

Relativism and the Authority of Scripture

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to give practical ideas on how to respond to questions of biblical authority.

Objectives: This session will help you:

1. know how to respond to questions about Biblical authority
2. have confidence in explaining why the Scripture has authority
3. understand the thinking behind relativism and how to respond to it
4. have more confidence in responding to a relativist

Key Verse: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I. Introduction.

In the next five minutes, outline below how you would defend the following statement: “The Scripture is authoritative on all matters in which it speaks.” Do this before proceeding on to the next page.

II. Evidence for the Uniqueness and Authority of the Scripture (Refer to Appendix “Evidence for the Uniqueness of Scripture and Confidence in its Authority”)

A. **M**anuscripts

The quantity of manuscripts assures that we have an accurate text and that no other ancient historical work comes close to having the authenticity that the Bible does. This argument shows that we can be assured of the accuracy of the text.

B. **A**rchaeology

Archaeology verifies the historicity of the Bible. No historical description in the Bible has ever been disproved by archaeology, rather just the opposite. Again, this demonstrates the reliability of the historical descriptions of the Bible.

C. **P**rophecy

Fulfilled prophecy demonstrates that the Bible is unique and inspired. The Deuteronomy 18:20-22 test of prophet: 100% accuracy. Examples of fulfilled prophecy concerning nations. 300+ prophecies concerning Christ’s first coming C all fulfilled as given.

D. **S**tatistics

The probability of the prophecies being fulfilled against Tyre and Babylon.

Transition: We live a culture that won’t readily accept what we just went over. Let’s talk for the next few minutes about how to reach people who are reticent about accepting "truth".

III. Relativism

Examples of relativistic statements:

- That’s true for you, but not for me.
- I think it’s too narrow to say it’s either/or, we should be more open-minded.
- We shouldn’t judge others.
- It may be wrong for you, but you can’t say it’s wrong for me or others.
- It doesn’t matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere.

Transition: We are living in a period controlled by a philosophical position called relativism. Let’s first look at this a little closer, then talk about how to answer the relativist and bring him to considering Christ.

IV. Understanding Relativism

Relativistic thinking:

- No thing can be understood the same way or completely by anyone; therefore, no statement about a thing can be absolute.

- Things change. What it was, it has now become and is yet to be. So, no lasting statement can be made about it.
- There is no absolute truth. All there is are differing opinions, none of which are final. Though some may be normative for the moment, they are in no way universal. Claiming to be open-minded and tolerant, relativists do not welcome any kind of moral or religious truth.
- An old dogma: the sophist Protagoras (500 BC), "man is the measure of all things." Community develops the standard of truth.

Conclusion of Relativism: no absolutes, only temporal, personal or corporate opinion.

Dogmas of relativism

1. Persuasion and attempts to convert are wrong because they assume truth.
2. Exclusivity is the cardinal sin.
3. Tolerance is the cardinal virtue.
4. Might makes right. If there is no "universal right", then the most powerful rules.

	Biblical Worldview	Secular Worldview
Ultimate Reality	God exists. This is His world. He actively participates in it. Humans are spiritual-soulish-physical beings. Our identity is found in Him.	God does not exist. Nature is eternal and impersonal. Humans are solely material. They create reality and find their identity in the manipulation of nature.
Origins	Humans and all things are created by God.	Chance plus time.
Authority	God rules and all things are accountable to Him.	Humans are autonomous, personal/corporate power determines extent of his/their authority.
Morality	Reflection of the nature and character of God	As the culture determines.

V. How to respond to questions of authority

A. Responsibly

Be honest. When you don't know, say so! Do all you can to find the answer. Tell the truth, but in love. Don't be ashamed of what God has set in order.

B. Relationally

We treat people with dignity and honor. We recognize they are on a journey, lost in sin, held captive by the evil one, senseless. Ours is not to condemn, but to set free. Love covers a multitude of sins. Knowledge puffs up, love edifies (1 Corinthians 8:1). Reason in an environment of love draws people to Christ (1 Peter 3:15).

C. Rationally

- Use terminology they understand. Start from their known, not ours, and move them to the truth.
- Seek to understand the reasons, emotional and rational, behind their positions. Ask good questions.
- Act rationally, not emotionally, and ask them to validate their logic. We all act from a worldview, a way of seeing life. Let's look at three of the chief ones:

1. Three Fundamental Worldviews

a. Naturalism

- Naturalism states that all human morality can be attributed to natural processes, i.e., time + chance.
- The weakness of naturalism is the lack of reasonableness that time + chance could create innate morality. All humans have an innate sense of right and wrong.

b. Pantheism

- Pantheism views the world around us as an illusion, a dream, and all of us as one with the universe.
- To reach nirvana (perfection or bliss), the person must become "good" by eliminating ignorance, the cause of suffering, from his life.
- The weakness of pantheism is that there is no good reason to deny the actual existence of the physical world.
- There is still the assumption that innate goodness exists, because it has been lost and can be found. Where did it come from, how was it lost, how do we know that the elimination of suffering is the way to Nirvana.

c. Theism

- There is a personal God who created and sustains the universe.
- The three monotheistic religions are Judaism, Islam and Christianity.
- A common problem with theism is the existence of evil. If there is an all-powerful God who is good, how could He allow evil?

The different religions are briefly explained on the following chart.

Religion	Type	Meaning of Life	Moral Teaching	Life-Goal
Hinduism	Pantheistic	Life is "for man...to realize his full...potentialities...in his moral and spiritual life."	Follow the "road of morality"	The comprehension, through moral living, of the unity of all things.
Buddhism		Life is following "the Four Noble Truths" which deal with and eliminate suffering	Walk in the Eightfold Right Path (Buddha's perfect way)	Nirvana, a state of tranquility, devoid of all suffering
Judaism	Monotheistic	Life is a God-initiated meeting of man and God Who is the God of history acting and revealing Himself in the world	Obey the Mosaic Law and the teaching of the Prophets	Obedience to the Law and the Prophets while awaiting the Messiah who will lead chosen Israel to inherit the earth
Islam		Life is submission to the Divine will of one God, Allah, here on earth and in the life after death	Obey Allah's will as Mohammed's ethics and the Koran reveal it.	To humbly accept what Allah decrees.
Christianity		Life is found in a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ	"Love one another, as I have loved you." (John 13:34)	To know God and to enjoy Him, which brings Him glory.

Chart adapted from *The Meaning of Life in Five Great Religions*. 1965. Chalmers & Irving. Westminster Press.

Transition: With an idea of where people are coming from you can now . . .

2. Establish Their Belief in Objective Truth

Ask "real life" questions that point out the inconsistencies in their relativistic thinking by making them declare that they do hold some things, maybe only one thing, to be universally true. Be sure to "speak the truth ***IN LOVE***" (Ephesians 4:15), not to win the argument, but to help them open up to God's absolute truth.

- a) *I think it's too narrow to say it's either/or, we should be more open-minded. Response:*
- Since you corrected me, don't you assume error exists? If error exists, doesn't truth therefore exist?
- b) *We shouldn't judge others. Response:*
- When you are accused of judging, ask the other person what he means by judging? If he answers, "thinking another person is wrong" or "disagreeing with another," simply respond, "Don't you think I'm wrong? Aren't you're disagreeing with me? Aren't you therefore judging me?"
- c) *It may be wrong for you, but you can't say it's wrong for others. Response:*
- If you were arbitrarily imprisoned, or failed a class without cause, based upon your position that all values are relative, what grounds would you have for protest?
 - So, if right and wrong are arbitrary, then, is there any real difference between Mother Theresa and Adolph Hitler?
 - So, if you came upon someone raping your mother, would you stop him, since it was "right for him?"
 - How can you say that lying, cheating, stealing, or drug-abuse are wrong?
- d) *Society determines absolutes of right or wrong. Response:*
- Was Nazi Germany wrong for killing 6 million Jews?
 - Was the United States wrong (Dred Scott case) to declare African-Americans "non-persons" with no rights and thereby condoning slavery?
- e) *It doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere. Response:*
- Would you allow a convicted child molester to baby-sit your child if he has expressed "sincere" sorrow over his past molestations?
 - If you "sincerely" believed that a termite-infested chair would hold you up, would that make any difference as to whether it would hold you up or not?
 - If you "sincerely" believed that the moon was made of green cheese, would that mean the moon was made of green cheese?
- f) *It's intolerant to say that Jesus is the only way to God. Response:*
- Christians didn't make this up, Jesus said it in John 14:6. Indeed it is an intolerant and arrogant statement, unless it's true. If it's true, He's merely stating a fact. Is it intolerant to say that $2+2=4$ and only 4? Jesus said this because ***only He has dealt with the sin problem that separates all of mankind from God.***
 - Can all religions be equally true if they contradict one another?

Once they acknowledge there is some form of objective truth, ask where universal truth comes from. They can't base it on Naturalism because it does not allow for "universal truths." Pantheism is fatalistic, as all life is illusory. Theism is the best alternative because there is a personal God who is involved in the universe He made and has revealed Himself to man. From here it's an easy transition to Jesus.

3. Jesus is the Answer, not our ability to reason.

Let them to see His life through us.

Present to them evidence for His historic death and resurrection.

Pray that they will acknowledge that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Reference: Copan, Paul. *True for You, but Not for Me*. 1998. Bethany House Publishers.

D. Further Thoughts on Tolerance

1. "Getting Clear About Tolerance" by David Horner as appeared in the magazine "A Separate Peace" 1991 by Worldwide Challenge.

David Horner discusses "Apparent tolerance" (modern society - no one is wrong, everyone is right, need to be open-minded, all opinions equally true, claiming that one thing is uniquely true is narrow-minded, etc.) and "Real tolerance." "Real tolerance refers not to how we treat opinions, but to how we treat people. It means treating people with respect, regardless of their opinions, even if we disagree with them. Real tolerance recognizes and respects honest disagreement, taking other people's views seriously, without forcing them to hold one's own position through coercion or manipulation."

"The model of real tolerance, I would suggest, is God. He loves us enough and treats us with enough dignity to take seriously what we believe. He respects us enough to allow us to choose to believe Him or reject Him and takes those choices seriously enough to hold us responsible for them."

2. "How Should We Respond?" by Josh McDowell as appeared in Worldwide Challenge magazine, July/August 1997

God never once in the Bible calls us to be tolerant. Rather, He calls us to act justly and exercise lovingkindness. I believe we are called to do four things:

- a. *Pursue truth.* Embrace all people - but not all beliefs. Learn from all people - but don't agree with all. 1 Peter 3:15.
- b. *Affirm beliefs and develop deep convictions.* G.K. Chesterton once remarked that "tolerance is a virtue of a man without convictions." We can't develop convictions about God's truth if we assent that all truth is equal. Allow God's absolute truth to grab your head and heart.
- c. *Identify with justice.* Tolerance and justice cannot co-exist. Why? Because justice must have a moral basis to discern right from wrong. In order to act justly, we must discern right from wrong. We need to help our children know how to make right choices based on the very nature and character of God Himself.
- d. *Love others.* The opposite of tolerance is not intolerance, but love. We are not called to ignore sin. Rather, we are called to walk the difficult road of loving all men while speaking truth about sin. Who is our greatest example? Jesus Christ.

In John 4, the story is told of Jesus and the disciples departing Judea for Galilee. They went through Samaria. He stopped at a well, and a Samaritan woman came to draw water. Despite moral, racial and social barriers, Jesus began to talk to her.

The woman was a sinner, living in adultery. Jesus knew it. But what did He do? He didn't pick up stones. Rather, he spoke to her - treated her with respect, in love exposed her sin, confronted her need for God's forgiveness, and allowed the Holy Spirit to dwell on her sin. He didn't dwell on it. He simply exposed it. He acted justly and exercised lovingkindness.

What does the Lord God require of you in an age of tolerance? To act justly and exercise lovingkindness. Stand firm in the ultimate authority of Jesus Christ and in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. Act justly. And always exercise lovingkindness.

E. Quotes from evangelist and philosopher Francis Schaeffer.

- "If there is no absolute moral standard, then one cannot say in a final sense that ANYTHING is right or wrong."
- "If society has no absolutes, then the society is absolute."
- "Relativists have both feet planted firmly in mid-air."

Discussion Questions:

1. What is relativism and how can you respond to the relativist and his/her statements?

2. Assume you are sharing the Gospel, and the person you're talking with says, "You keep quoting from the Bible, but how do you know it's true or credible? What makes it so special compared to other religious books?" How would you respond?

Appendix

Evidence for the Uniqueness of Scripture and Confidence in its Authority

(We owe a great debt of gratitude to Josh McDowell, traveling representative for Campus Crusade for Christ International, and his team who compiled the book, Evidence that Demands a Verdict (ETDV) [Copyright 1972 by Campus Crusade for Christ] which has been quoted extensively in the preparation of this material.)

Manuscripts

1. Amazing Unity, Composition and Preservation.
 - a. The Bible has 66 books, 40 authors, was written over a 1500 year period in three languages on three continents - yet, it is one book with one theme, the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - b. Most books do not survive a half century; a few last a full century; the Bible has lasted for more than 19 centuries and is printed today in over 1,000 languages, surviving time and attack.
2. Attestations by some authorities.
 - a. A.T. Robertson - author of the most comprehensive grammar of New Testament Greek wrote: There are some 8,000 manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate and at least 1,000 for the other early versions. Add over 4,000 Greek manuscripts and we have 13,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament. Besides all this, much of the New Testament can be reproduced from the quotation of the early Christian writers.
 - b. Bruce Metzger - "Of the approximately 5,000 Greek manuscripts .. they contain all or part of the New Testament."
 - c. John Warwick Montgomery says that, "to be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament."
 - d. Sir Frederic G. Kenyon (former director and principal librarian of the British Museum) in his book, The Bible and Archaeology. "...The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest existing evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."

3. Manuscript comparison.

- a. The evidence for the early existence of the New Testament writings is clear. The wealth of valuable material for the New Testament becomes even more evident when compared with other ancient documents that have been accepted without question. Consider the following chart.

Author & Work	When Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	Number of Copies Today
Caesar (Gaelic War)	100-44 BC	900 AD	1,000 yrs.	10
Plato (Tetralogies)	427-347 BC	900 AD	1,200 yrs.	7
Tacitus (Annals)	100 AD	1,100 AD	1,000 yrs.	20
Homer (Iliad)	900 BC	400 BC	500 yrs.	643
Thucidides (History)	460-400 BC	900 AD	1,300 yrs.	8
Sophocles	496-406 BC	1,000 AD	1,400 yrs	100
Aristotle	384-322 BC	1,100 AD	1,400 yrs.	5+
New Testament	40-100 AD	125 AD	25 yrs.	24,000

- b. To be skeptical of the 27 documents in the New Testament, and to say they are unreliable is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as those in the New Testament.

4. Manuscript Evidence of the New and Old Testaments.

a. Outstanding New Testament manuscripts.

- 1) Chester Beatty Papyri (200 AD) is located in the C. Beatty Museum in Dublin with part being owned by the University of Michigan. This collection contains papyrus codices, three of them containing major portions of the New Testament.
- 2) Codex Vaticanus (325-350 AD) is located in the Vatican Library. Nearly all the Bible. This is said to be one of the most valuable.
- 3) Codex Sinaiticus (350 AD) is located in the British Museum; discovered by Tischendorf, a German scholar, in 1844 in the Mount Sinai Monastery. This manuscript, presented by the Monastery to the Russian Czar in 1859 and later bought by the British government for 100,000 pounds on Dec. 25, 1933. The manuscript contains almost all of the New Testament and over half of the Old Testament.

- 4) Codex Alexandrinus (400 AD) also located in the British Museum; The encyclopedia Britannica believes it was written in Greek in Egypt. It contains almost the entire Bible.

F.F. Bruce says: "There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament."

b. Old Testament manuscripts.

The reliability of the Old Testament does not lie in a large number of ancient manuscripts we have nor in the dating of the oldest manuscripts close to the actual date of writing. Their reliability lies in the **VERY** meticulous transcribing of the Hebrew Scriptures by the Talmudists (A.D. 100-500) and Massorettes (A.D. 500-900). The Talmudists wrote only on the skins of ceremonially clean animals; the length of each column must not be less than 48 or more than 60 lines; and the breadth must consist of 30 letters; the ink must be black; no word or letter, not even a yod, must be written from memory; between every consonant the space of a hair or thread must intervene; the fifth book of Moses must terminate exactly with a line; etc. The Massorettes devised a complicated system of safeguards against scribal slips. They counted, for example, the number of times each letter of the alphabet occurs in each book; they pointed out the middle letter of the Pentateuch and the middle letter of the whole Hebrew Bible; and made even more detailed calculations than these. Sir Fredric Kenyon says, "They numbered the verses, words, and letters of every book. They calculated the middle word and the middle letter of each. . . These trivialities had the effect of securing minute attention to the precise transmission of the text." He goes on to say that the older copies were either burned, buried, or stored in some sort of cupboard in the synagogue. Newer copies carried more credibility than the older ones because the aged copy could be defaced or damaged with the lapse of time. Therefore, the oldest copies we had (until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls) were from the year 900 A.D. The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947. They include a complete copy of the Book of Isaiah and fragments of almost every book in the Old Testament. They are dated around 200-100 B.C. How did this compare with the previously oldest manuscripts we had from 1000 years later? Of the 166 words in Isaiah 53, there is only one word (three letters) in question after a thousand years of transmission – and this word does not significantly change the meaning of the passage.

5. Internal Evidence for Reliability

John Warwick Montgomery writes that literary critics still follow Aristotle's dictum that "the benefit of the doubt is to be given to the document itself" . . . not to the critic. Therefore, "one must listen to the claims of the document under analysis, and not assume fraud or error unless the author disqualified himself by contradictions or known factual inaccuracies."

The authors of the books of the New Testament wrote as eyewitnesses or from first hand information (Mark a close companion of Peter; Luke a close companion of Paul). See 1 John 1:1-3; Luke 1:1-3; Acts 1:1-3. They were written to eyewitnesses – the writers

appealed to what the readers had seen and knew (Acts 2:22; Acts 26:24-28). They appealed to the skeptical to go talk to other eye-witnesses – 500 of them – to verify their claims (1 Corinthians 15:6-8).

6. External Evidence Test for Reliability of Scripture

Do other historical materials confirm or deny the internal testimony provided by the documents themselves?

- a. Eusebius (A.D. 130) (Ecclesiastical History III.39) preserved writings of Papias which he got from John (Apostle). He confirmed the authenticity of Mark and Matthew.
- b. Irenaeus (A.D. 180) a student of Polycarp – a disciple of John (Apostle) in his writing (Against Heresies III) confirmed the authenticity of the four gospels.
- c. There was also Clement of Rome (A.D. 95); Ignatius (A.D. 70-110); Polycarp (A.D. 70-156 – burned at the stake for refusal to deny Scriptures); and Flavius Josephus (Jewish Historian) and Tatian (A.D. 170) all confirm the reliability of the New Testament.
- d. Archeological Evidence. There are yet to be found any real statements in the Bible in terms of history that have been proven to be false by history and archeology (see next section on “Archeology”).

This does not prove that the Scripture is *authoritative*, but it does demonstrate that the texts we have are *reliable* representations of the originals.

Archeology

Evidence from a Non-Christian.

Dr. Nelson Glueck: President, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio. Over 10 years of personal archaeological exploration in Palestine, mainly in the Dead Sea area. Discovered King Solomon's Copper mines and Solomon's Porch by following Deuteronomy 8. Featured on the cover of Time magazine.. says: "Thus far, no archaeological discovery has ever been made in the Bible lands which contradicts a well-understood Biblical statement in the Bible."

Millar Burrows – Yale University archeologist...”On the whole, archeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the Scriptural record. More than one archeologist has found his respect for the Bible increased by the experience of excavation in Palestine."

William F. Albright – another great archeologist...”There can be no doubt that archeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition.”

The Ebla tablets have records of every people mentioned in Genesis, of which many before the discovery were disputed, including the Hittites. Even the name Abraham is mentioned in the

tablets as someone with whom they had business dealings from the region of Sodom and Gomorrah (ca, 1900 BC).

Scriptures that at one time were said to be inaccurate, have later been proven correct by new archeological finds.

Prophecy

1. Fulfilled Prophecies of Nations

- a. Tyre
Completely destroyed and used as a place for fisherman to dry their nets. (Ezekiel 26:3-21) (ETDV, pp. 285-291). Prophecy made before 570 BC. Finally, and completely destroyed in 1291 AD and today the area is used for drying nets. It has a fresh water spring that pours out 10 million gallons a day, yet the city has not been rebuilt.
- b. Sidon
Tyre's sister-city, like New York and Baltimore. Prophesied that it would have wars continually, but would never die. (Ezekiel 28:22-23) (ETDV pp. 291-293) It has a very bloody history, but has always been rebuilt.
- c. Babylon
Babylon was the mightiest city of its day. It was 196 square miles, moat all around, double walls (311 feet high [football field], 87 feet wide [11 cars across]), 100 solid brass gates. Eight things were prophesied against Babylon, including its complete destruction (see p. 315). All eight have occurred exactly as stated.

2. Fulfilled Prophecies about Christ

- a. The Old Testament alone contains over 300 references to the first coming of Christ. (Remember the second coming has not yet been fulfilled.)
- b. There are 25 predicted details concerning the betrayal, trial, death and burial of Christ which were fulfilled within 24 hours of the time of the death of Jesus Christ.
- c. A sample of the prophecies concerning Christ, see ETDV, chapter 9 for details.

Prediction	Fulfillment
Micah 5:2 (710 BC), The town of His birth named.	Matthew 2:1
Isaiah 40:3 (700 BC), Preceded by a messenger.	Matthew 3:1-3
Zechariah 9:9 (500 BC), Enter Jerusalem on a donkey.	Luke 19:35-37a
Psalms 41:9; Psalm 22:16 (1000 BC), Betrayed by a friend, hands and feet pierced.	Matthew 10:4; Luke 23:33

Prediction	Fulfillment
Zechariah 11:12 (500 BC), Sold for 20 pieces of silver.	Matthew 26:15
Zechariah 11:13b (500 BC), Money thrown into Lord's house and used for potters field.	Matthew 27:5,7
Isaiah 53:7 (700 BC), Dumb before his accusers.	Matthew 27:12-19
Psalms 22:16 (1000 BC); Isaiah 53:12 (700 BC), Crucified, with thieves.	Luke 23:33; Matthew 27:38

Statistics

A sample of prophetic probabilities according to statistician Peter Stoner (*Science Speaks*).

1. Tyre: The odds of all the prophecies against Tyre being fulfilled are 75 million to one.
2. The odds of all the prophecies against Babylon being fulfilled are one in 5 billion.
3. The odds of Christ fulfilling the above eight prophecies is one in 10^{17} . That's equal to filling the state of Texas two feet deep with silver dollars, marking one of them, blind folding a man and asking him to pick the marked one on the first try. Stoner goes on to say that the probability of just 48 of the 300 total prophecies about Christ being fulfilled was 1×10^{157} .

Evidence for the Resurrection.

1. Tomb was empty (Luke 24:3).
2. Roman guards were bribed to say the disciples stole the body (Matthew 27:62-66 28:11-15). The response to soldiers for failure to perform their duties was supposed to be death (Acts 12:3-19).
3. First reports of the resurrection were from women, and the testimony of a woman in that culture was worthless. But that argues for the reality of the situation in John 20:18.
4. Grave clothes were undisturbed (John 20:5-7).
5. Jesus appeared in bodily form (Luke 24:36-44).
6. Jesus was seen alive by more than 500 people (1 Corinthians 15:1-8).
7. Disciples were changed - (Peter denied Christ 3 times yet spoke at Pentecost and 3,000 were converted) (Acts 2:41).
8. Conversion of the Apostle Paul (Acts 9 - Jesus spoke to him personally).
9. Establishment of the Church worldwide – starting from where it all happened (and could have been disproved if it was a hoax).