

# *Effective Youth Catechesis*

Steve Hemler



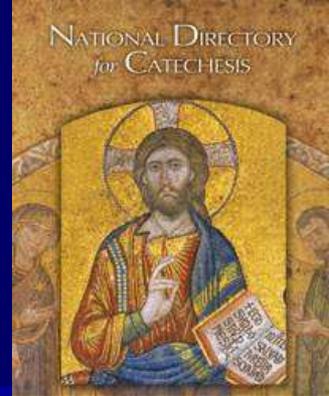
# Presentation Outline

- **Introduction**
  - Purpose of Catechesis
- **Foundations of Catechesis**
  - Stages of Faith
  - “Wedge Model”
- **Three Dimensions of Catechesis**
  - Practical Suggestions

# Introduction

- What does word “catechesis” mean?
- What is the purpose of catechesis?
  - Are we to **only** provide religious instruction (impart “head knowledge”)?
- Following video shows what may happen if we don’t understand our task and how to best accomplish it!



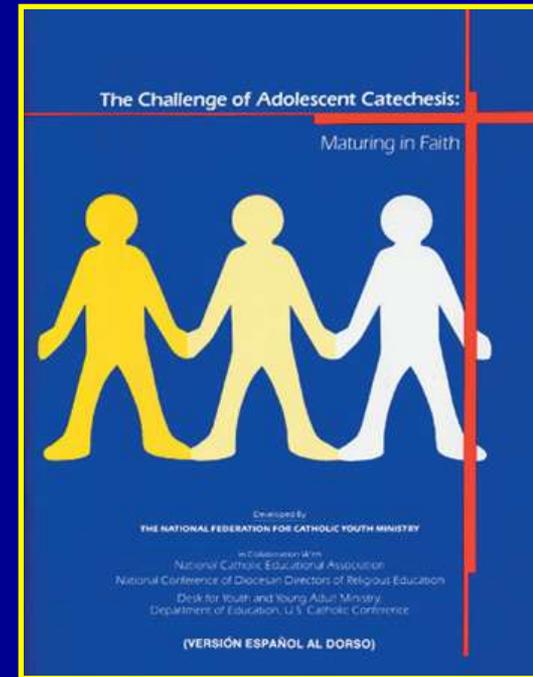


# Purpose of Catechesis

- From *National Directory for Catechesis*
  - By U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
  - “The aim of catechesis is to lead believers to a deeper knowledge **and** love of Christ and the Church **and** a firm commitment to follow him.”
  - What else besides “deeper knowledge”?

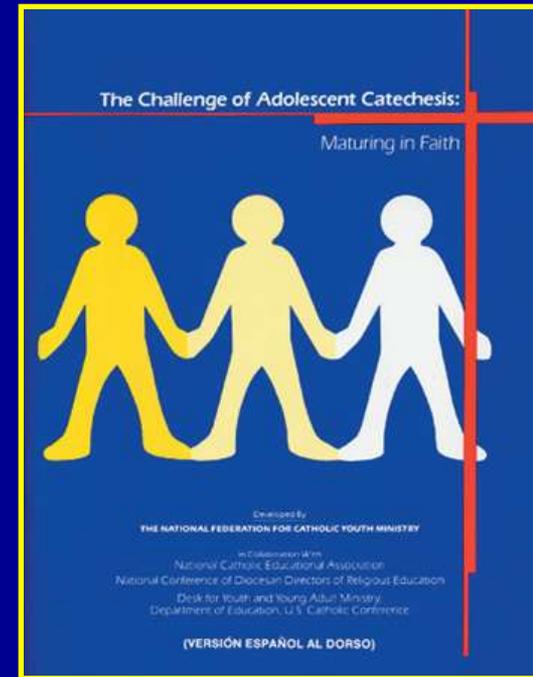
# Purpose of Catechesis

- From *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis*
  - By National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry
  - “The primary aim of adolescent catechesis is to sponsor youth toward maturity in Catholic faith as a living reality.”



# Purpose of Catechesis

- From *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis*
  - “We have two tasks: to foster in youth a communal **identity as Catholic Christians** and to help them develop their own **personal faith identity.**”

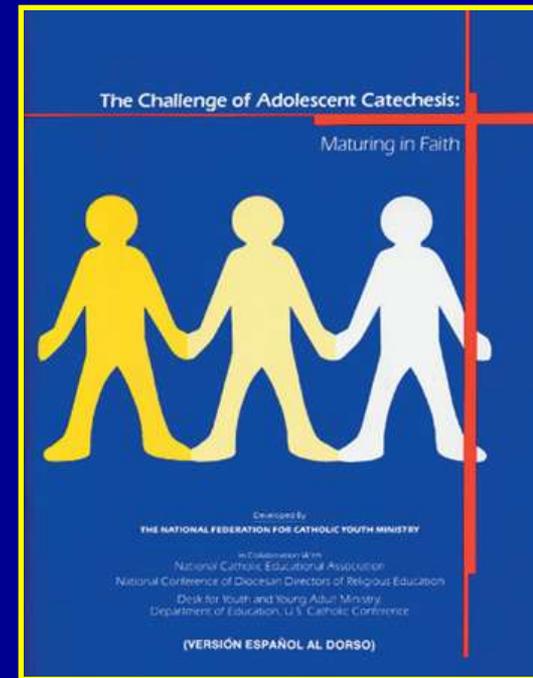


# Purpose of Catechesis

- **1st Task: Like Our Last (Family) Name**
  - Family inheritance (Catholic heritage)
  - We're like an **adoption agency**
    - Helping youth **find a home** for their faith by sharing what Catholics believe and practice
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Task: Like Our First (Given) Name**
  - Individual personality (our own faith)
  - We're like a **mid-wife**
    - Helping youth **give birth** to their own faith

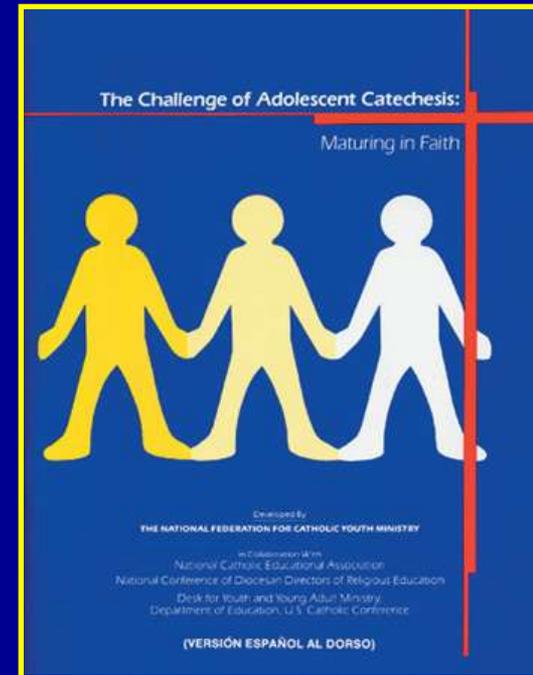
# Purpose of Catechesis

- From *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis*
  - “To accomplish the first task, we **present the faith convictions and values** of the Catholic Christian tradition and **invite** adolescents to adopt and own these values and convictions.”



# Purpose of Catechesis

- From *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis*
  - “To effect the second, we help adolescents **respond to God** in faith, in prayer, in values and in behavior. The sense of belonging experienced by youth in an **active Christian community** supports these two tasks.”



# Purpose of Catechesis

- **Why is an “active Christian community” important?**
  - **Experience of community is needed to “till the soil”**
    - **In order for youth to more readily accept Christian message**
- **Let’s look more deeply at why this is so important**

# Foundations of Catechesis

## 1. John Westerhoff's Stages of Faith Development:

(1) Experienced Faith

(2) Affiliative Faith

(3) Searching Faith

(4) Owned Faith

# Stages of Faith

- **Expand into needs and elements of later stages**
  - After needs of earlier stages are met
- **Like rings of a tree**
  - We do not leave needs of earlier stages behind after expand into next stage
  - Continue to need faith experiences of earlier stages

# Stages of Faith

## (1) Experienced Faith

- First experienced by young children
- Grows by participating in customs and rituals
- Lifelong foundation of faith
- Faith of our senses
  - “Bells and smells”
- Rituals point to the love of God

# Stages of Faith

## (2) Affiliative Faith

- Belonging to (be affiliated with) an accepting Christian community
- Expand into affiliative faith during adolescence
- Dynamic youth ministry program
  - Social, spiritual and service activities
  - Protestant churches still better
- Most adults' faith is “arrested” here
  - “Cultural Christians” (family, friends)

# Stages of Faith

## (3) Searching Faith

- Questioning and internalizing what we have long been taught
  - Necessary prerequisite to having our own (not our parents') faith
- Begins during late adolescence and may continue into adulthood
  - Can be troubling if not understood
  - College “debates” (personal & video)



# Stages of Faith

## (4) Owned Faith

- Rarely occurs before young adulthood
- May appear as great illumination or enlightenment
  - Because of serious struggle with doubt that precedes it
- Now our own faith
  - No longer faith of our parents, family, etc.
  - “Committed Christians” (Intentional Disciples)

# Stages of Faith

## (4) Owned Faith

- **Witness by personal and social action**
  - **Stand up for what believe in**
- **God's intention for everyone**
- **Only way to owned faith is through searching faith doubts and questions**
- **CAINA's "Faith and the Big Questions" program helps youth and adults address Searching Faith questions**

# **“Faith and the Big Questions”**

- 1. *God and Science: Where Does the Evidence Lead?***
- 2. *Which is True: Creation, Evolution, or Both?***
- 3. *Is Jesus Truly the Son of God? (Resurrection)***
- 4. *Near-Death Experiences: Evidence for the Soul?***
- 5. *How Are We Saved? (Catholic View)***
- 6. *Why Go To Church? (Not Just “Spiritual”)***
- 7. *Why Would a Loving God Allow Evil, Pain, and Suffering?***

# “Faith and the Big Questions”

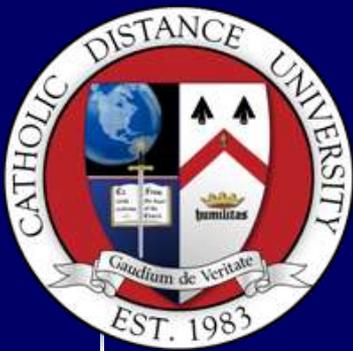
- This series has two objectives:
  - (1) Help those searching for their own answers to these “big questions”
  - (2) Help us meet St. Peter’s challenge:

*“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”* (1 Peter 3:15)
- **Strengthen** faith and help us **explain and share** our faith (apologetics)

# Apologetics

**Bishop Robert Barron:** “Innumerable surveys and studies over the past ten years have confirmed that young people frequently cite intellectual reasons when asked what has prompted them to leave the Church or lose confidence in it. Chief among these are the convictions that religion is opposed to science or that it cannot stand up to rational scrutiny.”

“What is vitally needed today is a renewed apologetics. A new apologetics should look deep and long into the question of the relationship between religion and science.”



# *Certificate in Apologetics*

[www.cdu.edu](http://www.cdu.edu)

## Certificate Requirements

Completion of the following six apologetics seminars

**3-week, online,  
asynchronous**

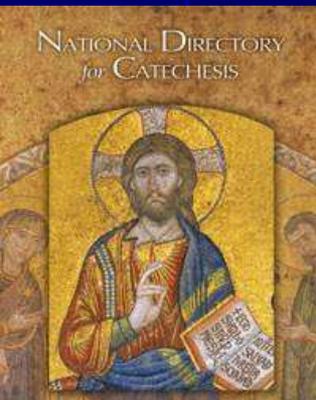
- Proclaiming the Reality of God: Compelling Evidence of God's Existence
- Making the Case for Christ
- How Are We Saved?
- Why do We Need the Church?
- Why would a Loving God Allow Evil, Pain, and Suffering?
- The Art of Evangelization through Apologetics

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# Foundations of Catechesis

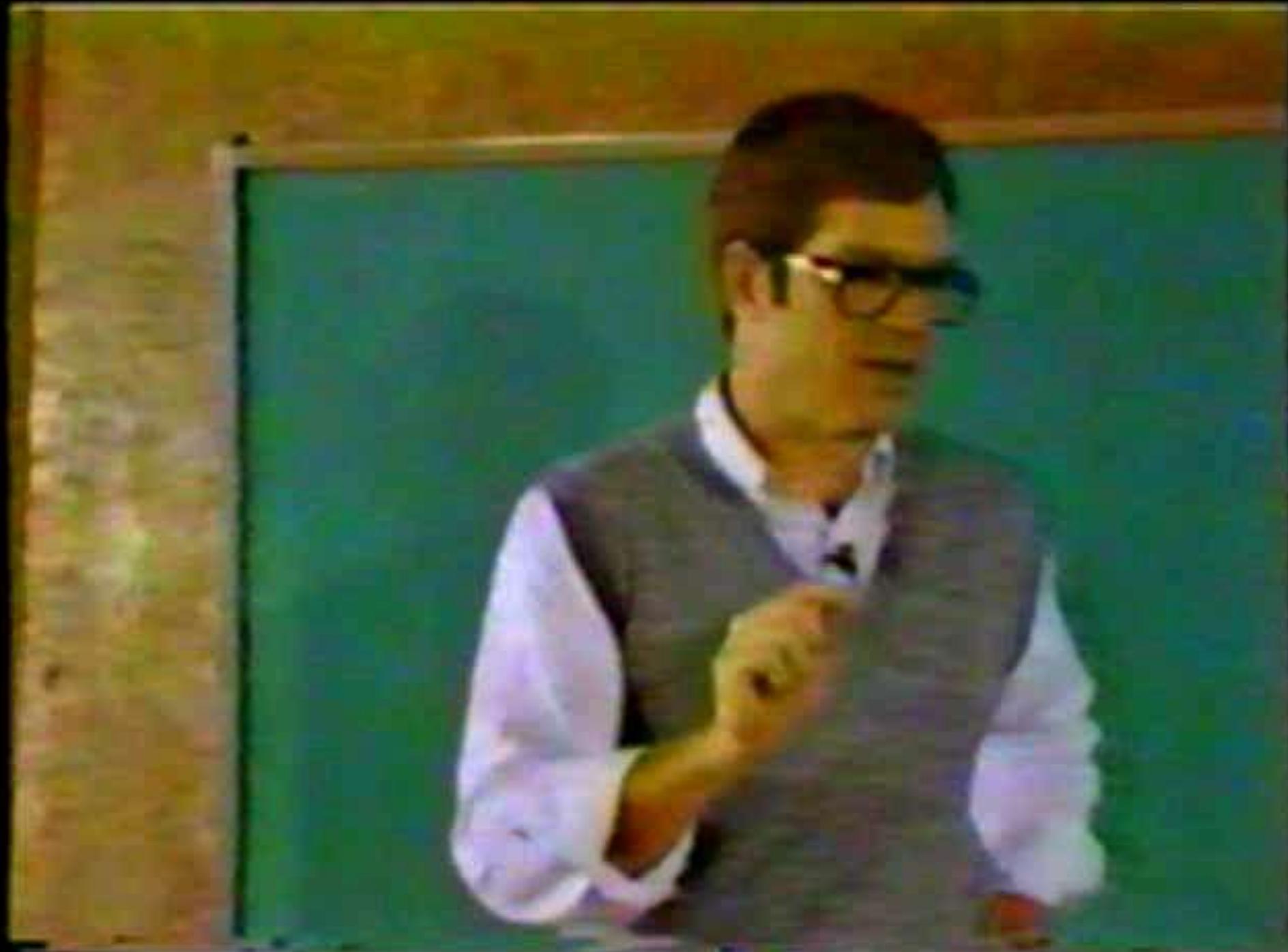
- From *National Directory for Catechesis*
  - “Youth catechesis ... is most effective when situated within a **comprehensive program of youth ministry** that includes social, liturgical, and catechetical components as well as opportunities for service.”
  - What is a “program of youth ministry”?
  - If your parish doesn’t have one, how can youth catechesis still be “effective”?



# Foundations of Catechesis

## 2. “Wedge Model of Youth Ministry”

- We read article by Tom Zanzig in 1982
  - “Lights went on”
  - Basis for our CCD/Confirmation classes
- **Classic Video Workshop**
  - “Effective Adolescent Religious Education”
  - Will distribute handout after video
- How use these concepts in your youth ministry or religious education class?



# Discussion Questions

- **What for you were some new or particularly relevant insights from this video?**
- **How will you apply these insights in your ministry?**

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# Dimensions of Catechesis

## ■ 3 Dimensions of Youth Catechesis?

### 1. Community

- Welcoming and building community
- Helps meet “Affiliative Faith” needs

### 2. Message

- Systematic education and teaching

### 3. Service

## ■ How use in rel. ed. class settings?

- **Integrate** each and every dimension

# 1. Community

- **How can we be more welcoming?**
  - **Remember each student's name**
    - **Talk with each student as they arrive**
  - **Hang balloons, streamers, welcome banner (at least for first class)**
  - **Arrange chairs in circle**
    - **Comfortable seating**
  - **Send birthday and Christmas cards**

# 1. Community

- **How be more welcoming (continued)**
  - **Provide lots of snack food and drinks**
    - **Popcorn (adds festive air)**
    - **Have available at beginning of class**
  - **Play music as students arrive**
    - **Contemporary and appropriate**
  - **Allow 10-15 minutes of socializing at beginning of class**
  - **Use lots of appropriate humor**
  - **Other suggestions for welcoming?**

# 1. Community

- **How can we build community within our classes?**
  - **Use some icebreaker games**
    - **Adjective Names Circle**
    - **Clothespin Tag**
    - **“Snowball” fight, etc.**
  - **Attend their school events**
    - **Plays, band concerts, sports, graduations**
    - **With parents’ permission**

# 1. Community

- **How build community (continued)**
  - **Class social activities**
    - Bowling, movie, pizza, etc.
    - With parents' permission & help
  - **Overnight “Lock-Ins”**
    - Games, music, movies (appropriate)
      - *The Passion of the Christ* (Recut)
  - **Team teaching adds more talents**
  - **Other community-building suggestions?**

## 2. Message

- Need to “till the soil” in order for youth to hear Christian message
  - By welcoming and building community
- What are some practical teaching tips and techniques?
  - Classes must be “interesting”
    - Not necessarily fun
    - Boredom is bad!

## 2. Message

- **Some practical teaching tips and techniques (continued)**
  - **Use Active Learning**
    - Individual reflection worksheets
    - Small group discussions
    - Ask lots of questions
    - Student skits
    - “Fishbowl Discussion” (rolled magazines)
  - **Marilyn Kielbasa on Active Learning**



## 2. Message

- **Some practical teaching tips and techniques (continued)**
  - **PowerPoint Presentations**
    - **With embedded video clips and discussion questions (mix it up)**
  - **Group prayer**
    - **Prayer Center: crucifix, Bible, candle(s)**
  - **Team teaching is best!**
  - **Other teaching suggestions?**

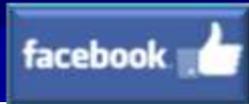
# 3. Service

- **Service opportunities**
  - **Serve the poor and homeless**
    - **St. Vincent de Paul Society**
  - **Living Stations of the Cross**
  - **Other service suggestions?**

# Summary

- **Purpose of Catechesis**
- **Foundations of Catechesis**
  1. **Stages of Faith**
  2. **“Wedge Model”**
- **Three Dimensions of Catechesis**
  1. **Welcoming and Building Community**
  2. **Teaching Tips and Techniques**
  3. **Service Opportunities**

# Internet: cainaweb.org



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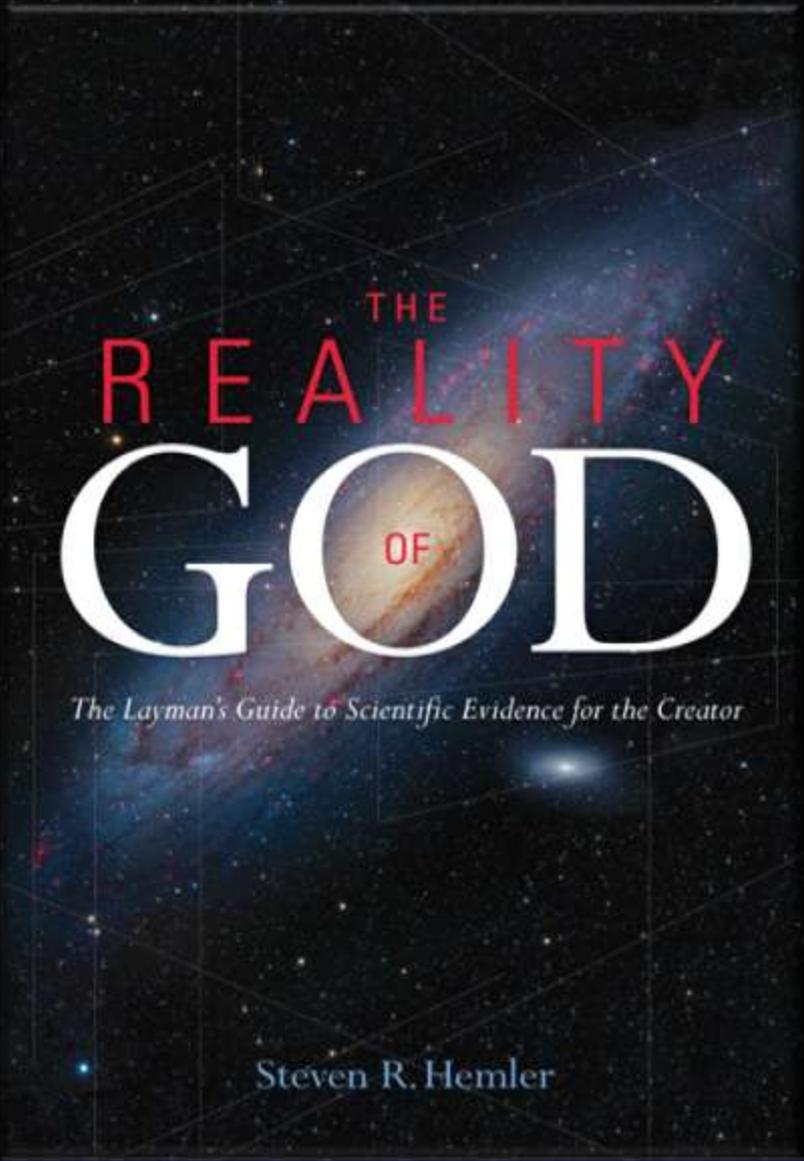


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REALITY  
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GOD

*The Layman's Guide to Scientific Evidence for the Creator*

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MORE

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TRUTH AND HAPPINESS

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