texts, Habermas argues that the creed's early origin and eyewitness testimony give it substantial credibility.

The chapter also tackles the testimony found in the gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—which offer detailed accounts of Jesus's appearances to various individuals and groups. These appearances are marked by physical interactions, providing further support against theories like hallucinations or group think. Habermas explains that group hallucinations aren't plausible given the varied nature, temperament, and circumstances of the witnesses.

Regarding the gospel of Mark's original ending, which reportedly lacks post-Resurrection appearances, Habermas argues that it doesn't undermine evidence, as the narrative implies future appearances. He points out that other credible sources and early creeds confirm such appearances, bolstering

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the Resurrection's historical foundation.

Lastly, Habermas shares a personal testimony, discussing how the Resurrection provided comfort during the death of his wife. This poignant reflection underscores the Resurrection's personal and existential significance beyond historical analysis.

This investigation brings the author closer to concluding that, as a historical event, the Resurrection is backed by robust evidence, corroborated by various testimonies and scholarly analysis. The chapter invites readers to reflect on their own beliefs and the potential impact of the Resurrection on their lives, further explored with suggested resources and questions for deeper contemplation.

Section	Summary
Introduction	Introduces the theme of whether Jesus was seen alive after his death and uses Addie Mae Collins' case to highlight the complexity of an empty grave.
Importance of Empty Tomb	Dr. William Lane Craig stresses the significance of the empty tomb as evidence, yet it is not conclusive alone.
Interview with Gary Habermas	Lee Strobel meets scholar Gary Habermas who defends the Resurrection through rigorous debate and evidence.
Absence of Eyewitness Accounts	Habermas analogizes scientific methods to explain the absence of direct eyewitness accounts of the Resurrection.

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Section	Summary
I Corinthians 15 Creed	Presents an early Christian creed indicating Jesus' appearances to key figures shortly after the Resurrection.
Testimony in the Gospels	The gospels provide detailed accounts of Jesus' post-Resurrection appearances, rejecting hallucination theories.
Gospel of Mark	Addresses Mark's original ending, suggesting future appearances and supported by other sources.
Personal Testimony	Habermas shares a personal reflection on how the Resurrection offered him comfort.
Conclusion	The chapter invites reflection on the Resurrection's historical and personal impact, urging deeper contemplation.

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## Chapter 14 Summary:

In the chapter "The Circumstantial Evidence," the author explores the concept of building a case for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ using circumstantial evidence, akin to how the prosecution used circumstantial evidence to convict Timothy McVeigh in the Oklahoma City bombing trial. Although no direct witnesses existed in McVeigh's case, the assembly of indirect proof—like testimony about McVeigh renting a Ryder truck and explosive residue on his clothing—fortified the charge against him. Similarly, the author seeks to determine whether circumstantial evidence also supports the claim of Jesus' resurrection.

To delve into this, the author interviews J.P. Moreland, a professor with extensive knowledge in history, philosophy, and theology. The dialogue centers around five main pieces of circumstantial evidence that Moreland presents in support of the Resurrection.

### Exhibit 1: The Disciples Died for Their Beliefs

Moreland highlights that after Jesus' crucifixion, his followers, initially dispirited, regrouped with a bold message about Jesus' resurrection. Their conviction was such that they were willing to endure hardships and even martyrdom, which he argues wouldn't have been the case if they hadn't truly believed in witnessing the resurrected Christ.

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## **Exhibit 2: The Conversion of Skeptics**

Further evidence comes from the conversion of skeptics like Jesus' brother James and Saul of Tarsus (later Paul the Apostle), who transformed into fervent believers post-resurrection. For James, who was initially skeptical, his later faith and leadership in the Jerusalem church suggest a significant change likely prompted by an encounter with the risen Jesus. Paul's dramatic transformation from persecutor of Christians to a devout proponent of Jesus' teachings is also attributed to an encounter with the resurrected Christ.

## **Exhibit 3: Changes to Key Social Structures**

Moreland notes the radical shift in longstanding Jewish traditions following Jesus' resurrection. These included abandoning animal sacrifices, which had been central to their faith, and disregarding the Mosaic Law as the sole means to righteousness. This mass shift was significant given the Jewish emphasis on tradition, suggesting a powerful experience like the Resurrection compelled such change.

## **Exhibit 4: Communion and Baptism**

The early Christians' adoption of Communion and Baptism serves as further evidence. These rituals focused on commemorating Jesus' death and

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resurrection, unusual for a movement unless they believed profoundly in the Resurrection's salvific implications.

### **Exhibit 5: The Emergence of the Church**

Lastly, Moreland emphasizes the rapid spread of Christianity after Jesus' death, which defied the odds considering its humble beginnings and the Roman Empire's hostile environment. He attributes this growth to the Resurrection as a foundational event that energized and unified believers, driving the nascent church's expansion.

Beyond these, Moreland introduces a less tangible but impactful category of evidence - the ongoing personal encounters individuals claim to have with the resurrected Christ, leading to personal transformation. He argues this experiential evidence, when combined with historical and circumstantial proof, provides a comprehensive basis for believing in the Resurrection.

In summary, the chapter methodically builds a case using layers of indirect evidence, paralleling legal proceedings, to suggest that the Resurrection is the most plausible explanation for these historical phenomena. The author concludes by noting that while someone might reject these claims, they must provide an equally persuasive explanation for all the facts Moreland discusses.

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