

The Sword & Shield

Fall/Winter 2024-2025
Volume 4, Issue 1

A Publication of Bellator Christi Ministries



Bellator Christi

Defending Christian Truth Since 2012

New Era for Bellator Christi

Brian G. Chilton, M.Div., Ph.D., President & Founder of Bellator Christi

This October, we begin a new fiscal year for Bellator Christi, and it looks to be one of the best years yet! God is blessing us as a ministry with some new opportunities and with a brand-new partnership. But in the wise words of Uncle Ben as he said to Peter Parker (aka. Spider-Man), “With great power, comes great responsibility.” With many ministries, it seems that when God starts pouring out His blessings that teams fall apart due to irresponsible decisions and a lack of accountability. I want to ensure that this is not the story of Bellator Christi.

As announced in July 2024, Bellator Christi has entered into a partnership with Illative House Press (IHP). IHP is continuing to grow and will, undoubtedly, become a new force in the publishing industry. IHP Founder and President Dr. T. J. Gentry and I have already discussed potential publishing opportunities that will place Bellator Christi front-and-center as the gold standard of apologetics and theological scholarship. But as God shines His light upon us with this responsibility, I strongly feel that all of us, beginning with myself, will need to be held accountable. That is why we are implementing the following parameters into Bellator Christi’s ongoing ministry.

Increased Board Advisement into Leadership Decisions. As you probably noticed, Bellator Christi adopted a new logo, design, and will have new theme music for the podcast once it begins this September. These decisions were not made in isolation. Rather, they included the Leadership Board, which includes Dr. Michelle Johnson, Dr. T. J. Gentry, Dr. Deanna Huff and me. To hold myself accountable, I will be employing the use of our leadership team even more as we navigate into a bright future, including two board meetings per year. The leadership team will be involved in developing a new vetting process when accepting potential candidates into the Bellator Christi fold.

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Special points of interest

- News on upcoming publications.
- Bellator Christi rebrand.
- Release of the Bellator Christi Podcast’s Season 8 schedule.
- Partnership between Bellator Christi and Illative House Press.

From the Executive VP's Desk

Changes to the Submission Process

By: Michelle Johnson, M.Div., Ph.D., Executive Vice President and Managing Editor



Welcome to a new season! Schools are back in session, football is now the dominant sport on television, and where I live, a few leaves are beginning to show some early red, yellow, and orange colors. It is also a new season at Bellator Christi, and it promises to be exciting! Brian has done a great job keeping our contributor team, readers, and podcast audience up to date.

I want to highlight some changes in our article submission and publishing process here. If you are a contributor, please make your way to the page with our publishing calendar. Please take a minute to note the dates you have an article due in the next six months.

Submitting an article means sending your publisher an article that is ready to be published. Please use the following questions to make sure your article is ready to send:

1. What is your word count? Articles should be between 500 and 1500 words.
2. Does your article have a title?
3. Is your article divided into three sections? Does each of these have a section title?
4. Are your citations complete?
5. Have you proofread your article for spelling/punctuation/grammatical errors?

If you have any questions or need any help preparing your article, please contact your publisher before the due date.

We are so excited about the opportunities God has given us at Bellator Christi! Thank you for being a part of this wonderful team. May we faithfully follow Him as we enter this new season.

Soli Deo Gloria!

The Pastor Apologist

A Legacy in Word and Deed

By: T. J. Gentry, D.Min., Ph.D., Associate VP of Publications & Communications

“A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children.” (Matt. 7:7, NKJV).



As a parent, my desire is to see the “faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) passed along to my children. I include in my children my current grandchildren (I have two), future grandchildren that may come along, and every generation following them. I don’t want anyone left out.

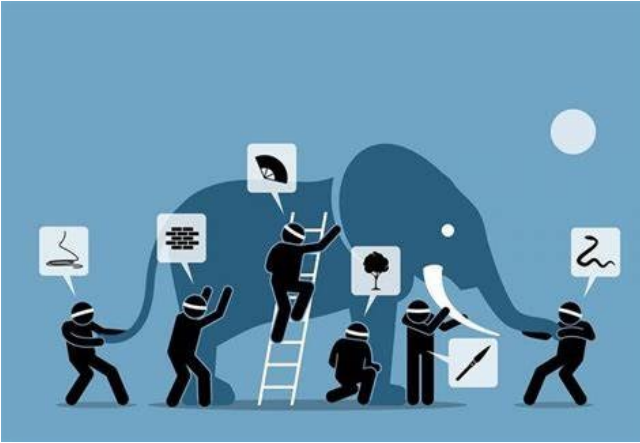
I have the same desire as an apologist: a desire to see the precious truths of the gospel passed along to those who remain when I am called home to be with the Lord. I find that the strength of my legacy as an apologist depends on a combination of my words and deeds as I “give a defense to everyone who asks . . . a reason for the hope that is in” me (1 Pet. 3:15). I find that building a legacy requires more than my own learning; it requires that I write, teach, and do the work of apologetics.

What about you? Are you doing the work of an apologist? Are you teaching others what you believe and why you believe it? Are you putting in the time and effort to write your reasons? Those who do the work, teach the truth and write the reasons can have confidence that they will leave an inheritance to those who follow after them—a legacy in word and deed.

Doctrines and Devotions

Do All Religions Lead to the One True God?

By: Deanna Huff, Th.M., Ph.D., Associate Vice President of Spiritual Care and Outreach



Many have heard the familiar illustration of the four blind people encountering an elephant. Because of their inability to see, they only experience part of the elephant; therefore, they all have different interpretations. The first blind person stands behind the elephant, touching the tail, and exclaims, “It is a rope.”

The second blind person stands to the side and says, “It is a whale.” The third blind person touches the leg and says, “It’s a tree.” The fourth blind person touches the trunk and says, “It’s a snake.” Who is correct? Pluralists contend this is analogous to world religions, claiming they all have different interpretations of the same thing, and no one has the market on truth but that all religions should be equally valid. Therefore, pluralists claim there are many ways to God, but the Bible claims one hundred times that Jesus is the only way to God.

Christianity claims to speak from the transcendent God. He is not touching a part of the elephant, but He is outside of the elephant. He sees the whole and expresses the reality of life through His Word. John Hicks, in *God Has Many Names*, says it’s unreasonable to dismiss all religions as false. However, the Bible reveals that Jesus is the only way to God. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Bellator Christi News and Updates



- *Why Creationism Still Matters* is now available. It was #1 on Amazon in several categories, including creationism. We want to thank all the contributors and editors who made this work possible.
- Bellator Christi launched a rebrand over the summer. Instead of the red cross in front of a silver backing, the leadership team agreed to adopt a yellow cross and shield over a midnight blue background. Some have said that this new look appears much more professional and academic than the previous version.
- Bellator Christi announced a new partnership with Illative House Press over the summer. Bellator Christi founder Dr. Brian Chilton joined Illative House Press as the new Editor-in-Chief of Acquisitions. This forms a new union between the two brands. Expect to see additional advertisements of IHP and IHP released books on the website and on the podcast.
- The Bellator Christi Podcast launches its 8th season on Thursday, September 5th. This season marks a return to the basics for the podcast. We will only feature pre-recorded audio episodes instead of livestreaming the shows. Due to technical issues, livestreaming negatively impacted the audio quality of the program, leading to multiple complaints from our listeners.
- Unfortunately, we lost a few members of the team. Dr. Scott Reynolds and Curtis Evelo decided to step away from the ministry due to personal reasons. We want to thank both Scott and Curtis for their many years of service with us. Additionally, we wish them the very best in their future endeavors. They are both cherished brothers in Christ.
- Season 8 will feature a number of new features including increased panel discussions and a new segment called “Bellator Talks.” Bellator Talks is a new series on the podcast that will handle current issues facing modern Christians from a biblical perspective. These episodes will feature the leadership team of Bellator Christi and other team members.
- We are also asking all team members to sign a yearly commitment pledge to ensure that they still accept the Statement of Faith and are able to commit to the upcoming year. This is part of our new emphasis on accountability.
- Bellator Christi is looking to accept 3-4 new team members. The leadership team is already talking with 1-2 potential candidates. If you know of some qualified candidates who would be good match for Bellator Christi, contact one of the members of our leadership team so that we can make a connection.

New Era for Bellator Christi (continued)

Continued from page 1.

Increased Responsibilities of Contributors. As I bear myself accountable, I must ask everyone else to be accountable, too. While this ministry is volunteer based, we are now in a position where contributors of book projects could see some revenue coming their way from royalties from future publications. The ministry will provide exposure to the publishing house, and the publishing house will provide visibility to the ministry. As such, we must ensure that contributors are regularly involved with the ministry and submit their scheduled articles in a timely manner. This will include a new process in which deadlines will be set two weeks prior to the publication of the submitted article. Addedly, those who consistently miss deadlines may have to step aside from being scheduled on our contributor list, which may also impact the author's involvement in future publications.

Increased Expectations of Acceptance of Doctrinal Fidelity. I was recently told that some readers of Bellator Christi have called us the “apologetic experts.” As apologetic and theology experts, we must ensure that all of members maintain doctri-

nal fidelity. That is why we are asking every member of the ministry to sign a yearly pledge, indicating both their commitment to submitting articles according to the schedule and their continued acceptance of our Statement of Faith. The Statement of Faith was largely adopted from Liberty University and other evangelical Christian institutions.

All these steps are merely to ensure that Bellator Christi Ministries remains accountable to each of its teammates. More importantly, the steps are to ensure that we remain responsible to the ministry and calling that our Lord has given us. As Jesus Himself said, “To whom much is given, much will be required” (Lk. 12:48). I challenge us all to use what God has given us to the fullest. As Dr. Leo Percer always says, “Go make much of Jesus.”



Luke 12: 48

From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

Tentative Schedule for Season 8 of the Bellator Christi Podcast

Angelology/Demonology

September 2024

9/5: S8E1 Origin and Purpose of Angels

9/12: S8E2 Categories and Classification of Angels

9/19: S8E3 Angelic Attributes

9/26: S8E4 Angelic Abode—How Many Levels of Heaven

October 2024

10/3: S8E5 Lucifer: The Satan, Demons, Influence, and Fall

10/10: S8E6 Panel Discussion: Unseen Realm & Divine Council—Is it a Biblical Concept? (w. Leo Percer, TJ Gentry, Gary Yates, and Josh Waltman)

10/17: S8E7 Bellator Talks Episode 1: Augustinian Apologetics (w. Michelle Johnson, TJ Gentry, Deanna Huff, and Tony Williams)

Ecclesiology

10/24: S8E8 What is the Church?

10/31: S8E9 Baptism and the Eucharist

November 2024

11/7: S8E10 Role of the Pastor & Deacon

11/14: S8E11 Panel Discussion: AI & the Church (Deanna Huff, Michelle Johnson, TJ Gentry, and Ryan Pauley)

11/21: S8E12 Bellator Talks Episode 2: Handling Heated Political Discussions at the Holidays in a Christian Manner

Winter Bible Study Series

January 2025

1/2: S8E13 1 Peter 1

1/9: S8E14 1 Peter 2

1/16: S8E15 1 Peter 3

1/23: S8E16 1 Peter 4

1/30: S8E17 1 Peter 5

Eschatology

February 2025

2/13: S8E18 Panel Discussion: Should the Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy Change? (TJ Gentry, Justin Angelos, & more)

2/20: S8E19 Views of the Book of Revelation, the Millennium, and Tribulation (w. TJ Gentry and Michelle Johnson)

2/27: S8E20 The Intermediate State: Where Do We Go When We Die?

March 2025

3/6: S8E21 The Antichrist & Mark of Beast

3/13: S8E22 The Purpose of National Israel & the Millennial Reign (w. Daniel Sloan)

3/20: S8E23 The Rapture & Final Resurrection

3/27: S8E24 Heaven and Hell

April 2025

4/10: S8E25 Panel Discussion: Global Evangelism (w. Sherene Khouri & Deanna Huff)

4/17: S8E26 Easter Special: The Shroud of Turin—What it Could Tell us about the Resurrection

4/24: S8E27 Bellator Talks Episode 3: Jeremiah and the Dangers of Remolding Jesus

Website Stats (Spring 2024)

March 2024: *5,634 views*

Top 3 Articles:

- 1) Family is Your First Ministry
- 2) Why Did Paul Persecute the Christians? (Johnson)
- 3) Four Levels of Demonic Influence

April 2024: *6,683 views*

Top 3 Articles:

- 1) New Evidence for the Authenticity of the Shroud of Turin
- 2) Family is Your First Ministry
- 3) Why Did Paul Persecute the Christians? (Johnson)

May 2024: *4,468 views*

Top 3 Articles

- 1) Four Levels of Demonic Influence
- 2) Why Did Paul Persecute the Christians? (Johnson)
- 3) Family is Your First Ministry

Comments:

Spring of 2024 showed a greater mixture of articles in the top spot than the website has had for quite some time. The longstanding leader “Family is Your First Ministry” no longer has the hold on the top spot as it once did. On April 3rd, the website broke the all-time record for the most views in a single day with over 1,050 views.

Website Stats (Summer 2024)

June 2024: *5,790 views*

Top 3 Articles

- 1) New Evidence for the Authenticity of the Shroud of Turin
- 2) Family is Your First Ministry
- 3) Four Levels of Demonic Influence

July 2024: *4,487 views*

- 1) Four Levels of Demonic Influence
- 2) New Evidence for the Authenticity of the Shroud of Turin
- 3) Family is Your First Ministry

August 2024: *7,377 views*

- 1) New Evidence for the Authenticity of the Shroud of Turin
- 2) Special Report: Turin Shroud Scientifically Dated to First-Century
- 3) Four Levels of Demonic Influence

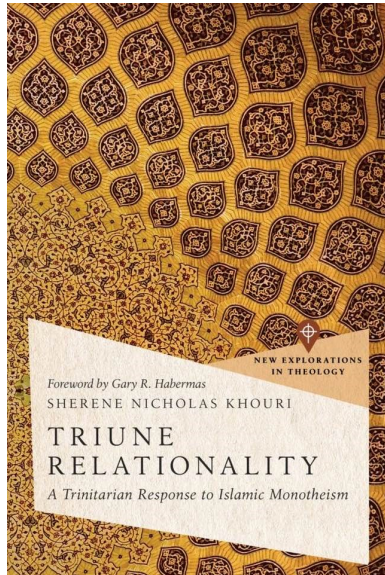
Comments:

The articles along with the recent surge of interest in the Shroud of Turin elevated the quarter to new levels! Some of the articles went viral. During this quarter, the website surpassed the total number of views for all of 2022. If the current trajectory holds, we are on track to have a record-breaking year for the most views ever.

New Publications from Bellator Christi Team Members

TJ Gentry, ed., Michelle Johnson, Deanna Huff, Brian Chilton, and Tony Williams—*Strong Faith* (September 2024—IHP Practica)

Dr. TJ Gentry headed up an exciting new book project that features easily digestible apologetic defenses for key truths of the Christian faith (i.e., defense for the existence of God, defense for the resurrection, and etc.). *Strong Faith* can easily be used with high school students, homeschools, and even with college students. Look for *Strong Faith* to release very soon by IHP Practica.



Sherene Khouri—*Triune Relationality: A Trinitarian Response to Islamic Monotheism* (November 19, 2024—IVP Academic).

Dr. Sherene Khouri launches her first solo book project with IVP Academic. Sherene Nicholas Khouri offers both historical and constructive responses to Islamic objections to the doctrine of the Trinity. Khouri considers arguments from Arabic Christian theologians and philosophers in the eighth to tenth centuries, primarily John of Damascus, Theodore Abū Qurrah, and Yaḥyā Ibn cAdī.

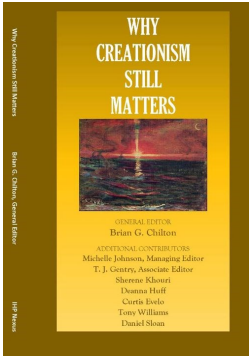
When Muslims expanded beyond the Arabic peninsula, Christians in occupied regions were spurred to defend the Trinity against the Islamic understanding of tawḥīd, the absolute oneness of Allah, and against misconceptions of Christian belief.

Khouri then applies the insights of these little-known thinkers to current theology and apologetics conversations. She makes the case for appealing to the common ground of God as the greatest conceived being, then arguing that such a being must be relational in nature. While Christians today debate models of the Trinity with each other and with Muslims, they can be confident that Christians throughout history have believed in triune relationality and found in the doctrine of the Trinity an invitation to personal relationship with the divine.

Daniel Sloan and Jeffrey Dickson—*The King is Coming: A Collection of Discussions on Christological Prophecy Written in Celebration of the Life and Work of Dr. Ed Hindson*—Lampion Press, 2024).

The King is Coming features various essays and discussions concerning messianic prophecy. Edited by Jeffrey Dickson and Bellator Christi's Daniel Sloan, the book commemorates the life of the late Dr. Ed Hindson.

New Publications (cont'd)



Bellator Christi Team—*Why Creationism Still Matters* (Now Available from IHP Nexus).

Drs. Brian Chilton, Michelle Johnson, T.J. Gentry, Deanna Huff, Sherene Khouri, Daniel Sloan, along with Tony Williams, Curtis Ebelo, and other members of the Bellator Christi team discuss the importance of creationism, how it impacts how we view other matters of life and ministry, and why the topic is still of great value. The book is now available through IHP Nexus.

Deanna Huff, T. J. Gentry, Michelle Johnson, Brian Chilton, along with Ryan Pauly—*Stewarding AI: Faithfully Using Creation Resources* (December 2024—IHP Nexus).

Like it or not, artificial intelligence is here and is impacting our culture in far more ways that we may realize. Is AI necessarily bad? How should Christians view AI and, more importantly, how should they use AI? *Stewarding AI* will explore those issues and a lot more. As Dr. Huff states, “Technology is advancing at an exponential rate; it is important for us to approach its use with responsibility and ethics in mind. This book provides a guide for Christians who wish to steward technology faithfully, while also acknowledging both the benefits and drawbacks of modern AI technology.”

Brian Chilton—*Semitic Residue: Signs of Oral Traditions in the Gospel of Matthew* (late 2024—IHP Academia).

In the late 1990s, a skeptical group of scholars known as the Jesus Seminar suggested that only 12% of the sayings of Jesus could be trusted in the Gospels. In this dissertation-turned-book, *Semitic Residue* challenges their assertion and shows that one has strong reasons to accept that the sayings and deeds of Jesus show signs of coming from early oral traditions. If true, these early oral traditions are every bit as early as the NT creeds and show that they are what many have thought them to be—early eyewitness testimonies.

Daniel Sloan—*When God Came Down* (2025—IHP Academia).

Brian Chilton—*Experiential Apologetics: Why Your Story Matters* (May 2025—IHP Nexus)

Check out these other releases from IHP:

Herty, Edward, *Jus Post Bellum and the Augustinian Worldview*. West Frankfort, IL: IHP Academia, 2024.

Wertz, James. *Precious Memories: 14 Daily Devotions*. West Frankfort, IL: IHP Practica, 2024).

Downey, Amy. *Missions in the Minor Key*. West Frankfort, IL: IHP Academia, late 2024.



Publication Schedule: Fall 2024

Due Date	Author	Editor/Publisher	Date Published
	Brian Chilton	Chilton	9/1/2024
	TJ Gentry	Johnson	9/8/2024
	Michelle Johnson	Huff	9/15/2024
	Jerry Bogacz	Gentry	9/22/2024
	Sherene Khouri	Chilton	9/29/2024
9/22/2024	Tom Knoff	Johnson	10/6/2024
9/29/2024	Leo Percer	Huff	10/13/2024
10/6/2024	Dan Sloan	Gentry	10/20/2024
10/13/2024	Tony Williams	Chilton	10/27/2024
10/20/2024	TJ Gentry	Johnson	11/3/2024
10/27/2024	Jerry Bogacz	Huff	11/10/2024
11/3/2024	Deanna Huff	Gentry	11/17/2024
11/10/2024	Sherene Khouri	Chilton	11/24/2024
11/17/2024	Brian Chilton	Johnson	12/1/2024
11/24/2024	Michelle Johnson	Huff	12/8/2024
12/1/2024	Tim Woods	Gentry	12/15/2024
12/8/2024	Justin Angelos	Chilton	12/22/2024
12/15/2024	Tom Knoff	Johnson	12/29/2024
12/22/2024	Leo Percer	Huff	1/5/2025
12/29/2024	Dan Sloan	Gentry	1/12/2025

Publication Schedule: Winter 2025

Due Date	Author	Editor/Publisher	Date Published
1/5/2025	Tony Williams	Chilton	1/19/2025
1/12/2025	TJ Gentry	Johnson	1/26/2025
1/19/2025	Brian Chilton	Huff	2/2/2025
1/26/2025	Jerry Bogacz	Gentry	2/9/2025
2/2/2025	Deanna Huff	Chilton	2/16/2025
2/9/2025	Sherene Khouri	Johnson	2/23/2025
2/16/2025	Michelle Johnson	Huff	3/2/2025
2/23/2025	Tim Woods	Gentry	3/9/2025
3/2/2025	Justin Angelos	Chilton	3/16/2025
3/9/2025	Tom Knoff	Johnson	3/23/2025
3/16/2025	Leo Percer	Huff	3/30/2025
3/23/2025	Dan Sloan	Gentry	4/6/2025
3/30/2025	Tony Williams	Chilton	4/13/2025
4/6/2025	TJ Gentry	Johnson	4/20/2025

Brian Chilton



Brian Chilton is the Founder of Bellator Christi Ministries. He first established the online ministry in November of 2012. Brian lives with his wife and teenage son in Pilot Mountain, NC. He earned a Doctor of Philosophy in Theology and Apologetics with a minor in Church History from Liberty University, where he also received a Master of Divinity degree in Theological Studies. Prior to his studies at Liberty, he received a Bachelor of Science in Religious Studies and Philosophy at Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, NC. He completed a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education at Wake Forest University School of Medicine. Dr. Chilton works as a clinical hospice chaplain, an Adjunct Professor of Apologetics at Carolina College of Biblical Studies, and the Editor-in-Chief of Acquisitions at Illative House Press. Brian published the book *Layman's Manual on Christian Apologetics* in 2019, *Conversations about Heaven* in 2023, and served as the editor and contributor for *Why Creationism Still Matters*. Brian can be reached at bchilton77@outlook.com or at **(336) 426-8685**.

Michelle Johnson

Michelle Johnson earned a Ph.D. in Theology and Apologetics at Liberty University. She also earned her M.A. in Theological Studies and her M.Div. in Professional Ministries at Liberty University. Michelle graduated from the University of Minnesota with her undergraduate degrees. She and her husband Steve live in Mankato, Minnesota.



Michelle and Steve attend Wooddale Church in Eden Prairie where Michelle serves on the Global Partner Care Team. In addition to her love of theology and apologetics, Michelle also has a passion for historical studies, particularly the theology of the Patristics.

When she is not spending time reading or writing, Michelle can often be found dreaming of her next travel adventure or enjoying a great cup of coffee. Michelle Johnson serves as the Executive Vice-President and Managing Editor of Bellator Christi Ministries. Michelle can be reached at johnsonmk87@gmail.com.

Deanna Huff



Deanna Huff serves as the Associate Vice President of Spiritual Care and Outreach as well as a Publisher for our team. Deanna Huff is a wife and mother. She has been teaching and training for the last twenty years equipping people to know their Christian faith and share it with others. Deanna has led many seminars for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, Oklahoma Ladies Retreat, and the State Evangelism Conference. She taught high school students for ten years at Christian Heritage Academy, in Bible, Universal History, Apologetics and Philosophy. Deanna earned a Doctor of Philosophy in Theology and Apologetics from Liberty University. She holds a Master of Theology in Apologetics and Worldview from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, a Master of Divinity with Biblical Languages from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Oklahoma. Deanna is heading up a collaborative book project entitled *Stewarding AI*: Deanna can be reached at deannahuff@outlook.com.

TJ Gentry



Thomas J. Gentry (a.k.a., TJ Gentry) serves as the Associate Vice President of Publication and Communications as well as a Publisher for Bellator Christi Ministries. He oversees the Illative House Press publishing company along with his daughter, Ireland Dillard. TJ earned a Doctor of Philosophy in Theology and Apologetics from Liberty University and holds numerous other doctorates and graduate degrees from North-West University, Carolina University, and Holy Apostles College. TJ lives with his wife and family in West Frankfort, IL and serves as the Senior Pastor of First Christian Church of West Frankfort. TJ has published numerous works including *Pulpit Apologist*, *Absent from the Body, Present with the Lord*, and *You Shall Be My Witnesses: Reflections on Sharing the Gospel*. He has a new book entitled *Leaving Calvinism: Finding Grace* to be published soon. TJ can be reached at thomas.j.gentry@gmail.com.

The Spring/Summer edition of the Sword & Shield will be published March of 2025.

Mission of Bellator Christi Ministries

Bellator Christi Ministries is a non-denominational online theological and apologetics ministry that exists to provide biblical and theological education. The site serves to teach Christian doctrine while defending the Christian faith by using a variety of means (written, audio, video, etc.). The ministry is academically centered, but the content is devoted to

a popular-level audience. The mission of the ministry is to take up the sword of Christian theology and the shield of apologetics while entering the arena of ideas. The goal is to evangelize and edify the body of Christ, to the glory of God.

Bellator Christi Ministries

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