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Christian Evidences

**Denver Cooper, Director
Louis Rushmore, Editor**

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rushmore@gospelgazette.com
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Dedication

Preacher to be Honored

In a day when some preachers are leaving the pulpits, it is especially delightful to honor a Gospel preacher who has kept and preached “the faith” for 61 years. Gene M. Carrell and Henrietta, his faithful companion for 57 years, represent a loyal service and sacrificial labor in the Kingdom of God.



Gene labored fulltime with the Fishinger and Kenny church of Christ in Columbus, OH for 27 years. He also served more than 25 years as an elder in that good church.

At age 16, he was encouraged by the late brother R.C. Oliver to become a preacher. R.C. was the preacher at Bloomington, IN which was the home town of brother Carrell. Gene began preaching for various congregations on August 27, 1944.

To Gene and Henrietta were born three daughters, Linda Gartman (deceased), Louanne Shelton and Lori Alda. Seven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren also bless the family.

Gene earned his BA degree from Abilene Christian University and his MS from Butler University, School of Religion.

Local works include Petersburg, Indianapolis and Terre Haute in IN; Dearborn, MI and Columbus, OH.

He served 2 years in the Army, has done radio and television work, directed Wabash Valley Christian Youth Camp for 3 years, preached over 100 Gospel meetings in IN, OH, MI, IL, KY, Virginia, WV, FL, OK, PA, TX, CO and Vancouver, British Columbia. He has also given lectures at Harding University, Michigan Christian College, Ohio Valley College, Pepperdine University, Firm Foundation Lectures, Great Lakes Christian College, Freed-Hardeman University, East Tennessee School of Preaching and West Virginia School of Preaching.

The church honored Gene and Henrietta by sending them on

a Bible Lands tour in 1972. They visited Palestine, Lebanon, Cyprus, Greece, Istanbul and Rome.

Gene also served as instructor of Homiletics, Hermeneutics and Counseling from 1971 to 1980 at Central Ohio School for Preachers and Teachers.

The kind, loving and compassionate spirit, coupled with a faithful stand for God's Word, has been a great contribution to the Lord's work wherever they have labored.

It is with great joy that we dedicate this lectureship book to them and pray that God may bless abundantly their golden years in his service.

Denver E. Cooper

Elder to be Honored

Through the years, the church in Pennsboro has been faithful to the Lord and active in his service. That may be attributed largely to a loving and dedicated membership and a godly eldership. The Pennsboro congregation is blessed with four wonderful elders that are deeply committed to the cause of Christ.

Steve Hayhurst has been an elder since December 1993. Having come from a denominational background, Steve's search for the truth has led him to be a serious student of the Word of God. That, combined with his life experiences has enabled him to develop into a very effective shepherd of God's people. He and his faithful wife, Marilyn, are genuine servants in the church.

Francis Sellers has been a lifelong member of the Lord's church and has been a tremendous example of faithfulness. For the past twenty-two years, he has served as an elder. As such, he has provided sound and solid leadership, the value of which, perhaps only heaven knows. Fern, his wife of forty-four years, has been a faithful companion. Together, they have been a wonderful Christian team.

Pete Taylor is in his twelfth year of service as an overseer of God's flock. He comes from a strong Christian family and his father also served as an elder in Pennsboro. Pete has never taken lightly the grave responsibility of watching out for souls. He, and

his good wife Debbie, have devoted their lives to the good of the kingdom.

Lynn Wells was appointed to the eldership in 1983. Since that time he has led by teaching and by example. He, and his devoted wife Carol, continue to be a great blessing to the church. Their loving labors are numerous and all who know them are blessed.

West Virginia School of Preaching would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to these men for their years of service in the kingdom, and for their sacrifice and generosity toward the school. May God bless them with many more years of healthy service to His glory.

Terry G. Jones

Preface

The theme for the 2005, Tenth Annual Victory Lectures of the West Virginia School of Preaching is “Christian Evidences.” The lectureship committee is to be congratulated for choosing this very vital and relevant theme. Those who discern the times are seeing a great and rapid deterioration of Bible knowledge and faith among men and women both in the church and in the world. Perhaps especially true in this regard is confidence in the Bible. Attacks on things sacred have been constant and unrelenting. The constant bombardment of schools, institutions of higher learning, teachers and professors, mass media, and so forth have spread the destructive germs of evolutionary thought, destructive criticism, modernism and skepticism. The result has been devastating to much of the “Christian” world. The continent of Europe has succumbed to anti-Christian philosophies; atheism and agnosticism rule the day. America is usually not far behind. All this has undermined the trust of men of women in God, Christ and the Bible, and by implication, the faith of future generations. This state of unbelief among so many is already being felt by denominations and churches of Christ across America. Church attendance and involvement have come to a slow crawl in many areas; conversions are few; teaching opportunities are scarce. This has resulted in the denominations (and some of our brethren) seeking ways of being “more progressive” and making worship services more “appealing to the masses” to lure people back. Bible believers recognize that this is not the answer! What are we to do, those who are striving hard to be loyal and faithful to God?

This lectureship provides a step in the right direction—we must restore the confidence of men and women in God, Christ and the Bible! There must be a return among those who are members of Christ’s Body, to “...always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15 NKJV). We must be able to aggressively teach again such subjects as, “Why I believe in God and how I know he exists;” “Why I believe that Jesus Christ is God’s only begotten Son, that He is my Savior and Redeemer” and “Why I believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, that it is credible, trustworthy, reliable and is able to give

me faith and hope in things eternal.” A study of Christian evidences is greatly needed in our time to help us all to be confident and sure in our own personal faith and then enable us to pass this on to others by boldly teaching the Holy Scriptures.

The purpose of this lectureship is to present the objective evidence (testimony) of the Scriptures and various other sources to show the many lines of reasoning that establish God’s existence, that he is the omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent, holy Being who is responsible for this universe and all things therein. Material will be presented establishing Jesus of Nazareth as God’s Son—virgin born, sinless, the Master Teacher, the perfect sacrifice for sin, resurrected, ascended and ruling as King of kings and Lord of lords. Lectures will present Evidences from Archaeology, the Bible’s Scientific Accuracy, Answers to Evolution, Answers to Atheism and much more. There will be studies from Bible texts by men who have taken great pains to rightly divide the Word of Truth and presenting it in a clear and understandable manner.

Much is to be gained by those who are in attendance and to those who read the written, permanent record contained in the WVSOP lectureship book this year. Our prayer is that all who hear and read will be strengthened in their faith, increased in hope, stirred to love the souls of men and zealously affected to teach them the evidences of the Bible! To God be the Glory!

Emanuel B. Daugherty

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|------------|
| FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE..... | 10 |
| BY BRAD HARRUB | |
| WHAT ARE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES? | 22 |
| BY BRAD HARRUB | |
| THE AGE OF THE EARTH..... | 37 |
| BY BRAD HARRUB | |
| TEXTUAL STUDY OF PSALM 19..... | 50 |
| BY J. D. CONLEY | |
| THE CAUSAL ARGUMENT PROVES GOD EXISTS | 64 |
| BY EDWARD BENESH | |
| THE FAILURE OF UNBELIEF..... | 92 |
| BY CHARLES C. PUGH III | |
| THE RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS | |
| | 120 |
| BY JOHN M. BROWN | |
| JESUS—THE INCOMPARABLE TEACHER..... | 131 |
| BY BRUCE DAUGHERTY | |
| GENESIS ACCOUNT OF CREATION..... | 137 |
| BY BRAD HARRUB | |
| THE INDESTRUCTIBILITY OF THE BIBLE..... | 153 |
| BY BRAD HARRUB | |
| TEXTUAL STUDY OF ROMANS 1:18-25 | 171 |
| BY RICHARD KELLEY | |
| THE MORAL ARGUMENT PROVES GOD EXISTS | 189 |
| BY MICHAEL E. PHILLIPS | |
| THE UNITY OF THE BIBLE..... | 195 |
| BY DAN KESSINGER | |
| ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS | 210 |
| BY CHARLES J. AEBI | |
| DID JESUS RISE FROM THE DEAD?..... | 221 |
| BY W. TERRY VARNER | |

| | |
|---|------------|
| ANSWERING EVOLUTION..... | 243 |
| BY BRAD HARRUB | |
| PLURALISM | 257 |
| BY BRAD HARRUB | |
| TEXTUAL STUDY OF ACTS 17:16-31 | 280 |
| BY TERRY G. JONES | |
| THE DESIGN ARGUMENT..... | 285 |
| BY JOHN F. BOARD | |
| HOW TO PROVE THE BIBLE IS GOD’S WORD | 303 |
| BY KRISS CECIL-CRIHFIELD | |
| THE MIRACLES OF JESUS..... | 319 |
| BY EDDIE COOPER | |
| ARCHAEOLOGY CONFIRMS DEITY..... | 324 |
| BY LOUIS RUSHMORE | |
| THE BIBLE’S SCIENTIFIC ACCURACY..... | 350 |
| BY DAVID EVERSON | |
| THE INEXHAUSTIBILITY OF GOD’S WORD | 358 |
| BY DENVER E. COOPER | |
| TEXTUAL STUDY OF 2 PETER 1:16-21..... | 368 |
| BY KEITH G. BALL | |
| ANSWERING ATHEISM’S ARGUMENT..... | 377 |
| BY GLENN E. HAWKINS | |
| MESSIANIC PROPHECY PROVES DEITY | 382 |
| BY D. GENE WEST | |
| WILL JESUS FIND FAITH ON EARTH?..... | 395 |
| BY WASH MCCALL | |
| THE VIRGIN BIRTH..... | 396 |
| BY EMANUEL DAUGHERTY | |
| THE CHRISTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT PROVES GOD EXISTS..... | 404 |
| BY STEVE STEVENS | |
| THE GREATNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH | 410 |
| BY FRANK HIGGINBOTHAM | |

Faith and Knowledge

By Brad Harrub

Introduction

We all know one. You know, those young kids who can rattle off questions at speeds that make most Indy drivers jealous. “Why is the sky blue? Why is water wet? What is dirt made of? Can worms smell? How do fax machines work?” While we encourage our young children to imagine and pretend, we often are rewarded with some very colorful, if not mind-boggling questions. Most of these questions we either answer quickly or simply, and then change the subject. Or, we use alternative strategies like food or videos. But what happens when our children begin asking us tough questions that have to do with matters of faith? What happens when our children come home from school and want to know how dinosaurs fit in with the Bible? Or what do we tell them upon discovering that their science class is studying evolution? Oftentimes, these important questions are left unanswered as our children are instructed to quickly “wash up and get ready for dinner.” Unfortunately, today many parents find themselves **reacting** to questions and topics, rather than planning ahead. As Christian parents, we need to be proactive rather than reactive. We need to be on the front line, teaching our children the truth about the world around us as they grow, because if we don’t, there is someone out there more than willing to teach them another version.

Possessing a belief in God is not enough. Our children (and grandchildren!), need to know how to defend that belief. The truth is, one day in the not-so-distant future, our children will find their faith being challenged. Their ability to handle that situation will greatly affect whether they live a life loyal to God or whether they abandon him and his teachings. There are literally thousands of evolutionists currently living who once espoused a belief in Christianity. Today they are apostates, placing more faith in science than the Word of God.

Picture for a moment the heartbreaking scene of two parents sending their young teenage son off to fight in a war. As tears roll down their faces, they cling to their son, wishing their hugs

could somehow ward off the impending military assignment. Dad takes a minute to have a man-to-man talk about his son keeping himself safe, and mom reminds him they will be there to support him throughout his upcoming ordeal. There could be no mistaking that this family understands their son is going to war. And yet, how many families realize there is an ongoing war for their children's very souls? It is literally a fight—one that evolutionists, humanists and skeptics have been waging for many decades. And, sadly, this is a war that has resulted in thousands of spiritual casualties. There are no tears for this send-off. There are no man-to-man talks regarding a son keeping himself safe. Tragically, many parents are so caught up in their day-to-day routines that they don't even realize their son or daughter has been "drafted." And so, many parents just stand by silently as their children go into battle for their souls. Parents, we **need** to change this attitude. If we are ever going to stop the casualties, we **must** change it. We must wake up and realize this is indeed a battle—a battle in which our children **must** know that we are going fight for them until we draw our last breath. We must arm our children with the very best equipment for this war. As Christian parents and grandparents, we must arm ourselves with knowledge based upon evidence, and be prepared to tackle some of these "tough questions" with our children and grandchildren. And we must never be willing to give up.

Faith—Not a Blind Leap

The story could be repeated in just about any congregation. A young man grows up in the church. Following his baptism, he takes an active role in leading singing and waiting on the Lord's Table. Everyone that is familiar with this young man says the same thing: "He is a strong Christian." And yet, within months after entering college, this "strong Christian" is on the path to becoming an unbeliever. His decision to leave the church was not sudden. Rather, it occurred over several weeks, as this young man wrestled with questions tossed out by his newfound friends.

The problem was this young man never developed a foundation for his faith. In fact, a great deal of his belief system was built around the beliefs of his parents. And to compound the problem, on occasions when this young man sought out answers on which to solidify his faith, he commonly received the same

answer: “Well son, we don’t know the answer for everything. Sometimes you just have to believe—you have to take a blind leap of faith.” In other words, this young man “believed” but he did not know why he believed. He was living an “inherited” religion.

So picture an eighteen year-old who suddenly finds his faith challenged by unbelievers. His friends (and professors) confront him with questions and information that directly conflicts with his belief in the God of the Bible. And sadly, all this young man has to defend himself with is the notion that he had taken a “blind leap.” Having, therefore, no good reason to keep on believing, when faced with tough questions, this young man falls headlong into the trap set for him by the “roaring lion”—our adversary, the devil (1 Pet. 5:8). **Satan was successful in his task because we failed in ours.** How many souls have been forfeited as our young people find themselves in a similar situation? They are presented with problems or alleged Bible discrepancies, and due to a lack of sufficient knowledge, they cast their entire belief system aside and begin supporting and defending worldly views. Unfortunately this young man was not the only one we have told that faith is a “blind leap.” Literally thousands have **not** been trained “in the way he should go” (Proverbs. 22:6), because we did not show them the evidences upon which their faith should have been based.

If we are ever going to break this cycle, then the first thing we must teach our young people is that faith is **not** a blind leap. We have the evidences around us to support our beliefs. We can prove the existence of God. We can prove the Bible is the inspired Word of God. We can prove Jesus Christ’s Deity. And we can show the foundation of Christ’s church. But it all starts with establishing the fact that the Christian religion is not simply a “close my eyes and hope it’s true” belief. Only after we establish that primary principle will we have a foundation strong enough upon which to build.

Peter stated that Christians should be “ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you” (1 Pet. 3:15). We are commanded to “contend earnestly for the faith, once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). With an increasing number of people doubting

God's existence, Jesus' Deity, and the inspiration of the Bible, the Christian will find an increased demand upon him to be able to defend these things. Paul stressed that we should "prove all things," and then having done so, "hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21). It was Paul's custom to teach the Gospel by presenting the evidences documenting the truthfulness of Christianity (see Acts 17:2-3; 19:8). That is, in fact, how Peter preached the first Gospel sermon—by presenting the evidence in a defense of Christ's resurrection (Acts 2).

Through a study of the evidences upon which Christianity is based, Christians can come to see that Christianity is not a "pie in the sky" or an "I hope so by and by" kind of religion. On the contrary, Christianity is grounded in historical fact. Its roots are deep and its precepts are provable. Through a study of Christian evidences, we can show young people that they can: (a) **know** God exists, (b) **know** Jesus is God's Son; and (c) **know** the Bible is God's inspired, inerrant, authoritative Word. In so doing, we can give young people a clear view of their God, his Son, his church and their future home of heaven.

Truth does not shrink from exhaustive examination, for it has nothing to fear. Rather, truth welcomes the searchlight of the severest scrutiny, unfailingly confident that it cannot be disproved. A religion that discourages logical examination of its claims is tacitly admitting the doubtfulness of its position. Christianity has no fear of submitting its beliefs to the critical examination of skeptics. Nor does Christianity fear to have its proponents study the claims of other religions (or no religion at all). Truth will not bend or break beneath the onslaught. A faith that cannot withstand a terse, critical examination is a faith not worth having in the first place. As young people are shown the manifold evidences that prove God's existence, Jesus' Sonship and the Bible's inspiration—and as they examine other claims (atheism, agnosticism, skepticism, denominationalism, etc.) under the dissecting microscope of God's Word—eventually they will come to accept, and be able to defend, the one true religion of the one true God.

Biblical Faith and Knowledge

It is not uncommon to hear someone say, in regard to a belief that cannot be proven true, "It's just a matter of faith." Or,

if someone is being advised about a particular course of action, the recommendation might be, “Just launch out on faith.” Certainly it is true to say that the word “faith” is used on occasion in each of these ways. And each of these statements may well express a certain belief. However, such a usage is not **biblical** faith. What is the relationship between biblical faith and belief?

Is faith belief? Yes, faith is a kind of belief. The issue, however, centers on the **kind** of belief that is biblical faith. Belief refers primarily to a judgment that something is true. But belief may be **weak** or **strong**. If I say, “I believe it may rain tomorrow,” that is an example of a weak belief. It is an opinion I hold which, while I hope is true, and thus believe to be true, is nevertheless one that I cannot prove. However, if I say, “I believe the guilty verdict in the criminal’s trial is correct and just,” that is an example of a strong belief because I am able to present factual reasons for my belief, based upon available evidence.

One of the foundational laws of human thought is the Law of Rationality, which demands that we draw only such conclusions as are warranted by adequate evidence. Biblical faith adheres to the Law of Rationality, and seeks conclusions that have a confidence warranted by the available evidence. In producing biblical faith, both **reason** and **revelation** are employed. Using capacities for proper reasoning, the Christian builds faith based upon numerous avenues of evidence. Sometimes that evidence may be based upon testimony provided by revelation. Paul wrote that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

Skeptics, of course, have suggested that reliance upon the testimony of another does not necessarily result in personal knowledge. They would contend that as information is passed along it is diluted or changed. Must testimony by necessity be diluted or destroyed simply because it has been passed from generation to generation? Not at all. We **know** George Washington lived, even though no one for the past several generations ever set eyes on him. We **know** of numerous other people and events in the same manner, as a direct result of credible testimony passed faithfully from age to age.

Further, biblical information provides a good test case for the accuracy of information passed from one person to another. In Mark 16, the account is told of Mary Magdalene having seen the Lord after his resurrection. She immediately went and told other disciples who, the text indicates, “disbelieved” (Mark 16:11). Later, Jesus appeared to two men walking in the country. They, too, returned to the disciples and reported that the Lord was alive, but of the disciples it was said that “neither believed they them” (Mark 16:13). Were these disciples justified in rejecting the report of the Lord’s resurrection merely because they had not been eyewitnesses themselves? Was their disbelief somehow evidence of “intellectual integrity” on their part? Were they to be commended for their rejection of two different reports that originated with trustworthy eyewitnesses?

No, the disciples were not justified in their disbelief. Later, when the Lord appeared to them, “he upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them that had seen him after he was risen” (Mark 16:14). Thus, the Lord verified the principle that Thomas Paine attempted to refute. If Mary Magdalene had expressed accurately to the disciples what she had seen, and they in turn expressed accurately what they had been told, would this not constitute valid evidence-based testimony of the sort that would warrant genuine faith in the resurrection? Facts must be reported before they can be believed. In Acts 18, the circumstances are given in which “many of the Corinthians hearing, believed.” What did they hear that caused them to believe? It was the testimony given by Paul. Faith is thus seen as the acceptance of knowledge based upon credible testimony.

Sometimes the evidence for faith may come by sight, as it did in the case of Thomas when Christ said to him after his resurrection, “Because thou hast **seen** me, thou hast **believed**” (John 20:29a). The Samaritans, mentioned earlier, believed on the Lord. The fact of their **seeing** him did not preclude their **believing** on him (John 4:41). There are times, of course, when faith and sight go together. Men sometimes walk by faith because of sight. Many came in obedience to the Lord during his earthly ministry because of what they heard and saw. During the early years of the church, many believed because of the miracles

they saw performed. Much faith was produced by the actual events that were observed by those present.

But what of those who have **not seen** those events firsthand? Do they have any less of a faith than those who witnessed such events? No, faith is not diminished by lack of sight. Jesus told Thomas, “blessed are they that have **not seen**, and yet have believed” (John 20:29b). Paul observed that “we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). Thomas had faith **after** sight. Today we have faith **without** sight, because of credible testimony from those who were eyewitnesses.

What is the relationship between faith and knowledge? Does faith somehow rule out “knowing”? Can one both “know” and “have faith” at the same time, or is it an **either/or** proposition? In speaking to this issue, Guy N. Woods has written:

More recently, a much more sophisticated form of subjectivism has appeared wherein faith and knowledge are compartmentalized, put in sharp contrast, and each made to exclude the other. The allegation is that a proposition which one holds by faith one cannot know by deduction. This conclusion is reached by taking one definition of the word “know,” putting it in opposition to the word “faith,” and thus making them mutually exclusive. To do this is to err with reference to both faith and to knowledge! (Woods 31)

In John 6:69, Peter said to the Lord: “And we have **believed** and **know** that thou art the Holy One of God.” Writing in 2 Timothy 1:12, Paul said “I know him whom I have believed.” The Samaritans told the woman who brought Christ to them, “Now we **believe**, not because of thy speaking; for we have heard for ourselves, and **know** that this is indeed the Savior of the world” (John 4:42).

In his book on the relationship between faith and knowledge, *The Concept of Rational Belief*, Dick Sztanyo remarked:

Biblical faith is built upon a prior understanding (knowledge) of what is to be believed... Any conception of faith that severs it from its objective, epistemological base (foundation of knowledge) is at variance with biblical teaching! Biblically speaking, one does not believe that God is (or any other items to be accepted “by faith”): (1) against

the evidence; (2) without evidence; and/or (3) beyond the evidence. Rather, one believes on the basis of evidence sufficient to establish the conclusion. (Sztanyo 3)

Faith is directly linked to knowledge. Without knowledge (i.e., evidence), it is impossible to produce faith. Further, knowledge is critical in making faith **active**. Sztanyo has observed in regard to what he terms “rational” belief:

This evidence enlightens the intellect which then makes a volitional commitment not only **possible** (since I now know **what** to believe) but also **rational** (i.e., I **know** what to believe)! Thus, faith is a volitional commitment of an informed intellect! **Knowledge without commitment is disbelief** (John 8:30-46; 12:42,43; Jam. 2:19); **commitment without knowledge is irrationality!** Neither is a genuine option for a Christian.

In the Bible, faith and knowledge are never set in contradistinction. At times, faith may be contrasted with a **means** of obtaining knowledge (e.g., sight), but faith never is contrasted with knowledge or, for that matter, reason. In addition, at times faith and knowledge may have the same object. The Scriptures make it clear that the following can be both **known** and **believed**: (a) God (Isa. 43:10); (b) the Truth (1 Tim. 4:3); and (c) Christ’s Deity (John 6:69; cf. 4:42). Further, knowledge always precedes faith, and where there is no knowledge there can be no biblical faith.

Biblical Knowledge VS. Biblical Ignorance

Solomon was once given the opportunity to name anything he wanted, and God would give it to him. The text states:

In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast shewed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead. Now, O LORD God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. **Give me now wisdom and knowledge**, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great? And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge

my people, over whom I have made thee king: Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like. (2 Chron. 7-12 emp. added)

Solomon asked for wisdom. What would you have asked for? Take just a second to truly consider this question.

In medical school there is a running joke about, “What do you call a medical student that only made C’s and D’s?” The answer of course is “A Doctor.” There are those individuals who have approached the field of medicine with the attitude of, “I want to do as little as it takes to make me a doctor.” They are perfectly happy with the C’s and D’s. Unfortunately I think this attitude is creeping into the church, except here we are saying, “I want to do as little as possible to be a Christian.” We are no longer hungry for knowledge. We don’t really want to study and learn from God’s Word. We just want to know enough to “get by.” But with weak knowledge often comes weak faith.

The following are three excuses often given for biblical ignorance:

1. I already know enough. And I would have to agree with that, to an extent. As a body of believers we have done an excellent job in expounding the steps of salvation and hot issues like instrumental music and taking the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week; and most Christians can even back those up with Scripture. But what happens when we step outside that area?

Where would you turn to demonstrate the inspiration of the Bible? What happens when our children ask us if dinosaurs existed, and if so, were they on Noah’s ark? What do we tell our young people when they ask us how old the earth is? Why is it that our young people today can’t hold their own in arguments against evolutionists, and therefore give up and accept it in college?

Unfortunately, I believe overall biblical knowledge within the church of Christ is on the decline. Fact of the matter is we have surrounded ourselves with time saving gadgets, and we still don’t study the Bible. We accept a “watered down, ‘cliff-note’ version.” But what about the true meat of the Word? Hebrews 5:12-14 says:

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

We all remember the church at Laodicea being called lukewarm in Revelation 3:14-16, but if we back up to the Book of Colossians, we see where Paul exhorts those same Christians to be constant in Christ.

For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:1-3).

In verse 8 of that same chapter, Paul warns: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” Well we all know what happened to the church at Laodicea. At what point did they forget their first love?

2. The second excuse often given for biblical ignorance is time, or rather a lack there of it.

Hear this: When someone says they do not have enough time, they are in essence saying, “It is not a big enough priority for me right now.” We have all been given the exact same 24 hours in every day—exactly the same amount Moses, Jacob, Abraham and Paul had. But how we prioritize our time during those 24 hours may differ greatly. It’s always been interesting to me how young people find time to study for the driving tests, or for the SAT, and they always have time for sports activities and practices, but how much time do they spend studying God’s Word? Is Sunday and Wednesday night the only times their Bibles get opened?

Adults, how is it that we have time for our favorite television series, or fishing, or time to read our favorite novels,

check our email, or play basketball, and yet the Bible quietly collects dust? How much time do our children and grandchildren see us studying the Bible? How much time do we spend first learning, and second teaching to our children? Are our children taught diligently like the children of Israel were commanded in Deuteronomy 6, “when thou sittest in thy house, walkest in thy way, when thou liest down, when thou risest up?” Do our children only hear about Jesus Christ inside the church building?

3. The third reason we are suffering from biblical ignorance is lethargy. It appears as though many have taken on the attitude: “I’m just waiting for the right knowledgeable person to come along and teach me.”

This excuse rests firmly at the base of many people’s brains, because they believe that sooner or later the right person will come along and by some marvelous method we will suddenly know the Bible. As such, they feel absolutely no motivation to learn on their own. They become stagnant. Let me ask you this: Where is that person going to come from? If churches of Christ around the country are suffering from a decline in knowledge, then where are these great teachers going to come from if we don’t take action for ourselves and become them? And why are we going to leave the responsibility up to “expert” teachers?

True learning must come from within. It is unfair to rely on preachers and elders for our knowledge. Sure, they can help us build our knowledge, but we must first lay the foundation. Second Peter 1:5 states: “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge.” Are we truly adding knowledge? Or are we satisfied with just maintaining our present position? Back to the original question: If God were to grant you anything at all, would your emphasis be on spiritual things or worldly things?

Conclusion

In Hebrews 11, we find the “Hall of Fame of Faith,” because each person acted out of obedient faith to God’s commands. We are told “by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain...” (11:7), “by faith Noah... prepared an ark to the saving of his house...” (11:7), and that “by faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go unto a place which he was to receive as an inheritance...” (11:8). What

does “by faith” mean in these statements? Were these people acting in the absence of evidence? Did they have no knowledge of **what** they were doing, or **why** they were doing it? Were they taking a “leap of faith”?

In each of these instances, the people involved acted because they had **knowledge** upon which to base their faith. Cain and Abel obviously had been instructed on what would be a “more excellent” sacrifice. Noah had the dimensions of the ark set before him by God. Abraham did not set out on a journey with no destination; he traveled by directions provided by the Almighty. None of these individuals took a “leap of faith” or acted on what they felt was a “strong probability.” Rather, they acted because their knowledge produced biblical faith.

Let us, like Paul, never be ashamed of the Gospel, recognizing that it is the “power of God unto that salvation” (Rom. 1:16). Let us study diligently to learn it well, and then in turn teach it to our children from the time we arise in the morning until the time that we lie down to sleep at night (Deut. 11:18-21), so that when the time comes for them to “leap” they will find themselves able to see a firm foundation underfoot.

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What Are Christian Evidences?

By Brad Harrub

Introduction

He knows his mom has told him not to scuff his shoes as he walks home from school, but that rock is just too tempting. It's the perfect size and just round enough that it might roll forever if Little Johnny kicks it just right. Besides, today is special. Today Johnny had the best day ever in the first grade! And so with the energy that only an excited first grader possesses, Little Johnny sends that rock spinning down the street past his house. It is 3:15 p.m., and mom stops folding laundry and begins contemplating dinner, when she hears the unmistakable sound of little feet on the sidewalk. Within seconds the back door bursts open and Little Johnny comes running down the hallway into the brightly lit kitchen. As mom frantically tries to keep the mud tracks off the floor, Johnny circles round and round, shouting: "Guess what video we watched today at school!" With dustpan in one hand, and an old wooden broom in the other mom replies, "What Johnny?" Screaming at ear-piercing levels that were clearly audible to all of the neighbors Little Johnny yells, "Dinosaurs!" And without taking another breath he begins rattling off the names of dinosaurs. "We saw a brachiosaurus, apatosaurus, deinonychus, triceratops, stegosaurus, tyrannosaurus rex and a velociraptor! Oh, mom you should have seen them. They were so cool mom. Tell me everything you know about them mom? I want to get some books about them. Can we mom? Can we please?"

And so, without any advance notice, Mom is thrown into the realm of the dinosaurs. Only minutes ago she was folding laundry, wishing she were elsewhere. Now she would be content to wind back the hands of time and fold those clothes. No one warned her that motherhood included needing advanced degrees in dinosaur trivia. For the next several days the questions continue. "When were the dinosaurs around? Why did they become extinct? Were they cold-blooded or warm blooded?" Poor mom—she can cook dinner, wash clothes, clean the kitchen, watch the children and talk on the phone all at the same time...but dinosaurs? All mom knows about dinosaurs can be

summed up like this: They were big, and they were green. Aside from that, mom has to rely on books to provide Little Johnny with the answers that he so desperately seeks.

Within a week, their house has been turned into a virtual dinosaur hall of fame. Dinosaur books, puzzles, games and action figures can be found in just about every room. Every dime Little Johnny had saved up has been spent on dinosaur books. You know the one's. The books with all big colorful pictures on slick glossy paper. The same one's that usually somewhere around page one, paragraph one, say something like, "All life on our planet changes and develops over many millions of years. This is called evolution. Millions of years ago the dinosaurs roamed the Earth, long before man ever existed." Even those "harmless" sticker books that she bought Little Johnny mention that dinosaurs roamed the Earth 225 million years ago.

Ask an average 10 year-old when the dinosaurs existed and see what response you get. Follow that question up with one about the men that lived with the dinosaurs and watch how quickly their brows become wrinkled. Chances are, those excited faces that were all ready to share a plethora of dinosaur trivia with you will immediately change into puzzled looks accompanied by troubling frowns. For you see, we live in a world that has taught our children that dinosaurs existed many millions of years ago, prior to the existence of man. And so off they go to school and learn about the dinosaurs that existed millions of years ago. But what happens when our children then try to reason this with the Genesis account of creation?

Ask yourself what normally is the first introduction most young people have into the humanistic, atheistic, Godless world of organic evolution. Dinosaurs! Once the stage has been set that the earth is millions and millions of years old, then it becomes easy to slip in evolutionary rationale for human existence. What better way to build a foundation than to get our children hooked on dinosaurs—something that is rarely dealt with in a religious setting, and something that most parents are not experts at. First and foremost, we need to understand that this is a fight. A fight that most parents are currently losing—and many do not even realize that there is a battle going on. We carry our children and grandchildren to Bible class and worship. We tuck them in at

night, and one day we wake up, only to realize that they have lost their souls because someone out there did their job better and before we did ours!

Evolutionists around the globe welcome our children with open arms as they relay to them their theories regarding the origin of man. By removing God's role in creation, evolutionists urge students to question both his existence and his authority. Children who once were faithful to the Lord, and who led singing or devotionals in the worship assembly, go off to the local university to receive an education, never to darken the doors of a church building again. Why? What are those men dressed in white coats revealing to our children and grandchildren? Is the evidence for evolution really that strong? **Definitely not!** In fact, regarding human origins, paleontologist Douglas Palmer admitted: "The trouble is we probably know more about the evolution of extinct trilobites than we do about human evolution." (Palmer 50). Lynn Margulis, who was once married to Carl Sagan, stated concerning neo-Darwinism: "**It is totally wrong.** It's wrong like infectious medicine was wrong before Pasteur. It's wrong like phrenology is wrong. Every major tenet of it is wrong" (Kelly 470 emp. added). Margulis is not alone in challenging the stronghold of Darwinian theory, but few have been so blunt.

So why are so many people still clinging to this fictitious theory? Why is it that eight-year-olds can easily identify the design in nature, yet "highly educated" individuals whom we allow to teach our children refuse to acknowledge the word "design"? Consider this: by admitting there is a design (whether it be in nature or the human body), then there must, in fact, be a Designer. **To believe in "God" means to admit a need to submit to that higher power.** Yet, today everybody wants to "go their own way" and "do their own thing." Aldous Huxley noted: "Every great advance in natural knowledge has involved the absolute rejection of authority" (Applewhite et al. 470). As our knowledge has increased over the last few centuries, our society has experienced a strong shift from respecting authority to despising authority. And so, colleges are filled with young students soaking up knowledge under the tutelage of professors who refuse any belief in God and who teach that we are simply

here by random chance, having descended from ape-like creatures.

The word creation is never mentioned in biology classes in reference to the origin of life, and the Genesis account of creation is only scoffed at or mentioned sarcastically. By the time many individuals graduate from college, the Bible they grew up believing, has been so ridiculed that it quickly becomes relegated to the bottom of a dusty old bookshelf—never to be opened again. Yet, in Peter’s first epistle, he instructed: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15). Statistics indicate that our young people are not properly prepared to give an answer or defense when their instructors begin to tear away at their faith. Professors categorize God’s Word as little more than a poorly written history book. These “highly educated” men no longer treat it as “God-breathed,” because to do so would be admitting there is a higher power. By declaring that “the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Psa. 19:1), we are paying homage to Someone capable of more than mortal men—and that Someone rightly deserves our obedience and respect. And unfortunately, many of our children are casting their Bibles aside in favor of science and the theories of men.

Perhaps you have seen the statistics. Even by conservative estimates, those of us in the churches of Christ are losing between 60% and 90% of our young people after they graduate from high school. “Little Johnny” grows up, is sent to college, vocational school, work, etc. and finds himself with more freedom than he has ever experienced. There is no mom around to make him clean up his room; there is no dad around to force him to mow the lawn. And suddenly, it dawns on Johnny that there is no one to make him attend worship. Johnny is “free!”

But in his rush to put to use his newly found freedom, Johnny forgets that with freedom always comes responsibility—to his parents, to himself and especially to the God who created him. Little by little, worldly pressures and pleasures push spiritual values out of Johnny’s life. And although Johnny may espouse a “belief” in God and the Bible, he long since has given

up any practical, day-to-day, life-influencing commitment to those values he once held dear. For all practical purposes, Johnny is gone.

Why Did Johnny Fall Away?

Why did Johnny fall away? What caused him to leave the Lord and his church, and instead turn his attention to worldly matters? Likely, of course, there are many possible answers. However, I would like to concentrate on only one answer. **Something undermined Johnny's commitment and caused him to give up the ideals he once held dear.** What persuaded this youngster to abandon his faith in God, his trust in Jesus and his reliance upon the Bible? Perhaps Johnny lost his faith because he never knew the evidences upon which his faith should have rested in the first place. In other words, Johnny "believed" but he did not know **why** he believed. He was living an "inherited" religion. Having, therefore, no good reason to keep on believing, when faced with the temptation to be free, Johnny fell headlong into the trap set for him by the "roaring lion"—our adversary, the devil (1 Pet. 5:8). **Satan was successful in his task because we failed in ours.** Unfortunately, Johnny, and many others like him have been told that faith is a "blind leap." We did not train Johnny "in the way he should go" (Prov. 22:6), because we did not show him the evidences upon which his faith should have been based.

The Need to Teach Christian Evidences

Many in the church today are not acquainted with the field of Christian evidences, or with the great good that can be accomplished through the proper use of this marvelous tool. Some preachers, teacher and parents wonder whether there is a proper place for instruction in Christian evidences within the teaching framework of the local congregation or family unit. Some—not knowing how valuable training in this area can be—have assumed it is of interest only to the "intellectually elite." Yet, nothing could be farther from the truth.

A study in Christian evidences concentrates on an examination of the many evidences upon which Christianity is based. This entails a study of the evidences for God's existence, the Deity and Sonship of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, the

truthfulness of the creation account in Genesis 1, etc. It helps ground our faith in fact by providing logical, sound, defensible answers to questions that so often arise—especially in the minds of young people.

Teaching Christian Evidences—Why?

Why, exactly, should we engage in the study of Christian evidences? First, we should study Christian evidences because biblical authority demands it. Peter stated that Christian should be “ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you” (1 Pet. 3:15). We are commanded to “contend earnestly for the faith, once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). With an increasing number of people doubting God’s existence, Jesus’ deity, and the inspiration of the Bible, the Christian will find an increased demand upon him to be able to defend these things. Paul stressed that we should “prove all things,” and then having done so, “hold fast to that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). It was Paul’s custom to teach the Gospel by presenting the evidences documenting the truthfulness of Christianity (see Acts 17:2-3; 19:8). That is, in fact, how Peter preached the first Gospel sermon—by presenting the evidence in a defense of Christ’s resurrection (Acts 2).

Second, we should study Christian evidences because it will strengthen our faith. Through a study of the evidences upon which Christianity is based, Christians can come to see that Christianity is not a “pie in the sky” or an “I hope so by and by” kind of religion. On the contrary, Christianity is grounded in historical fact. Its roots are deep and its precepts are provable. Through a study of Christian evidences, we can show young people that they can: (a) **know** God exists, (b) **know** Jesus is God’s Son, and (c) **know** the Bible is God’s inspired, inerrant, authoritative Word. In so doing, we can give young people a clear view of their God, his Son, his church and their future home of heaven.

Third, we should study Christian evidences to demonstrate the validity of the Christian system. Truth does not shrink from exhaustive examination, for it has nothing to fear. Rather, truth welcomes the searchlight of the severest scrutiny, unfailingly confident that it cannot be disproved. A religion that discourages logical examination of its claims is tacitly admitting the

doubtfulness of its position. Christianity has no fear of submitting its beliefs to the critical examination of skeptics. Nor does Christianity fear to have its proponents study the claims of other religions (or no religion at all). Truth will not bend or break beneath the onslaught. A faith that cannot withstand a terse, critical examination is a faith not worth having in the first place. As young people are shown the manifold evidences that prove God's existence, Jesus' Sonship and the Bible's inspiration—and as they examine other claims (atheism, agnosticism, skepticism, denominationalism, etc.) under the dissecting microscope of God's Word—eventually they will come to accept, and be able to defend, the one true religion of the one true God.

Fourth, we should study Christian evidences so that we can properly defend Christianity against the attacks made upon it by its enemies. From the philosopher who claims it is impossible to know anything at all, to the scientist who claims that we are little more than “naked apes,” attacks upon Christianity are never-ending. The atheist says he **knows** God doesn't exist, the agnostic says neither he nor anyone else **can know** God exists, the skeptic says he **doubts** that God exists, the infidel says that **if** God exists, it is **not** the God of the Bible, and so on. Various forms of these false philosophies have crept into the church in some places, and have caused the untaught and the unstable to fall away. Children are especially vulnerable to such false teachings, as often they are required to study under teachers or professors who openly are antagonistic to Christianity. A young person's plastic, impressionable mind is a prime target for the devil's ungodly schemes. It is our responsibility to fill the minds of our children with truth (and evidences for that truth) so they will be able to withstand the “fiery darts of the evil one” (Eph. 6:16). It has been said that a child's mind is like Jell-O®—and that our job is to fill with all the “good stuff” before it “sets.” A study of the evidences supporting Christianity is a fine step in the right direction toward protecting both our children and the future of the church.

Fifth, we should study Christian evidences because by doing so we can save not only our own souls, and the souls of our children, but the souls of others as well. One thing is certain:

We cannot teach what we do not know (Heb. 5:12). Our goal is heaven (Heb. 11:13-16). Our mission is not only to get there ourselves, but to take others with us as well (Matt. 28:18-20). It is our task to learn God's Word (Psa. 119:11), and then to convey that Word to others for their ultimate salvation (Mark 16:15-16; John 3:16). Our society today is a questioning one. Rightly so! Religion cannot and must not rest on presumptive grounds or traditional heritage. People must investigate the claims of Christianity, and then see for themselves that those claims are both legitimate, factual and, above all, true.

Lastly, we must show our children and grandchildren that Genesis is more than just a "story." All too often Christians relegate Genesis 1-11 as mythological rather than historical—but consider what that is telling our children. We espouse that the Bible is God's Word, but we say that creation and Noah's flood are just "stories" that were passed on to teach a lesson. If we are willing to discount the historicity of Genesis, then we should also toss out every book in the Bible that refers to it. In doing so, we will find ourselves left with only Jude, Philemon, 2 and 3 John. Compromising is not an option!

Teaching Christian Evidences—How?

Several years ago, Guy N. Woods, the late, lamented editor of the *Gospel Advocate*, carried out an extensive survey among churches of Christ nationwide. The results were not very flattering. According to the survey: 40% of those surveyed admitted that they attended only one worship service a week; 50% indicated that they did not know why churches of Christ do not use instrumental music in worship; 10% believed that one church is as good as another; 90% did not subscribe to a religious publication; 75% could not find the plan of salvation in the Bible.

These kinds of statistics speak volumes. They indicate a lack of Bible study, an attitude of indifference, and a failure to comprehend both basic Bible doctrines and the nature of the church. Little wonder we are losing some 60-90% of our young people after they graduate from high school. They merely are rushing to fit into the mold that so many parents and other church members have set for them. It is, quite simply, a matter of: "What you **do** speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you **say**."

Needless to say, this is not the way God intended that things be. Nor has it always been this way. The early Christians searched the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11) and “went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). These faithful followers of Jesus **knew** what they believed, **were not ashamed** of what they believed and, above all, **taught** what they believed. Men such as Moses Lard, Alexander Campbell, Raccoon John Smith and others like them who sought to restore New Testament Christianity realized that the Scriptures did not teach denominationalism or anything akin to it, but rather a singular, true church. They had to be able to **prove** such convictions, else their departure from the manmade institutions of which they formerly were members would have seemed both foolish and fickle. Nothing has changed. As Christians, we today must believe strongly in the Word of God, and be able both to proclaim and defend it at all times and to all classes of people (Jude 3). Above all, we must impress upon our children that our beliefs are not our own, and are not of our own design; they are God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 2:13; Rom. 10:17). As such, they are truth (John 8:32), and must be taken to a lost and dying world (Matt. 1:21).

How Do We Teach Our Children Christian Evidences?

The question then becomes: How do we go about teaching our children Christian evidences? First and foremost, **we must begin in the home**. We must encourage parents and children alike to become daily Bible readers. It may be difficult, busy schedules being what they are, but it is not impossible—and it is important! Begin by choosing short passages or single chapters. Choose passages that emphasize the use of evidences by biblical writers in their discussions with first century people (e.g., Acts 2; Acts 17; Rom. 1; etc.). Choose also passages that emphasize God’s commands in this regard (Jude 3; 1 Pet. 3:15; etc.) Reinforce two points: (a) God has commanded us to be ready to defend the faith, and (b) the inspired writers did exactly that in their writings and teachings.

Second, we should request a specific Sunday morning or Wednesday evening class devoted to the study of Christian evidences. Secure teachers and co-teachers who either already

are familiar with Christian evidences, or those who have adequate time to prepare properly. Use only the **very best** teachers who recognize the sacrifices they will have to make to do their job well.

Third, we should choose good, sound material to be used in class, so that the students not only have at their disposal additional information (besides what will be covered in class), but so they have a ready, reliable source to which they can turn in later years for answers to questions that may arise as they mature and grow older. Give the students diagrams, charts, reprints from journals and magazines, tracts and pamphlets, synopses of major arguments—anything that will provide a “mini-library” that students can use for further study. I cannot overemphasize the need to select good, sound materials. The souls of our young people are at stake!

A Word of Caution

A word of caution is in order at this point. First, the tendency exists for some to think that the use of evidences is **an end within itself**. We must not fall into this trap. The use of Christian evidences is a **tool**; it is a **means** to an end—not the end itself. The judicious use of Christian evidences can help people see that Christianity is a religion based on historical, verifiable fact. People, however, must possess a seeking attitude (Prov. 8:17). Without such, little may be accomplished. Be forewarned, therefore, that the use of Christian evidences does have limitations.

Second, unfortunately there are those working in the field of Christian evidences whose teachings are filled with error. They produce books, tapes, films, etc. that are unsound and unscriptural. They speak about the “probability of God’s existence,” the “leap of faith,” the fact that one “cannot **know** God exists,” the fact that “evolution and the Bible show almost complete agreement,” and the like. When souls are at stake, **there is no room for errors such as these**. We must exercise caution in choosing the materials and/or speakers to which young people are exposed.

Teaching Christian Evidences—What

In his book, *Set Forth Your Case*, Clark Pinnock provided

remarkable insight into the use of Christian evidences when he wrote:

The aim of apologetics is not to trick a person into becoming a Christian against his will. It strives rather at laying the evidence for the Christian gospel before men in an intelligent fashion so that they can make a meaningful commitment...The heart cannot delight in what the mind rejects as false. Apologetics presents compelling reasons to the mind for receiving Christ as Savior into the total man. Faith is based upon credible evidence which people can recognize as trustworthy in accord with proper criteria for truth. (Pinnock 11)

An essential function of Christian evidences is to show that Christianity is the one true religion of the one true God, and as such, is based on truth claims that the unbeliever can study, understand and accept. Another essential function of Christian evidences is to provide the believer with a firm foundation for his own belief, so that his faith may be grounded and rooted in the knowledge of God's truth. The Christian system is not now, nor was it ever intended to be, based on fiction or myth. Instead, it is anchored in the most credible of realities.

What Do We Teach Our Children About Christian Evidences?

First, the proof for God's existence is an important part of any study in Christian evidences. God's existence is both **provable** and **knowable**. Man can know God exists, and he can know that he knows it. This is a crucial point. If man cannot know God exists, then he cannot know (i.e., with certainty) that the Bible is God's Word. If he cannot **know** the Bible is God's Word, then he cannot **know** that Jesus is the Son of God. If he cannot **know** that Jesus is the Son of God, then he cannot **know** that he is saved. Yet this is in direct conflict with 1 John 5:13 ("These things have I written unto you, that you may **know** that ye have eternal life..."). If the Christian cannot know that God exists, what, then, distinguishes him from the agnostic? Christians are not agnostics.

Amazingly, some today claim that God's existence is neither knowable nor provable. Instead, they suggest, it is **more probable** that God exists than that he does not. Why cannot

those who advocate this idea see the logical results of such a concept? If it merely is **more probable** that God exists than that he does not, there nevertheless remains a **probability** (however small) **that God does not exist!** This notion is false. God's existence is not a matter of probability. Certainly, God's existence cannot be proved **scientifically** (i.e., like one would prove that a sack of potatoes weighs five pounds), but direct, empirical, scientific proof is not the only kind of proof available. We must not yield to the false concept that God's existence is unknowable.

Second, the proof of the Deity and Sonship of Jesus Christ forms an important part of the study of Christian evidences. In Acts 8:35 when the text says that Philip, in speaking to the Ethiopian eunuch, "preached unto him Jesus," and no more, it is because **there is no more**. Christianity without Christ is no Christianity at all. If the Deity of Jesus somehow is negated, all Christianity falls with it. We must impress upon youngsters that Jesus was who he claimed to be—and that the proofs to support his claim are irrefutable!

Any study of Jesus' Deity and Sonship, then, would include an in-depth examination of his virgin birth, his life, his teachings, his miracles, his bodily resurrection from the dead, etc. The historical, philosophical and biblical evidences supporting Jesus' Deity are multitudinous, and are able to prove to any open-minded person that he is who he claimed to be. Young people need to be protected from false doctrines that assert Jesus was a simply "good teacher" or a "wonderful prophet." Those are not options that Christ left open to us. Either he is who he claimed to be—the Son of God—or he is worse than the devil of hell, for he is both a liar and a hypocrite because he told men to trust their eternal salvation to him. Young people need to know that **Jesus is their risen Lord**.

Third, the proof of the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible forms an important part of the study of Christian evidences. Convince a young person that the Bible is **not** fully inspired, and he quickly will realize that: (a) God makes mistakes, and therefore is not to be trusted, and (b) if the Bible is not what it claims to be, then in actuality there is **no objective moral standard** to be followed in this life. There is no need to

dwell on the fruits of this kind of thinking. Evil trees produce evil fruits (Matt. 7:17). With no perfect, pure, trustworthy God—and therefore no objective standard or right and wrong—each man ends up doing what is “right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6). As the prophet Jeremiah correctly observed: “it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps” (Jer. 10:23).

Fourth, the proof of their creation at the hand of an Almighty God forms an important part of the study of Christian evidences. We must not allow our children to become convinced that they owe their ultimate origin to the blind, chance, naturalistic processes of organic evolution that allegedly provided them with an ancestry rooted in ape-like creatures millions of years ago. Instead, we must ground them in the truth contained within Genesis 1 (and elsewhere within God’s Word) that speaks of the lofty creation of man by God. We must help them see that there is an important difference between having evolved by accident from the primordial slime on some primeval seashore and having been created “in the image of God” (Gen. 1:26-27). We must not be afraid to analyze the scientific data, and show them the latest findings, because the Truth will always point towards an Intelligent Designer—God. **If we give, or allow anyone else to give, our children a false concept of their origin, they likewise will have a false concept of their purpose and destiny!**

Conclusion

The study of Christian evidences is an excellent way to provide the “strength of faith” Christians so desperately need in this day and age. It is an important asset in preparing for assaults likely to be made on our faith. Additionally, it is an excellent tool to use in evangelism. And it forms a part of the repertoire or knowledge needed by the Christian to convert the lost and to keep his own soul from apostasy. As the Christian strives to show himself “approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed” (2 Tim. 2:15), he will find studies in the area of Christian evidences a valuable part of that process. The knowledge that is gained from such a study will help him “rightly divide the word of truth”—something absolutely essential to salvation. Let us, like Paul, never be ashamed of the Gospel, recognizing that it is the “power of God unto that

salvation” (Rom. 1:16). Let us study diligently to learn it well, and then in turn teach it to our children from the time we arise in the morning until the time that we lie down to sleep at night (Deut. 11:18-21).

Biographical Sketch

Brad Harrub holds an earned B.S. degree in biology from Kentucky Wesleyan College (1993), and an earned Ph.D. (2001) degree in Anatomy and Neurobiology from the University of Tennessee, School of Medicine. Dr. Harrub has received numerous academic honors, including a presidential scholarship and a grant from the Center of Excellence in the Department of Neurobiology; he was listed in *Who's Who's* among Colleges and Universities, and in 2002-2003 he was listed in the *International Who's Who*. In 2003, Dr. Harrub was an invited speaker at the International Conference on Creationism, where he presented lessons on fossil man and the Noahic Flood. Brad has made several guest appearances on the television show “Origins.”

He currently serves as co-founder of Focus Press, a new work that publishes *Think* magazine. In addition, he serves as editor of *Reason & Revelation*, a monthly journal on Christian evidences. Dr. Harrub is a featured writer in many brotherhood journals. He has been published in several peer-reviewed scientific journals for research he performed. He is a member of the Society for Neuroscience. In addition he coauthored the books, *Diamonds in the Rough: Nuggets of Truth from God's Word*, *Investigating Christian Evidences* and *The Truth About Human Origins* and has written many tracts. Currently, Dr. Harrub is a Director of Focus Press, in addition to serving as the Director of Scientific Information for Apologetics Press, a non-profit, tax-exempt work dedicated to the defense of the New Testament. He also serves as a faculty member for the Internet School of Preaching, and has been involved in mission trips in Russia, Nicaragua and Ukraine.

Dr. Harrub conducts more than 35 weekend seminars each year all over the United States on *The Truth About Origins*. He has spoken at numerous youth rallies, training series, lectureships and workshops on the subject of creation/evolution, medical ethics and has taught classes to all age groups on these

topics and others related to them. He is married to Melinda (Mayes) Harrub, and has three children: Will (5), Reese (3) and Claire (1). He and his family worship with the Woodson Chapel church of Christ in Nashville, TN where he makes his home.

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The Age of the Earth

By Brad Harrub

Summer was finally here, and warmer weather meant that little Johnny could finally camp out in the backyard with his friends. On this particular occasion, Johnny and his friend Michael were lying in their sleeping bags, looking up at the stars. They had already talked about their favorite video games, their favorite movies and even girls. But without either one of them realizing it, their conversation took a turn toward religion.

It all started when Michael pointed out one of the brightest stars in the sky and asked Johnny how long it would take a rocket to reach it. Not knowing much about rockets or intergalactic distances, Johnny guessed “20 million light-years.” They then began to try and count the stars, and after many missed attempts, Michael finally asked: “How old do you think the earth is?” Little Johnny had considered this question before, and while he was not 100% sure of the correct answer, he felt he knew enough to speculate that the earth was at least a billion years old.

With his eyebrows raised, Michael immediately asked Johnny how that fit in with what they had learned in Bible class. Did that mean Adam and Eve were around a billion years ago? Johnny had also previously considered this question as well. Without skipping a beat, he told Michael that he was pretty sure that God made everything a long time ago, and then over time everything developed. As they stared up at the stars, the two boys began discussing the Genesis creation account, and soon they were working on a logical solution that allowed for billions of years within God’s creation. Maybe each of the days really represented a million years (after all, they both had watched television shows that documented the earth to be billions of years old). Right about the time they were ready to incorporate their conversation into the foundation of their religious beliefs, Johnny’s mom walked out with some cookies and Kool-Ade®. “What are you two boys discussing out here?”

It is true that one cannot turn to a specific passage in the Bible and find the **exact** age of the Earth. However, there are sufficient historical data, and enough biblical evidence, that a

diligent student can narrow down the upper limits and come up with a reasonable approximate age. The information is contained within the Scriptures, but it is up to Christians to dig it out and teach it to their children.

Sadly, our children run off to school and learn that one of the central dogmas of science is, “If we cannot measure it with our five senses, then it must not be real.” The scientific method, which is taught in almost every college freshman biology class, is concerned only with those things that can be measured, tested and observed (a concept that is somewhat ironic, given that evolution itself has never been measured or observed and cannot be tested). Anything that falls outside of this scientific method is called into question. **Thus, our society has been trained to discount and discredit ideas or theories that cannot be measured, tested and observed.** This mantra is repeated over and over by evolutionists who claim that special creation is nothing more than “smoke and mirrors” for organized religion. After all, it relies on supernatural miracles—which, scientists are quick to point out, are unscientific in nature. As such, many young Christians find themselves trying to defend their faith by **excising** miracles from the Bible. And then, to appear even more intellectually elite, those willing to compromise look for ways in which they can drag evolutionary concepts into God’s Word.

Because of the prevailing ideas of an ancient cosmos, and an old earth, many people (like Johnny and Michael) have tried to find ways to fit evolution and its billions-of-years time frame into the biblical account of creation. In essence, they still espouse belief in God and the Bible, but they also pledge a great deal of allegiance to science and evolutionary theory. As the old adage suggests, they want to “have their cake and eat it, too.” But can both the Bible and evolutionary theory be true? Consider the following evidences against an ancient earth.

1. A continuous Theme throughout the Bible: Redemption

There is a term for individuals who want to cling to both the Bible and to evolution. They are commonly known as “theistic evolutionists.” “Theistic” derives from the Greek *theos*, which means “God.” They claim, “Yes, I believe God made the heavens and the Earth, but maybe then he just stepped back and

allowed things to happen through evolution.” This was the notion that was running through little Johnny’s head as he lay there under the stars.

Thus, “Bible believers” find themselves in the awkward position of compromising the opening chapters of the Bible. But consider this: If Genesis 1-11 is tossed aside as merely a mythological story, then we must toss out the entire Bible, because the one major theme that is taught throughout the Bible is redemption. Mankind’s relationship with God started at the apex of the creation week in the Garden of Eden, and degenerated from there. We were literally the pinnacle of God’s creative activities, then by sin, we fell. Christians need to be fully aware that theistic evolution teaches that man started at the **bottom** as some amoeba-like creature, and evolved his way to the **top**. Therefore, either man started at the top and fell, as the Bible indicates, or he started at the bottom and rose, as evolution teaches. Both cannot be correct!

The prophets long ago declared the fall of humans, and the resulting need for a Savior. Scripture indicates that this was the reason for Christ’s death—to bring men back into a covenant relationship with God. If men truly did not fall as described in the creation account, then why did Jesus Christ, the Son of God, come to this planet and suffer a cruel death on the cross?

2. The Gospels Teach Creation

Those who discount or discredit the creation account as literal may as well get out their scissors and excise all of the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Jesus Christ himself made reference to the creation when he stated in Matthew 19:4 (cf. Mark 10:6): “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female.” These words indicate that Adam and Eve had been on the Earth “from the beginning of creation” (Mark 10:6). According to evolutionists, man did not evolve on the scene until about 3-4 million years ago. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that if the earth is supposedly 5-6 billion years old, then the last 3-4 million years is not, by any stretch of the imagination, “from the beginning.” Rather, it is “from the end.” Therefore, we are left with a choice: Either Jesus Christ lied and the evolutionists are correct, or we can believe that the words Jesus Christ spoke are

true, and therefore evolution is 100% wrong. The belief in theistic evolution allows for the Savior to be called a liar!

Of course, skeptics also would have to cut out the Book of John, because the first few verses of Chapter One review the beginning and creation. Luke would need to be removed as well, because in Luke Chapter Three, Christ is traced all the way back to Adam. Other Scriptures such as Acts 4:24, Acts 17:25, Romans 1:20, Colossians 1:16, 1 Timothy 2:13, Hebrews 1:2, 1 Peter 4:19 and Revelation 4:11 also would be called into question if the creation account is merely a nice “story” and not historically accurate. **As a matter of fact, the only books that do not refer to the Book of Genesis in some form are the books of Philemon, and 2 and 3 John!**

3. Was the Last “Adam” Mythological?

Sadly, little Johnny and Michael are hardly the only two individuals who have ever questioned the authenticity of Adam and Eve. Many young people question the first couple’s literal existence at some point in time. Since that is the case, we as parents need to be ready to provide them with the answer. Paul stated in Romans 1:20-21 that the things God had made had been “perceived” even “since the creation of the world.” Think about that for a moment. How can one say, “Adam was just a myth. We know today that man originated from a Neanderthal-type creature”? Who was there to “perceive,” if not Adam? Furthermore, if this were true, why did the inspired apostle Paul pen these words: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22), and then in reference to Christ a few verses later write, “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45)? If Adam and Eve are merely mythological, does this mean that this “last Adam,” Jesus Christ, was mythological as well?

4. Could There Be a Gap between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2?

Theistic evolutionists need lots of time for evolution, so they try to squeeze billions of years into the creation account—between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2—and they label it the Gap Theory. Many buy into this theory, espousing that maybe there

was a vast “gap” of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 that allowed for successive generations of plants, animals and even men (men before Adam). According to this theory, God destroyed the original creation because of a Satanic rebellion, and so Genesis 1:2 is translated to suggest, “the earth **became** waste and void.” Thus, the days of Genesis 1 are said to be days of “**re-creation**,” not days during which an “original” creation occurred.

- Yet, Exodus 20:11 plainly states that “in **six days** Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and **all** that in them is, and rested on the seventh day.” Notice what that the statement includes. If **everything** was made in six days, then **nothing** was created prior to those six days.
- In 1 Corinthians 15:45, Adam is called the “first man.” That, by definition, excludes any pre-Adamic race of men. Adam was the **first**.
- At the conclusion of the sixth day, God saw **everything** he had made, and behold it was “very good” (Gen. 1:31). If Jehovah’s original creation had become contaminated through Satan’s rebellion and was subsequently destroyed—and the new creation rested on a veritable graveyard of corruption—it is difficult to see how God could have surveyed the situation and then used the expression “very good” to describe it.

5. Were the Days of Creation Literal 24-hour Days?

There are also those that would take the six creation days, and try to squeeze millions of years into each day—making each day not a 24-hour literal day, but rather a long epoch of time (this often goes by the name of the Day-Age Theory). Yet in Genesis 1:14, Moses not only specified a day, but also defined it. “And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years.’” Consider that plants were created on day three. Most pollen-producing plants need insects to reproduce. If each day were millions of years, how did the plants survive millions of years until the flying

insects came along on day five? Also, each day is defined as a morning and evening. If we were to assume that every day consisted of 500,000 days of light and 500,000 days of night making evening, how many plants could survive such periods of darkness? And finally, ask yourself this question: What else Moses could have done to convey the message that these were, in fact, 24-hour days?

6. God Created Using Mature Objects

Young people also need to understand that the universe was created in a mature state, ready to serve as home to man and his fellow creatures. This fact implies that its **apparent** age would be different from its **actual** age. All of earth's creatures also were brought into existence mature, and capable of performing their intended functions. For instance, we know that the Lord commanded Adam, saying, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17). Thus, the trees must have already been bearing fruit in order to sustain Adam and Eve. Consider for a moment if Adam were to cut down one of the mature fruit bearing trees in the Garden. How many rings would that tree have had?

Even a child knows that birds normally do not fly immediately upon hatching; yet, Moses indicated that God created birds flying, fish swimming and animals roaming (Gen. 1:20-25). Suppose God told Adam that the earth was but a few days old, and that Adam set out to determine, by scientific inquiry, the veracity of the Lord's claim. After critical examination of his own body, and of the vegetation, animal life and geologic formations surrounding him, what would he have concluded?

7. The Biblical Genealogies Point to a Young Earth

In reading through the Bible, one cannot help but occasionally run into one of the chapters that records the genealogy of our ancient forefathers. Our children and grandchildren may cringe and want to skip over those chapters—but I encourage you to use those chapters in teaching them about

the age of the earth. Those long (somewhat tedious) chapters provide not only the names of offspring, but also provide ages of fathers when children were born and the ages when they died. This is genealogy combined with chronology. In determining the age of the earth according to the Bible, we must determine how long man has been here—which is not as difficult as it may seem. Speaking in round figures, it has been about 2,000 years since Jesus Christ visited the earth. Secular history volunteers that piece of information, since we calculate our calendars by his earthly appearance (A.D. standing for *anno Domini*, meaning “in the year of the Lord”). From Jesus to Abraham also was around 2,000 years—another figure that is verifiable historically.

| | | | |
|-------------------------|---|-------|-------|
| Present to Jesus | = | 2,000 | years |
| Jesus to Abraham | = | 2,000 | years |
| Abraham to Adam | = | ? | years |

The only figure missing is the one that represents the date from Abraham to Adam. Since we know that Adam was the first man (1 Cor. 15:45), and since we know that man has been on the earth “from the beginning of the creation” (Mark 10:6; cf. Rom. 1:20-21), if it were possible to obtain the figures for the length of time between Abraham to Adam, we then would have chronological information providing the relative age of the earth (since we also know that the earth is only five days older than man—Gen. 1; Exodus 20:11; 31:17).

The figure representing the time span between Abraham and Adam, of course, is **not** obtainable from secular history (nor should we expect it to be), since large portions of those records were destroyed in the Great Flood. But the figure **is** obtainable—via the biblical record.

First, few today would deny that from the present to Jesus has been approximately 2,000 years. Second, in Luke 3 the learned physician provided a genealogy that encompassed 55 generations spanning the distance between Jesus and Abraham—a time frame that archaeology has shown covered roughly 2,000 years. Third, Luke documents that between Abraham and Adam there were only twenty generations. Thus, the chart now looks like this:

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Present to Jesus | = | 2,000 years |
| Jesus to Abraham | = | 2,000 years (55 generations) |
| Abraham to Adam | = | ? years (20 generations) |

Since Genesis 5 provides the ages of the fathers at the time of the births of the sons between Abraham and Adam (thereby providing chronological data), it becomes a simple matter to determine the approximate number of years involved. In round numbers, that figure is 2,000. The chart then appears as follows.

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Present to Jesus | = | 2,000 years |
| Jesus to Abraham | = | 2,000 years (55 generations) |
| Abraham to Adam | = | 2,000 years (20 generations) |

In teaching this to children, make sure you strengthen the accuracy of the Bible by explaining that the 55 generations between Jesus and Abraham and the 20 generations between Abraham and Adam (covering the same amount of time) is explained on the basis of the vast ages of the patriarchs (e.g., Methuselah, who lived 969 years—Gen. 5:27). Faithful Christians can be reassured that according to the Bible, the Earth is less than 10,000 years old!

7. Are There Gaps in the Genealogies?

Some have argued that there are “gaps” in the genealogies. But where, exactly, should such gaps be placed, and how would they help? Observe the following. It is impossible to place any gaps between the present and the Lord’s birth because secular history accurately records that age information. Similarly, no gaps can be inserted between the Lord’s birth and Abraham because secular history also accurately records that age information. The only place one could put any “usable” gaps (viz., usable in regard to extending the age of the earth) would be in the 20 generations between Abraham and Adam. Yet, notice that there are not actually 20 generations available for the insertion of gaps because Jude stated that “Enoch was the **seventh from Adam**” (Jude 14). An examination of the Old Testament genealogies establishes the veracity of Jude’s statement since, counting from Adam, Enoch **was** the seventh.

Jude's comment thus provides divinely inspired testimony regarding the accuracy of the first seven names in Luke's genealogy—thereby leaving only 13 generations into which any alleged gaps could be placed.

In a fascinating article some years ago, Wayne Jackson observed that in order to accommodate the biblical record only as far back as the appearance of man's alleged evolutionary ancestor (approximately 3.6 million years), one would have to place **291,125 years** between **each** of the remaining 13 generations. It does not take an overdose of either biblical knowledge or common sense to see that this quickly becomes ludicrous in the extreme for two reasons. First, who could believe that the first seven of these generations are so **exact**—while the last thirteen are so **inexact**? Is it proper biblical exegesis to suggest that the first seven listings are correct as written, but gaps covering more than a quarter of a million years may be inserted between each of the last thirteen? Second, what good would any of this do anyone? All it would accomplish is the establishment of a 3.6 **million** year-old earth; old-earth creationists, progressive creationists and theistic evolutionists need a 4.6-**billion**-year-old earth. So, in effect, all of this insertion of “gaps” into the biblical text is much ado about nothing. But there is additional evidence for a young earth:

Geological Evidence for a Young Earth

Most people are unaware that the real scientific evidence points to a young earth as well. Consider the following:

Niagara Falls

Niagara Falls is a waterfall located on the border of New York and Ontario, Canada. Erosion has been slowly pushing the waterfall about seven miles upstream, forming the Niagara Gorge. Before large water-diversion projects were built in the 1950s and 1960s, the falls were receding at a rate of more than 3 feet per year. If the earth were 4.6 billion years old, and the falls have been eroding at a rate of 3 feet per year, that means the original location of the waterfall would have been 13.5 billion feet further upstream! (The circumference of the Earth is only 132 million feet around!)

Bristle Cone Pines

In the White Mountains bordering California and Nevada, there are bristle cone pine trees that have been dated at around 5,000 years old. These trees are incredibly healthy, so barring any catastrophes they probably will live for thousands more years. So a reasonable question to ask would be: If these trees have lived successfully for about 5,000 years, why have we not found any trees 8, 10, or 15 thousand years old? Could it be due to the Global Flood that occurred about 5,000 years ago?

Mississippi River

As the Mississippi River flows down towards the Gulf of Mexico, it picks up dirt and sediment from the riverbank along the way. Approximately 300 million cubic yards of sediment are deposited into the Gulf of Mexico by the Mississippi River **each year**. If we really have been around as long as evolutionists say we have, then the sediment deposited from the Mississippi River would have filled in the Gulf of Mexico a long time ago!

Grand Canyon

Evolutionists believe that the Grand Canyon was formed by the Colorado River (a small amount of water) over a long period of time. The problem with this theory is that there are over 900 cubic miles of dirt **missing** from the end of the river. How does one logically explain the absence of the dirt? If the small Colorado River formed the canyon, what happened to the 900 cubic miles of soil? A better explanation, and one that our children should be aware of is that the Grand Canyon could easily be the result of a catastrophe like the Flood.

Population Statistics

One of the strongest arguments for a young earth comes from the field of population kinetics. How do evolutionists account for the small number of people on the earth? According to the most recent census results, there are approximately 6.3 billion people on the planet. We know that the population is doubling about every 35 years. With that fact in mind, we can extrapolate backwards to determine how old the earth is. Without going into full detail here in the short space available, the argument from population statistics may be stated as follows.

Using the formula

$$P_n = \frac{2}{C-1} (C^{n-x+1}) (C^x - 1)$$

it is possible to compute the world population (P_n = world population after n generations; n = number of generations; x = life span in terms of generations; $2C$ = number of children per family). If evolutionary figures were entered into this formula, with man having lived on the earth only one million years (some evolutionists suggest that man, in one form or another, has been on the earth 3-5 million years), there would be an earth population of 1×10^{5000} ! That number is a 1 followed by 5,000 zeroes. But the Universe (at an estimated size of 20 billion light-years in diameter) would hold only 1×10^{100} people. Using creationists' figures, however, the current world population would be approximately 4.34 billion people. Evolutionary figures thus would imply an Earth population 10^{4900} times greater than would fit into the entire Universe! The question is—which of the two figures is almost exactly on target, and which could not possibly be correct?

Decay of the Earth's Magnetic Field

There are three important force fields associated with planet earth—gravitational, electric and magnetic. The magnetic field is due to the huge electric current, billions of amperes worth, circulating in the core of the Earth. It now is known that the earth's magnetic field is decaying faster than any other worldwide geophysical phenomenon. Knowledgeable scientists do not debate the fact of the rapid decrease in the earth's magnetic field. A comprehensive government report estimated, in fact, that the magnetic field would be gone by the year A.D. 3991.

Since we know the magnetic field is decaying, and we know the approximate rate, we can use mathematical equations to try to calculate backwards (employing a known value for the half-life decay rate of the field) the age of the earth. This presents a very serious problem in relation to the time needed by evolutionists. The problem is that going backward for more than just a few thousand years produces an impossibly large value in the magnetic field, and of the electrically generated heat stored

in the earth's core. In fact, Thomas G. Barnes, late professor emeritus of physics at the University of Texas at El Paso, calculated the upper limit of this time span to be 10,000 years. Going back any further than this, Barnes concluded, would cause the field to be at such huge values that the earth could not sustain itself and would rupture and crack. According to the facts associated with the magnetic field, the upper limit for the age of the earth is 10,000 years.

Polystrate Fossils

Embedded in sedimentary rocks all over the globe are what are known as “polystrate” fossils. Polystrate means “many layers,” and refers to fossils that cut through at least two sedimentary-rock layers. Probably the most widely recognized of the polystrate fossils are tree trunks that extend vertically through two, three or more sections of rock that supposedly were laid down in epochs covering millions of years. However, organic material (such as wood) that is exposed to the elements will rot, not fossilize. Thus, the entire length of these tree trunks must have been preserved quickly, which suggests that the sedimentary layers surrounding them must have been deposited rapidly—possibly (and likely) during a single catastrophe.

Further, tree trunks are not the only representatives of polystrate fossils. In the state of Oklahoma, geologist John Morris studied limestone layers containing fossilized reed-like creatures known as Calamites that ranged from one to six inches in diameter. At times, even animals' bodies form polystrate fossils like catfish in the Green River Formation in Wyoming. Probably the most famous is the fossilized skeleton of a whale discovered in 1976 near Lompoc, California. The whale is covered in “diatomaceous earth.” Diatoms are microscopic algae. As they die, their skeletons form deposits—a process that evolutionists say is extremely slow. But the whale (which is more than 75 feet long) is standing almost on its tail at an angle and is completely covered by the diatomaceous earth. There simply is no way a whale could have stood upright for millions of years while diatoms covered it, because it would have decayed or been eaten by scavengers.

Trees, reeds, catfish and the other organisms with which the fossil record abounds did not die and lie around for hundreds,

thousands or millions of years while slowly being turned into polystrate fossils. Truth be told, polystrate fossils testify loudly to a young earth whose layers formed rapidly—and our children need to know this information!

Conclusion

I was talking with one of my aunts who claims to be a Christian. She looked at me and said very matter-of-factly, “Brad, you know I believe in God. I don’t really have any trouble with it. If he wanted to use six days or six million years, it doesn’t matter to me. He could have done it anyway he chose.” Before anyone offers an “amen,” let me state that “yes, he could have done it anyway he chose.” But friends, he told us exactly how he did do it! “For **in six days** the Lord made the heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them” (Exod. 20:11 emp. added).

The evidence is in. It was by God that all things were built (Heb. 3:4). The universe and all the complexities of the earth point to an intelligent Designer. We would do well to recall the words of the prophet Isaiah: “Thus saith God the Lord, He that created the heavens, and stretched them out; He that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein” (42:5). As the psalmist so aptly noted: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork” (19:1).

Textual Study of Psalm 19

By J. D. Conley

I am both honored and humbled to appear on this eleventh series of the West Virginia School of Preaching Victory Lectures. Without debate, it is one of the finest lectureships presently being conducted in our brotherhood. I am honored because of the invitation and the privilege of being in the eminent company of these great Gospel preachers. I am humbled because of my assignment. It is a daunting one. Try as I have, I know my feeble efforts towards justice have fallen short. Yet, my investment in hours of study and research, regarding these fourteen verses, have enriched my life and fortified my faith. It is my hope this study will build up your faith in the God revealed in the nineteenth Psalm.

Introduction

Since the “O.J.” trial of ’94 and ’95, America seems to be fixated, even addicted with an insatiable appetite for judiciary proceedings. Random surfs through the channels will beam in Judge Judy, Judge Joe Brown and just about anyone else who dons a black robe, owns a gavel and has a law degree. We now have Court TV with its panel, who speak incessantly about whomever it is at the moment who is embroiled in criminal legalities. America and the world loves to see the unfaithful husband, the spoiled athlete, the aging pop star, the has-been celebrity or even their President squirm under the pressure of the media, the drooling public and a jury of peers. Thanks to Mr. Simpson, we as a nation have become quite educated in the rule of law and courtroom deportment. Many miles have been logged since the days of Judge Wapner and his small claims “The People’s Court.” Miles I’m afraid in the wrong direction.

Nonetheless, in this morass of legal and illegal exposure we have been reminded repeatedly of this one powerful fact: In a court of law, a case can hinge on the testimony of a single credible witness. One believable attestant is all it takes to put a defendant behind bars and razor wire, or in the wide leather straps of a lethal injection chamber. Just one mind you—**1!**

Conversely, it is incredible in the mind of you and me as

Christians, that given the vast amounts of testimony/evidence, many fail to reason that there is indeed an omnipotent, omniscient, omni-present, omni-benevolent, eternal Being. Nowhere else in Scripture is the existence of God more emphatically brought to light than in the brief, but concentrated, 19th Psalm of David. For within these handful of verses not **one** but **two** credible witnesses are called to the stand. Each is openly subjected to examination and cross-examination. After being thoroughly scrutinized, each step down unfazed, unscathed and completely credible. The names of these sterling witnesses are “Nature” and “Scripture.” Combined, their testimony is more than enough to establish God’s existence. Therefore, man’s ignorance or rejection of God cannot and will not be excused (Rom.1:20). What will be your verdict? Leaf over to the 19th Psalm and let’s examine the evidence and listen to the testimony. Lets begin with:

The Witness of Nature (General Revelation)

Certainly God’s glory in nature is often ignored, underappreciated and needs to be admired. But David’s intent was not to dwell simply on the glory of God as seen in nature, although he may at first have left that impression. Instead, it is the praise of God’s law and the greater glory Scripture contains that is the prominent feature David highlights. The lamented Guy N. Woods wrote:

A look at creation impresses us with the fact of limitless, inexhaustible power in the universe. But, no one can determine by such observation, the character or attributes of God; indeed, whether there is one God or a million. When we have revealed to us the one God by the Bible, nature declares his glory. Nature does not tell us how to be saved or enable us to go to heaven. The Scriptures are the sole source of such information. (qtd. in Taylor 35)

Nature is helpless to govern our morals, much less dictate the tenants of salvation or even our need for salvation. We need the Scriptures! But the marvels seen in nature supplement our faith in God who gave us the Scriptures. Nature is a credible witness for God’s existence, but its glory is not nearly as brilliant when bereft of a knowledge of him who is revealed in the Bible. The atheist therefore lives in a dingy, gray, black and white

world. While he acknowledges nature with its colors, he robs himself of the glory of it. To him it is an unexplainable accident, an uncaused cause, and so is he. But to David and the believer, nature is too thin a screen to conceal the God of the universe.

Study of the Text, vv. 1-6

Verse 1—“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.”

David affirms that the heavens publish the existence of God. Leupold says:

“**Heavens**” are in the emphatic position in the Hebrew as much as to say: The very heavens declare, or even, the heavens in a very distinct sense declare. (178)

From this opening line the question begs, “Why can’t the atheist look up in the sky and read this plain publication of God’s existence?” The answer is “He could, but he won’t.” Its not as though the atheist has carefully collected and has thoroughly examined all the evidence for God’s existence, and after doing so has drawn the conclusion, there is no God. Instead he does what Paul says all atheists do in Romans 1:28 “...**they did not like to retain God in their knowledge...**” The atheist **refuses** to read the publication that is on display each day and night! He does not **want** to know God. He foolishly rejects the evidence of his Creator (Psa. 14:1). He needs to look up and read the advertisements!

David also declares: “**and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.**” Even the azure blue arch declares God’s existence. It makes manifest for all to see his handiwork. The white zephyrs floating past, the warm golden rays shining through. This psalm along with the 8th psalm lead us to think the words, “God’s Glory,” were written in capital letters across the sky. Psalm 33:6 compliments this passage, “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.”

Verses 2-3—“Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, their voice is not heard.”

Without interruption, the heavens preach a constant and soft-spoken sermon. It’s a sermon for all to hear, for all to take notes. The preacher’s voice is not heard, yet it is loud and clear,

and all pervading.

Verse 4a—“Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.”

The line or message from the heavens comes down in siren tones proclaiming there is a God! This sermon is preached all around the world and back again. It is preached over and over again—24/7.

Verses 4b-6—“In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun. Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.”

Sounds to me as though David may have penned these words at sunrise, as the sun blushed the morning sky and began inching on its daily trek. He declares that God has set a tabernacle for the sun. We know that a tabernacle is a tent, which suggests to us something temporary. The sun is not eternal. It had its origin with God in Genesis 1. It will have an end (cf. Psa. 102:25-26; Heb. 1:10-12). David uses the analogy of an excited and anxious bridegroom getting up early to meet his bride compared to the intense sun’s rising. Youth, vibrancy and joy are all set forth by the analogy. The imagery changes from a bridegroom to a strong man getting ready to race. Like a marathon runner he will not quit until he gets to the finish line, and neither will the sun stop until it runs its course across the vaulted sky. As we view the sun’s long daily journey from distant east to distant west, we learn that nothing is beyond its reach. Every particle of life on earth is reached by the heat of its rays. Consider the following facts about the sun and how it declares its maker God.

The earth in orbiting the sun departs from a straight line by only 1/9 of an inch every 18 miles—a very straight line in human terms! If the orbit changed by 1/10 of an inch every 18 miles, our orbit would be vastly larger and we would all freeze to death. If it changed by 1/8 of an inch, we would come so close to the sun we would all be incinerated. Did such precision happen by chance? The sun is poised at 93 million miles from earth. Just right. Did that happen by chance? Ten percent one way or the other would be deadly. The earth would either be a ball of fire or

a ball of ice.

Without the sun being positioned precisely where God put it, life could not exist on earth, regardless of whether it be plant life, animal life or human life. But because **there is** a God, who has not acted haphazardly with this huge hot orange ball, life on this earth not only exists, but it thrives! Human life is able to exist because we get crucial vitamin D from the rays of the sun. Should the sun suddenly vanish, so would we. For years, doctors have warned us about the dangers of getting too much sunlight. We have been warned to put on sunscreen lotion. Now we are hearing that wearing sunscreen all these years may be linked to skin cancer! This is precisely what we were seeking to avoid by the slathering on of the sunscreen! One prominent scientist today is advocating that all people need at least two hours of sunlight a day. This is necessary for the pituitary gland to function properly. Could it be that God knew what he was doing all along with the sun? Did he not make it for our good and his pleasure (Gen.1:31; Rev. 4:11)?

The plant kingdom depends upon sunlight. This is one obvious reason why we can know the days of Genesis 1 were not eons of time in duration. Plants were created on the third day, the sun on the fourth day. If the days were not literal 24-hour days, but millions of years in length, how did the plants survive? When God said **“evening and morning”** completed a day, why argue? In the name of reason, what else could he have meant?

The Complexity of Plant Design

Consider a few marvels of the plant kingdom that cry out for the existence of an orderly God. Have you ever seen a straight peanut in your life? Horticulturists have developed all sorts of uses for the peanut. Dr. George Washington Carver when asked to describe his work said, “God and I are working on the peanut.” But Dr. Carver could never get one to grow straight. Solomon wrote, “Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked” (Ecc. 7:13). Question: “How do the kernels in the shell get their nutrition?” The kernels aren’t connected to the shell, they’re loose. Pick up a peanut in the shell, shake it and it rattles. To make matters more complex, the kernel is surrounded by three shells: the skin, the inner and the outer shell. So how does it get its food? I must

confess I do not know, but God who made the peanut does know! Have you ever seen a straight grapevine? You cannot straighten a grapevine. God **made** it crooked. A bean vine will not grow straight, no matter what kind of bean it is. Furthermore, all beans are left-handed. As it climbs the pole, it grows left to right. If you were to unwind it and wind the vine up the pole right to left, the vine will wither and die on the third day. Why? Because man cannot interfere with God's intentions for the bean vine. He **made** it grow a certain way.

The Complexity of Animal Design

There are literally teeming thousands of signposts scattered throughout the natural world that clearly point to God, the unseen Designer of nature. These signposts are clearly obvious to those whose minds have not been blinded by "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4); and to those who do not refuse "to have God in their knowledge" (Rom. 1:28). The design of the animal kingdom is a signpost in blinking neon. God is the only answer to the marvelous instincts and abilities of the billions of creatures inhabiting this earth.

Little wonder Job urged:

But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; And the birds of the heavens, and they shall tell thee: Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these things that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? (Job 12:7-9)

Of course, all animals with their God-given instincts and abilities declare their Maker. Each one teaches with silent emphasis that "God hath wrought them." But for the sake of space, permit me to tell about one, the amazing grunion. Tides vary greatly in different parts of the world. In the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia, tides rise and fall fifty feet and more; in Hawaii tides rise less than a foot, almost entirely due to the pull of the sun. The pull of the sun, the pull of the moon, together or against each other, plus storms at sea, make it very difficult to accurately predict tides. Oceanographers have learned to do it with considerable accuracy. But the grunion, a small silvery fish, can do it without study, training or instruments. Grunion runs are found only off the coast of southern California, beginning in March and continuing through July. Three or four nights after

the full moon, thousand of grunion appear on the beaches to lay their eggs in the sand. The forecasting of the hour and minute when the grunion will run is reached by adding fifteen minutes to the time the tide reaches its nightly peak. They come ashore after the turn of the tide, and on nights when the tide reaches a little less high than on the preceding night, so that the eggs are laid in sand which will not be reached by the tide again for about two weeks. The female permits herself to be washed in by the tide and strands herself. She energetically burrows herself into the sand tail first to a depth of two to three inches and lays the eggs in the sand, is then joined by the male who fertilizes the laid eggs. The whole process lasts about thirty seconds and the grunion then flop back into the sea. The eggs will not be washed out until the next high tide two weeks later. When the next high tide erodes the beach and uncovers the eggs, they hatch explosively and the newborn swim out to sea. Question: Where did the grunion learn this marvelous timing?

The Complexity of Human Design

In conjunction with Psalm 19:1-6, David also penned these well-known words in Psalm 139:14, “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.” Notice that David knew he was made by God and knew that he knew, he was made by God! He knew it, and he knew it well!

When Darwin popularized his theory of evolution by natural selection from the one-celled living thing to the human being, he thought it was evident that evolution went from the simple cell to the complex multi-celled organism. He no doubt thought this due to the fact down a light microscope at a magnification of a mere several hundred times the human cell looked like a “black box,” a very disappointing spectacle. But today, Mr. Darwin would perhaps acquiesce after a quick peek through a 21st century microscope. Dr. Michael Denton, an Australian medical doctor says in his book, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*:

To grasp the reality of life as it has been revealed by molecular biology, we must magnify a cell a thousand million times until it is twenty kilometers in diameter... what we would see would be an object of unparalleled complexity and adaptive design.” He goes on to say, “The

nucleus itself would be a vast spherical chamber more than a kilometer in diameter, resembling a geodesic dome inside of which we would see, all-neatly stacked together in ordered arrays, the miles of coiled chains of the DNA molecules.

However, Dr. Denton continues,

In terms of complexity, an individual cell is nothing when compared with a system like the mammalian brain. The human brain consists of about ten thousand million nerve cells. Each nerve cell puts out somewhere in the region of between ten thousand and one hundred thousand connecting fibers by which it makes contact with other nerve cells in the brain. Altogether the total number of connections in the brain approaches 10^{15} or a thousand million million. Numbers in the order of 10^{15} are of course completely beyond comprehension. Imagine an area about half the size of the USA (one million square miles) covered in a forest of trees containing ten thousand trees per square mile. If each tree contained one hundred thousand leaves the total number of leaves in the forest would be 10^{15} , equivalent to the number of connections in the human brain!

Dr. Denton concludes, “It is the sheer universality of perfection, the fact that everywhere we look, to whatever depth we look, we find an elegance and ingenuity of an absolutely transcending quality, which so mitigates against the idea of chance” (330-331). Amen Dr. Denton!

Lee Strobel, former legal editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, and a staunch atheist until 1981, has written the following in his award-winning book, *The Case for a Creator*:

I look at the stars in the night sky or reflect on the structure and information-bearing properties of the DNA molecule, and these are occasions for me to worship the Creator who brought them into existence. (91)

Certainly, the witness of nature David writes about has proven credible. May all men feel obligated to examine the evidence it affords. As his children, may we take this evidence and make it a daily and cognitive exercise.

The Witness of Scripture (Special Revelation)

David, the sweet singer of Israel, now ascends to a higher level of inspired thought (i.e., the perfect, sure, right, pure, clean and priceless law/scripture of God). The minute Eve sunk her

teeth into the forbidden fruit, this perfect world was no more. Her transgression stained and contaminated the Edenic paradise. Relatively speaking, it wasn't long until the gnarled fingers of sin had reached the four-corners of the earth. God's "general revelation," nature, had been forever marred. The world was no longer a perfect place. Nonetheless, there exists something perfect in this imperfect world. That something is the revealed law of Almighty God, which doubles to reveal him. It is to these sacred writings man should aspire to live. It is through **this** witness man can know there is a God to which he is accountable. May we carefully listen to this witness as David records testimony about God.

Study of the Text, vv. 7-10

Verse 7a —“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul...”

David states that God's law is so thorough, that it has the ability and power to convict and convince a sinner to change his direction in life. The Scriptures can do this because there is no weakness or flaw in them whatsoever.

An American skeptic was over in Africa when he ran across a native reading the Bible. The skeptic told him, "People in America have long ago put away that little black book; it won't do you any good to read it either." The native looked up and said in broken English, "This book teach me not to eat you." The skeptic realized he was talking to a former cannibal and had it not been for the Bible he was reading, he may have been his next meal!

Verse 7b – “...the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.”

The word "simple" does not mean slow of learning. Instead, it refers to one who is teachable, sincere and humble. The simple man is one who desires to know and do the will of God. Among other things, this verse teaches we can know and understand God's Word (cf. Prov. 2:1-6; John.7:17).

Verse 8a—“The statutes of the lord are right, rejoicing the heart...”

Leupold says, "It is 'right' in that it maps out a straight course for any man that would be guided by it" (182). David

echoes these sentiments in Psalm 119:105, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” We live in an age of darkness and misdirection; many have lost their compass; millions are confused. But the way of the Lord is right, and because of that, we can rejoice.

Verse 8b—“The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.”

In his work on Psalms, J.J. Stewart Perowne points out, “According to the expressive Hebrew idiom [the commandments of the Lord, JDC], is to the soul what food is to the worn fainting body” (225). If spiritually starving man would only read God’s Word with an open mind, he would be spiritually enlightened. May our prayer always be, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Psa. 119:18).

Verse 9a—“The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever...”

God’s special revelation is pure and unadulterated. As such it has the ability and wherewithal to last forever (cf. Matt. 24:35).

Verse 9b – “...the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether...”

David by inspiration has not overrated this section. He has striven with sublimity to convey to man the obligatory will of God. If there is a law such as depicted in these verses that is **“perfect, right, pure, clean, true and righteous,”** then it necessarily follows that there is a Lawgiver, a God who embodies these qualities and attributes—a God each and every person is amenable to. What better way for God to reveal himself than to do so in such a way that man can know God and furthermore know what God expects of him? David has made his intended point.

Verse 10—“More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.”

What a grand praise for the law of God David offers! He shows its absolute desirability and sweetness. Earth contains no ore that can match the true value of the Word of God. No bank, no store, no hidden treasure can begin to approach the intrinsic worth of Scripture. The sweetness of the world’s best honey is bitter and acrid when compared to the rich taste it leaves in the

hearts of God's people.

Psalm 19:7-10 set forth sufficient evidence to show there is indeed a "special" revelation of God—a revelation more special than his "general" revelation in nature. David has done this mainly by appealing to the purity of Scripture. But it should not be overlooked that a case can be built for God's existence based on the harmony, the fulfilled prophecy, the indestructibility of the Bible and the mistakes it doesn't make, all earmarks of its inspiration. The Bible is inerrant, all-sufficient and reasonable because it is the product of a perfect God. The Bible is the most powerful piece of evidence for the existence of God.

His "general" revelation in nature only serves to support what really doesn't need supporting, his "special" revelation, the Scriptures!

The Application of Special Revelation, vv. 11-14

Verse 11—"Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."

At the time of this writing, yesterday was the 4th of July. As I got out the sparklers and smoke bombs, I noticed the numerous warnings on the packaging. How many people have been burned or maimed because they did not read the warnings on fireworks? Or worse yet, read and then ignored the warnings? Sadly, too many to count. Likewise, our loving heavenly Father has supplied us with ample warnings regarding sin and its consequences. But many do not bother to read the warnings, or they read them and sluff them off. Many say rules are made to be broken. If that were the case, why were they given in the first place? Rules, God's rules, have been made by him to be kept by us. There is great joy in doing so. David is speaking from experience; we need to listen. Folks that ask, "Do I have to attend every service of the church," or question any other part of God's law, clearly demonstrate a wrong attitude toward God's commandments. They are robbing themselves of joy and putting themselves in jeopardy.

Verse 12—"Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults."

Sin can mask itself. Satan has mastered this technique. As a result a lot of people, even Christians are unable to recognize sin—or stubbornly refuse to call sin, sin. I believe this is one of

the biggest problems we are currently faced with not only in the world but in the brotherhood as well. Oh, its easy to see sin sometimes in others, but self? Ignorance abounds regarding the definition of sin. If it's something other than murder, incest or cannibalism, it's a little hard for some to call dancing or social drinking sin, or even adultery and homosexuality. Sin has lost its shock value because many have lost their spiritual moorings. Preachers, this is why you are rebuked occasionally for your sermons. People do not know what sin is anymore. Times as these call for specificity. We can no longer take for granted that everyone in the assembly knows what is sinful and what is not. The **“secret faults”** refer to the sins that are unknown to us. Be sure they are not sins God doesn't know about (cf. Eccl. 12:14), or nobody else knows about. Secret faults are sins we commit unawares. Jeremiah declared, “The heart is deceitful above all things, desperately wicked: who can know it?” The implication is, not even you and I can know it. Maybe a secret fault could be pride, or restraint, i.e doing just enough to get by. Just having Jesus somewhere in the mix, but not first in our life. We ought never be satisfied with the status quo. On second thought, maybe we should never be satisfied (cf. Luke 17:10).

Verse 13–“Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.”

Presumptuous sins are open sins, brazenly and with forethought committed. In fact, there was no sacrifice for presumptuous sins under the Old Law (cf. Num. 15:27-31). I imagine when David said the words, “Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins,” he meant it! Presumptuous sins also have a digressive process on which they downward march (cf. Psa. 1:1), “Walk, Stand and Sit.” As David points out, this type of sin can gain mastery over us. Thankfully through God's grace, we have a sacrifice that covers such sins (cf. Rom. 6:14). Because of the blood of Christ, we can live upright and we can live before God in innocence from the great transgression. Note the progression: secret faults, presumptuous sin, and the great transgression, which is unrestrained sin. Sin without guilt or remorse. Its full-blown “in the face of God” rebellion. None can

afford to reach that point. David tells us we need not.

Verse 14—“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.”

James wrote, “...if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body” (Jam. 3:2). Our words will determine our destination (Jam. 3:3-4). Oh, if we could just control our tongues! This last verse should truly help us accomplish that. If we are always guarding what we say and what we think, we can’t help but be found acceptable in Lord’s sight. David alludes to the fact that the Lord as our strength and Redeemer will assist us in that noble and necessary effort. Memorize this verse. Begin each day by reciting it in prayer. It will prove to be a marvelous blessing. Permit Jesus to be the rock on which we build our daily lives. Finally, may we conduct our lives as these last four verses teach.

Conclusion

In 1981, world renown, British astrophysicist Sir Fred Hoyle complained in *Nature magazine*:

The likelihood of the spontaneous formation of life from inanimate matter is one to a number with 40,000 noughts after it...It is big enough to bury Darwin and the whole theory of evolution. There was no primeval soup, neither on this planet nor on any other, and if the beginnings of life were not random, they must therefore have been the product of purposeful intelligence. (105)

It’s nice to have someone of Hoyle’s stature on our side, but it’s not necessary. What David wrote in the 19th Psalm carries the greater weight and is forever with us. May we listen to the quiet forceful sermon nature preaches, and obey the perfect law of the Lord, knowing that God is!

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Biographical Sketch

J.D. Conley is a third generation Gospel preacher and native Texan. He is in his 13th year of preaching full-time. He has lived in eight states including, Texas, Georgia, Louisiana, Tennessee, Virginia, Florida, West Virginia and now Ohio. He majored in Bible at Freed-Hardeman University and is a graduate of the Brown Trail School of Preaching in Fort Worth. He's had three local works: Spencer, WV; Elkins, WV and since June of '04 he has preached for the Harmar Hill church in Marietta, OH. For 3 years, he helped host "Bible Questions Answered," a live, one hour call in TV program in Elkins. He is currently writing a book on "Christian Patience." He has been married to the former Denise Cooper for 26 years. Their daughter, Shalyn, is a sophomore at Freed-Hardeman . Their son, Shane, plans to enroll in the WVSOP in the Fall of '07. Their other three sons are Jesse, 14; Travis and Matthew, 12.

The Causal Argument Proves God Exists

By Edward Benesh

The world sees today an unbelief of a new type: vague, loitering, and strangely contented. Doubt of the sterner sort, doubt which ‘goes sounding on its dim and perilous way,’ doubt which is an anguish, and which is much nearer faith than it knows, is much less common than formerly. In its stead has come an unbelief which is as indefinite as a mist, as obscuring, and as little shaken by storms. It is not a landscape, but a vapor. ‘Christianity,’ it whispers, ‘is, if not untrue, at least unnecessary: life can be lived well enough without it.’ (Fitchett 19)

“Snakes and snails and puppy dog tails—that’s what little boys are made of,” says the old nursery rhyme to affectionately describe the mischievous make up of most little boy’s characters. On the contrary, little girls are made up of “sugar and spice and everything nice.” Fundamentally we understand that these statements reflect, though not pervasively, the differences so often exhibited in boys and girls. It is typically the little boy who comes home with the lizard in his pocket along side the slingshot just as it is the little girl, typically, who desires to play tea, house and dress up in frilly clothes.

Yet, the words of this simple rhyme, many would say, are no longer valid in their simple characterization of reality. Truth be told, it is asserted, there is very little difference between male and female and those differences should not only be de-emphasized, but all reference to them removed from the viewing of a politically correct world, though the simple fact—men and women, boys and girls are very different from one another—is not only biologically, physiologically and logically demonstrated, but is also seen in the practical, but simple rhyme taught in the past to our children, which accurately reflects reality.

What does all this have to do with the cosmological argument? By way of argumentation, it has little to do with the subject at hand, but serves as a marker of societal norms, the context within which we live and ideology we must deal with as

we make our arguments for God's existence. In the same way the words of the well-worn rhyme are criticized, so too is the simple but profound truth "In the Beginning God..."¹ We live in what is commonly called the post-modern age, which is characterized by, to sum it up in one word, nothingness. Truth is but that elusive snipe that we, by some cruel, but naturalistic joke, look after foolishly and fearfully. Influenced heavily by the faiths of humanism, scientism, atheism and those of like stripe (though the ideas and effects of these are but illusory), our world and its very existence, according to the hallowed halls of academia, has been reduced to nothingness—no right, no wrong, no male, no female, no inhibitions, no morals, no ethics and certainly no God.

In contrast to modernity, postmodernism repudiates any appeal to reality or truth. The very attempt to propose totalizing metanarratives that define and legitimate reality are denounced as oppressive...The Self is the source of truth and reality...What one chooses does not matter; that one is free to choose is all that matters. As a result, postmodernism is suspicious of all metanarratives that seek to name, define, legitimate and arbitrate social institutions, roles, identities and practices. There are no controlling rules or norms for society; not even God has that right. (Phillips and Okholm 13)

How then to do we argue for the existence of God when germane laws of science and logic are not respected, but skirted about to propagate the climate and illusion of absolute freedom for a world community, whose acme and focus is self? Can our arguments any longer make the assumptions once readily accepted by all, except the lunatic, or are we to simply accept the tenets of postmodernism and its numerous, far-reaching attendant doctrines? For instance, how can and must we deal with the simple assertion by atheistic science that the Second Law of Thermodynamics,² which implies a beginning of all

¹ All Bible references are from either the NKJV or the KJV of the Bible, unless otherwise noted.

² The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that the amount of energy available to do work is decreasing and approaches an even distribution—entropy increases, implying that eventually the universe

things, does not apply to the universe as a whole, which amounts to nothing more than a denial of the law itself. Note the following assertion by the late J.L. Mackie in refuting the cosmological argument.

There is *a priori* no good reason why a sheer origination of things, not determined by anything, should be unacceptable, whereas the existence of a god [sic] with the power to create something out of nothing is acceptable. (94)

Consider also the words of noted evolutionary astronomer Robert Jastrow.

The Universe is the totality of all matter, animate and inanimate, throughout space and time. If there was a beginning, what came before? If there is an end, what will come after? On both scientific and philosophical grounds, the concept of an eternal universe seems more acceptable than the concept of a transient universe that springs into being suddenly, and then fades slowly into darkness. (31)

Finally, think about the implications of the words of Woolsey Teller, one of the founders of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, from his debate with brother James D. Bales at Harding College.

According to my theory—and it seems to be the generally accepted one—the universe of matter has always existed and undergone change...Well, you have to start with something; you have to start with an assumption. The scientist, the materialist starts with the idea that matter has always existed and always will exist and undergoes change. (41)

Despite these assertions, the Second Law of Thermodynamics emphatically supplies the implication of a beginning and eventual end of all things, which leads us to ask, “How did it all begin, why, when and by whom?” How do we then cope with such inconsistencies and contradictions, and often outright deception, in an attempt to not only defend the Faith, but make disciples of all men?

Of course the list of objections to theism or the assertion that there is a personal Creator of the universe, whose character

will suffer what is called “heat death.” In even simpler terms, the universe is winding down. Of course, all this points out that the universe must have had a beginning.

is delineated in the pages of the Bible, could go on, and some simply, for various reasons, will not change their minds, but we must certainly aver that it is not only time to rethink our approaches, meeting people where they are instead of assuming points not assumed by the non-believer (which many arguments seem to do), but also seek greater dissemination of theistic ideology. This, dear friends, is the challenge set before us. Yet, it is one that is not insurmountable.

The Cosmological Argument(s)

The cosmological argument is really a group of arguments that can be, generally speaking, divided up into three groups—Thomist, Leibnizian and Kalam. The entire family of arguments can trace their origin back to the likes of Plato and Aristotle, but find later support from Medieval Islamic, Jewish and Christian thinkers such as al-Ghazali, Anselm, Descartes, Spinoza, Berkeley and Locke (Beebe 1). For one reason or another, this family of arguments has been criticized heavily by skeptics. Yet, taken together the arguments have and continue to instill in the believer great confidence in the assertion “God does exist,” and certainly make it clear, beyond a shadow of doubt, that the alternatives to a transcendent, eternal, loving, intelligent Creator are far less acceptable and outright unreasonable.

Thomist Argument

Named for Thomas Aquinas (1225-74), this argument is famous for its “five ways” of proving God exists. By papal decree, this is the official position of the Catholic Church. Relevant to our discussion of cosmology are the first three of Aquinas’s five ways.³

The first way may, in essence, be called the argument for an unmoved mover or first motion. Some have termed it the argument from change (Kreeft and Tacelli 50). Aquinas stated that in the world we see things that are in motion, but that all things that are in motion must be moved by something else. The

³ Contemporary supporters of Aquinas’ five ways are Norman Geisler and Bruce R. Reichenbach, among others. See Geisler, Norman. *Philosophy of Religion*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974 and Reichenbach, Bruce R. *The Cosmological Argument: A Reassessment*. Springfield: Charles C. Thomas Publishers, 1972.

thing that simply has the potential to move cannot activate its own potential—something must cause it to move. In terms we could perhaps better understand, imagine if you will an endless series of boxcars hooked together and sitting on their track. While they have the potential to move forward and deliver their load, without an engine to actuate that potential, regardless of how many cars we may have, the train cannot move. There simply must be a first cause of motion in every series of motions. Thus, in order to account for this cosmic motion, Aquinas postulates a first cause of all motion—God.

The second way may be called the argument from first cause. The argument asserts that causes must happen in a series and that nothing has the ability to cause itself. To say that a cause is self-caused would be to assert, in different terms, that A causes B, B causes C and C causes A, which is, at best, absurd. Thus, everything that is caused is caused by something else. As is the case with the argument from first motion, an endless series of causes is impossible, which we will detail further later. Thus, there must be a first cause, which itself was uncaused. This uncaused cause is God.

The third way is an argument from an absolutely necessary being. Aquinas reasoned that beings come into existence and go out of existence and that whatever comes into being or goes out of being does not have to be. In other words, it is possible for it not to be. If they were truly necessary they would have to always exist. However, what if all beings are unnecessary beings? If such were the case then their origins would have to be, if the universe began to exist, traced back to a time when literally nothing would exist. Yet, since out of nothing, nothing comes, it must be the case that some being or beings are necessary—a first being. This first being, he surmises, is God. He is the source of being to everything else.

The forth and fifth ways, which we mention only in passing, deal respectively with the argument from degrees of perfection and the design (teleological) argument. Instead of pursuing these, let us for a moment deal with the weaknesses of the argument. While some have charged Aquinas with begging the question concerning his readings and illustrations of the impossibility of an infinite regress (though there are alternate readings that are

immune to such a charge), the greatest failure of the argument is the assumption or leap that is made from premise to conclusion, which asserts that God exists. Many have been the critics who have simply asked, “Why must a first efficient cause or a necessary being have the properties of the theistic God?” (Rowe 5). In defense of Aquinas’s five ways, as Imran Aijaz points out, “detractors of the cosmological argument have usually been too quick to claim victory by pointing out this simple, although problematic, deficiency in Aquinas’s proof. The reason for this is because the cosmological argument can, and has been reconstructed⁴ to render the basic gist of Aquinas’s argument immune to common criticisms” (5).

The Leibnizian Argument

The Leibnizian cosmological argument takes its name from the philosopher and co-founder (along with Isaac Newton) of calculus, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716). We will deal only briefly with this argument before moving into our third, most substantial and defensible form of the cosmological argument, in this writer’s opinion.

J.P. Moreland, in his book, *Scaling The Secular City—A Defense of Christianity*, best sums up this argument.

It begins by asking the question ‘why is there something rather than nothing?’ Why does something exist at all exist? It then uses the principle of sufficient reason (for anything that exists, there must be some reason, some purpose or rational context, why it exists rather than not exists) to argue for the existence of an intrinsically intelligible or self-explanatory being—God—whose existence is logically necessary. (17)

The fundamental problem with the argument, however, lies in the assumption that the principle of sufficient reason will readily be accepted as universal. While we certainly would not agree that the universe is just there, which many would argue is just as viable an alternative, the assumption of sufficient reason

⁴ One such reconstruction is found in the work of Hackett, Stuart C. *The Resurrection of Theism*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957: 195-201.

leaves the argument susceptible to attack.⁵ Notice the following observation by William Lane Craig.

Leibniz, of course, identified the necessary being as God. His critics, however, disputed this identification, contending that the material universe could itself be assigned the status of a necessary being...Atheists have not felt compelled to embrace the view that the universe came into being out of nothing for no reason at all; rather they regard the universe itself as a sort of factually necessary being: the universe is eternal, uncaused, indestructible, and corruptible. (*Truth* 85-96)

In this vein it is much like, it seems, the argument supported by brother Bert Thompson and Wayne Jackson that asserts as its first premise “everything that exists is either mind or matter.” While this is, without a doubt, true, it is not an assumption that will perhaps be readily accepted, despite the research that supports the notion that matter and mind (brain and mind) are two completely separate things for the same reason listed in the above paragraph with regards to the Leibnizian argument (42).⁶ Is it not the case that many have asserted and continue to assert that all is simply matter, including the human brain? Sound as it no doubt is, the simple fact that the first premise is highly debatable makes the argument, though no less sound, rather ineffective, perhaps, for many.

The Kalam Argument

The word Kalam is an Arabic word that means “eternal” and is a fitting description of the argument that was first formulated by Christian theologians to rebut Aristotle’s notion that the universe was eternal. The argument was later employed by Islamic theologians to argue for the existence of God.

This argument has a long and venerable history among such Islamic philosophers as Alfarabi, Al Ghazli, and Avicenna. Some scholastic philosophers also used it, especially

⁵ For a more protracted consideration of the Leibnizian argument and a contemporary defense of this work, see Taylor, Richard. “Metaphysics.” *Foundations of Philosophy Series*. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1974.

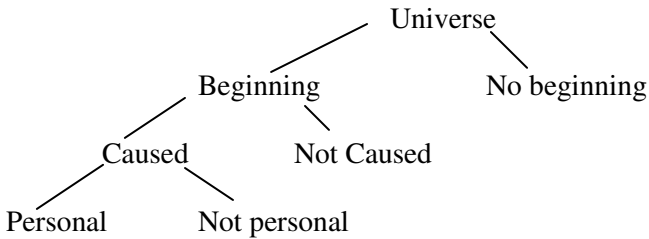
⁶ See Thompson, Bert and Wayne Jackson. *A Study Course in Christian Evidences*. Montgomery: Apologetics P, 1992: 18.

Bonaventure. The argument, however, was opposed by Thomas Aquinas, who believed it philosophically possible (though biblically untrue) that God could have caused the universe from eternity. (Geisler 100)

This argument has been revised and supported contemporarily by scholars like William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland. The argument, its major premises, is summed up as follows.

1. The universe either had (a) a beginning or (b) no beginning.
2. If it had a beginning, the beginning was either (a) caused or (b) uncaused.
3. If it had a cause, the cause was either (a) personal or (b) not personal (Ramey 1).

Craig diagrams the argument as follows (Moreland 18):



The argument works by supporting proposition (a) in premise one and then builds upon it in the following premises, making it, in reality, a series of arguments or disjunctive syllogism. Thus, the form of the argument is valid. To be sound, of course, the premises must be true, the discussion of which will make up the bulk of this lecture.

Craig frames the basic argument as follows:

1. Whatever begins to exist has a cause.
2. The universe began to exist.
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause.

Craig then goes on to say that from this cause one can “do a conceptual analysis of what it means to be a cause of the universe, and a striking number of Divine attributes can be identified” (Strobel 98). Let us then look at each one of the premises (or arguments), delineating the truth contained therein

and thus establish the soundness of the argument as a whole.

Premise #1—The universe (a) had a beginning or (b) did not have a beginning

William Lane Craig offers three arguments in support of the universe having a beginning. The **first** denies the possibility of an actual infinite and thus eliminates (b) as a possibility, the only alternative to (a).

1. An actual infinite cannot exist.
2. A beginningless series of events in time is an actual infinite.
3. Therefore, a beginningless series of events in time cannot exist.

This argument takes us into the realm of set theory where we must see clearly the difference between an actual and potential infinite. As Craig explains:

There is a difference between a potential infinite and an actual infinite. A potential infinite is a collection that is increasing toward infinity as a limit but never gets there. Such a collection is really indefinite, not infinite...By contrast, an actual infinite is a collection in which the number of members is really infinite. The collection is not growing toward infinity; it is infinite, it is 'complete...' Now I am arguing, not that a potentially infinite number of things cannot exist, but that an actually infinite number of things could not exist, this would spawn all sorts of absurdities. (*Reasonable* 95)

The most famous illustration of this concept is offered us by David Hilbert, German mathematician—Hilbert's hotel. Imagine first a hotel with a finite number of rooms. If all the rooms of the hotel were full and we entered seeking refuge we would be turned away because there is no room. Yet, at Hilbert's hotel, a hotel with an infinite number of rooms, there is never any room, but always room for one more. Imagine you come into Hilbert's hotel seeking refuge only to be told there are no rooms. Yet the man at the desk checks you in and gives you a room by simply bumping the person in room #1 to room #2 and so on out to infinity. Curious enough is this odd arrangement, but it becomes even more troubling to find out that since you checked in there are no more persons in the hotel than there were originally.

There is still an infinite number.

To make matters even worse, the next morning, for some reason, all the people in even numbered rooms check out. Since there would be no end, in this infinite set of numbers, to the subset of even numbers, an infinite number of people have checked out. Yet the number of people in the hotel is still an infinite number. The same day all the people in the odd numbered rooms check out (an infinite number), leaving the hotel with you as the single occupant. Thus, what we have is infinity plus one equals infinity; infinity minus infinity equals infinity; infinity minus infinity equals one. Such absurdities abound in considering the actual infinite in our present reality.

Think for a moment about Bibles as an illustration. How many Bibles do you have in your home? In my library right now, not including the ones on electronic media, I have about 35 Bibles of various stripes. Yet, let us say you have an infinite number and since you do, you would like to give them away for men to read. However, realizing that you cannot pass them out alone, you call on a friend to divide the Bibles and the work. The first time you meet you give him all of the even numbered Bibles (don't you feel sorry for the guy who has to number these) and keep the odd numbered ones for yourself. Thus, both of you would have an infinite number of Bibles. The second time you meet you give him all of the Bibles, but three of them. He would then have an infinite number of Bibles and you would have only three. Finally, you meet a third time and he, seeing the imbalance in the last arrangement gives all the even ones back. However, you become disgusted and give them all to him and storm out (very Christian like).

Looking at this scenario, it is easy to see the absurdity of the idea of an actual infinite. In the first case you gave away all the even number of Bibles—thus, infinity minus infinity equals infinity. In the second scenario infinity minus infinity equals three. Yet, in the third and final scenario, after you have given them all to your friend, infinity minus infinity equals zero. We thus have the same equation (infinity minus infinity) bearing three different answers. This, folks, is absurd and no reasonable or right thinking person would ever accept such a proposition. Yet, it is no more absurd than saying “nothing is real,” “matter is

eternal” or “we came from nothing.”

Allow us but one more illustration of this idea that an actual infinite is impossible. In July of 1776, the declaration of independence was signed and adopted by the United States. Some 284 years before this event, on April 17, 1492, Christopher Columbus signed an agreement to devote the proceeds of his undertaking beyond the western seas to the recovery of the holy sepulcher in the crusades (Schaff and Schaff). If the series of past events of the universe is infinite, then prior to April 17, 1492 there are an infinite number of events. Yet, though 284 years intervene, there is also an infinite number of events prior to the signing of the declaration of independence. How can that be? Is infinity the same as infinity plus 284? It cannot be.

Second, that a “beginningless series of events in time entails an actually infinite number of things,” is rather obvious, based upon the above discussion. If our world never **began** to exist, then there has existed, prior to this time, and endless series of events.

Finally, these premises being true, we must conclude, soundly so, that a “beginningless series of events in time cannot exist.” The series of past events must be finite and have a beginning since an actual infinite is impossible. Thus, the universe, time and events, began to exist. An actual infinite is simply conceptual and does not describe the reality of our world. We may consider it in the realm of trans-finite math (heeding the rules of such practice), but to deal with the concept in the real world is an impossibility.

Objections

The objections to this line of reason, while neither numerous nor of a great amount of merit, must be considered for but a moment.

Objection #1—Some argue that the mere presence of an infinite in set theory shows that an actual infinite is impossible. This, of course, fails miserably. Just because mathematics creates a theory does not mean that such a theory can readily be applied to our actual world. We cannot simply expect to move from the theory of an actual infinite to an actual infinite without further proof for such existing.

Objection #2—The second objection we will consider

asserts that the puzzles of Hilbert's hotel and so on should be rejected because in infinite set theory the characteristic of finite sets, which says that the whole is greater than any of its parts, does not apply. Thus, the defenders of the Kalam argument are applying principles to infinite set theory that should not be applied. This argument fails as well for the same reason given in objection #1. What the Kalam supporter tries to show is the absurdity that results from taking the infinite set theory and applying it to reality, which we must do to prove an actual infinite. The point is simply that infinite set theory and actual infinities do not apply to reality.

There are certainly more objections of greater complexity, yet most are refuted by the same principles offered either by the argument itself or in answering the two above objections.

The **second** argument under the first premise of our main argument states that it is impossible to create an infinite number of things by adding one number after another since it would be impossible to reach the desired end. Thus, the series of events up until now are a finite collection. Again, this would seem rather obvious, but, after stating the argument, as per Craig, let us deal with the crucial step of the argument.

1. The series of events in time is a collection formed by adding one member after another.
2. A collection formed by adding one member after another cannot be actually infinite.
3. Therefore, the series of events in time cannot be actually infinite.

The crucial step is found in proving the second premise, the first, as we have said, being obvious to any right-minded person. Simply stated, no matter how much time you have or whether or not one postulates that a finite set can be divided into an infinite number of midpoints⁷ (which is not a true infinite, but only potential), you can never reach an infinite set of numbers by adding one more to the set because you can always add one more. In children's games one may call upon the infamous "infinity" to end a discussion on whose bike is the fastest. Yet, this child's game has no bearing on the reality of life. No matter

⁷ For a discussion and treatment of this, Zeno's puzzles, see Black, Max. "Achilles and the Tortoise." *Analysis* 11. March 1951: 91-101.

how you would begin the count (whether from now to the past—regress, or from the past to now—progress), since there is a starting point or an end point (both being the present), the set would be finite.

To illustrate, let us say you are doing a research paper on the Miracles of Christ and want to make use of an infinite number of sources. Thus, you go to the library and ask the librarian to begin stacking the infinite number of books on a cart (must be some cart) that you have placed before her. Just as you think the infinite number has been reached, the librarian adds yet another book, prompting you to ask, “Is that all?” Of course, her answer is, “Certainly not, we still have an infinite number of books to add. You better get reading.” Then she goes on adding one more book at a time. You still continue to count. But you will never reach or traverse the infinite. There will never be a point where you cannot add one more number. This is a potential infinite, but not an actual one. It can increase forever without limit, but it will always be finite. Thus, the past series of events in the universe must be finite.⁸ If it is finite, then it had a beginning and we must ask, when did it begin and how?

Objections

Objection #1—The first objection, offered by a Zeno Ibn Cantor al-Yahood, states that men such as Craig and Aijaz contradict themselves in dealing with the idea of traversing the infinite, and thus their argument is invalid, by refusing to acknowledge that time in an infinite plane is made up of finite points that may be traversed. In other words, you cannot traverse the infinite, but you can walk a mile, from point A to point B. Al-Yahood says, “Aijaz and Craig have a problem with beginningless time, yet one can only traverse an infinite if they start at the beginning of this beginningless stretch of time! This is where the contradiction is: you are only traversing the whole span if you start at the beginning, but if it is beginningless, there is no beginning. Any point on a scale that stretches backwards is a finite distance away from the present, and that’s final” (3). The major problem with this objection is that it assumes a beginningless time for the universe, which is exactly what Craig

⁸ See Moreland’s *Scaling the Secular City* for a full discussion (28-32).

and Aijaz have proven as false. The whole point of the Kalam argument is not to show how set theory works, but reveal what happens when we begin to say the infinite is applicable to reality. Thus, the objection really has gone nowhere.

Objection #2—Some have argued that while it may be impossible to count *to* infinity, it is possible to count *from* infinity. The question we have in regard to this objection would simply be “how would the numbers in the set differ depending on which way you counted?” It does not matter at all. The set is still infinite no matter which way the count began and the end could never be reached by adding one step after another.

Objection #3—A few critics of this argument make the objection that counting from or to infinity and actually traversing the infinite are not parallel. One cannot count to infinity, but he can traverse it, because in traversing it there would be no starting point. While there may be a difference in some sense between “traversing” and “counting,” the point is that both involve the successive formation of a series, which is simply impossible in infinite sets.

The **final** argument for the soundness of the first premise departs from the world of philosophy and enters the realm of science. While we have relied heavily to this point on the works of William Lane Craig, J.P. Moreland and a few others, we will depart from their works and warn the student of the Bible from them as well, given their assertion that the Big Bang is what caused it all. We will not deal with this subject since our main goal is not to refute the Big Bang, but prove the existence of God by reasoning from what we do know—the universe exists.⁹

We, however, do want to take the time to revisit the Second Law of Thermodynamics as the basal piece of evidence that the universe had a beginning. You may recall that the Second Law of Thermodynamics states, “The total amount of useful energy is decreasing to the same degree to which useless energy is

⁹ For a full discussion on the Big Bang, see Major, Trevor. “The Big Bang in Crisis.” Reason and Revelation. June 1991: 21-24. It should be noted as well that brother Major, through email, face-to-face conversation and many, many phone calls, was instrumental in not only the gathering of information, but also in aiding our understanding regarding the finer points of the argumentation.

increasing, and this rate is irreversible in its flow. In other words, once the fire burns out, one cannot make another fire out of the ashes” (Lindsay, *Harmony* 120).

This fundamental law is expressed by its founder, in the Bible, numerous times and diverse ways.

Lift up your eyes to the heaven, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment and they that dwell therein shall die in like fashion... (Isa. 51:6)

Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed (Psa. 102:25-26)

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up (2 Pet. 3:10)

The second law, affirmed by all true science, is universal in its scope. If there is an area or event in the universe that does not fall beneath this simple, but far-reaching (in its implication that there was a beginning and so on) law it is yet to be put forth for examination. Let us find the car that is built that does not grow old and end up in the car graveyard. Let us find the planet or star or part of the universe that does not decay or move toward entropy. Given the lack of such evidence, scientists turn philosophers and create various speculations that are wholly without merit.¹⁰ All the while, theologians honor the law as it proves the universe did begin to exist.

Premise #2—If the universe had a beginning, it was either caused or uncaused

Affirming that the universe began to exist, we then move to our next disjunctive or dilemma and consider whether or not this universe that exists was caused to exist or uncaused. Our first line of defense is simply the common sense nature of the

¹⁰ See Moreland’s *Scaling the Secular City* (36-38) for a fuller discussion on the universal nature of the Second Law of Thermodynamics.

assertion. We do not worry that when we get up in the morning and go to work that a pack of wild dogs is going to materialize in our home and begin to tear the place apart. We do not routinely and rationally wonder whether or not one day we will go to sleep in the same house only to find in the morning that a ghetto, complete with gangs and gang warfare, has sprung into existence around our home out of nothing. Why? Everything we know about the universe, whether we are a theist or atheist, believer or skeptic, tells us that things that come into existence do not come from nothing, especially when it comes to events. Is it not the case that all events or things that come to exist must have a cause? Certainly! This is known as the principle of causality. It can be stated in a number of ways, both analytically and non-analytically.

1. Every effect has a cause.

This form is clearly self-evident, and it is analytic, in that the predicate is reducible to its subject. Other ways to state the principle are not analytic, nor so self-evident:

1. Every contingent being is caused by another.
2. Every limited being is caused by another.
3. Every thing that comes to be is caused by another.

2. Nonbeing cannot cause being (Geisler 59).

At this point we are reminded of the C.S. Lewis book, *The Silver Chair*, where two of the main characters are having a conversation with a witch in the an underground kingdom about the sun. The witch begins to play tricks with the children who have compared the sun to a lamp that was in the room. The child says of the sun, "It giveth light to the whole overworld and hangeth in the sky?" The witch responds by asking, "hangeth on what, my Lord?" While they pondered the question, the witch laughingly adds, "you see? When you try to think out clearly what this sun must be, you cannot tell me. You can only tell me it is like the lamp. Your sun is a dream; and there is nothing in that dream that was not copied from the lamp. The lamp is the real thing; the sun but a tale, a children's story" (462-465).

Though Lewis was not a big supporter of the cosmological argument and deemed it rather ineffective, the excerpt from *The Silver Chair* and the witch therein is a fitting description of the

skeptic and his oft made argumentation. It is the same type of argument made by atheists and humanists that simply asserts that God is but a fairytale, and the only thing that exists or ever existed, eternally so, is the universe, or that which is empirically relevant and readily available. For instance, atheist Quentin Smith, in a debate with William Lane Craig, stated, “the most reasonable belief is that we came from nothing, by nothing and for nothing” (Strobel 99).

Again, the first line of defense, though not held in the highest regard, is the common sense nature of the assertion. For instance, when David Copperfield made the Statue of Liberty reappear, it did not just pop out of nothingness, which is certainly understandable once we properly understand true nothingness. We know, though we don’t know all that was involved (by design of course), that it was the work of a magician and the various tools of his trade, not nothing. Similarly, the husband and father doesn’t see a freshly prepared lasagna in the refrigerator and think “that just appeared there out of nothing.” The same could be said when mom noticed that it disappeared in the middle of the night. It did not fall into some cosmic hole of nothingness from whence it came. Such is absurd and contrary to what is perceived each and every day in nature.

Even the natural philosopher David Hume, in a letter to John Stewart in 1754, admitted, “But allow me to tell you that I never asserted so absurd a proposition as that anything might arise without a cause...” (Guthrie 1).

Notice also the following bit of wisdom offered by Samuel M. Thompson in refuting Acosmism, the philosophy that says real existence is but an illusion:

The cardinal rule of philosophy is that everything exists. We simply cannot assert sheer nonexistence. The attempt to do so destroys its own meaning, for it is the attempt to refer to a realm or class or instance of a nonexisting something. Every awareness, every thought, no matter how fantastic or how impossible is its content, is an existent. To deny this of a supposed thought about nothing is to deny the very occurrence of a thought about nothing; and this, of course, requires us to think about a thought about nothing. (289)

There is one objection that we must deal with, which takes us into the realm of Quantum Mechanics, where it is claimed that

the law of cause and effect does not hold. In 1973, Edward Tryon suggested that the entire universe came into existence out of a vacuum, as a “quantum quirk,” after observing the spontaneous appearance of subatomic particles from such (Strobel 99).

Quantum theory...holds that a vacuum...is subject to quantum uncertainties. This means that things can materialize out of the vacuum, although they tend to vanish back into it quickly...theoretically, anything—a dog, house, a planet—can pop into existence by means of this quantum quirk... (100)

Many have since argued that this is an example of something coming from nothing, since the particles appear spontaneously. Yet, as far as argumentation is concerned, it is truly only an example of equivocating, using the same term (nothing) in two different ways in the same argument. At the beginning of the argument “nothing” means a total lack of attributes. At the end of the argument it means something with at least one attribute, that being the attribute of a vacuum, which is not the equivalent of nothingness, but is “a sea of fluctuating energy, and arena of violent activity that has a rich physical structure and can be described by physical law” (101).

This, in reality only pushes back the case one can make for a caused universe. Let us ask, where did the vacuum come from or the energy that makes it up? What caused it to be? We are back to the same argument, having jumped the low hurdle of spontaneous subatomic particles. Thus, the law of cause and effect holds.

Yet, for a moment consider the alternatives, dealt with briefly in our delineation of the Thomist argument. If the universe is not caused, but uncaused then there are three possibilities that exist. First, the universe came from nothing. Second, everything is an illusion. Third, the universe is self-caused. The first we have just disproved. The second is absurd. Wouldn't something or someone have to exist to experience or think that all existence is an illusion? This is self-contradictory. The third and final possibility, like the second, violates the law of non-contradiction, which states that “nothing can both be and not be at the same time and in the same respect” (Groothius 76).

For the universe to create itself it would have to be and not be at the same time and in the same sense.

Therefore, we are left with the assertion that the universe, which we proved began to exist in premise one, must have been caused by some source that transcends, precedes and controls it.

One may ask, however, if everything in the universe has to have a cause, then what caused God? Many have asked this question and all of them have made the same mistake. The fallacy here is one of category. Events do not happen without a cause. However, God, who is neither an event nor an unnecessary (contingent) being, does not need a cause. God has no beginning and no end, as our universe and existence. Thus, when we ask for a cause for God, we are asking for the cause for an uncaused cause or being. God transcends the universe, space and time and thus exists eternally, though this is beyond our full grasp.

Premise #3—If the universe had a cause, it was either personal or impersonal

For a moment let us consider some of the assertions and implications made thus far. In our effort to show that the universe began to exist and was caused, we have stated that this universe was brought about (caused to exist) by an uncaused cause that, by implication, must be eternal and changeless. It must be such if it is truly uncaused or necessary.

What if we were then to assert, not that we ever would, that the necessary and sufficient **conditions** for the first event simply existed as unchangeable from eternity and for some reason gave rise to the first event—the existence of the universe? The idea is that it was a set of conditions, not God, which caused the first event.

The problem with this type of thinking is that if a condition is eternal and changeless then the event that comes from the sufficient conditions is spontaneous and eternal itself. To illustrate, if necessary and sufficient conditions exist for a cloud to form, then a cloud forms spontaneously. There is no thought or deliberation that is necessary. The conditions are right. Yet if the necessary and sufficient conditions are eternal and unchangeable, then the effect, a cloud, must also be eternal (which we know is false), since it appears spontaneously from

the necessary and eternally sufficient condition. As Craig puts it, if water always freezes at sub zero temperatures and the cause for such law is eternal then the effect would likewise be eternal—all water would be frozen from eternity.

The only way to get around this problem is to assert that the first cause or uncaused cause, in giving us the first event, freely chose to act, in a timeless and spaceless condition, to bring it about.

It seems there is only one way out of this dilemma, and that is to infer that the cause of the universe is a personal agent who chooses to create a universe in time. Philosophers call this type of causation ‘agent causation,’ and because an agent is free, he can initiate new effects by freely bringing about conditions which were not previously present...a finite time ago a Creator endowed with free will could have willed to bring the world into being at that moment. In this way, God could exist changelessly and eternally but choose to create the world in time...He freely and eternally intends to create a world with a beginning. By exercising causal power, he therefore brings it about that a world with a beginning comes to exist. So the cause is eternal, but the effect is not. In this way, then, it is possible for the temporal universe to have come to exist from an eternal cause: through the free will of a personal Creator. (Craig, *Reasonable* 117)

Majid Fakhry expressed it in a little different way.

With the temporality of the world as a premise, the Mutakallims proceeded to prove that the world being created (*hadith*) must necessarily have a creator (*munith*), by recourse to the so-called ‘principle of determination.’ In its barest form, this principle meant that since prior to the existence of the universe it was equally possible for it to be or not-to-be, a determinant (*murajjih*) whereby the possibility of a being could prevail over the possibility of not-being was required; and this ‘determinant’—they argued—was God. (13)

Having then reasoned to the point where we must attribute the existence of the universe to a first cause that is personal, we must

realize the final portion of our argument is personal,¹¹ not mathematical or scientific, in nature. Why? What influence has science in explaining that which is not bound by it or did not exist contemporaneous with it or prior to it? None! Science has no means to fully explain a volitional beginning of the universe or a personal uncaused cause, though it readily lends proof to such an assertion. As Norman Geisler notes:

Therefore, if a personal explanation does not exist, then there is simply no explanation at all—which is metaphysically absurd, since on that account the universe just popped into being uncaused out of nothing. (Geisler and Hoffman 49)

While, for all intensive purposes, the Kalam cosmological argument ends here, having asserted and proven from science, mathematics, common sense and philosophy that the universe came to exist, is finite, and owes its origin to a personal Creator who possesses certain characteristics, let us go on then and re-examine the necessary characteristics we have given or are implied about the first cause of the universe and reasonably determine who this God is. Is what we are calling God actually a plurality of Gods? When we say God, are we referring to the God of the Koran or the God of the Bible (or any other for that matter)? Who is this uncaused God? While a full discussion of these is impossible and bleeds over into other areas (teleological argument, inspiration of the Bible and so on), let us take a brief look and then draw some cursory conclusions.

Characteristics of the Uncaused Cause

If we go back into our argument the following points emerge for us about our first cause.

1. Eternal
2. Necessary

¹¹ By personal we are referring to the manner of describing an event. For instance, in describing a certain event, we may detail that certain muscle fibers in my arm, receiving stimulus from the corresponding nerves, which came as a result of stimulus from my brain, actuated my arm in a striking movement. Or, I could simply say, “I hit the guy.” One is scientific (or attempts to be). The other is personal. Both describe the event. Yet, the latter implies a willful act.

3. Volitional—implies mind, thought, feeling
4. Transcending time and space
5. Unchangeable
6. Oneness—There is only once uncaused cause or God

Since we have already talked at length about most of these, let us deal, as we narrow our thoughts down, about the oneness of God. If there is only one, God then we must understand that the implication is that there are only one set of characteristics that define this being. If there is only one set of characteristics that define (limit—though self-imposed limit) this being then we are not going to find God acting out of harmony, since he is unchangeable, with this character.

Perhaps, the best way to deal with the oneness of God, relevant to our discussion, is found in the “Anthropic Principle,” or the principle that states that “from its very inception the entire cosmos was fine-tuned and tweaked so as to make the origin of human life possible” (Geisler and Hoffman 49). Biology, physics, geology, physiology, genetics, astronomy and all science of every stripe, truly examined, burst with evidence that the universe was indeed finely tuned for the purpose of supporting human life.

This unity is surely the product of a single will or mind and not a pantheon. It was this finely tuned order of events, specifically the complexity and order of the genetic code of humans, that Antony Flew, longtime atheistic philosopher, acknowledged were the turning point in his thinking and now, though not professing Christianity, affirms a higher intelligence.

First, it (a pantheon) violates what some have called the “principle of Parsimony,” also know as Occam’s Razor (a scientific and philosophic rule that entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily, which is interpreted as requiring that the simplest of competing theories be preferred to the more complex or that explanations of unknown phenomena be sought first in terms of known quantities), which precludes us from assuming there are multiple gods if a single, self-existent being suffices (*Merriam-Webster*). If there are multiple gods, then they would possess the same characteristics and be in complete harmony or there would be conflict, which we certainly do not find, given the unity of our universe. If they are in complete

harmony in all the facets, then they are one. Why would we want to attribute such unity to multiple sources when one source is sufficient if not demanded?

Second, the world is unified in operation to support human life.

The word 'universe' signifies unity. Men speak of heavens and the earth; but the earth belongs to a starry system. The earth is a planet, and with its associate planets is one of countless similar groups, not alien from one another, but linked together in a stellar universe. Scientific theory more and more favors the reduction of 'forces' to unity. The theory of the conservation of force is an illustration. The unity of the world testifies to the unity of God. (Fisher 29)

Consider also the following evidences from science.

The distance of the earth from the sun is 93 million miles. The average temperature of the sun's surface is 11,500° F. Sun spots are between 1 to 2 million degrees Fahrenheit. Scientists have determined if the temperature on the sun were just 50° F more or less for just one year, life would cease to exist. Fifty degrees is less than ½ of 1 % of the average surface temperature of the sun. It appears the temperature of the sun was designed expressly for the purpose of making the earth hospitable for life to exist (Lindsay, *Origins* 98).

The earth has a slight wobble of 3°. This helps to deflect the intensity of the sun's rays. If it wobbled more than 3° up, the poles would freeze over, resulting in the shrinking of the oceans which in turn would cause more land to exist, eventuating the land to become desert. If it wobbled more than 3° down, the polar caps would melt, causing the oceans to rise; this would in turn cause an absorption of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere which would limit plant growth—the major producer of oxygen. (98)

Consider the oxygen level: It is 21%. If it were 25%, it would be impossible to grow forests because of fires which would be ignited by lightning during electrical storms. Even pouring rain couldn't put out the fires, if the oxygen level were only 19%, just 2% less, we'd suffocate. If it were 10% more, the earth would explode like a huge ball of fire. If it were 10% less, it would be impossible to have a natural fire. (98)

Such unity, as we have said, implies a single source or mind that framed them together with the notion of supporting human life. Why would we assume anything different when all that speaks from earth or heaven tells us One is sufficient?

Yeah, But the God of the Bible?

So what happens when we find two groups or writings asserting God and yet in them we find two very different beings in conflict? First, we know that both cannot be right. Both may be wrong, but both cannot be right in their assertion concerning the same God in the same sense. Second, we must examine the evidence that these writings can be traced to a source beyond man, or, to put it another way, bear the fingerprint or characteristics consistent with the uncaused originator of the universe. If the God who created the universe did communicate to his creation, then we must be able to set forth a case that a particular communication is his. A claim that such is the case is not sufficient. Third, we must dismiss all claims that are not in harmony with a source beyond human origin and do not bear his fingerprint.

Assuming the case for the inspiration of the Bible (which is dealt with in other portions of the book), and that all other writings fail the tests, we must conclude that the personal Creator, with a specific set of characteristics, communicated to man through not only naturalistic means, but also in the Bible, which bears out the same character we find in our argumentation. Thus, we have our uncaused cause identified as the Author of the Bible. Notice the following.

His Necessity

And He is not served by human hands as if he needed anything, for he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. (Acts 17:25 NIV)

And he is before all things and in him all things hold together. (Col. 1:17 ESV)¹²

For from him and through him and to him are all things. (Rom. 11:36 ESV)

¹² *English Standard Version*

His Eternality

From everlasting to everlasting thou art God. (Psa. 90:2)

For this is what the high and lofty one says, who inhabits eternity. (Isa. 57:15)

His Immutability

God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. (Num. 23:19)

I the Lord do not change. (Mal. 3:6)

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom is not variableness, neither shadow of turning. (Jam. 1:17)

His Oneness

Hear O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord. (Deut. 6:4)

I am the Lord and there is none else. (Isa. 45:18)

There is no God but one. (1 Cor. 8:4)

His Will

You are worthy O Lord to receive glory and honor and power; for you created all things; and by your will they exist and were created. (Rev. 4:11)

But all these worketh that one and selfsame Spirit, dividing to man severally as he wills. (1 Cor. 12:11)

And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye might prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Rom. 12:2)

It is certainly no coincidence that we find the same characteristics of God in the Bible, which asserts, ‘In the beginning...created,’ in the arguments from every discipline known to man.

Conclusion

Mortimer Adler, in volume 29 of the *Great Books Of The Western World*, stated, concerning the chapter on God, “More consequences for thought and action follow the affirmation or denial of God than from answering any other basic question” (Little 17). Truly, all other questions pale in comparison to this fundamental question of life and its profound implication. If there is a God, that God sent his Son to earth to die on a cross

and his Spirit to deliver a written communication called the Bible, then men everywhere are not, as humanists and atheists assert, supreme beings, but subject to the will of a Creator.

This idea alone will be unsavory to some, and from a rebellious spirit they will deny what is so obviously true—God does exist. The case for a Creator, as presented here and coupled with the overwhelming evidence from every discipline known to man, is rock solid, firmly fixed and irrefutable, despite man’s inadequacy at times in the presentation of argumentation. As complex as it may seem, when these arguments and evidences are boiled down and the steam and smoke of active minds settle, the simple, but profound, affirmation, given by God’s Word, that “In the beginning God created...” endures unshaken by the cat calls of skeptics.

Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercises loving judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord. (Jer. 9:23-24)

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Biographical Sketch

Ed Benesh, born in Wheeling, WV in 1969, is currently the preacher at the Sunrush church of Christ in Chillicothe, OO. He is a 1992 graduate of Freed-Hardeman University, a 2000 graduate of the West Virginia School of Preaching, a veteran; and father of three children (Maxwell, 11; Bethany, 4; and Joshua, 2). He is married to Carrie A. (Rossey) Benesh. His current works include directing the Annual Sunrush church of Christ Lectureship, conducting the weekly radio program "Search The Scriptures," working with the youth at Fort Hill Christian Youth Camp, teaching Greek and other subjects at the Central Ohio Bible Institute and Preacher Training Camp (Alkire Road church of Christ, Columbus, OH), speaking on various lectures and conducting Gospel meetings.

The Failure of Unbelief

By Charles C. Pugh III

Introduction

“**BEWARE**, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart **OF UNBELIEF** in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12, emp. added).

The admonition is to beware. The admonition is for believers to beware of the blunder of unbelief. Rogers says the construction of the preceding verse “expresses a warning and fear regarding a pres. inevitable reality, indicating the warning should be taken very seriously” (522).

As used in this lecture, **unbelief** relates to the rejection and denial of (1) the existence of God, (2) the inspiration and authority of the Bible, and (3) the deity of Jesus Christ. In the above text (i.e., Heb. 3:12), unbelief relates to “the unending existence of God” (522) and the authority that the word of the ever-living God has over, on, and in, one’s life (cf. Heb. 4:2). There are many forms of unbelief. As Bales has stated:

[A]theism is not the only form of unbelief. But such forms of unbelief as agnosticism and skepticism—when they become a person’s settled outlook on life—are for all practical purposes atheistic since they cause a person to leave God out of his life. They lead men to live as if they knew that God does not exist. **These are atheists in life whether or not they are in profession** (Faith 8, emp. added).

The person who mentally assents to the truth of the existence of God, the inspiration of the Bible, and/or the deity of Jesus Christ, but lives his life trusting in anything, or anyone, but God, will experience the failure of unbelief just as the avowed atheist who argues against the existence of God. Paul wrote, “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in [i.e., believe in] uncertain riches but in the living God...storing up a good foundation for the time to come...” (1 Tim. 6:17, 19). The rich fool (Luke 12:15-21), though successful by the standards of the world, experienced the failure of unbelief because he trusted in (i.e., believed in) **his** possessions, properties, plans and purposes for the answer to the

meaning of life, rather than trusting in the person, power, purposes and providence of God to provide the answer to the meaning of life on Earth.

The purpose of this lecture is to affirm and prove that unbelief in **every** form is doomed for failure. Unbelief is deficient **intellectually, morally, and spiritually**. My purpose is not to refute atheism, agnosticism or skepticism with a detailed examination of the arguments of such. However, there is a sense in which “when the nature and consequences of unbelief are clearly set forth its essential unsoundness is made evident” (Bales, *Faith* 8). As we truly see the weakness, ugliness and poverty of unbelief, we can truly appreciate the strength, beauty and richness of the Christian faith.

Before consideration is given to the threefold failure of unbelief (i.e., intellectual, moral, and spiritual), please note two basic false assumptions of unbelief: (1) Unbelief falsely assumes that it alone is rational, and Christian faith is irrational. (2) Unbelief falsely assumes that only religion is based on the element of belief while unbelief is based on reason exclusively and does not involve faith.

In response to the first false assumption of unbelief (i.e., unbelief is rational and Christian faith is irrational), I have written elsewhere the following:

To be rational simply means that one honors the law [of] rationality (i.e. he draws only such conclusions as are warranted by the evidence). The Bible teaches (1) the law of rationality is true and (2) all men ought to honor this law. Isaiah wrote, “ ‘Present your case,’ says the Lord, ‘Bring forth your strong reasons, says the King of Jacob’” (Isa. 41:21). Paul wrote, “Prove all things...” (1 Thess. 5:21, ASV). John stated, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1, ASV).

Although it is the case that the Bible teaches Christian faith is rational, and God does not ask us to believe anything for which He does not give us sufficient evidence, some affirm that faith is irrational. They hold that Christian faith must involve the espousal of some inadequately supported conclusion by a “leap into the dark” beyond the available and relevant evidence...

The Bible teaches that faith comes from the sufficient evidence provided by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). To claim that faith is a “leap into the dark” beyond the evidence is to espouse irrationalism, which implies agnosticism, which implies that, for all we know, the Christian faith may not be true. This is not to say that one **fully** comprehends **all** the details of the basic propositions of the Christian faith (i.e. God exists, the Bible is the word of God, Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and to be saved one must believe in, love, and obey Jesus Christ). However, it is to say that God has provided sufficient revelation (evidence) for believing and knowing that Christianity is the one, true religion. There are sufficient reasons for being a Christian (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15). (Pugh 29-31)

Unbelief creates a “false and artificial antithesis” (Sweet 16) between reason and **all** religious faith. However, such an antithesis does not exist between reason and **true Christian faith**. Sweet correctly said:

We must remind ourselves that Christianity claims to be a rational system. It makes much of belief, and emphasizes strongly the necessity of faith...[H]owever, **faith** (that is, trust beyond the range of experiment) **is an element in all reasoning processes**. Christianity admits the unprecedented nature of the events which it alleges in the career of Christ, but maintains that the belief in these events is entirely reasonable because they are supported by many infallible proofs. (92 emp. added)

A second assumption of unbelief says religion is supported only by “beliefs” while unbelief is backed by “reasons.” The fact is there is a sense in which unbelief also has its “beliefs.” The unbeliever is, himself, a believer. Bales explained, “[W]hen one calls an atheist an unbeliever it means not that he is without any belief, but that he does not believe the specific things which distinguish the believer in God from the one who does not believe in God” (*Faith* 19). “The question here is not *whether* we believe, but *what* we believe and *why* we do so” (Blanchard 191). We choose what we are going to believe, but not whether we will believe. On this point, W.H. Fitchett wrote the following:

...[U]nbelief, like every other creed, is best judged by its affirmations (i.e. its beliefs). We are too much concerned

with what it denies. We do not draw out in clear terms the affirmations which stand behind these denials. Some day a book will be written on what may be called the affirmatives of unbelief, and it will be a very amazing bit of literature. For when **the denials of unbelief** are translated into positive terms it will be seen they **require** for their acceptance and digestion **a much more amazing exercise of faith** than the largest propositions of belief itself (*Logic* 161 emp. added).

In another work, Fitchett has also written:

The choice of the soul, to sum up, does not lie, in the last analysis, betwixt Belief and Doubt; but betwixt rival forms of belief. If the Christian creed is not accepted, there emerge certain alternative beliefs perfectly definite in character, one or other of which must take its place. For the temple of the human soul cannot be left empty, swept, and garnished. Some Tenant must come! Men are unwilling to see the inevitable and underlying affirmations of doubt; the dark alternatives to faith, from which there is no escape; they try, as we have said, to keep the Christian solution of the great problems of duty, while rejecting the axioms on which that solution is built. But no attempt is more certainly predoomed to defeat. (*Beliefs* 12-13)

I contend that it takes greater faith to affirm atheism and unbelief than it does to believe the affirmations of the Christian faith. As one former militant atheist stated, “‘Of all choices, *atheism requires the greatest faith*, as it demands that one’s limited store of human knowledge is sufficient to exclude the possibility of God’” (qtd. in Blanchard 192). The famous statement attributed to G.K. Chesterton sums it up well: “When a man stops believing in God, he doesn’t then believe in nothing, he believes in anything” (qtd. in Rees 158). Unbelief is, itself, a belief system. It believes in its unbelief. However, it is a system that is grossly deficient and fails in this life and in the life to come.

Intellectual Failure of Unbelief

In the first place, **unbelief fails intellectually**. It does so because it spends most of its time in the negative attacking faith in God, the Bible and Jesus Christ, and offers nothing in the way of a sound argument to prove its conclusions. Bales wrote, “The weakness of the unbeliever’s position is revealed with full force

in the failure of its arguments against the Christian faith, and in its utter, dismal failure to sustain by reasonable and logical arguments that which it affirms” (*Faith* 21, emp. added). An example of the intellectual failure of unbelief is evidenced in its impossible defense of the proposition that God does not exist. Robert Flint described the dismal failure of unbelief in proving its “no God” case when he wrote:

It is proverbially difficult to prove a negative, and there can be no negative so difficult to prove as that there is no God. Were a man to be landed on an unknown island, the print of a foot, a shell, a feather, a scratch on the bark of a tree, the perforation or indentation or upheaval of a little earth, would be sufficient to show him that some living creature had been there; but he would require to traverse the whole island, and examine every nook and corner, every object and every inch of space in it, before he was entitled to affirm that no living creature had been there. The larger the territory to be traversed and examined, the more difficult would it necessarily be to show that it had not a single animal inhabitant. So to show that there is a God may be very easy, but to prove that there is certainly none must be extremely difficult, if not impossible. There may be as many witnesses to God’s existence as there are creatures in the whole compass of heaven and earth, but before we can be sure that nothing testifies to His existence, we must know all things. The territory which has in this case to be surveyed and investigated is the universe in all its length and breadth; it is eternal time and boundless space, with all the events which have occurred in time, and all the objects which occupy space. Before a man can be warranted to affirm that nowhere throughout all this territory is there any trace of God’s existence, he must have seen it all and comprehended it all, which would require omnipresence and omniscience, or, in other words, would imply that he is himself God. (9-10)

David Hume (1711-1776), called the father of modern skepticism (Blanchard 50), rejected the principle of causality and made one of the most fundamental attacks on natural theology (General Revelation) in modern times. He is well known for his classic assault on miracles in his famous essay (1748), which Smith calls “the most powerful attack on the whole conception of miracles that has been delivered in modern times, claimed by

some philosophers to have forever prevented any further belief in miracles” (*Stand* 9). Blanchard says, “Even Hume came to see that his ideas were leading him down a miserable cul-de-sac, which is where huge areas of modern society are to be found” (52). Hume implied the utter intellectual failure of his unbelief when he said:

...I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more likely and probable than another. Where am I, or what? From what causes do I derive my existence, and to what condition shall I return? Whose favor shall I court, and whose anger shall I dread? What beings surround me, and on whom have I any influence, or who have any influence on me? I am confounded by all these questions, and begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, environed with the deepest darkness, and utterly deprived of the use of every member. (qtd. in Matthews 155-56)

Leander S. Keyser’s *A System of Christian Evidence* contains a chapter titled, “The Failure of Infidelity.” Keyser discusses the achievements of unbelievers in (1) the field of literature and (2) the field of science and invention. Although Keyser acknowledged some positive work done by those who have espoused unbelief, he points out that this has been done as “independent individuals” and **unbelief has done little “in an organized capacity”** (248 emp. added). He asks, “Where are its [i.e., unbelief’s] colleges, its hospitals, its constructive works? The Christian religion, founded solely on the Bible, has built many colleges and other institutions of higher education...Where have the organized free-thinkers a first-class college in all this country?” (252).

In *The Intellectuals Speak Out About God*, subtitled, *A Handbook for the Christian Student in a Secular Society*, it is stated:

Few people realize it, but Harvard started out as a Christian college, and was one hundred years old before there was even one professor who was not a minister. Furthermore, Harvard’s original charter contains the following educational mandate: “Everyone shall consider the main end of his life and studies to know Jesus Christ which is eternal life.” When Harvard professors began to lose their zeal for the

faith, Yale was founded. When Yale began to falter, others were established to take its place. Even so, the president of Yale in 1754, Thomas Clap, declared the early purpose of colleges as “societies of ministers for training up persons for the work of the ministry.”

Gradually, colleges began to spring up all over, and of the first one hundred and nineteen, one hundred and four were started by Christians to acquaint students with the knowledge of God—including Princeton, Dartmouth and Columbia...Out of a graduating class of forty thousand in 1855 *ten thousand* went on to become ministers—over 25 percent! (Oakes xxii-xxiii).

Some have the “inaccurate perception that Christianity is...based on blind faith....Christianity is a reasonable faith as evidenced by Paul’s presentation to the first century philosophers on Mars Hill in Athens. Recall, also, that Paul was a scholar of the first order before his conversion. He came humbly into the kingdom of God as all must, but his skills of inquiry and teaching were still his most utilized gifts” (xxv). When Paul made his defense of the Gospel before Agrippa (Acts 26:1-32), he was interrupted by Governor Festus who accused Paul of irrationality (Acts 26:24). Paul responded, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth” (Acts 26:24 NASV). On the word that is translated *sober* (NASV), *reason* (NKJV), the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* states, “It denotes a. ‘the rational’ in the sense of **what is intellectually sound**...denotes b. ‘rational’...The ref. here is...simply to ‘being rational’” (Luck 7: 1097, emp. added).

Christian faith does not fetter thought. It actually invites investigation:

...[T]he foundation framework of modern science...was born and bred in the theistic world-vision...This intellectual superstructure...provided a systematic rationale for the foundations of science...Interestingly the great scientists who founded modern science, Copernicus, Newton, Maxwell, Einstein, Planck, Heisenberg...and numerous others...passionately proclaimed the root-and-fruit embeddedness of science and religion (Varghese xii-xiii).

Modern science is sometimes represented as a grinch that has stolen the faith. “It’s not science that is the grinch but a band

of intellectuals trapped in vacuous abstractions and irrational ideologies” (17). The truth is “...many of the greatest scientists of modern times, from Einstein to Stephen Hawking...have identified the laws of nature with the Mind of God” (18). Francis Bacon has been credited with discovering the scientific method, the combination of induction and deduction, hypothesis and proof. Bacon believed in God, Christ, and the inspiration and authority of the Bible (Kennedy 9).

Do you know who has been called the greatest scientist that ever lived? Kennedy has reported:

A poll taken of scientists...concluded that the greatest scientist that ever lived was Sir Isaac Newton. If you read a list of the things that he discovered...mathematical laws of gravity are just one piece of that huge puzzle from this gigantic intellect. He was, also...the co-discoverer of calculus...**Newton believed in God, he believed in Christ, he believed in the Bible, and he believed in creation.** To the utter chagrin of modern evolutionary scientists, he wrote more books on theology than he did on science. (9-10 emp. added)

Unbelief is not the source of the various branches of science. Kennedy lists more than forty different branches of science and their respective discoverers (10-12). Every one of these discoverers was a theist! There is “not an evolutionist among them...They were...all believers in creation” (10, 12). “[T]he idea of fundamental laws of nature, the backbone of modern science, arose in theistic cultures...[I]t’s a striking fact of history that Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler, Newton, Faraday and Maxwell, Einstein, Planck and Heisenberg, all believed in a divine Mind behind the world and Rationality at the foundation of reality” (Varghese 102).

In his essay, “Of Atheism,” Francis Bacon wrote, “...[A] little philosophy inclineth man’s mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men’s mind about to religion” (108). Dr. Antony G.N. Flew, leading atheistic philosopher for 50 years, who met the late Dr. Thomas B. Warren in debate on the existence of God (1976) at North Texas State University (now the University of North Texas) has stunned many in the philosophical world with his affirmation that “biologists’ findings on the incredible complexity of the DNA encoded in

each cell show ‘intelligence must have been involved’ in producing life as we know it” (Ostling 23). In 1955, Professor Flew set the agenda for modern atheism when he presented a paper “Theology and Falsification,” which he set forth in a debate with the well-known British writer and former atheist, C.S. Lewis. Flew’s work became the most widely reprinted philosophical publication of the last 50 years. He has published more than 30 books in which he has, in some form or another, attacked belief in God. But now, Professor Flew has “announced that the discoveries of modern science have led him to the conclusion that the universe is indeed the creation of infinite Intelligence” (Institute for MetaScientific Research back cover). In a video, *Has Science Discovered God?*, produced by Roy Abraham Varghese and the Institute for MetaScientific Research, Flew responded to a question concerning whether modern science indicates some outside Intelligence for the origin of the universe. He answered, “Yes.”

In a new Introduction for the 2005 edition of his book, *God and Philosophy* (first published in 1966), Professor Flew writes, “...[T]he inductive argument from the order of nature to God as its Intelligent Orderer...is an argument that becomes progressively more powerful with every advance in human kind’s knowledge of the integrated complexity of what used to be called the ‘system of nature’” (11). At this point, Flew does not believe in “the well-defined, personal God of the Bible” (Ostling 23). However, his journey from militant atheism to the honest acknowledgment that the “enormous complexity”/ “unbelievable complexity” (Institute for MetaScientific Research) in nature implies Intelligence for its origin is monumental. My prayer is that Professor Flew will be true to his commitment as stated in a 2004 letter to *Philosophy Now*: “[F]ollow the argument wherever it leads” (Flew 6). Such was what Warren urged Professor Flew to do nearly 30 years ago. If he will do this, he will be led to the conclusion reached by Paul in his presentation to Athenian philosophers 2000 years ago (Acts 17:18-31).

Professor George John Romanes (1848-1894) was a passionate biological scientist. He was a student and friend of Charles Darwin and a professor at Oxford. Through the influence

of Darwinism, he lost his faith in God and, as Gore observed, “his mind moved rapidly and sharply into a position of reasoned scepticism about the existence of God at all” (*Thoughts* 9). In 1876, he published anonymously a work entitled *A Candid Examination of Theism* in which he denied the existence of God. The authorship of this work did not become known until after Romanes’ death in 1894. Nearly two years following Romanes’ death (May 23, 1894), J.W. McGarvey wrote an essay, “The Darkness of Atheism” (April 11, 1896) in which he cited a passage from Romanes that he (McGarvey) said “reads like the wail of a lost soul” (140). Among other things, Romanes stated:

I am not ashamed to confess that with this virtual negation of God the universe to me has lost its soul of loveliness...[W]hen at times I think, as think at times I must, of the appalling contrast between the hallowed glory of that creed which once was mine, and the lovely mystery of existence as now I find it,—at such times I shall feel it impossible to avoid the sharpest pang of which my nature is susceptible. (*Thoughts* 28)

Sometime before 1889, Romanes wrote three essays that were unpublished at the time of writing. One of these was *A Candid Examination of Religion*, which was a critique of his former work, *A Candid Examination of Theism*. In the latter work (*Religion*), he says, “It will be shown that in many respects the negative conclusions reached in the former essay have been greatly modified by the results of maturer thought as now presented in the second” (99). Romanes had reclaimed his faith in God, and wrote:

I know from experience the intellectual distractions of scientific research, philosophical speculation, and artistic pleasures; but am also aware that even when all are taken together and well sweetened to taste...the whole concoction is but as high confectionery to a starving man...take it then as unquestionably true that this whole negative side of the subject proves a vacuum in the soul of man which nothing can fill save faith in God. (*Thoughts* 150-152)

In *The Life and Letters of George John Romanes*, written and edited by his wife E. Romanes, there is the following significant statement that speaks volumes concerning the intellectual failure of unbelief: “When the Shadow of Death lay

on him, and the dread messenger was drawing near, and he looked back on his short life, he could reproach himself only for what he called sins of the intellect, mental arrogance, undue regard for intellectual supremacy” (352).

Romanes died on Wednesday, May 23, 1894, at the young age of 46. On the preceding Thursday he had said, “*I have now come to see that faith is intellectually justifiable. It is Christianity or nothing*” (349).

More than one-hundred years removed from Romanes, former atheist and Harvard graduate, Patrick Glynn, in his 1997 book, *God: The Evidence*, boldly predicted:

The day, I believe, is soon coming when skepticism, unbelief, is going to be the minority position, not just among the populace at large, but even among intellectuals...[D]ramatic new developments in science, medicine, and other fields have radically transformed the old existence-of-God debate...[O]ver the past twenty years, a significant body of evidence has emerged, shattering the foundations of the long-dominant modern secular world-view...The past two decades of research have overturned nearly all the important assumptions and predictions of an earlier generation of...atheistic thinkers relating to the issue of God. Modern thinkers assumed that science would reveal the universe to be ever more random...instead it has discovered unexpected new layers of intricate order that bespeak an almost unimaginable vast master design...Today...**there is no good reason** [Author’s Note: There **never** has been! (Rom. 1:20)] for an intelligent person **to embrace the illusion of atheism or agnosticism, to make the same intellectual mistakes I made...**[T]he road to the spiritual view of life...is the greatest of intellectual, and human, adventures (2, 19-20 emp. added).

Moral Failure of Unbelief

Not only is it the case that **unbelief** fails intellectually, but it also **fails morally** in that it has no ultimate, objective standard of moral/ethical truth and thus, logically, everything is permitted in an unbelieving society. French existentialist philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre, stated:

The existentialist...finds it extremely embarrassing that God does not exist, for there disappears with Him all possibility

of finding values...There can no longer be any good **a priori**, since there is no infinite and perfect consciousness to think it. It is nowhere written that “the good” exists, that one must be honest or not be, since we are now upon the plane where there are only men. Dostoevsky once wrote, “**If God did not exist, everything would be permitted;**” and that...is the starting point. **Everything is indeed permitted if God does not exist**, and **man** is in consequence forlorn, for he **cannot find anything to depend upon either within or outside himself**...[I]f God does not exist...we [are not] provided with any values or commands that could legitimize our behavior. (485, emp. added)

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), a British mathematician and philosopher, was an avowed atheist. He was awarded the Nobel Prize and authored more than 40 books on philosophy, education, morality, sex, etc. His Beacon Hill School, located sixty miles from London, was established in 1927 as a “free thought” school where children were to have “absolute freedom of inquiry” (Tait 73). Russell’s only daughter, Katharine, was educated at the school and wrote, “One of the most important aspects of the school, for my parents, was its sexual freedom...[W]e were free to say anything we liked about sex, to ask any question and to compare ourselves with members of the opposite sex without concealment” (95). In his *Autobiography*, Russell suggests “the school gave nothing in return for the grief it caused” (98). His daughter calls it “an emotional disaster” (99). Because of his controversial views on free sex it was “decided he was not a fit person to instruct the young,” and he was terminated from his professorship at the City College of New York in 1940. He authored a vicious attack on Christianity titled, “Why I Am Not a Christian.” He taught his children and others that “mankind was no more than an accident of evolution” (178). In *My Father Bertrand Russell*, Katharine answered, “What was it like, having Bertrand Russell for a father?” (xi). She wrote:

My father was a notably irreverent and mischievous man, not above using his children to provoke people in ways that would not be quite acceptable from conventional adults...[W]hen we traveled more by car, he suggested that we might lean out of the windows when we passed other cars and shout out: “Your grandfather was a monkey!” This

was to convince them of the correctness of Darwin's theory of evolution...(4)

Russell believed, in spite of his atheism, that "parents must begin teaching the child with its very first breath that it has entered into **a moral world**" (59 emp. added). However, the moral failure of his (and all) unbelief is evidenced when Katharine wrote concerning moral responsibility that she might say as a child: "I don't want to! Why should I?" To which, she said, "a conventional parent would reply: 'Because I say so...your father says so...God says so...'" However, Russell would answer, "Because more people will be happy if you do than if you don't." "So what? I don't care about other people," he would answer, "You should." She rejoined, "But why?" his answer: "Because more people will be happy if you do than if you don't." Tait then observed: "We felt the heavy pressure of his rectitude and obeyed, but **the reason was not convincing-neither to us nor to him**" (185 emp. added).

In an 1886 work, *The Influence of Scepticism on Character*, William Watkinson set forth the obvious failure of unbelief morally. He stated:

The testimony of history to the fatal effect of scepticism on character is very clear...History shows in bold characters none may misread, that when a people does not like to retain God in their knowledge, and construe the science of life into a science of indulgence, character rapidly declines, and with [out] character all the glory of man descends into the dust .(19-20)

The moral failure of unbelief does not provide a pretty picture (cf. Rom. 1:21-32) and, in the words of British atheist, Richard Dawkins: "My own feeling is that a human society based simply on the gene's law of universal ruthless selfishness would be **a very nasty society** in which to live" (3 emp. added). This statement is from a militant unbeliever who misrepresents all religious faith as "a state of mind that leads people to believe something...in the total absence of supporting evidence" (330). And yet, what he offers in place of religious faith is "**a very nasty society in which to live.**"

As I have written elsewhere:

Think about it! Dawkins is accurate in his conclusion. A society based simply on a philosophical viewpoint, which negates God, will be “*a very nasty society*,” because it has no objective reference point for ethics and morality. Any, and all, conduct, no matter how reprehensible, could be defended logically because, without God, it is impossible to argue for any objectivity with regard to “right” and “wrong.” “Right” and “wrong” conduct is meaningless terminology without God...As Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris roamed Columbine High School, they approached seventeen year old Cassie Bernall. She was asked by one of the gunmen if she believed in God. She said yes. She was then asked why and “...they just blew her away” (Bernall 13). Someone had convinced those two young men that God does not exist, and their actions are the horrifying, but logical, consequences of life without God. If evolution (atheism) is true, then there is no difference between killing a cockroach or a human being. (Pugh 93-95)

Could anything be clearer? Unbelief leaves man without a moral compass. Logically, he is doomed to failure without God, and any society that promotes unbelief is, logically, doomed to failure. This is not to say that all unbelievers see the logical moral implications of their unbelief and live accordingly. In one sense, we can be thankful they do not. You and I would not want to live in a society that consistently followed the moral implications of atheism and unbelief. Some unbelievers are good people, but such is in spite of their unbelief. They are better than their creed, just as some Christians are worse than their creed. But the point is—**unbelief is a menace to morality**. One hundred years ago (1905), Fitchett evaluated the moral failure of unbelief and his evaluation is still accurate in 2005. He stated:

According to its teaching, all moral qualities—courage, goodness, pity, self-sacrifice—are nothing better than labels on the jars of a chemist’s shop. A mother is a mere combination of carbon, phosphorus, lime, and water, with a few salts thrown in. The whole interval betwixt greed and love, betwixt the lust that prompts to sin and the conscience that rebukes sin, can be measured in the terms of chemistry. A few grains, more or less, say, of mercury, make the whole difference betwixt the saint and the harlot. Why, then, should we admire the saint or blame the harlot? (*Logic* 178)

Bales, in his great work, *Atheism's Faith and Fruits*, has well summarized the moral aspect of unbelief's failure:

It is possible for atheists to have a civilization in which to live only because there are sufficient people today with faith in God to hold society together. What would atheists do if they converted all people and all of them lived down to the atheistic creed? Such a society could not long survive for it would not be a society but a mass of men fighting among themselves. Instead they (i.e. unbelievers) are parasites on a society which has drawn its moral and spiritual strength from theism...Civilization is impossible without some moral and spiritual ties binding it together, and atheism is incapable of generating moral and spiritual ties. That this is true is clearly shown in the statements of unbelievers as well as the logical consequences of its doctrines of materialistic determinism and relativity of morality. (143-44)

Spiritual Failure of Unbelief

Finally, **unbelief fails spiritually**. It fails spiritually because it leads to a pessimistic spirit in life. It leaves man guilty in sin, and hopeless in death. Smith wrote, "...[A]sk them if in their skepticism, their rejection of the Bible, and denial of God, they have found joy...[T]hey will be unanimous in declaring this, that **unbelief leads straight to pessimism**" (*Stand* 188 emp. added). "...[U]nbelief, when it is thought through to its logical and inevitable conclusion, can find room only for deep, dark, pessimism" (Bales, *Faith* 57).

Numerous are the examples of unbelievers who, by their lives and words, show the pessimism of unbelief. Smith claims, "[T]he man who did more to destroy the faith of men in the Bible and in Christ, at the beginning of what we might call our modern age, than any one writer in Europe was Voltaire" (*Stand* 188). Voltaire's pessimism is evidenced in the following words from his pen poisoned with unbelief: "Strike out a few sages, and the crowd of human beings is nothing but a horrible assemblage of unfortunate criminals, and the globe contains nothing but corpses...I wish I had never been born" (qtd. in Smith, *Stand* 188-89).

In 1946, in an obituary editorial, the *New York Times* called H.G. Wells "the greatest public teacher of his time" (qtd. in Smith, *Chats* 187). His *Outline of History* sold millions. His

other writings were extremely popular and financially profitable (Smith, *Stand* 196). He called Jesus of Nazareth “the world’s greatest failure” (Wells, *Happy* 20). He viciously attacked Christianity. He suggested that men ought to get together and write a new Bible (Smith, *Chats* 188). However, “the greatest public teacher of his day” could not teach himself the way of peace and happiness. Wilbur M. Smith calls Wells’ final book, *Mind at the End of Its Tether*, a work of less than forty pages, “the most despairing cry, the most agonizing scream of utter hopelessness that can be found coming from any intellectual leader of the 20th century” (191). Bales said in this book, “the dying wail of an atheist is recorded for posterity” (*Faith* 74). Wells wrote:

...[T]his world is at the end of its tether...[T]here is no way out or round or through...It is the end...“Life...a tale told by an idiot...signifying nothing...” It passes, and presently it is vague, indistinct, distorted and at last forgotten for ever...”Golden lads and lasses must, like chimney sweepers, come to dust.” “No,” says this ingrained streak of protest: “there is still something beyond the dust.” But *is* there? There is no reason for saying there is...There is no way out or round or through...After all the present writer has no compelling argument to convince the reader that he should not be cruel or mean or cowardly. Man must go steeply up or down and the odds seem to be all in favour of his going down and out...Ordinary man is at the end of his tether. (*Tether* 1, 4, 10, 14-15, 18, 30)

The philosophy of life that dismisses God, and a religious outlook, fails to provide one with purposeful fulfillment in life. The atheistic psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud branded faith in God as a form of mental disorder that he predicted humanity would outgrow (Glynn 57). However, Freud’s disciple-turned-rival, Carl Jung, observed that every one of his patients in the second half of his life fell ill because of a loss of a religious outlook in life and none was healed who did not regain such (69). Just here, I am reminded again of the noted atheistic philosopher Bertrand Russell and his daughter’s observations about her father’s life. She said:

I believe myself that his whole life was a search for God...Somewhere at the back of my father’s mind, at the

bottom of his heart, in the depths of his soul, there was an empty space that had once been filled by God, and he never found anything else to put in it. He wrote of it in his letters during the First World War, and once he said that human affection was to him “at bottom an attempt to escape from the vain search for God”...I picked up the yearning from him, together with his ghostlike feeling of not belonging, of having no home in this world. (Tait 184-185)

Life without God fails. Glynn wrote: “Modernity failed to achieve its ambition of a comprehensive, materialistic alternative to the religious understanding of the human condition. A purely secular view of human mental life has been shown to fail not just at the theoretical, but also at the practical, level” (78).

Unbelief fails to provide the solution for man’s fundamental problem of sin and guilt. “...[M]odern research tends to bear out the observation that sin breeds misery” (75). Sin and guilt are real. The vicious attacks and denials of unbelief cannot remove sin and guilt. Bertrand Russell’s daughter wrote:

...I had been running about the world, like Christian in *Pilgrim’s Progress*, looking for a way to escape the burden of my sin, and neither my father nor psychiatry had been able to help me.

“It’s irrational and unscientific to feel as you do,” he told me. “You have nothing to feel guilty about.”

“Nobody is perfect,” psychiatry told me. “Don’t expect so much of yourself.”

But I remained “weary of earth and laden with my sin”...

The religion my parents had grown up with was a dry morality without grace, a series of impossible demands that left them defeated and depressed. They escaped from it joyfully into a free life that affirmed their own goodness and expected their children’s. And yet they passed on to us the same impossible demands from which they had suffered...[T]hey still expected perfect honesty and kindness and all the rest, without showing us how it was to be done. Consequently, we in our turn were loaded down with inescapable and, to us, inexplicable guilt. (Tait 187)

True Christianity provides the answer. It perfectly harmonizes man’s accountability and responsibility for his behavior (cf. Rom. 3:9-23), and God’s love for man that results

in God doing for man, in Jesus Christ, what he (man) is unable to do for himself (Rom. 7:14-8:39). “Only the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the plan of salvation revealed therein, are in harmony with (1) the infinite nature of God and (2) the sinful condition of man. . . **In Jesus Christ, the infinite God is both just and justifier** (Rom. 3:26). The Christian life is a forgiven life (1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5)” (Pugh 104 emp. added).

Unbelief fails spiritually, because it fails in the hour of death. The failure of unbelief as it faces death is evidence of its utter failure as a way of life, because one of life’s great certainties is “the living know that they shall die” (Ecc. 9:5). The Psalmist asked, “What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave?” (Psa. 89:48). In contrast to the person and work of Jesus Christ that releases “those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:15), and brings “life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10), there is the hapless, helpless, and hopeless way of unbelief as it is faced with death. Matthews presented the argument as follows:

Every impartial observer must perceive that there is a vast difference between the heaviness that occasionally oppresses the spirit of the dying christian, and the dread horror which, as we shall see, distracts and overpowers the dying infidel...Tell us, if you can, of a christian who has died suffering anguish of conscience for having clung to his Bible against every objector, and against every objection, and we will give up the argument. That, or anything like it, as all men know, never can be shown; and if we find, that in the truth-revealing, truth-telling hour of death, the christian always cleaves to his Bible closer and closer, as his only hope, while the infidel again and again shrinks from his infidelity, and would cast it from him as the ruin of his soul; there is argument here which no one can gainsay, proving that the Bible is the book for sinful man, and faith in its revelations, alike, his duty and his safety...Let us place the dying infidel and the dying christian side by side. Let us call up, on the one hand, the names of men whom we have seen to be distinguished as champions of infidelity; and on the other, the names of those known as intelligent believers in the Bible, and who adorned its doctrines in their lives; and

let us learn from themselves what they felt and avowed in the solemn hour of death.

We have spoken of Hobbes, and of the massive strength he employed against Christianity...how did he meet his death? He lived to the age of about ninety years, when a christian would have felt himself "full of days," "desiring to depart and be with Christ." But what does the infidel philosopher say when he found he could live no longer? "I am about to take a leap in the dark," he exclaimed; and so dreadful were his apprehensions of what he might find in the darkness before him, that he added, "Were I master of the world, I would give it all to live one day longer."...James Harvey will always be held in grateful remembrance...for the purity and benevolence of his character and the value of his writings. He died at the age of forty-four...When he saw his death approaching, far from desiring to stay in this world another day or even hour, he exclaimed, "How thankful am I for death! It is the passage to the Lord and giver of eternal life. O welcome, welcome, Death! Thou mayest well be reckoned among the treasures of the Christian; 'to live is Christ, to die is gain!' "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, of mine eyes have seen thy salvation.'" To these exulting views let me add the triumphs of the seraphic Payson...when he saw dissolution nearer at hand, he exclaimed, "The celestial city is now full in my view. Its glories beam upon me—its sounds strike upon my ears, and my spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of death, and that appears but an insignificant rill, that may be crossed by a single step, whenever God shall give permission."...[W]e can turn to one whom he has called "the most extraordinary man of the age," the far famed Voltaire; and in him we witness horrors that might well suffice for both. He saw death coming, and felt the icy hand of the destroyer, when day after day, it crept up to his heart; and his death bed was a scene so appalling that it has few parallels in those pictures of remorse that startle and shock us while we survey them. As we have already stated, in his coarse and virulent attacks on christianity, his favorite and oft repeated expression, when speaking of the Redeemer, was, "Crush the wretch." No wonder that in his last hours, he himself should seem crushed beneath the weight of the divine displeasure...[H]e was tortured with an agony of mind that sometimes led him

to gnash his teeth in impotent rage against both God and man; and at other times, in plaintive accents, he would plead "Oh, Christ! Oh, Lord Jesus!" and then turning away his face, he would cry out that he must die, abandoned of God and man. As his end approached, his condition became more and more frightful, so that his infidel associates were reluctant to approach the bed of the dying blasphemer, while they strove to guard the door against the entrance of those who might become fresh witnesses of the revolting tragedy. Even his nurse repeatedly exclaimed, that "for all the wealth of Europe, [I] would never see another infidel die;" and his physician...declared that...he ardently wished those who had been perverted by the infidel's writings could have been present at his death, when they could not have failed to find an antidote to the poison. Such was the well-attested end of Voltaire. It was a scene of horror that lies beyond exaggeration, for those who saw most of it, all agree that words are not adequate to describe it.

...I have always considered the death of Hume as described by Adam Smith, Dr. Black and others, to be a scene of the most flimsy hypocrisy to be found on record. It is obvious that Hume's friends, like those of Voltaire, were anxious that he should evince no sign of misgiving or fear, and should persist in his infidelity to the last. But both he and they overacted so far in the matter as to betray themselves. They tell us of his great composure; of his utter unconcern as he sat with them at the card-table, knowing himself to be on the brink of the grave...And what is death, taking it even as Hume viewed it? It is a severance, perhaps forever, from scenes and friends where all our enjoyments have rested during life; it is to embark on a dark sea that is to bear us to a shore where all is strange, untried and unknown, and from which we are never to return. Suppose, if you will, that this is death, and that it leads to nothing more. Is it an occasion on which a dying man, whose heart has ever felt the ties of fellowship with kindred, or kindred spirits, would be found laughing and trifling if he does justice to the feelings of his own heart? Never. It reminds us of the expedient of the school-boy, who on his way through the church-yard "whistled aloud to keep his courage up." In a sober and rational view of it, it can be nothing but affectation, a mask to hide something within very different from the frolicsome manner played without. I may appeal to every one, young

and old, learned and unlearned, if it is not equally against nature and philosophy, to view death as a frolic, to go to it as we would go to a frolic, and as Hume wished to have it believed that he went to his. No man ever did such a thing honestly. He would have first to obliterate every feature of his own humanity, before he could find it possible. He may act such a part; but it is only acting, and the acting, awkwardly performed.

...And although Hume during his last days may have persisted in acting the part of a trifler when in the presence of his infidel companions; there were others who were habitually near him, and before whom the pangs of his constrained and violated conscience made themselves awfully plain, and brought his death bed into a fearful resemblance to that of the wretched Voltaire. In the hour of midnight...he became a different and more honest man. He was then, as we are told, at times so convulsed with remorse and fear, that his trembling frame caused the very bed beneath him to shake; his moans of mental distress became so appalling as to render it painful for his attendants to remain near him, and yet his dread of being alone was so great that he would not allow their absence for a moment. The evidence of his agony in the last hours of Hume is from those who had no object of their own to gain by giving it, and who are said never to have disclosed the harrowing scenes till impelled to it by a sense of what they owed to truth. When the statement was first given to the public, the friends of the infidel philosopher were challenged to contradict it, if it was not true. They wisely, it seems, remained silent on the subject...

Sir Francis Newport was trained in early life to understand the great truths of the gospel; and while he was yet in early manhood, it was hoped that he would become an ornament and a blessing to his family and nation. The result was far other-wise. After he arrived at mature years he fell into company that corrupted both his principles and his morals. He became an avowed infidel, and a life of dissipation soon brought on a disease which was pronounced incurable. When he felt that he must die, he threw himself upon his bed, and after a brief pause, broke out in the language, "Whence this war in my heart? What argument is there not to assist me against matter of fact? Do I assert that there is no hell, while I feel one in my own bosom? Am I certain

there is no after retribution, when I feel a present judgment?...O that any one could restore to me my ancient guard of piety and innocence! Wretch that I am, whither shall I fly from this breast? What will become of me?" Among his infidel companions was one who tried to dispel these thoughts, to whom he replied, "That there is a God, I know, because I continually feel the effects of his wrath; that there is a hell, I am equally certain, having received an earnest of my inheritance there already in my breast; that there is a natural conscience, I now feel with horror and amazement, being continually upbraided by it with my impieties, and all my sins brought to my remembrance. Why God has marked me out for an example of his vengeance, rather than you, or any other of our acquaintance, I presume is because I have been more religiously educated, and have done greater despite to the Spirit of Grace. Oh that I was to lie upon the fire that never is quenched a thousand years, to purchase the favor of God and be reconciled to Him again! But it is a fruitless wish; millions of millions of years will bring me no nearer to the end of my torments than one poor hour. O eternity! Eternity! Who can discover the abyss of eternity! Who can paraphrase upon these words, *forever and ever?*"

Suspecting that his family and friends might impute his agony of mind to insanity, he told them, "You imagine me melancholy or distracted. I wish I were either; but it is part of my judgment that I am not. No; my apprehension of persons and things is more quick and vigorous than it was when I was in perfect health; and it is my curse, because I am thereby more sensible of the condition I am fallen into...See now then, I have despised my Maker, and denied my Redeemer; I have joined myself to the atheists and profane, and continued their course under many convictions, till my iniquity was ripe for vengeance, and the just judgment of God overtook me when my security was the greatest, and the checks of my conscience were the least."

Mental distress like this, conspiring with bodily disease, his life wasted away rapidly; and when his end was seen to be near, and he was asked if he would have prayer offered on his behalf, he turned away his face and exclaimed, "Tigers and monsters, are ye also become devils to torment me? Would ye give me prospect of heaven, to make my hell more intolerable?"

Soon after, his voice failing, and uttering a groan of inexpressible horror, he cried out, "O the insufferable pangs of hell!" And with these last words upon his lips, he expired and passed into eternity...

And now, that we have seen how infidelity leaves the wisest infidel without hope in death, while christianity spreads before the christian a hope full of immortality, we may well ask, is there no argument here to show which of the two we should choose as a religion adapted to the wants of dying men? There can be but the one answer from every one who allows conscience to give it. "Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his," was the prayer of Balaam as he stood on the plains of Moab, struggling with his own convictions, and tempted from his allegiance to truth by his love of the world. And ever since his day, it has been the repeated supplication, uttered by men the most hardened enemies of Christianity, when they have seen death before them, and realized what it is to die. **Go where you will in our dying world, and consult the "saint, the savage, or the sage," and you will find from the experience of them all, that faith in the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is himself the Resurrection and the Life, is the only power that can take from death its sting, and from the grave its victory.** (167-68, 170-75, 178-86, 204-05 emp. added)

Robert Green Ingersoll (1833-1899) was an American lawyer who, through his philosophy of agnosticism, attacked Christianity and all religion. He said:

We are laying the foundations of the grand temple of the future—not the temple of all the gods, but of all the people—wherein, with appropriate rites, will be celebrated the religion of Humanity...We are looking for the time when...REASON, throned upon the world's brain, shall be the King of Kings, and God of Gods. (1: 89-90)

The funeral for Ingersoll's brother, Ebon C. Ingersoll, was in Washington, D.C. on May 31, 1879. The *National Republican*, June 3, 1879, described the funeral ceremony thusly:

The funeral of the Hon. E.C. Ingersoll took place yesterday afternoon at four o'clock, from his late residence, 1403 K Street. The spacious parlors were filled to overflowing, and

hundreds were unable to gain admittance...It was the largest gathering of distinguished persons assembled at a funeral since that of Chief Justice Chase [Author's Note: Representative James A. Garfield was one of the pall-bearers along with several other Senators and Representatives.]...The only ceremony at the house, other than the viewing of the remains, was a most affecting, pathetic, and touching address by Col. Robert G. Ingersoll, brother of the deceased...When he began to read his eloquent characterization of the dead man his eyes at once filled with tears. He tried to hide them, but he could not do it, and finally he bowed his head upon the dead man's coffin in uncontrollable grief. It was only after some delay, and the greatest efforts of self-mastery, that Colonel Ingersoll was able to finish reading his address. When he had ceased speaking, the members of the bereaved family approached the casket and looked upon the form which it contained, for the last time. The scene was heartrending...(qtd. in Ingersoll 12: 389).

That which the above cited source described as "a most affecting, pathetic, and touching address" included the following statements from the famous agnostic who paid tribute to his brother but, in so doing, implied the tragic spiritual failure of his system of unbelief as he was confronted with death. He said:

[W]hether in mid-sea or 'mong the breakers of the farther shore, a wreck at last must mark the end of each and all. And every life, no matter if its every hour is rich with love and every moment jeweled with a joy, will, at its close, become a tragedy as sad and deep and dark as can be woven of the warp and woof of mystery and death...Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead there comes no word; but in the night of death hope sees a star and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing...(12: 390-91)

"Contrast these rattling husks with the tender consolations of Christianity" (Russell 248). Unbelief fails in life as well as in death. Christian faith triumphs with the cry, "But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:58).

Conclusion

The failure of unbelief is well documented. Unbelief fails **intellectually, morally, and spiritually**. Unbelief “is cold and dark...cheerless and hopeless. To a guilty sinner it offers no ground of hope that he may obtain pardon...It is a system of malignant doctrines, malignant practices, and malignant results” (Plumer 70, 76). Mitchell has well summarized the failure of unbelief:

[I]t...freezes all the finer emotions and feelings of the human breast. It wraps up man in the mantle of exclusive and all engrossing selfishness. It causes him to regard himself as a piece of mere organized matter. It produces the utmost apathy towards the feelings and interests of others. It argues a cold heart, and a heart something worse than cold...never fails to *rob* his fellow being also of his confidence in God and of his prospects of immortality; the cruellest deed of which a human being can be capable. For, take from a man his gold, or his possessions, or his reputation, or his liberty, or his very temporal existence, great and distressing as these evils appear, they are as a drop of the sea in comparison of taking from him *that*, the loss of which, the universe cannot make up. (408-09)

However, **the ultimate failure of unbelief is** not its intellectual, moral or spiritual failure in this world, but **its eternal failure** in the world to come. Paul described this ultimate, eternal failure of unbelief when he wrote:

[W]hen the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed. (2 Thess. 1:7-10)

The *destruction* (**olethros**) in the preceding text (verse 9) is the ultimate failure of unbelief. It is “the loss of all that gives worth to existence” (Moulton and Milligan 445). Rogers says, “The word does not mean annihilation...” (483). The “unbelieving” will have “their part in the lake which burns with

fire and brimstone” (Rev. 21:8) where “they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10). **THIS** is the ultimate failure of unbelief that Jesus Christ described as “where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched” (Mark. 9:43-48). Unbelief results in the eternal loss of the soul. Jesus said if we die in our sin “where I go you cannot come...[I]f you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:21, 24).

Therefore, one of our greatest needs (in one sense, the most basic and greatest of our needs) is summed up in the simple, yet amazingly profound, words: “**Have faith in God**” (Mark 11:22 emp. added). This is an obedient faith (cf. Rom. 1:5; 16:26; Heb. 5:8-9). Bales summed it up eloquently:

Faith in God as revealed in Christ has far greater credentials than any other faith. It will create greater hope, will create greater love, and will develop more of the type of individual whom even unbelievers would say is the type that the world needs.

Choose you this day, whom you will serve. There has been placed before you life and death, the rational and irrational, the good and the evil, the hopeful and hopeless, the loveless and the lovely. **Choose you must, choose you will, and your all is staked upon your choice.** (*Man* 104 emp. added)

“Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears ‘**Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!**’” (Mark. 9:24 emp. added). “And the apostles said to the Lord, ‘**Increase our faith**’” (Luke 17:5 emp. added). May such be the fervent prayer of each one of us. “And this is the victory that has overcome the world...our faith” (1 John 5:4).

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Biographical Sketch

Charles C. Pugh III is in his 39th year of preaching the Gospel of Christ. He is an instructor at West Virginia School of Preaching where he teaches eight courses including Christian Evidences I, II, and III. He has studied and taught for more than thirty years in the field of Christian Evidences. He is in his 19th year working with the Bridge Street Church of Christ, New Martinsville, WV, where he did the pulpit work for 15 years. Since 1999, due to a vocal fold disease, much of his work has been concentrated in the areas of writing and publishing. He is an author of several books and tracts and owner of *Threefold Publications*. He preaches numerous Gospel meetings yearly and appears on several lectureships. He and his wife Sharon have two daughters, one son, a granddaughter and grandson.

The Reliability of the New Testament Texts

By John M. Brown

We who believe all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17) don't need to be convinced of the reliability of the New Testament. However, many in our world don't believe in or trust the reliability of the Sacred record, and they cannot be saved unless they are convinced of such, for they cannot come to faith without the Word of God (see Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6).

Thus, it is necessary for us to be able to define and defend the reliability of the Bible—or for the specific purposes of this lecture, of the New Testament. Indeed, we are commanded to make a defense of that for which we stand (1 Pet. 3:15; Phil. 1:17; Jude 3).

We shall approach this subject by examining several pieces of evidence validating the reliability of the New Testament:

Extant Manuscripts

There are many copies of manuscripts that exist from antiquity, but no ancient writings have as many preserved copies as the New Testament! F.F. Bruce has written, “There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament” (178).

Regarding early Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, there are 307 uncials (manuscripts written in all large letters), 2,860 miniscules (manuscripts written in small letters), 2,410 lectionaries (reading lessons) and 109 papyri, for a total of 5,686 early manuscripts. We also have early copies in other languages, translations from the Greek, including more than 10,000 in Latin, more than 4,100 in Slavic, more than 2,000 in Ethiopian and thousands more in other languages, for a total of more than 24,970 early manuscripts of the New Testament (McDowell 34). From the first two hundred years of the church, there yet exist 5,366 manuscripts of the New Testament (either in fragments, books, partial New Testaments and complete New Testaments) (38).

In comparison, there are only 643 copies of Homer's *Iliad*, eight copies of Herodotus' *History*, eight copies of Thucydides'

History, only seven copies of any of Plato's writings, 10 copies of Caesar's *Gallic War*, and 20 copies of Livy's *History of Rome*.

Much more could be said on this point, but suffice it to say that no writing from antiquity has the amount of manuscript evidence that the New Testament has—in fact, none is even close! We note Edward Glenny, who has written:

God has given us 5,656 manuscripts containing all or parts of the Greek New Testament. It is the most remarkably preserved book in the ancient world. Not only do we have a great number of manuscripts, but they are very close in time to the originals they represent. Some partial manuscripts of the New Testament are from the second century A.D., and many are within four centuries of the originals. These facts are all the more amazing when compared with the preservation of any other ancient literature. (95)

The Church Fathers

The church fathers—early leaders in the church in the first, second, third and fourth centuries whose writings still exist—are testimonies to the reliability of the New Testament. The evidence is too overwhelming to cite here in full, but we shall notice just a few examples.

Ignatius of Antioch (67-110 AD), a contemporary of the apostles, quoted from Matthew 3:15 and John 3:8, and the letter to the Ephesians, and other epistles frequently. **Clement** of Rome (c. 95 AD) regularly used New Testament Scripture as an authoritative guide, and repeatedly quotes the four gospels and Acts, ascribing it to the author Luke. **Papias** of Hierapolis (c. 70-155 AD) quoted the apostle John, spoke of Peter and Mark, and commented on the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, as well as Peter's preaching. **Polycarp** (69-156 AD), who had been taught by the apostles and conversed with many who had seen Jesus, upheld the truth of the Scripture, even dying a martyr's death while never renouncing his faith. In one particular letter, he alludes to some forty references from books now in the New Testament, citing numerous references from the Gospel of Matthew and the writings of Paul. **Tatian** (c. 170 AD) organized the Scriptures, and composed the first "harmony of the Gospels." **Iraeneus** of Lyons (130-200 AD) was a student of the apostle

John, and wrote, “So firm is the ground upon which these gospels rest, that the very heretics themselves bear witness to them...” (*Against Heresies III*). It has been written concerning him, “...the testimony which this writer affords to the historical books of the New Testament, to their authority, and to the titles which they bear, is express, positive, and exclusive” (Paley 132). He demonstrably shows that there were four Gospels—no more, and no less—and is vivid regarding the Book of Acts and its author, Luke. **Justin Martyr** (100-167 AD) cites some twenty to thirty citations from the Gospels and the Book of Acts, quoting specifically from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. He wrote a defense of Christianity addressed to the Roman Emperor, and died a martyr’s death. **Tertullian** (160-220 AD) quotes from the four Gospels, mentions the churches founded by Paul at Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica, writes of the church at Rome and churches established by John. He calls the Book of Acts “Luke’s commentary,” and notes that Paul’s epistles confirm Acts. William Paley has written, “Tertullian quotes no Christian writings as of equal authority with the Scriptures, and no spurious books at all; a broad line of distinction, we may once observe, between our sacred books and all others” (137). **Theophilus** affirms that the Scriptures were written under direction of the Holy Spirit. **Eusebius** (264-340 AD) cites references—in fact long quotations—from the Gospels of Luke and John, and the Book of Acts. **Hippolytus** quotes from Paul’s letters to Timothy. **Origen** (185-254 AD) of Alexandria noted that the four Gospels were received without any controversy by the church, attested to the authority of Acts and wrote in clear words:

It is the doctrine acknowledged by all Christians, and evidently preached in the churches, that the Holy Spirit inspired the Saints, Prophets, and Apostles, and was present in those of old time...The records of the Gospels are the Oracles of the Lord, pure Oracles, purified as silver seven times tried. They are without error, since they were accurately written, by the co-operation of the Holy Spirit. (Torrey 48)

Cyprian of Carthage cited the four Gospels and Acts also, viewing these writings as authoritative. **Novatus** wrote of the

“divine scriptures.” **Victorin** of Germany cited the historical Scriptures of the New Testament, and commented extensively on the Book of Revelation. **Arnobius** and **Lactantius**, circa 300 A.D., composed a defense of Christianity, relying primarily on the four Gospels. **Augustine** wrote:

The Scriptures are the letters of God, the voice of God, the writings of God...The writers record the words of God...All Scripture is profitable since it is inspired of God. The Scriptures, whether in history, Prophecy, Psalms, or Law, are of God. They cannot stand in part and fall in part. They are from God, who speak them all...As it was not the Apostles who spoke, but the Spirit of the Father in them, so it is the Spirit that speaks in all Scriptures. (48-49)

Other early writers citing New Testament Scripture include Anatolius, Athanasius, Cyril, Epiphanius, Poebadius, Basil, Ephraim, Jerome and Augustine.

The evidence from early writers—contemporaneous to the New Testament writers—is overwhelming, conclusive and amazing!

William Paley makes these observations:

I. That the historical books of the New Testament, meaning thereby the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, are quoted or alluded to by a series of Christian writers, beginning with those who were contemporary with the Apostles, or who immediately followed them, and proceeding in close and regular succession from their time to the present...

III. That they were, in very early times, collected in to a distinct volume.

IV. That they were distinguished by appropriate names and titles of respect.

V. That they were publicly read and expounded in the religious assemblies of the early Christians...

VIII. That the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, thirteen epistles of St. Paul, the first epistle of John, and the first of Peter, were received without doubt, by those who doubted concerning the other books which are included in our present cannon...

X. That formal catalogues of authentic scriptures were published; in all which our present sacred histories were included. (120)

Early Non-Christian Writers

The first century Roman historian Tacitus, considered a reliable observer, made mention of Christianity, even of the one he called “Christus” as having been tried before Pontius Pilate, exactly as the New Testament relates (*Tacitus* 15: 44). Perhaps best known is the Jewish historian Josephus (37-100 A.D.) who makes many references verifying facts set forth in the New Testament, writing about James the brother of Jesus, John the Baptist and quite a bit of information about Jesus himself. The Roman Pliny the younger, in a letter to Emperor Trajan in about 112 A.D., describes Christian worship, and his description is remarkably accurate. Talmudic (Jewish writings) between 70 and 200 A.D. describe both the fact and timing of Jesus’ crucifixion. Lucian of Samosata, a second century Greek writer, describes many of the practices of Christianity in accurate detail.

It would be utterly foolish to deny the existence of Jesus Christ, even based solely on the evidence outside the New Testament. Unbeliever and outspoken skeptic, H.G. Wells, acknowledged the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth in his monumental *An Outline of History*.

Archaeology

Archaeology has again and again proven the truthfulness of the biblical record. In fact, Jewish archaeologist Nelson Glueck wrote, “It may be stated categorically that no archeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference” (31). Instead of refuting biblical details, archaeology has confirmed them, even some previously seriously doubted by skeptics.

Regarding the New Testament, the following are some facts that have been verified by archaeology: the names of many Roman and Jewish leaders found in the New Testament; the existence of a synagogue at Corinth; the pool of Bethesda; the manner in which one was crucified (a crucifixion victim was uncovered in 1968, who even had his legs broken by a crushing blow); the official Roman titles of Pontius Pilate; the name of Erastus as a city official (which has been found on a slab of

limestone, and was mentioned by Paul in Romans 16:23); and many New Testament coins.

Space does not permit an exhaustive study here, but secure any good volume on biblical archaeology, and your faith will be strengthened as you see the actual, physical verification of biblical names, places and events.

Transmission

We understand that copies of biblical manuscripts were produced by hand. But we must always remember: This was an extraordinarily exacting and precise science! The work of scribes and copyists was a difficult, time-consuming and meticulous work. Copyists were neither slovenly nor careless in the discharge of their duties. It is not that words were simply checked; individual letters were checked and re-checked to detect errors. It was never a hurried business. These copyists were acutely aware of the great significance of their work.

This understanding helps us in the discussion about the reliability of the New Testament, for we must ever remember that those who copied and recopied the manuscripts did so with exceeding care.

Language

For years, scholars wondered about what we have come to popularly call “Koine” Greek—the particular Greek in which the New Testament was written. Scholars understood that it was somewhat different from popular Greek of the time, and some speculated that it was maybe a “religious” Greek used for the purpose of writing a religious document, such as the New Testament. We have better understanding now. The language of the Greek New Testament is unique—a uniqueness that underscores its credibility.

And those who study the intricacies of language note that the New Testament was written in a style of Greek containing many Hebrew and Syrian idioms—a style of Greek written by those of Hebrew origin. This does not, however, describe the church fathers. Those who did know Hebrew—such as Justin Martyr or Origen—did not write in a style of Greek that bears any resemblance to the New Testament. The point is: The New Testament documents are unparalleled and unprecedented, and

could not possibly be forgeries of a later time. Its language attests to its authentication.

William Paley has written:

An argument of great weight with those who are judges of the proofs upon which it is founded, and capable, through their testimony, of being addressed to every understanding, is that which arises from the style and language of the New Testament. It is just such a language as might be expected from the apostles, from person of their age and in their situation, and from no other persons. It is the style neither of classic authors nor of the ancient Christian Fathers, but Greek coming from men of Hebrew origin; abounding, that is, with Hebraic and Syrian idioms, such as would naturally be found in the writings of men who used a language spoken indeed where they lived, but not the common dialect of the country. This happy peculiarity is a strong proof of the genuineness of these writings; for who should forge them? (116)

Preservation

Here we come to a most essential doctrine, and one with which some Christians are unfamiliar. The biblical doctrine of “inspiration” is essential to believing the Scriptures. But the biblical doctrine of “preservation” is equally significant. Inspiration refers to the means whereby the message was delivered, that it did not originate with man, but with God, and that God chose the very words that are recorded in Scripture (see 1 Cor. 2:9-13; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).

Preservation refers to God’s promise to keep his Word intact—to not allow his Word to become discarded or cease to exist. God not only originally gave us his Word—he has kept his Word before man ever since.

Note some verses that teach the preservation of Scripture. In Psalm 12:6- 7, the Bible says, “The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.” Here is a promise of God’s preservation. We needn’t worry that the Word of God became lost in some distant past fog—no, God promises to “keep” and “preserve” his Word! In 1 Peter 1:24-25, we read, “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The

grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” Note that the Word of the Lord endures forever.

In Matthew 5:18, Jesus said, “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” In Luke 16:17, we read, “And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail” (see also Mark 13:31 and Luke 21:33).

So God promised to protect and preserve his Word, which we, based upon his promises, believe he has done. Those who come with “another gospel” or some newly discovered “revelation,” fall into the category of deceivers (cf. Gal. 1:6-9), but the message of the Old and New Testaments stand vindicated.

Historicity

Just a casual reading of the New Testament demonstrates the historicity of the book. Have you ever read fiction, or perhaps mythology or a fairy tale? They usually begin something like, “Long, long ago, in a land far, far away, there lived...” It is immediately obvious that one is reading a “made up” story. But not so the New Testament—indeed not!

The New Testament mentions contemporary places, individuals and happenings, and records them with precise detail. It is obvious the writers were stating contemporaneous occurrences in that which they were relating.

For example, consider some passages from a master historian, Luke:

There was in the days of Herod king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. (Luke 1:5)

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar August, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria). (Luke 2:1-2)

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea

and of the region of Trachonitus, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiphas, being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Sacharias in the wilderness. (Luke 3:1-2)

All through the New Testament, specific individuals, including governmental officials (of whom we have archaeological evidence—see above), specific places and specific events are identified. This “historicity” points to the reliability of this document! The New Testament tells us who, what, when, where, how and why.

The Promises of Jesus

If one believes Jesus to be the Son of God, then one must adhere to what he promised. And what he promised was both inspiration (to his apostles and prophets) and preservation (of God’s Word).

Regarding inspiration, note what Jesus promised the apostles:

These things have I spoken with you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:25-26)

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. (John 16:12-13)

From these two passages, we note the following: (1) Jesus had spoken to his apostles in their presence, but he was going away (to the cross, and ultimately to heaven to sit at God’s right hand); (2) He had more to tell them; (3) the Holy Spirit would come unto them (the Father would send the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ name); (4) the Holy Spirit would teach them all things; (5) the Holy Spirit would cause them to remember all that Jesus had said; (6) the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth; (7) the Holy Spirit would show them things to come.

Inspiration is not a difficult concept to believe if we believe the words of Jesus, for that is exactly what he promised his apostles. Listen to an apostle, Paul, claim that very inspiration of

which we speak: “How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Eph. 3:3-5).

Note that Paul affirms: (1) he received a revelation from God; (2) he wrote it down; (3) we may read and understand this revelation he wrote; (4) this revelation has been made known to Christ’s holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This is the very thing Jesus promised in John 14 and 16!

And regarding preservation, Jesus said emphatically, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt. 24:35)—a promise that our Lord’s words would be preserved intact.

Conclusion

We can believe, and know, that we have the mind and will of God recorded in the New Testament, exactly as God promised. The evidence is overwhelming and conclusive. If one denies the inspiration and authority of the New Testament, then that one must explain the New Testament’s existence by some other means. What is the plausible explanation?

In an exhaustive study on this very subject, J.W. McGarvey in his book, *Evidences of Christianity*, concluded that, “We have thus gone over all the ground of evidence necessary to the proof of the divine origin and authority of the Christian religion, and of the infallibility of the records of it contained in the New Testament... (223).

By examination of the evidence, an honest, open-minded and open-hearted individual can come to the correct conclusion that the New Testament is of God! God’s Word is reliable, indeed, above anything and everything else ever written. “For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psa. 119:89).

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Biographical Sketch

John M. Brown is in his fifteenth year as minister of the Flatwoods, KY church of Christ. He holds six to eight Gospel meetings per year, as well as speaking at other functions.

He and his wife Dana have five children: Sarah, Sammy, Shyler, Jacob and Jefferson Davis Brown.

He is active in community affairs as well, and has a love of history.

Jesus—The Incomparable Teacher

By Bruce Daugherty

It is no surprise that Jesus was the Master Teacher. Teaching is a work associated with the entire Godhead. Teaching was associated with the anointing of the Holy Spirit on Bezalel and Oholiab during the construction of the Tabernacle (Exod. 35:34). God himself is described as a teacher. He taught Moses (Exod. 4:15). The prophets promised a teacher to come (Isa. 30:20; 54:13; Jer. 31:33). The nations were to be taught by God (Isa. 2:3). No wonder that Jesus assumed the title of Teacher—Rabbi—and performed much of his ministry as a teacher (Hartley 403-04).

Teaching was a prominent feature in the ministry of Jesus (Matt. 4:23). The Gospels are composed of a great amount of teaching material. The Sermon on the Mount, the Parables and the discourse on the Mount of Olives are all indicators of the importance of teaching in Jesus' ministry.

The reaction of the people to Jesus' teaching also indicates that Jesus was the Master Teacher. The Bible says that the people were astonished at his teaching (Matt. 7:28-29; 13:54). They also marveled at his teaching (John 7:15, 32, 44-46). It was teaching that helped set Jesus apart from the other teachers of his day and it is the teaching that also helps demonstrate his Deity. This lecture will examine what is meant by teaching in the Bible and then explore the ways in which Jesus was the Master Teacher.

Bible Words Which Define Teaching

There are several words used in the New Testament that are translated as teaching. First and foremost is διδάσκω (*didasko*) which is translated as to teach and to instruct. Another New Testament word is μανθάνω (*manthano*) which is translated as to learn, to find out, to discover; to learn by experience (Rengstorf, διδάσκω 2: 135-65; μανθάνω 4: 390-461). The biblical office of prophet in the New Testament church was one who proclaimed, taught and interpreted a divinely revealed message (Matt. 11:9; 1 Cor. 12:28). Shepherds are to feed the flock as they instruct, protect and lead the congregation (John 10:16; Eph. 4:11; Acts

20:28).

In addition to these words, the New Testament also utilizes a number of synonyms for teaching. Among these are παιδεία (*paideia*) which is translated as training, correcting, discipline and chastisement (Eph. 6:4; Heb. 12:5-11). Related to this word is παιδαγόγος (*paidagogos*), a slave attendant who conducted children to and from school. The Bible says that the law was our *paidagogos* to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24). An English word for teacher, pedagogue, is simply a transliteration of this Greek word into our language. A synonym related to the idea of teaching and instructing children is ἐκτρέφω (*ektrepho*). It is translated as to nourish, to rear, to bring up children (Eph. 6:4; 5:29).

Another synonym is διερμυνέω (*diermeneo*), which means to translate, explain and interpret (Luke 24:47; 1 Cor. 14:5).

New Testament teaching or instruction is also characterized by παρατίμι (*paratithimi*) which means to set forth or place alongside for comparison; to point out, to demonstrate; to entrust to another (Matt. 13:24; 1 Tim. 1:18).

Involved in the teaching process is ζητήσις (*zetesis*) which means to question, examine, deliberate, discuss and debate (Acts 15:2,7; John 16:19).

Based upon these New Testament words and synonyms for teaching, a working definition of teaching is: the communicative process by which a teacher leads students to obedience and maturity in Christ by proclaiming, examining, demonstrating, explaining, modeling, nourishing and training the eternal truths of God's Word (Patterson 25).

Why Jesus is the Master Teacher

Jesus is the incomparable Teacher because he knew what was in man (John 2:23-24). Secular systems for teaching fail precisely on this point: they do not know man! They hold to incorrect views concerning the nature of man. Behaviorism and determinism are prominent theories offered to explain man's psychological and intellectual dimension. But these theories and any other theory of psychology or education are inadequate if they are built solely on a naturalistic view of man. Naturalistic views cannot explain man's soul nor can they satisfy his spiritual longings (Matt. 4:4; Acts 17:27-28). Because Jesus was in the

beginning and God's agent for making all things, he knew man's physical as well as spiritual nature (John 1:1-3).

Jesus is the Master Teacher because he taught people, not just lessons. Notice how many individuals are listed in the Gospels: Nicodemus (John 2:1), Peter (Luke 5:1-11), the Samaritan woman (John 4), Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-10) and the woman of Syro-Phoenicia (Mark 7:24-30). This ability to see individuals, especially those emarginated by society, distinguished Jesus as the Teacher come from God.

Do we fail at this point in our teaching today? Teachers, do we see who we are teaching? Do we see the needs of those who sit in the pews? What is the need of the 14-year-old? Of the newlyweds? Of young parents? Of those approaching the mid-life point? Of those who are in their golden years? Without an ability to see the needs of these individuals, we will fail in teaching no matter how well we have mastered our material.

Jesus is the Teacher without equal because of his trust in the Word of God. Jesus placed great emphasis on the Scriptures (Matt. 4:4; 22:29,31; John 5:39). In contrast, the teachers of Israel did not know the Scriptures (Matt. 22:29; John 3:10,12). Teachers today must emphasize the Scriptures in their lessons. In a day in which some Bible classes imitate television talk shows, we must return to the Scriptures. The Bible is the inspired Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). It is able to build up Christians (Acts 20:32). It alone tells us of Jesus (John 5:39; 8:31-32, 47).

Jesus is the teacher without comparison because he taught people in their everyday situations. For many people, religion is separated from their daily life. Not so for Jesus. He taught in parables and stories drawn from daily life. Maybe this is why the common people heard him gladly (Mark 12:37). Jesus demonstrated the impact of Scripture on every day life (Mark 7:1-13). Because of his connection to everyday living his teaching stood in stark contrast to the teaching of the Pharisees (Luke 11:46, 52; Matt. 23:3-4).

Teachers, are we teaching for life? Christianity concerns the whole of life (Matt. 22:37-40). Religion that makes a difference is a religion that is seen Monday through Saturday, not just on Sunday! Our teaching should make a difference in the everyday

living of our students (Luke 10:25-37).

Jesus is the Master Teacher because he taught to change men according to the will of God. There are teachers who have great intellectual content to their lessons. There are also teachers who touch the emotional heartstrings of their audiences. But the will is also important in our teaching. Jesus taught to reach the will of man (Matt. 5:48; 7:21-23; 19:16-22; 22:37-40). The intellect deals with knowledge, information and facts. The will deals with direction, motivation and change for life. As a Teacher, Jesus gave more than information. He gave teaching that resulted in reformation and repentance.

Teachers, do our lessons give information that leads to a response? Does it call for a decision? There is a great need to have Bible studies and classes that are directed toward the decision making process. We must call for a submission of the will of man to the will of God!

Finally, Jesus is the Incomparable Teacher because he modeled what he taught. Jesus is our model for everything, including obedience (John 13:17; Heb. 5:8-9; 1 Pet. 2:21). The apostle Paul considered himself a role model for his converts (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17). Paul praised his Thessalonian converts for having become imitators of their teachers and the Lord (1 Thess. 1:6-7). As teachers of God's word today, we must have the goal of obedience as we teach (Matt. 7:24-27; Rom. 2:17-21, 25). But to call for obedience means that we ourselves must first be obedient. We cannot lead where we will not go. We cannot give what we do not have first for ourselves.

Elders are to be "examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:3). Preachers are to be "examples to the believer" (1 Tim. 4:12). Every disciple is to be "salt of the earth" and "light of the world" (Matt. 5:13-16). We are not simply imparting knowledge as we teach, but we are to be modeling behavior that can be imitated.

In the Great Commission Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." These disciples were taught to observe all things (Matt. 28:18-20). To "observe" is to be obedient in everything. We will have more faithful disciples, more qualified leaders, more effective teachers when we remember that the really

biblical way of teaching is first doing, showing, modeling, and secondly telling (Robinson).

The Teaching of Jesus Demonstrates His Deity

Jesus' teaching ministry only lasted three brief years. He wrote no books. He held no university chair. He did not travel extensively from his humble birthplace. Yet, through the men he trained, Jesus has impacted the world like no other teacher. This was because his teachings reflected his divinity. On one occasion Jesus declared, "The Spirit gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I have spoke to you they are Spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). Peter realized that truth as he declared, "Lord to whom shall we go? For you have the words of eternal life. We believe and we know that you are the Holy One of God" (John 6:68-69). Dear reader, examine the teaching of Jesus. Compare it to the teachings of men. Believe that Jesus is the Son of God and receive the life that he gives (John 20:30-31).

Conclusion

In a day in which much worldly emphasis is given to titles like "doctor" and "scholar," we would do well to learn from the example of the apostles. No apostle or 1st century disciple ever used the title "Teacher." This was out of respect for what Jesus had taught concerning earthly titles (Matt. 23:8). But it was also out for recognition that just as Christ is the only salvation (Acts 4:12; 1 Cor. 3:11), ultimately, Jesus is the only Teacher.

May we ever be disciples of Jesus, the Master Teacher.

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Biographical Sketch

Bruce Daugherty is married to the former Gayle Gleaton; they have two sons, Mike and Vince.

Brother Daugherty received his BA in Bible from Freed-Hardeman College (1981), and he is working on an MA in Church History from Harding Graduate School of Religion.

He was the associate minister at the Graham Rd. church of Christ in Reynoldsburg, OH (1981-83); a missionary to Cervignano, Italy (1983-1990); minister with the Beville Rd. church of Christ in Daytona Beach, FL (1990-2000) and is the minister with the N. 10th & Clairmont Ave. church of Christ in Cambridge, OH (2000-present).

Bruce was an instructor with the Florida School of Preaching (1995-2000), and he is an instructor with the West Virginia School of Preaching (2000-present).

Genesis Account of Creation

By Brad Harrub

In a single statement she had unknowingly compromised her entire belief system. Sadly, this was not the first time I had heard someone concede the veracity of God's Word. Trying to appear intellectually elite, this Christian woman proclaimed that she did not have any problem with the whole creation/evolution controversy. She assertively proclaimed: "God could have done it any way he chose. If he wanted to use six days or six million years, it does not matter to me. I do believe God created things, but maybe he used evolution to get us to where we are today." Others, with flushed faces and neck-veins bulging, have shouted: "You are limiting God! By declaring that it was simply six 24-hour days, you are limiting God and his abilities!" Truth be known, God **could** have done it anyway he chose. But Christians must understand that he told us exactly how he did do it. And if limiting God means that we are holding him to exactly how he said he did it, then yes, we are limiting him to his Word.

Oftentimes, these disparaging comments are declared by individuals who have not considered fully the consequences of their thinking. They consider a firm belief in Jesus Christ the only essential ingredient to true spirituality. However, when these individuals find their faith challenged, or when evil, pain and suffering strikes, an inward examination reveals absolutely no foundation on which to rely. By compromising the opening chapters of God's Word, individuals soon find themselves unable to defend any passages that follow thereafter—their beliefs having been founded on sand. Consider the quandary of a Christian who concedes an evolutionary heritage for mankind. And yet, when that individual's own children question the need for baptism, the parent's defense of using God's Word as validation for the essentiality of immersion for the remission of sins becomes untenable. However, a rock solid foundation is possible—a foundation that is unwilling to compromise the creation account found in God's Word.

Scientific Examination of the Creation Account

Much arguing has occurred as to whether God's creation

activities were structured along a seven-day week as we commonly know it. The answer to this controversy can be found in the midst of the Decalogue:

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work...For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. (Exod. 20:8-11)

God patterned the Israelite's week after his creative week. God said he did his work (of creation) in six days and rested, and that he expected the same of the Jews; what could be clearer? Later on the Lord instructed: "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made the heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed" (Exod. 31:16-17). God could very well have created the universe in six millennia, six centuries, six decades, six weeks, six hours, six minutes, six seconds or even six nanoseconds, but God said he did it in **six days**. In an effort to firm up our foundation on the creation account, I would like for us to examine precisely what took place during each one of those six days.

Day One

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). In this single sentence, Moses summarized one of the most important miracles that ever took place. He leaves no question as to how the heaven and earth got here. Notice, God did not create all of the heavenly bodies on this particular day; it simply states heaven and earth. Prior to the first day of creation, nothing existed. There were no stars or planets or any living things. The phrase usually employed to describe God's creative activity at this point is *creatio ex nihilo* (creation from nothing). F.F. Bruce correctly observed: "The visible, material universe came into being by pure creation—out of nothing. It was not fashioned from preexistent material..." (125).

In the past, it was popular among scientists to suggest that

the universe is eternal. Today, however, such scientists are as scarce as hen's teeth—and for good reason. We now know that the matter and energy of which the universe is composed cannot have existed forever. The eminent astrophysicist from NASA, Robert Jastrow, stated bluntly what every scientist today knows to be true: “The lingering decline predicted by astronomers for the end of the world differs from the explosive conditions they have calculated for its birth, but the impact is the same: *modern science denies an eternal existence to the Universe*, either in the past or in the future” (Jastrow 30).

Every material thing eventually runs down. For example, when a vehicle is made from metal, wood, plastic, rubber and glass, energy is used to put all these different parts together. However, soon after the vehicle is made, the wood begins to rot, the metal rusts and the rubber deteriorates. Similarly, the universe also is running down. Thus, there must have been a time in the past when it was new—like the vehicle described above. This period of time—denoted as “the beginning”—started with God creating some basic ingredients of the world, such as water and light. Through his power, God not only brought these things into existence, but also imbued them with order. Just as someone had to shape the metal, glass and rubber in order to make the vehicle, so God had to organize matter and energy in order to make the earth.

Before God completed this task, the earth was “without form, and void” (1:2). That is, nothing existed which had any particular shape or purpose. Whitcomb has commented:

“Without form and void” translate the Hebrew expression *tohu wabohu*, which literally means “empty and formless.” In other words, the Earth was not chaotic. ...It was simply empty of living things and without the features that it later possessed, such as oceans and continents, hills and valleys—features that would be essential for man's well-being. ...In other words, when God created the Earth, this was only the first state of a series of stages leading to its completion. (Whitcomb 69-70)

Could the Lord Have Used a Big Bang?

Early in the first day, the most prevalent feature of the new earth was deep water and darkness. The water's presence on the

earth as mentioned in Genesis 1:2 should not be overlooked. Christians ready to compromise the creation account often suggest that maybe God used a Big Bang explosion to form the universe. The premise is that maybe God simply created matter and then used the Big Bang to get us where we are today. But consider the implications. An explosion of matter the magnitude needed to carry out the initial “Big Bang” would have been literally white hot—too hot to even measure using current technology. And yet, we are told that water was on the earth on this first day; something that would have been impossible had the earth resulted from a Big Bang explosion. One cannot have a fiery explosion and a water covered earth on the same day. No, the Lord did not use the Big Bang to create the universe around us.

Next, we find God speaking light into existence, and placing into motion a cycle of daytime and nighttime (Gen. 1:3-4). Subsequently, this cycle was used to establish a time for the six periods of God’s creative activity, each period being marked by an evening and a morning—viz., a normal day of approximately 24 hours in duration (Gen. 1:5; cf. 1:14). [Notice Moses uses this clarification on each of the days. Americans record days morning to evening. The early Jews recorded days evening to morning. But both measures of time represent the same thing: one twenty-four hour day.] The work of day one at first appears to include only the creation of light. However, if in keeping with Exodus 20:11 **all** things were created within this week, then day one actually begins in verse one, with the creation of the watery void called “earth.”

Besides the initial creation of the earth in a waste and void (i.e., unformed and unfilled) condition on day one, the Creator also called light into existence out of nowhere. Henry Morris has suggested what this might have involved:

It is obvious that visible light is primarily meant, since it was set in contrast to darkness. At the same time, the presence of visible light waves necessarily involves the entire electromagnetic spectrum... In turn, setting the electromagnetic forces into operation in effect completed the energizing of the physical cosmos. All the types of force and energy which interact in the universe involve only

electromagnetic, gravitational, and nuclear forces; and all these had now been activated. (Morris 56)

Moses makes no excuses for teaching that light existed prior to the luminaries. H.C. Leupold appropriately commented: “If scientists now often regard light as merely enveloping the sun but not as an intrinsic part of it, why could it not have existed by itself without being localized in any heavenly body?” (52). On the first day God said, “Let there be light” (Hebrew *or*), whereas on the fourth day God said, “Let there be lights” (*ma-or*, light-bearers). Therefore, God’s first recorded statement created independent light—without a light-bearer. And since God instituted the light/darkness cycle on that day, we must conclude that the light came from a fixed direction, and that the earth rotated on its axis. [In eternity, there will again be light without the sun (Rev. 21:23).]

Regarding the light bearing objects created on day four, the phrase, “let there be lights” (v. 14), is identical in grammatical construction with other statements of “let there be...” in the chapter. Therefore, the command can mean only that God spoke the luminaries into existence on day four just as he had created the initial light on day one and the firmament on day two. Notice also that God said, “Let there be lights **in the firmament of heaven**”—an expression that could not have been used if they had been there (though concealed) since day one. Then Moses records that God **made** the lights (v. 16) on day four, not that he just made them “shine” or “be visible.” And then he said that God “set” them in the firmament of heaven, which can only mean that they were not there until that very day—created *ex nihilo* (Heb. 11:3).

Day Two

On the second day, God began to make the earth distinct from the rest of the universe. He placed an expanse (KJV “firmament”; Hebrew *raqia*) in the middle of the water, and called it “heaven” (1:6). In the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, “heavens” always is plural and, in general, refers to the “heights” above the earth. As such, there are three particular applications of the word in Scripture. There are the atmospheric heavens where clouds move and birds fly (cf. Gen. 1:20 and Jer. 4:25), the sidereal heavens (i.e., outer space) where the planetary

bodies are located (cf. Gen. 1:17 and Isa. 13:10) and the heaven of God's own dwelling place (Heb. 9:24). In Genesis 1:6, the word "heaven" refers to the atmospheric heavens.

The Hebrew raqia (the "firmament" of the KJV, ASV, RSV, et al.) means an "expanse" (Davidson DCXCII) or "something stretched, spread or beaten out." (Maunder 315; Speiser 6). Keil and Delitzsch offered this definition in their monumental commentary on the Pentateuch: "to stretch, to spread out, then beat or tread out...the spreading out of air, which surrounds the earth as an atmosphere" (52).

The Septuagint (a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek produced by Jewish scholars in the third century B.C. at the behest of the powerful Egyptian pharaoh, Ptolemy Philadelphus) translated *raqia* into the Greek as *stereoma*, which connotes a "solid structure" (Arndt and Gingrich 774). Apparently, the translators of the Septuagint were influenced by the then-popular Egyptian view of cosmology and astronomy [they were, after all, doing their translating **in Egypt** for an **Egyptian** pharaoh] that embraced the notion of the heavens being a stone vault. Unfortunately, those Hebrew scholars therefore chose to render *raqia* via the Greek word *stereoma*—in order to suggest a firm, solid structure. The Greek connotation thus influenced Jerome to the extent that, when he produced his Latin Vulgate, he used the word *firmamentum* (meaning a strong or steadfast support—from which the word "firmament" is transliterated) to reflect this pagan concept (McKechinie 691).

In his *Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Old Testament language scholar W.E. Vine stressed:

While this English word is derived from the Latin *firmamentum* which signifies firmness or strengthening...the Hebrew word, *raqia*, has no such meaning, but denoted the "expanse," that which was stretched out. Certainly the sky was not regarded as a hard vault in which the heavenly orbs were fixed... There is therefore nothing in the language of the original to suggest that the writers [of the Old Testament—BH] were influenced by the imaginative ideas of heathen nations. (67)

Raqia denotes simply an expanse, not a solid structure. The original context in which *raqia* is used does not imply any kind of solid dome above the earth. The Bible equates "firmament"

with the “heavens” (Psa. 19:1), using even the compound “firmament of heaven” (Gen. 1:14-15, 17). God provided the correct definition of the word on the second day of creation when he “called the firmament heaven” (Gen. 1:8). It was described further when Isaiah said that the Lord “stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in” (Isa. 40:22). “Heavens” always is dual in the Hebrew and, in general, refers to the “heights” above the earth.

This “atmospheric” layering would prove essential for future creations. Thus, at the end of day two, the earth existed in the form of a sphere with several layers—one for the oceans, one for the sky, and one for the waters above the sky (Gen. 1:7). Existing beyond these second waters are the heavens (Hebrew *shamayim*) that compose the universe. Note that this day also was composed of an evening and a morning (Gen. 1:8).

Day Three

When it was first mentioned in Genesis 1, the earth was a formless, watery object, but now, in addition to illumination and atmosphere, God had given the forming planet the feature of dry land. Evolutionary science offers a different view altogether. This is an unambiguous example of the insuperable conflicts between evolution theory and revealed truth. The Bible says **water first**, then land; evolution says **land first**, then water. How can one agree with evolution on this point without flatly rejecting divine testimony?

From the third day onward, God shaped the earth, prepared it for life and then created the life itself (Gen.1:9-13). He began by gathering the waters into one place to form an ocean or “sea.” He then caused dry land to appear. In the soil, God created all manner of plants—vegetables, grasses, trees, herbs, etc. Have you ever considered what these first few plants must have looked like? Were they saplings? Seeds, just about to sprout? Later on in Chapter One God gives the plants to men and animals for food, so we know that these plants must have been created mature—already bearing fruit. Thus, if Adam were to have chopped down one of those trees, how many rings would it have had? While the tree was only days old, it must have appeared much older, because God presented man with a world full of mature plants and animals. Thus, while some things may “appear” old, in

reality they may be relatively young.

Plants are unique in their own right, but do share some features common to other living things. For example, they consume nutrients and produce energy. Most plants use “photosynthesis” to change carbon dioxide, water and sunlight into energy-rich compounds and oxygen. In one way or another, every living organism on the earth depends on the flow of energy from the sun. That energy, in the form of sunlight, falls to the earth, hits plants and helps them manufacture products (like food and oxygen) that living creatures (like animals and men) need to exist. [Consider also, most pollen producing plants need insects to reproduce via pollination. If each day were millions of years, how did the plants survive millions of years until the flying insects came along on day five? Additionally, the sun is not created until day four, and yet the plants are already in place. If each day were millions of years, how could the plants survive while waiting on the formation of the sun?]

Plants also are able to pass on genetic information to their offspring by producing seeds, which can be inside pods, at the center of a delicious fruit or in a form that allows them to be borne by wind through the air. But plants also are different from animals and humans. Plants contain cellulose, which makes their cell walls rigid. Animals and human do not have cellulose. Plants do not have sensory or nervous systems, which means they cannot “understand” or “feel.” Humans possess both systems. Plants do not have organs (like legs or wings) for locomotion, which means that they usually stay in one place. Most animals and humans move around (although there are exceptions in the animal kingdom, like sponges).

After the dry land appeared, God commanded: “Let the earth put forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit trees...” (Gen. 1:11). Derek Kidner conveyed the exciting tone of the literal Hebrew rendering of this verse: “Let the earth vegetate vegetation, herb seeding seed, fruit tree making fruit after its kind” (48). Does this sound like a gradual process requiring untold millennia to accomplish? Additionally, consider that every time a seed is planted, it only gives rise to the type of plant it originated from. And yet, we are told that the diversity we observe in plants is from evolution. A tomato seed only produces

tomato plants. Moses went on to confirm this stating that each form of life was to bring forth (reproduce) “after its kind.” This cripples the notion that all life is somehow related biologically, thanks to a parental process of organic evolution. As with days one and two, the creative activity is followed by an evening and a morning—thus completing day three.

Day Four

Day four is somewhat unique among the other days of creation. For the first time, the earth is not the direct object of the action of God. Instead, the divine attention is directed to the creation and ordination of the heavenly bodies that surround the earth. By his omnipotence, God spoke the planets and stars into being. From man’s standpoint, they are merely “lights in space.” They do not appear to the unaided eye as anything else; hence, there is no need (in this context) for Moses to discuss them in any other way. Earth’s exalted status is evident from the fact that the stars and planets were brought into existence for the benefit of the earth—a far different view than that which says that the earth is little more than a cosmic accident. In the expanse of the universe, God placed various objects that produced light. Most of these objects are stars, which appear faint or bright, depending on their size and distance from earth. Together, the planetary bodies were to be “...for signs, and for seasons, and for days and for years” (1:14).

God then created one medium-sized but nonetheless spectacular star, known as the “greater light,” or sun. He then created a “lesser light,” the moon (1:16-18). Although the moon does not emit its own light, it provides light on the earth by reflecting light from the sun. Additionally, the moon produces tides in the oceans, seas and great lakes of the world. These luminaries were to accomplish three specific purposes: (1) they were to regulate between day and night; (2) they were to be indicators of signs and seasons; (3) the light-bearers were to give light upon the earth. Although they are not called by name, the sun and moon are discussed in particular. The sun, which is greater in its intensity of light, is responsible for illuminating the realm of day. The moon, which only reflects light (thus its designation as the “lesser” light), is given the function of providing the majority of nighttime illumination. As the apostle

Paul wrote in his first epistle to the saints in Corinth: “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory” (15:41).

Evidence of God’s activity on day four of the creation week is all around us. The fact is, the universe is “fine-tuned” in such a way that it is impossible to suggest logically that it simply “popped into existence out of nothing” and then went from the chaos associated with the inflationary Big Bang model (as if the universe were a giant firecracker!) to the sublime order that it presently exhibits. Our universe operates in accordance with exact scientific laws. The precision of the universe, and the exactness of these laws, allow scientists to launch rockets to the moon, with the full knowledge that, upon their arrival, they can land within a few feet of their intended target. Such precision and exactness also allow astronomers to predict solar/lunar eclipses years in advance, or to determine when Halley’s Comet can be seen once again from the earth. It does not take long to realize just how well ordered the universe and this earth is. Physicist John Gribbin, writing on the numerous specific requirements necessary for life on our planet, emphasized in great detail both the nature and essentiality of those requirements, yet curiously chose to title his article, “Earth’s Lucky Break”—as if all of the precision, orderliness and intricate design in the universe could be explained by postulating that the earth simply received, in a roll of the cosmic dice, a “lucky break.”

Nobel laureate Arno Penzias put it this way: “Astronomy leads us to a unique event, a universe which was created out of nothing, one with the very delicate balance needed to provide exactly the conditions required to permit life, and one which has an underlying (one might say ‘supernatural’) plan” (83). Who designed the universe with “the very delicate balance needed to provide exactly the conditions required to permit life”? The answer, of course, is the Intelligent Designer of the Bible—God.

Day Five

At the conclusion of day four, earth is now a fit home for animal life. On day five, God speaks into existence all manner of sea life and flying creatures (1:20-23). The seas are to “swarm

with swarms of living creatures” (1:20 ASV), which conveys a feeling of immediacy. All the creatures of the ocean, such as whales, sharks, fish and even the smallest shellfish, were created and placed into their watery home. No long, gradual process is intimated here; the command is urgent, and the result is immediate.

The creation of birds is spoken of in like terms: “and let birds fly above the earth” (1:20). The living things of the sky probably would include not only flying birds, but flightless birds as well (e.g., ostriches). Likely, this category also included creatures that we usually do not consider as birds (e.g., such as bats and flying insects). The Creator brought his creatures into being capable of functioning in their determined roles. Fish were created swimming; birds were created flying.

Whereas at times modern classification schemes rely heavily upon evolutionary presuppositions, biblical writers did not. Generally speaking, biblical classification schemes relied instead on such simple characteristics as flying, swimming, walking, creeping, crawling, etc. For example, since a bat flies, it is cataloged with birds (cf. Lev. 11 and Deut. 14). In Genesis 1, and elsewhere within Scripture, the teaching is explicit that animals and plants are to reproduce “after their kind.” In commenting on this important concept, Jean Sloat Morton noted:

It is obvious that the “kinds” of Genesis do not fit man’s classification system. Furthermore, throughout Scripture it is impossible to fit God’s method of classification into that of man’s... The “kinds” mentioned in Genesis are those plants and animals that do not interbreed. **Kinds** sometimes refers to what modern man calls “genus” (plural genera); in other cases **kind** means “family.” In some instances, **kinds** refers to the species. (154-155)

After creating these various “kinds” of air-and sea-dwelling animals, God commanded them to fill the water and sky. Just as plants produced seeds to reproduce their own kind, so also animals continued their own kind through reproduction. And, like the plants created on day three, the animals began in an adult form so that they could reproduce as God commanded them (1:22). They, like everything else God created, arrived in a completed, mature state.

As with the vegetation that preceded them, the creatures of

day five were to reproduce “after their kind” (1:21-22). Evolution teaches that birds are the biological descendants of reptiles, which descended from amphibians, which descended from sea creatures. However, Moses says that birds and fish were created at the same time. Once again, evolution and the Genesis account of creation are irreconcilable. Evening falls and morning returns, thus concluding the fifth day.

Day Six

“Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind, cattle, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after their kind,” thunders the Creator. Complete and immediate obedience is the response reflected in the pithy phrase: “And it was so” (1:24). These three terms (cattle, creeping things and beasts of the earth) obviously are intended to encompass the whole animal kingdom, excluding only the creatures of day five, and man. God created every animal that lives on the land, which would include creatures such as cattle, lizards, snakes, apes, monkeys and dinosaurs. There is no doubt that the creatures of days five and six included the multitudes of currently extinct animals (e.g., dinosaurs) with which the fossil record is replete. There is no justification for the notion that dinosaurs inhabited an earth that was destroyed before the Genesis week of creation.

The earth is finally in a state of readiness for the crowning glory of all creation—humankind. The sixth day marked the culmination of God’s creative work, and the day on which he created man and woman. Genesis 1:26-27 states: “And God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” But what does it mean to be created in the “image and likeness” of God?

It is apparent from the text of Genesis 1 and 2 that the creation of man differed markedly from that of all other life on earth in at least the following ways.

(1) A divine conference preceded the forming of man. God said, “Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness” (Gen. 1:26 emp. added). Such never is said of animals. Feinberg noted:

...[M]an is the apex of all creation. Man’s creation by God comes as the last and highest phase of God’s creative activity... Now there is counsel or deliberation in the

Godhead. No others can be included here, such as angels, for none has been even intimated thus far in the narrative. Thus the creation of man took place not by a word alone, but as the result of a divine decree (238).

(2) Man's creation was unique in that God "breathed life" into him (Gen. 2:7). As James Orr wrote in his classic text, *God's Image in Man*:

The true uniqueness in man's formation, however, is expressed by the act of the divine inbreathing... This is an act peculiar to the creation of man; no similar statement is made about the animals. The breath of Jehovah imparts to man the life which is his own, and awakens him to conscious possession of it (41, 46).

(3) The sexes of mankind were not created simultaneously, as in the case of the animals. Rather, the first female was "built" from a section of the first male's flesh and bone.

(4) Unlike animals, mankind is not broken down into species (i.e., "according to their kind" or "all kinds of"), but instead is designated by sexuality. God created them male and female.

(5) Only man is endowed with an immortal soul; animals do not possess such a soul. Unlike animals, man possesses a God-given spirit that returns to him when man dies (Ecc. 12:7). Such never is affirmed of animals. Scripture refers to Adam, the first man, as the son of God (Luke 3:38), and to mankind in general as "the offspring of God" (Acts 17:29). No animal ever was described by such language. Man is the only physical being upon this earth that possesses an immortal soul given to him by God—the Father of Spirits (Heb. 12:9). This immortal spirit that is given by God (and that one day will return to him) most assuredly makes us divine image-bearers. It likens us to God, separates us from the lower creation and gives us a reason to live—and to live in accordance to God's will!

(6) Finally, the text of Genesis 1 explicitly states that mankind alone was created in the image of God. Nowhere is such a statement made concerning the rest of earth's life forms. Unlike the other creatures that God created, man alone bears a special resemblance to him. Of all the living beings that dwell on planet earth, one solitary creature was made "in the image of God." What is it, then, that composes the critical essence of man

that distinguishes him from all of creation, and what are the ramifications of this distinction?

For those willing to search the Scriptures and accept their teaching, nothing could be clearer than the fact that mankind was created wholly distinct from the previously existing animals. The Bible paints a picture of man as a being that stands on a different level from all other creatures upon the earth. He towers high above all earthly creation because of the phenomenal powers and attributes that God Almighty has freely given him. No other living being was given the capacities and capabilities, the potential and the dignity, that God instilled in each man and woman. Indeed, humankind is the peak, the pinnacle, the crown, and the apex of God's creation.

After Adam named the animals that the Creator brought to him, his lack of human companionship became evident. Unlike the animals, which all had mates that were "meet" (i.e., suitable) for each other, Adam was alone. God evaluated the situation as "not good" and took the necessary action to resolve the problem. The man was put to sleep while God removed a rib from his side and God performed the first surgery here on earth, forming the first woman. Following this operation, God presented Adam with his wife. How will the theistic evolutionist and his cohorts attempt to harmonize this account with evolutionary theory? With the creation of mankind now complete, evening falls and morning returns, concluding the sixth day.

Day Seven

The seventh day follows as a day of rest for God. Little is said concerning this day; in fact, only two verses are devoted to it. Obviously, this was not a period of literal rest that was allotted to overcome exhaustion, since Omnipotence is not wearied by activity. Day seven was simply a day enjoyed by the Creator in which he refrained from further creation.

Conclusion

Today we are literally surrounded by salesmen. They pitch their products on billboards, infomercials and through every form of available media. Their only objective is to push the product and make a sale. Men and women spend years in school to learn exactly what phrases to use, and what displays will work

best to market their merchandise. Good salesmen can take a lackluster product that performs well below any guarantee and convince individuals that they must have one. Most people have experienced that queasy feeling of being sold a product by a slick salesman, only later to realize that the product did not live up to expectations. While the salesman may have appeared professional, or had a great sales pitch, there always was something that was “not quite right”—something that a smooth sales job and flowery words prevented a prospective buyer from putting a finger on. Nevertheless, the salesman presents the product in such a way that one would almost feel foolish not to buy. And so our closets and garages are filled to capacity with things that were sold by successful pitchmen.

While these products may make a dent into checking accounts or take up excessive storage space, they are, for the most part, harmless. But consider products that individuals sell that possess a price much higher than any checking account balance. Have the “garages and closets” of our spiritual lives also become cluttered with material that is unneeded or unwanted—or worse—harmful? Have we bought into compromising products that are spiritually unhealthy? Sadly, many individuals are more selective of items that are worn outside the body, than information that they bring inside their own mind. As a result, many individuals unknowingly compromise their relationship with Christ and their Almighty Creator. The salesmen often come with outstanding credentials and “sound good.” However, the product that these men leave you with will not only erode the foundation of your faith, it will eventually jeopardize your soul. **Do not compromise God’s Word!** A Christian need not have nagging doubts about the Creation account. It often has been said that those who criticize the Bible the most, generally know it the least. In looking at the scientific evidence regarding the Creation account, it is easy to see why this statement is true.

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The Indestructibility of the Bible

By Brad Harrub

The memory was permanently etched in Johnny's mind. During his first week in his freshman biology class, his professor walked in carrying three books under his arm. He first lifted the class textbook and told the class they would be responsible for all of the material contained therein. He then lifted the corresponding lab manual, and told the class that they would be expected to complete nearly all of the experiments covered in the manual. As Johnny was trying to calculate how he was going to pay for those two exorbitant textbooks, he noticed the professor reach down and lift up what looked like a leather-covered Bible.

The sight of that familiar book warmed Johnny's heart—but that warmth was short-lived. The professor told the class that the book he was holding was a pathetic excuse for a history book, and as such, anyone who held to its contents would probably not pass his class. His point was crystal clear. And to add an exclamation mark to what he had just said, the professor tossed that black Bible into a wastebasket across the room. Johnny's heart sank. A pathetic history book? How could anyone describe the Word of God as a pathetic history book?

That evening as Johnny and two friends were studying in his dorm room, he casually mentioned the account of the professor and the Bible. To his surprise, his two friends began agreeing that the Bible contained a great number of errors and contradictions. They began comparing it to modern-day books penned by men. Johnny was confused. All of his life he had been told that the Bible was the inspired Word of God. But as he sat there listening to his friends, he simply could not think of one argument that would separate the Bible from all other books.

Consider the number of souls that have been forfeited as our young people go off to college and find themselves eventually favoring science over the Bible. After all, they want to do well in school, they want a good grade-point average, they want to make mom and dad proud, and so they study this material, incorporating it into their sponge-like minds without ever realizing the eternal consequences. Then, one day near spring break, Johnny returns home. And sometime between the

mountain of laundry being washed and him emptying out the refrigerator, he confesses that he will not be going to church with his parents that weekend. In fact, he goes on to admit that he doesn't really even believe in a God anymore. And just like that, we realize our child has lost his/her soul, and we have lost our child.

What's going on here? And more important, how do we stop it? Why is it that our young people, once they leave home and go off to college or some vocational school, walk out the church building doors, never to darken them again? The answer is quite simple. Many people in the church have closed their Bibles, and no longer study or teach the Old Paths to their children and grandchildren. We must stop waiting on others to teach our children, and understand that that responsibility lies firmly on our shoulders. **Make no mistake about it, rearing and teaching your children is not the responsibility of the church!** It's not the preacher's job, it's not the elders' job, it's not the deacons' job. It's the parents' job.

And part of that job is teaching our children and grandchildren that the Bible is more than just a good book. We must teach the indestructibility of this inspired book! What good is it to teach our young people the words of the Bible if they do not understand that his Word will last forever, and that those words are inspired—God breathed—**and that the Bible alone should be our authority in making decisions?** We send our children to Bible class every Sunday morning and Wednesday night, where they learn the stories of Abraham and Sarah, Lot and how his wife turned into a pillar of salt, Noah and the Flood, Christ and his crucifixion—but do we ever provide them with evidence so that they understand that these are more than just stories? Without that foundation, without the evidence and proof that the Bible is more than just a good book, we might as well be reading them Shakespeare or Robert Frost.

How do we teach our children (or our friends and coworkers) that the Bible is the **only** inspired book, and as such should be followed. There are many ways, actually. We can show them the prophecies in the Bible. We can discuss how the Bible was put together—by about 40 different men over 1,600 years. But we also can “fight science with science.” Contained

within the pages of Scripture are scientific accuracies that prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Bible is the inspired Word of God! Many of the passages in the Bible that speak of the world around us, reveal information that scientists have only recently uncovered. I encourage you to walk your children through the fields of astronomy, oceanography, physics, medicine and biology in order to see that this is no ordinary book. It is the indestructible Word of God.

The Factual Accuracy of the Bible

The Bible claims to be the inspired Word of God. Therefore, it should be accurate in whatever subject(s) it discusses, since God knows everything (1 John 3:20). The factual accuracy of the Bible confirms that it is inspired. Time and again, the Bible's facts have withstood the test. There are many examples.

In the past, critics accused the prophet Isaiah of having made a historical mistake when he wrote of Sargon, King of Assyria (Isaiah 20:1). For years, this remained the only historical reference—secular or biblical—to Sargon having been linked with the Assyrian nation. Thus, critics assumed Isaiah had erred. But in 1843, Paul Emile Botta, the French consular agent at Mosul, working with Austen Layard, unearthed historical evidence that established Sargon as having been exactly what Isaiah said he was—King of the Assyrians. At Khorsabad, Botta discovered Sargon's palace. Pictures of the find may be found in *Halley's Bible Handbook*. Isaiah had been correct all along, and the critics had been wrong—all along.

In the New Testament, over 45 countries are mentioned (and even more cities). Each country and city is mentioned in its proper geographic location. In fact, whenever the biblical record can be checked, it always passes the test. For example, one of the most famous archaeologists of the last century was Sir William Ramsay, who disputed the accuracy of events recorded by Luke in the Book of Acts. Ramsay believed those events to be little more than second-century, fictitious accounts. Yet, after years of (literally!) digging through the evidence in Asia Minor, Ramsay concluded that Luke was an exemplary historian. In the decades since Ramsay, other scholars have suggested that Luke's historical background of New Testament times is among the best ever

produced.

The Prophecy of the Bible

One way to prove that the Bible is inspired would be to show that all the checkable facts in it are correct. Another way to prove its inspiration would be to show that the predictions it makes regarding future events are correct. As it turns out, one of the most impressive internal proofs of the Bible's inspiration is its predictive prophecy. If the Bible is inspired of God, it should contain such valid, predictive prophecy. In fact, the Bible's prophecy—completely foretold to the minutest detail and fulfilled with the greatest precision—has confounded critics for generations. The Bible contains numerous prophecies about individuals, nations, cities and even the promised Messiah.

In order for a prophecy to be valid, it must meet certain criteria. First, it must be a specific, detailed statement—not something that is vague or general in nature. Second, there must be enough time between the prophetic statement and its fulfillment so that there is no chance whatsoever of the prophet having the ability to influence the outcome. Third, the prophecy must be stated in clear, understandable terms. Fourth, the prophecy must not have historical overtones. In other words, true prophecy should not be based on past (or current) societal or economic conditions. Fifth, a clear, understandable, exact prophecy must have a clear, understandable, exact fulfillment. It is not enough to suggest that a certain event came true with a “high degree of probability.” The fulfillment must be unmistakable, and must match the prophecy in every detail.

Two questions come to mind: (1) Does the Bible contain predictive prophecy; and (2) If it does, can the predictive prophecy be proven true? The answer to both questions is, “Yes!” The Bible's prophecy fits the criteria perfectly—each and every time. Consider just a few brief examples.

Within the Bible, numerous prophecies are presented regarding the rise, decline and fall of both individual cities and entire nations. For example, in Ezekiel 26:1-14, the Bible foretells the destruction of the city of Tyre with miraculous precision. The prophet Ezekiel predicted that Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, would destroy the city (Ezekiel 26:7-8). Many nations would come up against Tyre (26:3). The city would be

leveled and scraped clean like a bare rock (26:4). The city's stones, timbers and soil would be cast into the sea (26:12). The surrounding area would become a place for the spreading of fishermen's nets (26:5). And, finally, the city never would be rebuilt to its former glory (26:14).

History records that each of these predictions came true. Tyre, a coastal city from ancient times, had a rather unusual arrangement. In addition to the inland city, there was an island about three-fourths of a mile offshore. Nebuchadnezzar besieged the mainland city in 586 B.C., but when he finally was able to inhabit the city in about 573 B.C., his victory was hollow. He did not know that the inhabitants had left the city and moved to the island—a situation that remained virtually unchanged for the next 241 years. Then, in 332 B.C., Alexander the Great conquered the city—but not with ease. To get to the island, he literally had his army “scrape clean” the inland city of its debris, and then employed those materials (stones, timbers and soil) to build a “land bridge” to the island. Yet, even though Alexander inflicted severe damage on the city, it still remained intact. In fact, it waxed and waned for the next 1,600 years until finally, in A.D. 1291, the Muslims thoroughly destroyed Tyre. The city never regained its position of wealth and power. The prophet Ezekiel looked 1,900 years into the future and predicted that the city of Tyre would be a bald rock where fishermen gathered to open their nets. And that is exactly what history records as having happened!

The Old Testament also contains over three hundred messianic prophecies. A “messianic” prophecy is one that tells about a coming “Messiah” or Savior. These prophecies were written to tell the world about a man who would come to save humankind from sin. The prophecies about the Messiah said that He would be rejected and know grief (Isa. 53:3), and would be betrayed by a friend (Psa. 41:9) for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12). He was (John 13:18; Matthew 26:15). He would be spit upon and beaten (Isa. 50:6; 53:5), and in death his hands and his feet were to be pierced (Psa. 22:16). This is exactly what happened (Matt. 27:30; Luke 24:39). Although he would die and be placed in a rich man's tomb (Isa. 53:9; Matt. 27:57), his bones would not be broken (Psa. 34: 20; John 19:33), and his

flesh would not see corruption because he would be raised from the dead (Psa. 16:10; Acts 2:22ff.) and eventually ascend into heaven (Psa. 110:1-3; 45:6; Acts 1:9-10). These prophecies were written hundreds of years before they came true. But Jesus Christ fulfilled each of them in every detail, establishing him as the Savior of the world and the Bible as the inspired Word of God.

Time and again, biblical prophecies are presented, and fulfilled, with exacting detail. Jeremiah wrote: “When the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known as one whom the Lord has truly sent” (Jer. 28:9). The Bible is the only book that contains hundreds of accurate examples of predictive prophecy. And only God can tell the future. If the Bible accurately predicts the future (and it does!), its Author must be God.

Scientific Accuracies in the Bible

1. Scientific Accuracies from the Field of Astronomy

Somewhere buried in the recesses of my brain are the smells of paste, the textures of construction paper and No. 2 pencils, and the sounds of chalk writing out lessons on a chalkboard. Those memories of elementary school recall to mind teachers’ names and faces, and the classroom textbooks—textbooks such as the McGraw-Hill history book that I used in the fifth grade. Somewhere concealed in those pages was the story of Christopher Columbus and his famous journey to America. I remember, as most Americans do, being taught that ancient people during Columbus’ day believed the earth was flat. As such, textbook pictures often showed a map with a boat at the edge ready to either fall off or be devoured by a wicked sea creature. While we do not know the exact date when people began accepting the fact that the earth was round, we do know that the images that NASA provided—images from astronauts who had turned their cameras back towards the earth—left little doubt in the minds of most people of the circularity of our home planet.

The earth **is** round—and we can now pat ourselves on the back for recognizing such. Yet, God’s Word foretold this fact literally thousands of years ago. Isaiah, in speaking of God, stated: “It is he who sitteth upon the **circle** of the earth” (40:22

emphasis added). The Hebrew word Isaiah used for “circle” is the word *khug*, which means literally something with “roundness,” a “sphere.” But, of course, the people of Isaiah’s day thought the earth was flat. And that was the concept of the many generations of people who followed Isaiah. Isaiah had been correct all along, even when the people of his day emphatically stated the opposite. How did Isaiah know the earth to be a sphere? By what authority did he pen those words?

2. While most of us can remember studying the planets and their orbit around the sun, how many of us are familiar with the sun’s **orbit**? Psalm 19:5-6 contains several interesting scientific facts. In speaking of the sun, the psalmist suggested; “His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.” For years, Bible critics scoffed at Bible believers, stating that this verse taught the false concept of geocentricity (i.e., the sun revolves around the earth). Then on June 1, 1999, at 9:40 p.m., radio astronomers measured the sun’s orbit throughout the Milky Way Galaxy. We learned that rather than being fixed in space, the sun actually is in an orbit of its own. In fact, it is estimated to be moving through space at the rate of 600,000 miles per hour, in an orbit so large it would take approximately 220,000,000 years to complete just one orbit. How did the psalmist portray such accurate statements—when people of his day, and for years afterward, taught that just the opposite was true? And, by the way, there is another gem packed away in these two verses. The psalmist hinted at the fact that the sun is the source of energy for the earth (“and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof”). An amazing statement, is it not, considering when it was written and by whom?

3. Electric light, one of the everyday conveniences that affect our lives, was invented in 1879 simultaneously by Thomas Alva Edison in the United States and Sir Joseph Wilson Swan in England. By the 1950s, most new homes were being wired for electricity so the owners could take advantage of this new discovery. In discussing light and darkness, the Lord asked Job: “Where is the way where light dwelleth? And as for darkness, where is the place thereof?” (38:19). The Lord described the travel of light in a “way” (Hebrew *derek*, which is literally a

traveled path or road; cf. Genesis 16:7), whereas darkness was described as a “place” (Hebrew *maxim*, meaning a place, a spot, as standing; cf. Genesis 1:9; 28:11). Until the seventeenth century, it was believed that light was transmitted instantaneously. Then, Sir Isaac Newton suggested that light is composed of small particles that travel in a straight line. Christian Huygens proposed the wave theory of light, and Olaus Roemer measured the velocity of light as evinced by its delay while traveling through space. Scientists now know that light is a form of energy called radiant energy, and that it travels in electromagnetic waves in a straight line at the speed of over 186,000 miles per second (660 million miles per hour). For example, it takes about eight minutes for light to travel its “path” from the sun to the earth. Some evolutionists, who deny the chronological data found in the Bible, have suggested that light, which spans the distances from stars to us, proves the universe is billions of years old. They overlook the fact, of course, that God created the heavenly lights already in place (Gen. 1:14-16) to serve as a “witness” of his infinite power and for man’s benefit (Psa. 19:1). God, in making his perfect, mature universe, formed the stars so that their light could be seen on earth.

4. Jehovah also inquired of Job, “By what way is light parted?” (38:24). The word “parted” is from the Hebrew *halaq*, meaning to divide, allot, apportion (cf. Numbers 26:53). Though the Lord simply may have been asking the patriarch if he knew how light is distributed on earth, nonetheless it is an amazing scientific fact that light literally can be parted. When a narrow beam of sunlight passes at a slant into a triangular, transparent prism, the sunlight is broken into a band of seven colored lights referred to as a spectrum. Sir Isaac Newton eventually discovered this, yet the writer of the Book of Job knew it first.

2. Scientific Accuracies from the Field of Oceanography

1. Long ago, Solomon wrote: “All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again” (Ecc. 1:7). This statement, considered by itself, may not appear all that significant. But when considered with additional evidence and other biblical passages, it becomes all the more remarkable. Having lived just

outside of Memphis, TN, for many years, I had many opportunities to observe the massive Mississippi River. When it is moving at normal speed, scientists have calculated that the river dumps approximately **6,052,500 gallons** of water **per second** into the Gulf of Mexico. So where does all that water go? The answer, of course, lies in the hydrologic cycle so well illustrated in the Bible. Ecclesiastes 11:3 states that “if the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth.” Amos 9:6 informs us that “He...calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth; the Lord is His name.” The idea of a complete water cycle was not fully understood or accepted until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The first substantial evidence came from experiments of Frenchmen Pierre Perrault and Edme Mariotte. These scientists demonstrated that the flow of the Seine River could be accounted for by precipitation. Astronomer Edmund Halley also contributed valuable data to the concept of a complete water cycle. More than 2,000 years prior to their work, however, the Scriptures had indicated a water cycle. How?

2. If you never had journeyed to the depths of the ocean (or heard news reports about such), what would you expect the appearance of the bottom of the deep to look like? Most of us would relate that body of water with other bodies of water with which we are familiar. As such, we likely would envision something similar to ponds, lakes or pools—i.e., a flat, muddy, or sandy bottom. God asked Job, “Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? Or hast thou walked in the recesses of the deep?” (38:16). The Hebrew word for “recesses” (or “trenches”) refers to that which is “hidden, and known only by investigation.” What were these “recesses of the deep” (the Hebrew word for “deep” is the word for seas or oceans)? In 1873, a team of British scientists working in the Pacific Ocean found a “recess” 5½ miles deep. Later, another team of researchers discovered another trench 35,800 feet deep (over 6 miles down). Extensive studies have now been conducted on the Mariana Trench off the coast of Guam. The bathyscaph *Trieste* has traveled down almost seven miles into that trench. Today we have found trenches in all three major oceans. We also have discovered freshwater springs emptying into the oceans. How

did Job know about these “springs” and “recesses in the deep,” when we did not discover them until centuries later? What authority did he have to make such claims?

3. God told Noah (Gen. 6:15) to build an ark that measured 300 cubits in length, 50 cubits in width and 30 cubits in height. This is a ratio of 30 to 5 to 3, length to breadth to height. Using the most conservative estimate available for a cubit (approximately 17½ to 18 inches), the ark would have been roughly 450 feet long (a football-field-and-a-half) and would have contained approximately 1.5 million cubic feet of space. In 1844, when Isambard K. Brunnel built his giant ship, the *Great Britain*, he constructed it to almost the exact dimensions of the ark—30:5:3. As it turns out, these dimensions are the perfect ratio for a huge boat built for seaworthiness and not for speed. Obviously, the ark was not built for speed; it had nowhere to go! In fact, shipbuilders during World War II used that 30:5:3 ratio to build a boat (the U.S.S. *Jeremiah O’Brien*) that eventually was nicknamed “the ugly duckling”—a barge-like boat built to carry tremendous amounts of cargo. It had approximately the same ratio as the ark. How did Noah know the perfect seagoing ratio to use in building the ark? Upon whose knowledge did he draw? Brunnel and others like him had many generations of shipbuilding knowledge upon which to draw, but Noah’s literally was the first of its kind.

3. Scientific Accuracies from the Field of Physics

1. Moses (Gen. 2:1) stated: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.” This is an extremely interesting assessment of the situation, because Moses chose the Hebrew past definite tense for the verb “finished,” indicating an action completed in the past, never to occur again. Moses stated that the creation was “finished”—once and for all. That is exactly what the First Law of Thermodynamics states. This Law (often referred to as the Law of Conservation of Energy/Matter) states that neither matter nor energy can be created or destroyed. It was because of this Law that Sir Fred Hoyle’s “Steady State” (or “Continuous Creation”) Theory was discarded several years ago. Hoyle stated that at points in the universe called “irtrons,” matter was being created constantly. But the First Law states just the opposite. The Bible says that God “ended His work which He

had made” (Gen. 2:2). As Henry M. Morris has suggested: “This is the most universal and certain of all scientific principles and it states conclusively that, so far as empirical observation has shown, there is **nothing** now being created anywhere in the known universe” (235).

It is because God has finished his creation that nothing now is being created. But, as a corollary to that, why is it that nothing is being destroyed? This is the second half of the statement of the Law. Matter and/or energy may change form, but the total amount of energy in the universe remains the same. Nothing is being destroyed, even though its form may change. Once again, the answer can be found in the science of the Bible. Nehemiah provided a portion of the answer when he stated: “Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all” (9:6). Hebrews 1:3 points out that God “upholds all things by the word of His power.” If God is upholding it, then man will not destroy it. Other verses make that clear in this regard (cf. Isa. 40:26; Ecc. 3:14; 2 Pet. 3:7). Thus, again we see that the biblical writers penned accurate scientific statements long before such statements were even known to be scientific.

2. In three places in the Bible (Heb. 1:11; Isa. 51:6; Psa. 102:26) the indication is given that the earth, like a garment, is wearing out. This, of course, is exactly what the Second Law of Thermodynamics states. This Law, also known as the Law of Increasing Entropy, governs all processes; there is not a single known exception. The Law states that as time progresses, entropy increases. Entropy is the scientific word which simply means that things become more disorderly, more random, more unstructured. In other words, a flower blooms, fades and dies. A child grows into adolescence, adulthood, senility and dies. The house we build today, in 250 years will be a heap of junk. The car we buy today, given 30 or 40 years, will rust and fall apart. Everything is running down. Everything is wearing out. Energy is becoming less available for work. Eventually then (theoretically speaking) the universe, left to itself, will experience a “heat death” when no more energy is available for use. We did not discover these things until fairly recently, yet the Bible writers

portrayed them accurately thousands of years ago. What was the source of their knowledge?

4. Scientific Accuracies from the Field of Medicine

1. Moses told the Israelites (Lev. 17:11-14) that “the life of the flesh is in the blood.” He was correct. Because the red blood cells can carry oxygen (due to hemoglobin in the cells), life is made possible. In fact, the human red blood cells carry, for example, approximately 270,000,000 molecules of hemoglobin per cell (Perutz 64-65). If there were any less, there would not be enough residual oxygen to sustain life after, say, a hard sneeze or a hefty pat on the back. We know today that the “life of the flesh is in the blood.” But we didn’t know that in George Washington’s day. How did the “father of our country” die? We bled him to death (Havron 62). People felt that the blood was where evil “vapors” were found, and that getting rid of the blood would make a person well again. Today, of course, we know that is not true. Think of how often blood transfusions have made life possible for those who otherwise would have died. Today we know the truth of the matter. How did the biblical writer know it?

2. Genesis 3:15 teaches plainly that both the male and the female possess the “seed of life.” This was not the commonly held position in Moses’ day, however. Nor was it the commonly held position just a few centuries ago. Several writers of days gone by, including some of Moses’ day, felt that only the male possessed the seed of life, and that the woman actually was little more than a “glorified incubator.” One writer even suggested that the male seed could be deposited in warm mud, and the end result would be the same as placing it in the woman’s womb. But Moses spewed forth no such nonsense. Rather, he stated the truth of the matter. But how did he know?

3. Leviticus 17:15 teaches that an animal that has died **naturally** is not to be eaten. Moses obviously was highly trained in public health procedures, for he certainly knew that of which he spoke. Today it is against local, state and federal public health laws to take an animal that has died naturally to a slaughterhouse in order to be prepared for human consumption. What if the animal died of rabies, anthrax, brucellosis or a similar disease?

Obviously, it would not be suitable for human consumption because if the animal died, something was wrong. Even today, this practice is one of our basic public health standards. But how did Moses possess such knowledge?

4. While the Old Testament placed no restrictions on the eating of fruits and vegetables, severe limitations were given for the eating of certain meats. Among land animals, only those that had a split hoof and chewed the cud were approved as edible (Lev. 11:3). Of the water-living animals, only those with fins and scales were acceptable (Lev. 11:9; of interest is the fact that poisonous fish have no scales). Birds of prey were prohibited, as were almost all insects. But perhaps the best known among these biblical injunctions was eating the meat of a pig. To the Israelite, pork was considered unclean, and thus was inedible. Today, we know there is good scientific reasoning behind such a prohibition. The pig is a scavenger and will eat almost anything. In so doing, on occasion it ingests the parasite, *Trichinella spiralis*, which is the cause of trichinosis in humans. Left untreated, this disease can be debilitating and even deadly. Pigs also are known carriers (as intermediate hosts) of the tapeworm *Taenia solium*, and of the parasite *Echinococcus granulosus*, which causes tumors in the liver, lungs and other parts of the body. Raw or undercooked pork can be quite dangerous when consumed by humans.

Pigs can provide safe meat if they are fed properly and if the muscle tissue is cooked correctly. But such conditions often did not prevail in ancient times. Were the Israelites “ahead of their times” in regard to their extensive public health and personal hygiene laws? Archaeologists admit that they have yet to find civilizations as ancient as the Israelites with rules and regulations that could rival those of the Jewish people in regard to complexity and scientific accuracy. The Egyptians, for example, were brilliant in many respects when it came to their medical technology. Yet, the Jews had access to this kind of information (and much more) that not even the Egyptians possessed. Interestingly, even today in some countries (like Germany) raw pork is considered a delicacy—in spite of the knowledge we possess about the potential dangers of eating it.

5. In Deuteronomy 23:12-14, Moses instructed the Israelites

always to bury human waste products. Today, of course, with centuries of experience behind us, we know that this is an excellent sanitary hygienic practice. But the common course of action in Moses' day, and for centuries to follow, was to dump waste products in any convenient place. History has recorded the folly of this kind of action.

In Europe, during the Middle Ages, "Black Plague" swept over the continent on two different occasions, slaughtering more than 13 million people in the process. Europeans routinely dumped waste of all kinds out their windows and into the public streets where decomposition took place and microorganisms flourished. One of those microorganisms—the one we know today as *Yersinia pestis*—grew in the waste products and contaminated the fleas associated with those waste products. The fleas, using rats as their hosts, subsequently traveled into the people's houses. Once inside a dwelling, the fleas then jumped from the rats onto the humans, biting them and infecting them with the plague organism. As this cycle was repeated over and over, millions perished. Yet, if the people simply had obeyed God's injunction, as given by Moses to the Israelites, all of the death and horror of two separate epidemics could have been avoided. How did Moses know to instruct the Israelites regarding such public health hygiene laws, when none of the nations surrounding God's people enlisted such practices—and would not for centuries?

6. In Genesis 17:12, God commanded Abraham to circumcise newborn males on the **eighth** day. But why day eight? In humans, blood clotting is dependent upon three factors: (a) platelets, (b) vitamin K, and (c) prothrombin. In 1935, professor H. Dam proposed the name "vitamin K" for the factor that helped prevent hemorrhaging in chicks. We now realize that vitamin K is responsible for the production (by the liver) of prothrombin. If the quantity of vitamin K is deficient, there will be a prothrombin deficiency and hemorrhaging may occur.

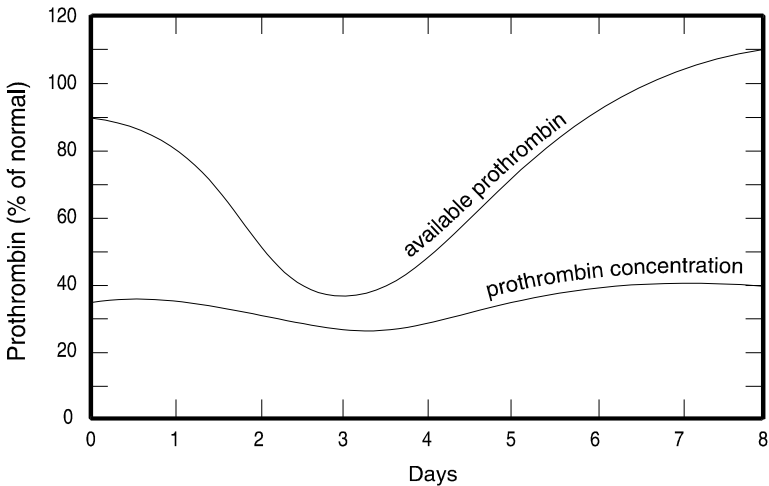
Interestingly, it is only on the fifth to seventh days of a newborn's life that vitamin K (produced by the action of bacteria in the intestinal tract) is present in adequate quantities. Vitamin K—coupled with prothrombin—causes blood coagulation, which is important in any surgical procedure. A classic medical text,

Holt Pediatrics, corroborates that a newborn infant has

...peculiar susceptibility to bleeding between the second and fifth days of life... Hemorrhages at this time, though often inconsequential, are sometimes extensive; they may produce serious damage to internal organs, especially to the brain, and cause death from shock and exsanguination (Holt and McIntosh 125-126).

Obviously, then, if vitamin K is not produced in sufficient quantities until days five through seven, it would be wise to postpone any surgery until sometime after that. But why did God specify day **eight**?

On the eighth day, the amount of prothrombin present actually is **elevated above 100 percent of normal**. In fact, day eight is the only day in the male's life in which this will be the case under normal conditions. If surgery is to be performed, day eight is the perfect day to do it (see graph).



S.I. McMillen, the renowned medical doctor who authored *None of These Diseases*, wrote concerning this information:

...as we congratulate medical science for this recent finding, we can almost hear the leaves of the Bible rustling. They would like to remind us that four thousand years ago, when God **initiated** circumcision with Abraham, He said "And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised..." Abraham did not pick the eighth day after many centuries of trial-and-

error experiments. Neither he nor any of his company from the ancient city of Ur in the Chaldees had ever been circumcised. It was a day picked by the Creator of vitamin K. (21)

The medical information employed by Abraham, and confirmed by Moses, was accurate scientifically then, and still remains so to this very day. No culture around the Israelites possessed such scientific acumen, which, by the way, was years ahead of its time. How, then, did Abraham and Moses come to know the best time for circumcision, unless, of course, this particular fact was revealed to them by God, and recorded in his Word through inspiration?

5. Scientific Accuracies from the Field of Biology

1. Moses stated (Gen. 1:11-12, 21, 24) that things reproduce “after their kind.” This, of course, is no surprise to us today because we understand genetics and the laws of heredity, which ensure that things do indeed reproduce “after their kind.” If a farmer plants corn seed, he knows full well that he will not be harvesting wheat. If he breeds a bull to a heifer, he knows that the end result will not be a baby colt. Corn produces corn; cows produce cows. Why? Because all living things reproduce “after their kind” Even today, in nature these things hold true. But how did Moses know—long years before the science of genetics (which came into existence only around 1900) was discovered?

2. Paul stated that it is God who giveth all life (Acts 17:25). For centuries men have been trying to “create life” through processes of spontaneous generation. Even though men like Spallanzani, Redi, Pasteur and hundreds of others have proven time and again that spontaneous generation is impossible, evolutionists still keep on trying. But, to date, no one ever has “created” life. They do well, in fact, even to get one of the simplest “building blocks”—amino acids. Paul knew long ago that it was God who gives life. Just a lucky guess?

4. Paul also stated that there are **four** fleshes—those of men, beasts, birds and fishes (1 Cor. 15:39). Today, even evolutionists accept this fact of science. These fleshes are indeed different in their biochemical makeup. But how did Paul, an itinerant preacher of the first century A.D., know this?

6. Scientific Accuracies from the field of Archaeology

1. The Moabite Stone, found in 1868 by a German missionary, was cut in 850 B.C., in the reign of Mosha, king of Moab. It tells of his being subjected to the Israelites. It also mentions that Omri, the captain of the Israelite host, was made king in that day. The Scriptures speak of that very event in 1 Kings 16:16. With every scoop of dirt the spade overturns, archaeology proves biblical statements to be factual.

2. The Bible plainly speaks of a king by the name of Belshazzar (Dan. 5:22; 7:1; 8:1). It was common practice for Bible critics to ridicule the Bible regarding its references concerning Belshazzar, because secular records never had been found that substantiated what the Bible said. Then, in 1876 Sir Henry Rawlinson discovered more than 2,000 tablets concerning Babylon. They disclosed records of a man named Belshazzar who, in the absence of his father Nabonidus, became king. The Bible had been right all along.

Conclusion

For generations, people have railed against God and the Bible. You may recall, in Jeremiah 36 King Jehoiakim took his penknife, slashed the Old Testament Scriptures to pieces and tossed them into a fire (Jer. 36:22-23). During the Middle Ages, those caught translating or distributing the Scriptures often were subjected to imprisonment, torture and even death. Religionists of that day did not want the average man on the street to know what the Bible said. Centuries later, the French skeptic Voltaire boasted: “Within fifty years, the Bible no longer will be discussed among educated people.” The Bible still is being discussed among educated people, while the name of Voltaire languishes in relative obscurity. Like the blacksmith’s anvil—which wears out many hammers but itself remains unaffected—the Bible continues to wear out the skeptics’ innocuous charges, all the while remaining unscathed. Governments come and go. Nations rise and fall. People live and die. Jesus warned that “heaven and earth shall pass away” (Matt. 24:35), but went on to note, “My words shall not pass away.” Isaiah wrote: “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand

forever” (40:8). The question remains, will we faithfully teach it to our children and grandchildren?

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Textual Study of Romans 1:18-25

By Richard Kelley

We appreciate being asked to speak on the WVSOP lectureship this year. We are sure God's richest blessings are upon those involved with the school, and we are grateful for the tremendous good being done through it in Christ. This year's theme of "Christian Evidences" is most needful in this age of skepticism and disbelief, and the corresponding lifestyles these promote. We pray both the lectures and the printed volume will henceforth "speak the words of truth and reason" (Acts 26:25 NKJV) concerning this vital topic.

Contextual Study (1:1-3:20)

It is necessary when handling a textual study that we deal with its entire context. The immediate context of our study begins with **1:18** and carries its thought to completion at **3:20** (see Grubbs, Reese, Shepherd, et al.).

Universality (1:1-17). In order to introduce the Roman Christians to his thesis, the prolific Paul first declared the **universality** of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, "...to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (1:17).

Individuality (1:18-32). The design of this section (incidentally, the one we deal with in our study) was **individuality**; i.e., to dismiss the notion that non-Jews (termed in N.T., "Gentiles") were safe from the wrath of Jehovah by virtue of their supposed ignorance of his existence, and thus, his requirements.

Impartiality (2:1-16). This portion of inspiration displays the fact that God's expectations were evident to all, though all were not subject to the same particulars (Judaism, Patriarchy). Hence, all men are guilty of sin and worthy of condemnation, Jew or Gentile notwithstanding.

Spirituality (2:17-29). Here the arrogance of those Jews who spoke (teachers) but did not practice, who professed but did not perform, is under attack. Though the Gentiles were condemned for hardening themselves against the knowledge of God, the Jews were actually in worse condition due their choice position. Thus, the law in which they boasted served as their

condemnation. They lacked a true spirituality by exercising a form of godliness while being void of inward purity.

Responsibility (3:1-8). The privilege to exhibit and profess the glory of God has its benefits, but also severe consequences in the event of neglect. Many of the Jews had failed in this dutiful honor. The Law (of Moses) was insufficient through man's inability to keep it without error. The conscience and morality of man was/is insufficient to save all others. Only "...the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:2) is the wisdom of God that can be both preached and lived by man sufficiently, for it alone accounts for the moral and spiritual shortcomings of man—sin.

Universality (3:9-20). Now, Paul draws the conclusion with which he began: "...For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin" (3:9). This is why a **universal** salvation was necessary, because of **universal** sin!

May we also point out at this juncture that the basis of many false teachings touching the authority of the Old and New Testaments would be silenced if people would concede the inability of the Old Testament alone to procure even a **national** salvation for the Jews, much less being part of a **universal** one in some supposed future dispensation. The inferiority of the Old Testament was only in man's futile attempt to be justified by it (Rom. 3:20; 7:7). The Law merely pointed the way to the one who **could** render faultless obedience to the Father (Rom. 10:4; Heb. 5:8-9); and thus, by keeping the law of God perfectly a **universal** salvation from sin was opened for man (Zech. 13:1-9). Concerning this doctrine of salvation, Milligan summarized well when he said:

[T]here are but two conceivable schemes of Justification; viz., (a) That which is by and through works of law. (b) That which is by grace, through faith...It is implied, that though the former is *conceivable*, it is utterly impracticable...*Hence it is implied that all such persons are condemned by law: and if saved at all, it must be by grace through faith.* (341)

Textual Study (1:18-25)

Christianity vs. the world. Spirituality vs. Materialism. In no other place of Holy writ are these themes more ably amplified than our current text. We have broken down this section into four

points, which are as follows: (1) **God's Wrath Justified**; (2) **Man's Excuses Nullified**; (3) **Humanism Glorified**; (4) **God Dissatisfied**.

God's Wrath is Justified (vv.18-19). In verse eighteen **God's Wrath Revealed**. The present tense of "revealed" indicates it had a definite starting point with a continual, lasting effect (linear). Concerning the manifestation of God's wrath, Grubbs remarked:

It clearly signifies, not a subjective feeling on the part of God, but the objective penalty annexed to the transgression of law—the curse that it entails upon the transgressor, or condemnation that it pronounces upon the wrong-doer. (41)

Thus, this manifestation of the holiness and justice of God against sin (here termed "wrath") begins immediately with the advent of personal sin, and continues to radiate into society through its adverse physical effects (see Gen. 3:16-19). Lusk described these aspects of the wrath of God as the "headwind" or "opposition" all are made to feel in this temporal realm due to sin (4). Finally, though, at the consummation of the ages and the final judgment, it will be demonstrated **fully** in the "eschatological" sense (Rom. 2:5-8; 2 Thess. 1:3-10).

The two primary things against which God's wrath ultimately is manifested may be summed up as such: (1) ungodliness; and (2) unrighteousness. Lard translated these, "impiety" and "injustice," respectively, stating, "[i]mpiety, *asebeian*, means a failure in our duties to God; injustice, *adikan*, [means] a failure in our duties to men" (48). Little wonder then that Jesus gave the "greatest commandment," and the "second like unto it" as "Love the Lord thy God," followed by, "...love thy neighbor" (cf. **Matt. 22:37-40**).

In verse nineteen, we find **Man Concealed** God's revelation (not that of his wrath, as above). The phrase, "manifest in them" (KJV, NKJV) is given a more proper sense by using, "manifest among them" (Lard 46) or "evident within them" (NASB; Reese 26). In other words, "...it does not seem likely this is talking about an innate knowledge of God" (26). Hence, Lusk described the evidence as "the observable phenomea [*sic*] around them" (6). The means by which man comes to this knowledge is in the following climactic verse(s).

Man's Excuses Nullified (v.20). First, from the natural creation, the apostle argues the case against man's excuses. Paul uses an interesting word play to begin verse twenty, telling us that God's "invisible things are clearly visible" (Vincent 670). The only manner in which this is possible is by observing and honoring the rigid laws of thought, which is the only means of arriving at what might be termed "non-empirical" truths. For example, there are no **visibly** defined limitations for gravity, as there is with a ball. The ball has observable physical properties through which one can easily deduce its existence, as well as its limitations. Nevertheless with gravity, the only explanation is to deduce by contemplation that one ultimate source of "Center" exists somewhere around which, **and by which, and through which**, all things gravitate, the thing itself not being limited by its effects. The inimitable Campbell remarked:

Circles, cycles and centres compose the machinery of the universe. Suns, moons and stars have their respective centres, their orbits and their cycles. But there is one centre that regulates and that governs all other centres; for every centre is both attractive and radiating. It communicates and it receives. It supports and is supported. There must, then, be one self-sustaining centre, and that centre must be forever at rest. It is both the centre of gravity and the centre of motion. And that centre is not God himself, for he is everywhere. He is himself a circle, whose centre is everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere. There is a reason for everything, if there be any reason in any thing. Of what use light, if there be not an eye? And of what use an eye, if there be not light? Creator and creature are correlates. The one implies the other. There is, therefore, in the human mind, a necessity for the being and perfections of God. His existence is essential to ours; but our existence is not essential to his. We are, because he was. Had he not been, we never could have been. We are not self-existent. He must, then, be self-existent; consequently, infinite, eternal and immutable. (*Popular Lectures* 163)

Continuing, Paul goes so far as to draw two conclusions that, at one time, were clearly perceived about God by the Gentile world: (1) The scope and nature of his power is immaterial ("...even his **everlasting power**" v.20); and (2) This power, if its scope and nature is immaterial (i.e., **greater than**

material), must be divine! (“...and **divinity**” v.20).

Therefore, we may properly say, “From the physical, the spiritual is clearly seen;” or, “From the material, the immaterial is clearly seen;” or, “From the contingent, the non-contingent is clearly seen.” All of these are equal; all of these are true. The apostle argues from these three principles (of logic) to draw his conclusion: (1) **Observation**, “clearly seen”; (2) **Contemplation**, “being understood”; and (3) **Deduction**, “everlasting power and divinity.” This is the only way to arrive at truth with respect to immaterial things. By inspiration as well as the natural human experience of rationality, he describes the process by which, and at which, truths of an immaterial nature are arrived. (It is furthermore implied, then, that this process is a required process, as man is considered inexcusable for refusing or abusing it as a means of arriving at truth.)

“Seeing” these things, **from the creation**, in verse twenty, we next observe the conclusion: there is no defense. The word “excuse” (KJV) is translated from the Greek *anapologetous*. Lusk stated of its use here:

...a defense, logical argumentation presented in defense...with the α prefix it is “no defense, inexcusable” Newman and Nida translate the latter part of this verse, “As a result, they cannot have any excuse for what they have done” or, “...there is no way in which they can defend what they have done.” (8)

Inasmuch as Peter in the Spirit required of Christ’s followers to offer up a rational defense (*apologia*, **1 Pet. 3:15**) for our faith, those who act irrationally, or think illogically, or both, have no excuse for skipping out on truths available to the mind God created for just such a process. In Reese’s commentary, at the conclusion of verse nineteen, he states, “What was ‘known’ about God is specified in the next verse [v. 20], **and so is how it came to be known (by observation and contemplation)**” (26 emp. added). It is therefore implied that the process of observation and contemplation regarding immaterial truths are as rational and defensible as material ones.

Humanism Glorified (vv.21-23). We use this definition of “humanism,” “a system of beliefs that has removed God from reality...and a group of believers who...believe that human

beings are the ultimate intelligence in existence” (Hatcher 16). This passage says that at one time these Gentiles “knew God.” What happened? At this point in the text, Vincent offered this quote by Kingsley:

I think it may be proved from the facts that any given people, down to the lowest savages, has at any period of its life known far more than it has done: known quite enough to have enabled it to have got on comfortably, thriven and developed, if it had only done what no man does, all that it knew it ought to do and could do. (670)

This is what happened to the Gentile nations—they gave up their knowledge of God! It was not for lack of evidence; it was not contradiction with the evidences; it was not confusion over the evidence; it was a refusal to take the time necessary to contemplate and draw conclusions! Winters remarked, “They acted contrary to the knowledge they possessed. They thus sinned against knowledge. They knowingly rejected right for wrong” (22). It was **moral laziness** that led to idolatry, materialism, humanism—atheism! And it is the same moral laziness that leads to these corruptions today.

Consequently, what happens to the intellect and volition of an individual whose reasoning has become vain and materialistic? Spiritual darkness (v.21). What happens when the darkness is glorified and magnified as the truth (**re: Isa. 5:20-21**)? The incorruptible God vanishes, and one is left with a temporal, hedonistic elevation of mankind above his eternal Source. Some wisdom (v. 22b)! Lard remarked, “When men are reasoning God and truth out of their souls, they usually make large pretensions to wisdom” (55). In this self-deception, momentary gratification takes over as the test of truth, and you are left with nothing. After all, once the material is gone, there is but emptiness. That is the end of materialism—nothing (v. 23). That is where the Gentiles placed themselves, as Paul also described in another place (**Eph. 2:12** no hope, because they were *atheos*, “without God”).

Finally, we examine **God Dissatisfied** (vv. 24-25). These two verses offer us two thoughts. First, **God Gave Them Up** (v. 24). There is no state of life worse than being rejected by God (cf. Rom. 9:13; Heb. 12:16-17). But the ultimate result of only

following one's own subjective inclinations in this life is misery and hopelessness (Ecc. 9:4-5). At least two things characterize the social and moral state of individuals and nations who live in this fashion: (1) uncleanness, which indicates that which is defiled and worthy to be discarded; and (2) dishonoring of the human body, which, when it is assumed the use of the body is purely for self-gratification, will eventually inflict the punishment of this evil upon those who practice the same (Rom. 1:26-27). Moral degeneration and de-sensitization marks the impending demise of nearly every known fallen nation in history; the Gentile nations were no exception.

Second, **They Gave Up Truth** (v. 25). Before commencing this verse, notice two things (1) the irrevocable pattern of moral degeneration does not stop the human desire to worship; and (2) even in the degenerate world, there is a difference between "worship" and "service."

This verse states that they did their obeisance to the created "more than" the Creator. However, as several agree (Reese, Whiteside, Vincent, Lard, etc.), the best use of the preposition *para* in this instance would be "rather than." Reese explains, "'Rather than' implies that they worshiped the creature only, and the Creator not at all" (36). Agreeing, Lard translated it, "instead of" (46).

When truth is forfeited, its premium compromised, the floodgates open, allowing any and every form of carnal ambition to reign in the hearts of men. Everything is permitted, save only an objection to permissive practice. Freedom from this slavery to personal satisfaction is only possible by knowing and obeying "the truth" (John 8:32).

Any nation of history whose morality is degenerating, rather than progressing, is blowing out the candle on the light of revelation—natural or supernatural. However, as with the Jews and Gentiles, a people once impressed with the light of the Gospel face a "sorer punishment" (Heb. 10:29). The implications of having truth and giving it up, or "exchanging" it for a lie is inexcusable to the highest degree. Irrespective of the case, God is just in judgment against "all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:18, 20). We conclude our textual study with these timeless words of

Milligan:

[A]ll who are acquainted with the present condition of the heathen world know perfectly well that the state of the morals is even now no better than it was among the ancients. Indeed, it has been clearly proved by the testimony of missionaries, as well as by the acknowledgments of the heathen themselves, that Paul's description of the moral state of the Gentile world, given in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans, is still a true and faithful picture of the moral condition of all nations that are without light and influence of a revelation from God. (39)

Special Study:

The Bible's Claim Can Be Proved

While this lecture is based on the textual study of the above explicated passage, we have been asked also to give special attention to the implications involved in verse twenty. It is not our purpose to posit the evidences for the existence of God; that is left to others in the volume. It is not our primary purpose to dispose with false claims about the "non-existence" of God (i.e., "injustices," eternal punishment, "pointless" sufferings, etc.). It is not even really our primary purpose to consider whether or not he exists (though that is obviously a prerequisite and is handled in other portions of this book). Our purpose is to discuss one of the implications of the claims. **We affirm that the process by which these truths are ascertained is valid, and the Bible's claim can be proven to the highest degree of satisfaction and assurance possible.** The existence of God is not guesswork; it is reliable according to the same fundamental laws of thought by which any other intangible entity is deduced.

Usually when one speaks of the existence of God, he affirms its truth and then begins aligning evidences, the conclusion of which is: "therefore, God exists." Given the fact those evidences are valid (i.e., both true and relevant to the conclusion), then, the truth of the matter can be ascertained. This is called, "rationality," and its process has been formally given a title in the discipline of logic, "the Law of Rationality." This workable definition is suitable for our purposes, "one should only draw such conclusions as are warranted by the evidence" (Warren, *Logic* 1). The Law of Rationality simply identifies,

then, the process to which men mentally appeal in order to arrive at truth(s). It has not been “invented” by men; it has been identified and described. In other words, the process existed first. The philosopher Thomas Aquinas (*ca.* A.D. 1225-1274) has been described as the first to give this process “detailed theological explanation” (Hackett 117). It is the process by which the intellect is introduced to certain things, empirically and deductions are made. When the process is undertaken objectively (honestly, uprightly), truth can be obtained (as truth is a moral station). When this process is applied to religion, it is possible to come to the conclusion: Therefore, God exists, with doubtlessness.

But to take the process a step further, it is also suggested in our text (**Romans 1:18-25**) not only that the existence of God can be ascertained by properly reasoning from empirical observation, but also that something of this Being’s nature can be understood. This is all the case because of at least two truths: (1) the process is the oldest known process for arriving at truth; and (2) no better process of arriving at truth has ever been discovered without contradiction (or, self-defeat).

Therefore, we conclude that the process of deducing truth from evidence properly reasoned (tangible or intangible) is the only process of deducing it; and, the result of doing such will not only bring a person to truth, but will also give him absolute assurance of that truth when he arrives there. In other words, when Jesus said, “...ye shall know the truth” (John 8:32), he was not just talking to hear himself talk. It is as much a natural part of being human that we must arrive at truth, as it is a divine requirement for the same. If this were not possible, humanity would be, on the whole, unreasonable; and God would be, in the least, malicious for requiring it of us.

At this time, then, let us re-visit Romans 1:20, “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.” Part of the reason we are examining this topic here is to address the continuing trend to which many (even some in the brotherhood of Christ) have attached themselves concerning just how “sure” we can be about the existence of him who is “from everlasting to

everlasting” (Psa. 90:2). A number of years ago, Roy Deaver addressed this same concern in the book, *Ascertaining Bible Authority*, when he quoted several who were, “...teaching the doctrine that it is impossible for us to know that God is, and that the Bible is the word of God” (27). In this concise treatise are listed several opinions respecting the limitations of knowledge in this area, such as these:

1. “There is no way to prove that God exists. We are **compelled to accept the idea...by faith.**”
2. “There is no way really to know.”
3. “Absolute certainty is **only a theoretical concept.**”
4. “...[T]here is **not enough evidence anywhere** to absolutely prove God, but **there is adequate evidence to justify the assumption, or faith** that God exists. (27 emp. added)

Let us examine these one at a time.

#1: It is not acceptable to say, “We are compelled to accept the idea.” Why is this so? If there is evidence at all, it must lead to something. And in the case of God, it can only lead to the fact that he exists, or he doesn’t; there is no alternative. To summarize the quote, “Evidence will not compel us to accept the **actual existence of God**, but at the same time, that evidence compels us to accept the **idea of the existence of God.**” Does that even make sense? If the **idea** of God is demanded by the evidence, then **God** is demanded by that same evidence (this is sometimes referred to as the *ontological argument* for the existence of God)!

#2: “There is no way really to know.” This universal affirmation is impossible to make. To say there is no way to know is to say no person anywhere, at any time could prove the existence of God. This claim of knowledge is greater than the theist’s claim. I have a cassette of a lecture delivered by Thomas Warren several years ago in which he related how he illustrated three possibilities of human knowledge by displaying a chart (or chalk board) with three boxes for all to see, and next to those boxes he wrote, #1: I know everything. #2: I know nothing. #3: I know some things. He related how a seven-year-old child reacted to his query:

A little boy was seven years of age, I asked him how old he was. He came up and sat down on the seat, rather timidly, and he said, "Brother Warren, I've watched your chart this morning." I said, "Yes? You did? And what'd you think about it?" He said, "Well, as I heard what you said, I knew what you were gonna mark." He said, "And I knew what I'd mark." I said, "Well, which one was it?" He said, "Something." He said, "Nobody knows everything, and nobody knows nothing, but everybody knows something." Seven years old! We've got Ph.D.'s in the church today that don't know that! You see...**honesty** is the greatest factor in your learning the truth of God. It's of more value than getting a Ph.D. from Harvard. You go up there and do a Ph.D. in theology and you may come out not knowing what your name is!...Its not a matter of just education, that's the matter, it's the matter of people not being honest. How could a fella that's honest let anybody convince him that he doesn't know anything?...Its simply not true! ("Will of God")

So when we affirm we can know, we mean what Warren further said in these words:

To know means that you have such certainty about it, that you cannot be wrong. That's what "know" means...I'm saying something more than that I merely *claim* to know it; or, that I have strong conviction about it; or, that I know a lot of other people who agree with me about it; or, that I have counted noses, and there are a hundred million people that say the same thing. That's not what it means to "know." It means that you are in a position to know the facts; and that you have the mind to properly deal with the facts; and, that, as a matter of fact, you **have** dealt with those facts, and that you have **certainty** about it, so that you **cannot be wrong** ("Will of God").

#3: "Absolute certainty is only a theoretical concept."

We reply, then, the fact that "absolute certainty is only a theoretical concept" is itself but a theoretical concept as well. What an absurdity to declare, **with certainty of truth**, that certainty of truth is impossible. This type of subjectivity always contradicts itself. Winters said:

What could be more foolish than to deny the trustworthiness of the human mind to correctly reason to a proper

conclusion? If the mind's power to reason cannot be trusted, then how can it be thought trustworthy when it reasons to its own untrustworthiness? How can it be untrustworthy when it reasons back to a Creator but untrustworthy when it reasons to deny the power of reason (especially the reason which concludes that god [*sic*] is the Author and Creator of all things)? (23)

#4: “There is not enough evidence anywhere...” This again is hard to hear. First, how could any single person, or entire field of persons, or generation of persons, come to the unfathomable knowledge that there is not enough evidence **anywhere** to prove God's existence? What would this imply? Such an individual(s) would need infinite knowledge. For a person to claim such is irrational at the very least, and eccentric at best.

Yet, the second portion of the quote is quite telling, “but there *is* adequate evidence to justify the assumption.” So at this point we reduce the Law of Rationality to this: “We ought to justify our **assumptions** with adequate evidence, rather than our **conclusions**.” To put it in relative terms, this implies the view that the existence of God is not subject to the Law of Rationality in the same way the existence of gravity is. For example, when it comes to gravity, do we say, “The evidence only takes me so far, then I take a ‘leap of faith.’” Nobody takes a “leap of faith,” or “leap in the dark” when it comes to gravity, do they? Only in the instance of suicide, perhaps. Do you know why? Because they are **absolutely certain** what will happen. If you stood atop a ten story building, would you **then** say there is only enough evidence to warrant an “assumption” about the existence of gravity, but there is really no way to know **for sure**? After all, you can't **see** it, only its effects. Probably not (if so, there are some obvious psychological problems at hand that should be addressed immediately). Yet, when it comes to God, some will take a “leap of faith” into eternity—a much harder, longer fall to say the very least.

Plainly stated, if we cannot absolutely prove God, then there is no evidence strong enough to warrant an assumption in favor of his existence. And the Bible affirmatively declares it can be proved (Rom. 1:20). In fact the Bible says it **must** be proved (1 Thess. 5:21), that is, to conclude with absolute certainty with

respect to the available evidence. If not, the Bible is the most wicked and regretful book ever to fall into the hands of men.

Some Implications of Rejecting the Bible's Claim

As with any belief, there are implications or natural consequences of those beliefs. The mishandling of the Law of Rationality with respect to the existence of God is no exception. We wish to offer two crucial ones.

#1. It Is to Reject the Fundamental Laws of Thought. Rationality demands that our conclusions are drawn from adequate evidence that corresponds to the conclusion. Notice, we are not saying, **“If God does not exist, these are the implications.”** We are before that. We are saying, if the **process of deduction by comprehension is incapable of leading us to absolute knowledge of things not empirical,** then these things are the result, and many more. But if we cannot use the process of deduction by comprehension to deduce the absolute knowledge of unseen things, pray tell, what other process shall we use?

So we affirm that these statements are an irrational indictment against the laws of thought. However, we should say that the individuals who made the comments we quoted do believe God exists (perhaps while holding this position “tentatively,” reasoning that either the evidence provided or the manner in which the data is processed (or both) is inadequate). Some would have us believe that because they reject rationality when it comes to the existence of God, that either the existence of God, or the process of coming to that conclusion is questionable, or both. In light of this, Bales asked:

Can all reality be grasped with forceps? When one attends a lecture does he carry forceps to pick up ideas and a bottle with a cork in which to keep them? It is not a reflection of the lecturer, or forceps, or ideas just because one cannot capture them in this manner. **The reflection is on the individual who thinks all reality can be grasped with forceps.** (7 emp. added)

At this point we wish mention something of the nature of the evidence from which we reason the existence of God. The evidence for, and the process by which the existence of God is deduced falls between two categories: (1) It is not so

overwhelming that one's free will is nullified (a matter of infringement); but (2) It is not so withdrawn that a proper deduction cannot be made without undue difficulty (a matter of improbability); it is absolutely perfect. Warren described it as "epistemic distance," and paraphrasing Hackett, described it thus:

It would reveal God to man without overwhelming man so that he is not really free. Yet, it would not necessitate a gap so large that man could not be drawn to God. It would be one which was both law-abiding and teleological (one which was designed for this specific purpose and upon which man could depend for regularity of response)." (*Logic* 45)

Again, we quote Campbell, who rightly enjoins the responsibility of human morality to the process, and elaborated on the subject in these terms:

There is a distance which is properly called *the speaking distance*, or *the hearing distance*; beyond which the voice reaches not, and the ears hear not. To hear another, we must come within that circle which the voice audibly fills.

Now we may with propriety say, that as it respects God, there is an understanding distance. All beyond that distance can not understand God; all within it can easily understand him in all matters of piety and morality. God himself is the center of that circle, and **humility** is its circumference. (*Christian System* 5 emp. added)

We must admit that Campbell was commenting with respect to the *written* revelation of God (Bible), but what applies to God's supernatural revelation, in essence, certainly applies to the natural revelation of God as well, as God is the author of both. Rejecting the laws of thought does not eliminate them, it rather implies a lack of dignity toward truth. In other words, to reject the Bible's claim that the existence of God can be deduced, is to admit our dishonesty in handling the evidence.

#2. It Is an Indictment of God's Character (mercy, holiness, love, etc.). We propose a simple argument to this end: If God exists, but withholds information relative to his existence, he is immoral and unworthy of our obedience and gratitude. We deny that God is immoral and unworthy of our obedience and gratitude, thus we affirm that he exists and does not withhold information concerning to the same.

There are about three basic possibilities relative to the evidence: (1) God chose to give man no information. (2) God chose to reveal everything to man. Or, (3) God chose to reveal some things. Those with whom we are dealing in our lecture do not believe God revealed nothing, so number one is, by concession, false. Also by concession, we agree that God did not reveal everything. So number two is false. Therefore, we agree on number three, “God chose to reveal some things.”

However, with respect to number three, “God chose to reveal some things,” we are faced with at least two possibilities about those things he chose to reveal. They are either: (a) enough properly to deduce his existence with assurance; or, (b) not enough properly to deduce his existence with assurance.

Let us examine (b), for this is the one to which agnostics adhere, and, if false, (a) must be true. If God gave us some things, but those things were not enough, or constantly misled us, God would be manipulative and cruel, considering the written will he authored gives divine mandates to “prove all things” (1 Thess. 5:21), “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3), and “always be ready to give a defense” (*apologia*, “rational defense”) for our faith (1 Pet. 3:15). Such a ‘god’ is not worthy of worship, affection, etc. In order to believe this, and comply faithfully with the implications of it, one would have to conclude that Christianity is “cruel and unusual punishment” (see 1 Cor. 15:19)! But God is neither manipulative nor cruel; this is contrary to his nature. Neither is living the Christian life “cruel,” as it is patterned after the perfect life of Christ himself.

We state furthermore that those to whom we refer here are practitioners of Christianity. (The positions of “stricter” agnostics and atheists are dealt with otherwise in this volume). Therefore, for one to speak this way about the revelation of God, while “practicing” Christianity admits defeat by his own life. It would be humiliating and illogical to follow a system of beliefs about which you had such doubt. To say, “I am a Christian, but I believe the evidence that the God I believe in revealed is often misleading or lacking,” is a position that denies the basic foundation of Christianity: conclusive evidence! It should be emphasized, then, that God never leaves himself without plenty of witness (cf. Acts 14:17; 17:25-27, et al.), and one who holds

this position denies this fact as true.

Hence, we conclude: It is false that God has given either not enough or too much information relative to his existence. It is false the information God has given with respect to his nature and will is either lacking or misleading. Then, it is true that God has revealed himself (and his will) to mankind, in a manner able to be understood by rational persons, and man must be responsible for the association he chooses to have therewith. God exists. This we know. Not because it is better to **assume** this than anything else. Not because the evidence seems to be pointing in that direction, even though such evidence stops short of actually **proving** it. Not just because we want to believe it, nor because it is “better” than not believing (after all, “better” would be merely a relative term if he didn’t exist, as there would be no standard by which “better” could be judged). No, but because all the available evidence leads to the inevitable and justifiable conclusion: **therefore, God exists.**

We affirm the existence of God is something that is provable to a degree of assurance and satisfaction neither lesser nor greater than any other immaterial, intangible truth to which we enjoin ourselves. The fact that **visibility** often gives a material richness to the experience of human reason is surrendered; but not to the end that **invisibility** lessens the credibility of an otherwise knowable thing. In other words, the **invisibility** of God does no injustice whatever to the case for his existence. However, the **visible** evidence of his creation, coupled with the rationality of that solitary species upon which is conferred the highest honor of intellect and will, provide adequate resources by which we confidently draw the conclusion: “therefore, God exists.” There is no other way to arrive at this truth. There will never be another way on this earth but this: to practice with honesty the rigid laws of thought (rationality).

Nevertheless, we must not stop at this point, that it **can be proven** (although that is the extent of our lesson). The rest of this lectureship and printed volume serves **to prove it**, and should urge the reader and listener to understand the moral injunctions that **it must be proven**, and **such an injunction is justified**, in light of who he is, and what we are.

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Biographical Sketch

Richard received his public education in IL, KY and WV, and is a graduate of WVSOP (2004). He began preaching part-time for the congregation in Wallace, WV in November 2000, and continued preaching part-time for two years before coming to WVSOP. While in school, he preached regularly for the church in Proctor, WV.

He and his wife, Samantha, have four children: Christian, Hannah, Noah and Emma. He serves as minister for the Prestonsburg church of Christ, Prestonsburg, KY, where he has labored since graduation. Along with his regular preaching and writing duties, he conducts the weekly radio program, “Know Your Bible,” which has aired in eastern Kentucky for over twenty years.

The Moral Argument Proves God Exists

By Michael E. Phillips

The world is a place where there are demands for fairness, equity and favorable treatment among the human race. Each and every day, common speech reveals these inner desires as human beings relate to each other concerning expected treatment.

“That’s my seat, I was there first”—“Leave him alone, he isn’t doing you any harm”—“Why should you shove first?”—“Give me a bit of your orange, I gave you a bit of mine” — “How’d you like it if anyone did the same to you?”—“Come on, you promised.” People say things like that every day, educated people as well as uneducated, and children as well as grown-ups...It looks, in fact, very much as if both parties had in mind some kind of Law or Rule of fair play or decent behaviour or morality or whatever you like to call it, about which they really agreed. (Lewis 3-4)

This thought pattern is extended into every avenue of life. It is found in the testing process in school, in the award ceremony in sports, on payday at work, and in the husband and wife relationship. Over and over, the answer is repeated, “It’s only right,” and anything less would be “wrong!” Where do such ideas originate? Are they based upon the demands of the rich in society? Are they based upon the most talented? Does the majority in a certain group dictate the boundaries of right and wrong? Perhaps the oldest members of the group set the guidelines for acceptable behavior. Maybe that which brings the most physical pleasure should be declared “right.” If the moral idea of “right and wrong” exists, it must have been established by some standard. What is that standard?

Since this issue is applied so often, it is taken for granted by most people, as it is applied daily. When one is driving according to the state law (i.e., speed limits, safety constraints for children, paying for the expensive fuel), all are examples of submitting to a standard that is recognized by all, and for the most part, it is obeyed. The question is raised, “Is the state the source for human morality?” Of course not, yet, the laws of the state are based upon the ultimate source and standard for

morality!

Morality is sometimes applied to one individual differently than to another, as one individual “ought” to do one thing, while another person at the very same instant “ought” to do something else. Morality can also be viewed in its objective form, where human morality “must” apply to everyone. There is only one possible way that this can be true: There must be a **universal standard for morality**. Again, the question is begged, “What is that standard?” Some think it is the role of government to set the standard for acceptable behavior in society. The problem with this conclusion is seen in history, where some governments established rules, which when executed, were considered to be crimes against humanity! There must be a higher law than that of civil government, a law to which even the occupants of the highest office in the land must submit.

The idea of human morality goes higher than man himself. Human morality is the force that guides the innermost parts of man’s life—the mind and the spirit. Not only are outward actions controlled through human morality, but consider some inner workings of man: (1) Honesty, which if there is no objective standard for morality, lying does not exist at all; (2) Logic, which if there is no objective standard for morality, there is no reason to debate; (3) Emotion, which if there is no objective standard for morality, there would be no reason to cry when wronged by another, nor to be satisfied in a job well-done; (4) If there is no objective standard for morality, then there is no **sin**, and no need for changing one’s life (repentance) nor to seek forgiveness (“I’m sorry”).

There are two possible sources for human morality: an **inside source** (man) or an **outside source** (higher than man, a Creator). Kyle Butt wrote, “The person who does not believe that God exists has only one choice when it comes to explaining morality—man must have thought it up by himself” (9). This might sound like a reasonable idea at first, but instead of exalting humanity to the level of royalty, the value of humanity is brought down to the level of the lowest life forms in existence.

When God is rejected, 1) man is held to have evolved by chance, merely as an accident of fate. 2) No higher moral, universal law exists, but law is determined by what few

people in power hold to be expedient and best. 3) The shift can be thus made to “sociological law,” which includes determining who lives and who dies. 4) No ultimate values exist; therefore, personal cruelty can have free course. (Cates 3)

The rejection of a morality within man that did not originate from man, leads to a rejection of the higher source from which it sprang. This leads to devaluating human life to the lowest level imaginable.

Morality within mankind can be viewed all over the world. While there may be some slight differences in its application, yet, there is a **sense** (not an instinct) that identifies some actions as being **right**, and some that are **wrong**. For instance, no civilization rewards traitors, no nation accepts two plus two equals five, and selfishness is never admired. The human race experiences a sense of morality that when compared is very similar no matter the location on the globe. This cannot be the result of self-invention; thus, the source for morality must be from **outside** of mankind.

Anyone studying Man from the outside as we study electricity or cabbages, not knowing our language and consequently not able to get any inside knowledge from *us*, but merely observing what we did, would never get the slightest evidence that we had this moral law. How could he? for his observations would only show what we did, and the moral law is about what we ought to do...If there was a controlling power outside the universe, it could not show itself to us as one of the facts inside the universe—no more than the architect of a house could actually be a wall or staircase or fireplace in that house. The only way in which we could expect it to show itself would be inside *us* as an influence or a command trying to get us to behave in a certain way. And that’s just what we do find inside us. (Lewis 20-21)

The morality within man, recognized within man, must have its source outside of man!

This morality within man is often called a sense of **conscience**. While the conscience of mankind must be guided by a standard, yet the conscience could not have been invented by man himself. There must be an external source for the

conscience within man.

What I am saying is this: every man can be driven to a point where he will defend some standard of right and wrong. This moral consciousness is inherent within man...If there is moral law, there must be a moral law-giver who has implanted moral sensitivity within the human heart which, depending upon how it is educated, will either accuse or excuse man. (Jackson 20-21)

Since one's conscience finds its origin outside of himself, that conscience must be educated in accordance with the standard of that Creator. There is no other option, since certainty of mind is not a guarantee of truthfulness. The example of the apostle Paul prior to his conversion is ample proof for this fact (see Acts 23:1; 26:9; 1 Tim. 1:13).

One might search for the Creator of human morality all over the world, but he reveals his identity within the pages of his inspired Word, the Bible. The opening chapters of Genesis reveal the physical and spiritual origin of mankind, including his source for morality.

Note that when God created man, He "*breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living being.*" We later read of "*the spirits of just men made perfect*" (Heb. 12:23), so this word usually (if not always) refers to that part of man that is made in the image of God" (Gen. 1:26-27)." (Thurman 2)

All that is within mankind's design originates from God, the Creator, including human morality. "God is a moral being; man is a moral being. Of all of God's creatures on earth, only man is able to appreciate things morally right and morally wrong" (Cates 13).

The existence of human morality proves there is a moral Lawgiver. Now, what moral law has been revealed to mankind, in order for him to be spiritually acceptable to the moral Lawgiver? The answer is found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. It is only moral that Christians use this objective, moral Standard, both applying it to themselves and teaching it to others.

First, there is the sense of **ought**. The original word is defined as "to be under obligation; ought, should" (Strong's 53). It can be seen in many passages, including (1) Acts 17:29, where Paul told the people of Athens that "we ought not to think that

the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device"; (2) Romans 15:1, where Paul wrote, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves"; (3) Hebrews 5:12, where the writer tells them that the time had come when "ye ought to be teachers" and (4) 1 John 3:16, which states, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Second, there is the idea of **must**. The original word is defined as "necessary (as binding), must (needs)" (Strong's 21). In comparing the first and second words, the second "indicates a necessity in the nature of things rather than a personal obligation; it describes that which *must* be done" (Berry 190-191). The usage of this term in Scripture includes (1) Acts 17:3, where Paul taught that "Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ"; (2) John 3:7, where Jesus told Nicodemus, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again"; (3) Acts 9:6, where the Lord told Saul of Tarsus, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" and (4) 2 Corinthians 5:10, where Paul gives fair warning, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."

Third, there is an urgent **necessity**. The original word is defined "constraint, needful, necessary" (Strong's 11). The single passage to be applied in this study is found at 1 Corinthians 9:16, where Paul proclaimed, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"

It is necessary that preachers, elders and all Christians go "everywhere preaching the gospel" (Acts 8:4). It is perhaps the most **morally** important thing that human beings can do, as each one is created in the moral image of God. There is a **moral lawgiver**, who wants "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

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Biographical Sketch

Michael Phillips is a native of Langeloth, PA. After working for thirteen years in land surveying, he attended the West Virginia School of Preaching in Moundsville, WV, where he graduated among the first class in 1996. He has worked with the church in Daybrook, WV and is now in his fifth year with the church in Belington, WV. He serves as the Alumni Editor for *Publishing Peace*, the monthly paper from the West Virginia School of Preaching. He and his wife Kim have three children, Jacob, Jesse and Jenny.

The Unity of the Bible

By Dan Kessinger

The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever. (Psa. 119:160)

In all of recorded history, there has never been a collection of writings like the Bible. Like most Bible believers, we have become so accustomed to hearing such laudatory statements about the Bible that we have developed immunity to them. But if anything, this is an understatement of the facts in the case. In a wide range of effects from public to intimate, from governmental authority to the innermost thoughts, the Bible is the standard of human behavior. Its influence is global in scope. Without the existence of the Bible, the world would be a far different place, and dare we say, a place not fit for human inhabitancy.

Other religious writings have great impact to be sure. By the weight of numbers, certain Eastern writings are probably revered by more than adhere to the Bible. Also, in recent years, the Qur'an has made its impact known in a negative way. But protestations of the skeptic to the contrary, the Bible is the standard by which the scraps of truth in other writings are recognized. It may be suggested that without the Bible, such sacred truths in profane writings like the Qur'an and Confucius would be unrecognizable as truth at all.

What is it that has enabled the Bible to enjoy this kind of primacy among the world's writings? Why did it not vanish into the mists of obscurity as countless other religious writings? Is its inarguable success due to its affiliation with Western Civilization? Was it only good luck that both Testaments were available in the universal language of Greek? The Bible survived, and even thrived as its chief advocates and custodians were destroyed or dispersed. The preservation of the Bible itself is partial proof of its divine origin and of the power of God's providence.

The historical preservation of the Bible is a matter of interest and importance, but it certainly is not its most noteworthy feature. Even if we knew nothing of the history of Scripture between its completion and our current age, the Bible's message would stand up to scrutiny. The ring of truth in its

purity has an unmistakable tone, and the Bible peals it forth. Truth has ever been so. “And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matt. 7:28-9). When the Bible addresses the thorny issues of every age, it does so with inescapable accuracy, finality and consistency. The message of the Bible is the reason for its power. But if the Bible’s message were inconsistent, it would have no real power at all, and it would undermine the claim that it is the message from God.

Christians base their lives on the confidence in that God exists. Among the reasons for such confidence is the existence of the Bible. Christians believe that the Bible is exactly what it claims to be—the inspired Word of God. Among the reasons for this confidence is the unity of the message therein.

An Unusual Collection

Given the circumstances of the Bible, the reader might have rather low expectations for it. Having read other ancient books, he might brace himself for a series of faulty claims, fantastic errors in the fields of science and nature, and an immersion into cultures whose time had simply passed. Those other books had been written by men who were, to be sure, brilliant and entertaining authors, but who were frequently, even comically, steeped in error and ignorance. Of course, lest we bask in arrogance, we too will eventually suffer the same fate. That is, if the world lasts another 3,500 years or so, our own views of truth will be exposed as stumbling errors in ways not yet conceived. Ancient writings often suffer from inconsistency with later enlightenment. Such is the way of the world as it inexorably assembles knowledge.

Consistency in a message defines that message and the messenger. A wavering and inconsistent messenger is known today by the term “politician.” Joking aside, one of the frequent charges one hears in political debating is that of inconsistency. What if such a seeker of office were to make speeches that only reflected the variety of views among his speech writers? Even though all of these writers were of the same political party, would they not stridently differ on specific issues? In spite of their all being from one basic culture, time frame and political

viewpoint, their views would disagree. The politician making these speeches would soon reap scorn for his inconsistent messages. He would be exposed as a fraud with no particular message of any importance of his own.

If God is the ultimate author of the Bible, he assumes the role of speechwriter, and uses a number of individuals to proclaim truth. If the Bible were a purely human production, it too would be full of errors, speculation and inconsistency. Not only is the Bible an ancient book, but also the time ranges of the Bible are prodigious. The first such gap is that occurring between the event and the description. Bible authors frequently were eyewitnesses of the events they described, and they were simply called upon by God to report what they themselves had seen. Such is the case in much of the four Gospels, and in the descriptions of wilderness events by Moses. These are circumstances lending themselves to accuracy, which is why reporters still report “from the field” today. However, Bible writers also wrote of events far removed from their own lives. In the case of Genesis, there was a gap of more than 2,000 years between some of the events and their being revealed to Moses. Could Moses accurately and authoritatively report the events of creation and the deluge?

When one then considers that the same ancient event is then addressed by other Bible writers, the likelihood of human error or disagreement increases exponentially. Particulars of creation were cited by Jesus in Matthew 19, and of the flood in Matthew 24. Other Bible writers also addressed these events throughout both testaments with specificity. And they at least claimed to be speaking by independent revelation of events many thousands of years in the past. Were they only quoting from Moses? Jesus did in Matthew 19, but he openly documented the Scripture as no new revelation (Matt. 19:4; 19:8). When there are new insights and information in these far more recent revelations, what is their source? Is it only speculation from a would-be prophet? If so, some clue as to its real nature ought to be forthcoming. Consider the new slant on the flood narrative in 1Peter 3:18-20.

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust,
that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh
but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and

preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

Here we learn that Noah was preaching by the authority of Jesus, thus Jesus himself is said to have preached. This is new information, but its beauty is in that it still conforms perfectly to the record of Moses in Genesis. The same can be observed by comparing the opening verses of Hebrews with the creation account.

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds. (Heb. 1:1)

In light of the information from Hebrews about the role of Jesus Christ in creation, it is most difficult to ignore him as one reads Genesis 1:26. Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

How is it that the Hebrews writer manages to augment our understanding of creation without disturbing even one stone of original edifice of truth as revealed by Moses? Why was it that none of these New Testament authors, or even their Old Testament counterparts, were tripped up in the details? Why is it that the new information they offer not only supplements the older truth, but clarifies it? Either these writers of the New Testament were as a group the most diabolically brilliant manipulators and frauds who ever lived or they were able to perfectly address issues far removed from their own lives through miraculous revelation.

Time is also an issue as we compare the Bible's first authors to its last. Because of a foggy understanding of the times involved, most people seem not to be fully aware of how much time passed as the Bible was being written, but the gap is tremendous. Between the calling of Moses and the death of John, we have a range of approximately 1540 years. Many think of all previous generations as being much alike: drab, colorless and

primitive until the fortunate advances made just in time for us. While modern times have improved the quality of our lives, such monochromatic view of history prevents us from properly differentiating. Time will reveal this view as shortsighted as later generations look on our own with equal disdain!

To illustrate the problem, I cite the words of a certain Social Studies teacher of mine. He was discussing the lifestyle of the Amish, and stated “other religions talk about being like Christ but they live it.” He was not himself Amish, nor was he really advocating conversion to that religion. He was discussing the culture of the Amish, but his statement reflected a glaring error: the belief that the culture of a few hundred years ago was identical to that of “Bible times.”

The term “Bible times” is part of the problem. That term suggests that there was great continuity among all of the vast ages recorded by the Bible. But Moses’ writing and those of John were separated by approximately 1540 years. That means if Moses had led the Israelites into the wilderness in 465 A.D., John would still be with us today. How much kinship has our age with that of the world of 465 A.D.? How much agreement is there in the disciplines of science, geography, medicine, politics or religion? In 465 A.D., Constantine, the Emperor of Rome who legalized his version of Christianity, had only been dead for one hundred years. Augustine had only been dead for 25 years. Arthur Penderagon would not yet be born for fifty years, Charlemagne for 350 and William the Conqueror for 600 years. The Battle of Hastings was still 600 years in the future, and the feudal system would begin just a few years after 465 A.D. In China, the 8th Dynasty was still in power (Hull). To go into the other vast differences between our own time and that of the 400’s A.D. would be superfluous. While it may certainly be true that the world has changed drastically in the last 1500 years, it also changed significantly in every 1500 years.

In addition, the Bible was also the product of diverse cultural settings. While primarily written by the descendants of Jacob, these writers found themselves writing in lands other than Palestine and in cultures other than that of Israel. Though Canaan itself is quite small (only 12,000 or so square miles), the writers of the Old and New Testaments were residents of three

continents.

The events of Old Testament history took place in the territory which is bounded by four great bodies of water - the Mediterranean (or the Great Sea), the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, and the Persian Gulf. This territory extends eastward as far as Iran (ancient Persia) and westward to Egypt. The mountains of Ararat in Armenia and Mount Sinai in the Sinai Peninsula mark its northern and southern limits. This territory extends about fourteen hundred miles from east to west, and nine hundred miles from north to south. In area it is equal in size to about one-third the land area of continental United States, or about 1,100,000 square miles. (Pfeiffer 13)

One must keep in mind that this does not include New Testament events in which Europe and extended locations in Asia Minor add to the theater.

Though the writers were all faithful Jews in the Old Testament¹ and Jewish Christians in the New, they were greatly affected by their culture, and did not live sequestered lives. Moses, for instance, had been an Egyptian royal. Daniel served as a prominent official in service to Babylon and Persia. Paul was a citizen of Rome. To say that these four governments represent diversity in culture is to understate the case.

The personal peculiarities of the writers of the Bible have also been well documented. They were kings and priests; they were statesmen, farmers, physicians, fishermen, shepherds and soldiers. Some were professional preachers while others specifically denied that role. Some were well educated as writers and scholars; others had no formal training at all. They were the richest of the rich and the poorest of the poor. Some were married, others were not. One had 1,000 wives, another was a eunuch. Some lived long lives while others died at an early age. Given the diversity in time, culture, economic status and geography, the Bible must surely be the most unusual collection of writings ever assembled. The likelihood of any consistency in doctrine among such a group seems small indeed.

The Consistency of the Bible

With all of this diversity, it seems reasonable to predict

¹ The possible exception, of course, is in the case of Job.

analogous diversity in the doctrine and outlook of the Bible. After all, except for their both being Jewish, what did Moses and King Solomon have in common? Or even more obviously, what did either of them have in common with John the apostle? If one were to assign to Moses and Solomon and John the task of writing on a moral topic, they ought to say virtually nothing alike. Why is this? Though both Moses and Solomon were royals, their backgrounds could hardly have been more different. Moses had abdicated from his position in anger, had spent 40 years as a shepherd and had returned to Egypt as an anti-royal activist. Solomon had basked in his position as king, using it as an opportunity to explore all that life had to offer. John knew little of such lofty lives other than what he had heard. He had spent much of his life fishing the Sea of Galilee. But hear each of them as they approach a similar topic.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. (Psa. 90:12)

Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them." (Ecc. 12:1)

I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father. (1 John 2:13)

Of course the specifics differ as does the wording. But the message is harmonious as each writer in his own way, directly or indirectly, addresses the idea of service to God as a priority throughout life, beginning in youth.

There are too many Bible doctrines to examine, each and every one as treated by various Bible authors. It is worthy to note that the Bible's unity in doctrine can be demonstrated in every case. Most attempts to find discrepancies in the Bible are misunderstanding of context even to the point of failing to recognize in what covenant the author is writing. Even in this case, the Bible shows remarkable unity of thought and consistency between the covenants. The New Testament writers built on the foundation that had already been laid without any attempt to question the unassailable integrity of the revealed law. "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the

contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet’” (Rom. 7:7). Later, non-biblical claimants to inspiration find themselves unable to equal this feat.² How is it possible to reveal an entirely new law without doing any damage whatsoever to the previously revealed but now defunct law? The answer is that both laws had been revealed by a Divine lawgiver.

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds. (Heb. 1:1-2)

The Bible presents a unified view of the nature of God. Since God is by definition infinite, human attempts to capture his essence have historically erred in two extremes. First, there is the mistaken view of God that makes him manlike in ways that limit his power. The gods of human construction are inevitably flawed in some ways, including in their power and in their morality. Perhaps our own obvious flaws cause us to be eager to serve a god who likewise has feet of clay. It may be the same tendency that causes voyeurism toward today’s celebrities and politicians. It makes some feel better about their own failings to find that others are less than perfect.

But the Bible never wavers in its presentation of the holiness of God. In the beginning of the Bible, he is introduced as the ultimate first Cause, a Being who is above and outside his own physical creation. In morality, he is perfect, without flaw. His holiness is unquestioned and his commands are perfect. In the incarnation, we have a human Savior who was likewise morally and spiritually perfect. Throughout the Bible, the holiness of God is emphasized, and the ultimate purity of the Godhead is to be revealed when this earth shall end.

² The Qur’an, the Book of Mormon and the Watchtower are all examples of such failed attempts. All claim to honor the Bible and continue its revelation, but all find it necessary to undermine the Bible in various ways. It is noteworthy that Jesus and his apostles never did this in establishing and proclaiming God’s new covenant.

For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. (Lev. 11:45)

because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Pet. 1:16)

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. (Psa. 19:7-9)

Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth. (1 Pet. 2:22)

It is a most risky enterprise to claim perfection. The mantle of perfection is such a fragile fabric that few care to defend it. Though the followers of God found themselves frequently questioning his flawlessness, they all concluded that God is right. Why did they all agree unwaveringly? In the course of 1,500 years, why were none of the observers able to ultimately charge God with some small indiscretion of judgment? Why is it that they all agreed on such a risky proposition? Why did no Bible writer give in to the selfish human tendency to equalize morality at his own personal level? The answer is that each wrote a perfect message from a perfect lawgiver. They were not revealing their own opinions

knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Pet. 1:20-21)

The other extreme view of God renders him more of a concept and less of a person. Like the flawed god of human construction, the conceptual view likely springs from an inability to conceive a perfect entity. With some good in almost everything and everyone, the “force for good” concept releases one from needing to defend the personal God’s actions. But the Bible unwaveringly resists cloaking God in mystical uncertainty. Even though his attributes are beyond human comprehension, in a marvelous way we are still assured that he is a “he,” not an “it.” How could he be a Father, if he were not a person?

Likewise, the Holy Spirit is a real person, not just God's holy attitude. If there were ever any doubt that the Godhead is comprised of persons, not mystical forces, the incarnation of Jesus Christ settles the matter. In it, God revealed himself to mankind as an individual rather than an abstraction.

who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Heb. 1:3)

Since the God of the Bible is a real Person, he has real feelings. Can a God of infinite power have recognizable emotions? No truth about God can be more readily noted in the Bible. God was grieved that he had made man (Gen. 6:6). Moses was called upon to confess that he had incurred the kindling wrath of God (Exod. 4:14). He is a God of joy and mercy (Micah 7:18). He is love (1 John 4:16). Likewise, the Holy Spirit is said to grieve (Eph. 4:30). The entire spectrum of emotions observed in the Father is clearly seen in the Son during his sojourn on earth.

It would certainly have been easier and simpler for the Bible writers to stray into these more easily defended areas of uncertainty. Why did they not? Was it only sheep-like docility that caused them to follow in the theological steps of their predecessors? Even when such forced consistency is attempted, it frequently falls short. And the question "Who is God?" lends itself naturally to a diversity of viewpoints. Yet, the Bible writers chose to reveal God in terms that demonstrate that they themselves were not fully capable of understanding his infinite power. And at the same time they avoided a literary shrug of the shoulders. They told us who God is in the best way possible for our limited intellect, by telling us what he is like. Their collective and consistent answer to the question demonstrates that such an infinite question may be partially answered in finite terms, but not by man.

These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (1 Cor. 2:13)

Monotheism is another view of God preached with perfect consistency throughout the Bible.

A shared idea of God must have come first, not that it can have come all at once. Only the fact that it was shared can explain how so large a number of writers working separately over so long a period of time could have produced a work that, in all its variety, has a deep underlying unity. Historical critical scholarship, having assigned different parts of different biblical books to different writers as well as, more recently, different and vastly expanded roles to different later redactors, has changed forever the way the Bible is read. But the unity of the Bible was not imposed entirely after the fact by clever editing. That unity rests ultimately on the singularity of the Bible's protagonist, the One God, the *monos theos* of monotheism. (Miles 93-4)

In an attempt to write a biography of God (an effort that turns out to mostly be vain and silly), Jack Miles found a grain of truth here. In spite of his being assured by scholarly buffoons that the Bible was extensively edited and we know not how it once read, he cannot escape what he calls the underlying unity in this doctrine throughout the Bible. In the midst of this critical tomfoolery, Miles cannot deny the Bible's unity in the doctrine of monotheism. The God of Bible is unrecognizable if he is not God alone.

Why is it that all of the writers of the Old and New Testament stubbornly remained faithful to monotheism? For an insignificant Israel to emerge from the fires of conquest between 1500 and 400 B.C. with her religion intact is most unlikely. This is especially true when one considers how many powerful Jews had introduced the pantheon of the surrounding nations. And throughout it all, the voices of the prophets spoke as one in Scripture: They utterly condemned the gods. They condemned all of the gods. Why was this doctrine steadfastly proclaimed? The writers of the Bible died rather than give up monotheism, even for a moment of compromise. The withering condemnation of Moses upon his brother Aaron was for his complicity in polytheism and idolatry (Exod. 32:21). According to rabbinic tradition, Isaiah was murdered by the polytheist Manasseh. Paul stood alone at Mars Hill in a debate against the most capable students of his day, and like Moses and Isaiah stood uncompromisingly against polytheism. Why was this doctrine so vital? How did it emerge from a period steeped in pantheistic

religion?

Monotheism is the religion of the Bible, because it is the truth revealed by God. There is no other explanation. Rather than an evolving concept, monotheism has ever been in danger of compromise. Like the holiness and individuality of God, the doctrine of his exclusiveness has ever threatened to evolve into polytheism. The writers of the Bible as one affirmed there is but one God.

The nature of man is just as clearly explored in the pages of Scripture. With or without the Bible, man inevitably turns to introspection. Who am I and what is the meaning of life? It is a question so open ended that it spawns an endless number of answers. Such is the case without a final word of authority. How is it then that the Bible gives us final and concise answers to such questions? Paul affirmed that some non-inspired writers had stumbled across some measure of truth when he quoted Acts 17:28 “for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’” The very fact that only “certain” had said this shows that perhaps other writers did not buy into this notion. But the Bible writers all agreed without exception to the Fatherhood of God.

As the offspring of Divine creation, who am I? The Bible gives us a consistent answer. I am a wayward child of a Divine Father. Though he is holy, I have sinned. He seeks to redeem me to himself. Notice how all of the following verses address the idea of a creating Father.

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (Gen. 2:7)

the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God. (Luke 3:38)

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name. (John 1:12)

And so it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. (1 Cor. 15:45)

Since the Bible consistently confirms that the God of

creation continues to be a life-giving force, in matters physical and spiritual, man has a purpose in his life. He approaches his God by obedience to his commands in a holy lifestyle. “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all” (Ecc. 12:13). If he is obedient and faithful, he can enjoy the blessings of being created anew spiritually, and anticipate a new creation from God who originally fathered man.

The reality and nature of sin is consistently explored by all Bible writers. Sin is shown to be a lawlessness (1 John 3:4). It separates man from God (Gen. 3; Isa. 59:1-2). Its eventual consequence is death. Perhaps here as clearly as in any particular is the single authorship of the Bible in evidence. Without the Bible, sin is justified, ignored or dismissed entirely. The writers of the Bible were called upon to unflinchingly report the sins of their heroes, and in some cases, of themselves. Would a profane scribe have reported the sin of his master with Bathsheba? Why would Moses indict himself for his seemingly small indiscretion at Kadesh? Why would Jeremiah write of his doubt, or Paul his sordid past?

The answer is that each of these was called upon to write the facts as they occurred. And there was more than honesty and accuracy in evidence here. Neither was it just a matter of humility that caused these uncomfortable truths to be revealed. The Author, God, in each of these cases had a point to make about sin, righteousness and forgiveness. The truth revealed in both covenants is that we are wayward people.

All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. (Isa. 53:6)

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Rom. 3:23)

It is important that we understand the consistent nature of sin, and the consequences it brings to those who indulge in it. And this is also true of God’s people who sin. The utter objectivity in the treatment of sin in the Bible proves that one and only one authored it. And that one has a decidedly superior view of sin than even his chosen human scribes.

The Bible’s message is even consistent in the reaction it

provokes among its enemies. The Old Testament is largely the story of God's family amidst the powerful pagan nations. But even his people were marked by stubbornness and unfaithfulness. Israel's history was marked by refusing Bible truth.

And the LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy. (2 Chron. 36:15-16)

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! (Matt. 23:37)

When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord. (Acts 7:54-57)

And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter." (Acts 17:32)

Why is it that the various messages of the Bible cause such similar reactions? The answer is that it is the same message on each occasion. The passions inspired by hearing the bitter truth far exceed those brought by false accusations.

Interestingly enough, similar reactions are noted today. They range from fear, to mocking that which cannot be defeated by argumentation, to shame masked by anger. And they coincide with the reactions noted in Scripture. Again, this comes as no surprise since the Bible is able to penetrate the human heart (Heb. 4:12). The truth, if it is to be truth, must be consistent. Jesus claimed that the Bible was the source of ultimate truth when he stated in John 17:17 "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." Since the Bible proclaims one sensible and

consistent message throughout, it cannot be anything other than the inspired Word of the living God.

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Biographical Sketch

Dan Kessinger appears on lecture programs each year, and he is a frequent contributor to religious journals. He is the author of *A Cloak of Malice*. He has worked with WV Christian Youth Camp since 1984, and West Virginia School of Preaching since 1995.

ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS

By Charles J. Aebi

A Pennsylvania State University professor once said to me, “The Bible is full of contradictions, so it is unreliable.” I asked him to name one contradiction or give me the books, chapters and verses that contradict one another. He admitted that he could not do it, did not know what any of them were and had never seen them, but he still said he was certain that the Bible was full of contradictions. I asked him if he would accept such undocumented statements about the facts of his discipline (psychology), and he admitted that he would not. Then why would he accept unproven assertions about the Bible to discredit it?

This is what a student at any secular university is likely to run into today if he or she takes a class in comparative religion or even in psychology, sociology or biology, and it is not confined to secular colleges, for many religious universities and even Christian colleges have the same atmosphere. What is the truth about alleged Bible contradictions? Are they real, or just imagined by those who do not like what the Bible says about the lifestyle they choose? Where do alleged discrepancies come from? What should be our approach to the problem of seeming inconsistencies we find in Scripture or ones that others point out to us as attacks on our faith?

Authority and Inerrancy of the Bible

The Bible claims to be the inspired, authoritative Word of God; God does not make errors, so the Bible is inerrant, meaning there were no contradictions in the original manuscripts. For example, Paul said, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17, all Scripture quotations will be from the *New King James Version* unless otherwise noted). Peter said that the Word of God “lives and abides forever” (1 Pet. 1:23), and that “no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:20–21).

Jesus said, "...the Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35b), and, speaking in prayer to God, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). Truth does not contradict itself. "...it is impossible for God to lie" (Heb. 6:18), so his Word is all true. "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. 4:12a); it is neither weak nor obsolete as a guide for our lives.

The Old Testament as well as the New claims to be the Word of the Lord. The Old Testament prophets repeatedly say, "The LORD says" and "Thus says the LORD." Psalm 19:7 says, "The law of the Lord is perfect." Psalm 119:89 declares, "Forever, O LORD, your word is settled in heaven." As DeHoff said, "If we are continually discovering that it is filled with errors and we are having to decide which parts are true and which false, it is not settled in heaven or anywhere else" (21).

How important is it for us to understand that the Bible contains no real contradictions? Thomas H. Horne in 1839 devoted 67 pages to alleged contradictions and pointed out that any book with real contradictions, such as the Koran, cannot be inspired by God. He says that the Koran is admitted by Muslim commentators to have upwards of 150 passages which have been "revoked" by later so-called revelations by the angel Gabriel (564). Were such contradictions to be found in the Bible, we would be hard pressed to have confidence in it as inspired by God. Roy H. Lanier, Sr. says that if there are contradictions in the Bible, these conclusions must follow: "God is not the author of the Bible...God does not exist, or if he does, he has not revealed himself...Lies have done more good than truth" (124).

Sources of Alleged Contradictions

Since the Bible claims to be verbally and completely inspired by God, it claims inerrancy, which means it cannot contradict itself in its original writings or manuscripts (called *autographs*). Therefore, any "contradiction" or "discrepancy" must be called "alleged," meaning that a passage may be accused of contradicting itself or another passage, but not proven to do so. As Lyons notes, we must use the principle of "innocent until proven guilty" in dealing with Scripture (1: 8). Problems are sometimes called "seeming disparities" or "apparent inconsistencies" because those who see them don't know how to

explain them, not that there is an actual contradiction.

Where do alleged contradictions come from? Failure to define “contradiction” is one source. One dictionary defines *contradict* as “to assert the opposite of (what someone else has said), to deny the statement of (a person); to declare (a statement, report, etc.) to be false or incorrect; to be contrary or opposed to; go against; to speak in denial; oppose verbally” It defines *contradiction* to include the above definition and also “a condition in which things tend to be contrary to each other; inconsistency; discrepancy; a person, thing, or statement having contradictory elements or qualities” (“Contradiction”). Contradiction, discrepancy, inconsistency, disparity and discordant are synonyms. Often a contradiction is alleged that is not what it seems. “For there to be a bona fide contradiction, one must be referring to the **same person, place, or thing** in the **same sense** and at the **same time**” (Lyons 1: 12). Contradiction is not the same as confusion. Some think it a contradiction when they are confusing people or places of the same name, confusing literal and figurative usages, or confusing the time of writing or speaking or the time referred to with some other time. Such a thing happens when a critic thinks the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000 are the same event but that the author got mixed up when writing about them. The confusion here is not that of the Gospel writer, but of the critic who has not read the text carefully.

Failure to consider the context is the major source of most misunderstandings. Authorship is one major consideration — Who said it? God said, “...in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17). Satan said, “You will not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). One surely contradicted the other in that case; what else would one expect? Uninspired men in the Book of Job argued with one another and were mostly wrong. Critics often manufacture discrepancies by their rules of literary criticism by which they ascribe parts of one author's work to various imagined sources, which are then declared to be contradictory because of misinterpretation. Josh McDowell says, “Supposed double and triple accounts of the same story are actually different stories with similar details...The supposed contradictory details in certain stories are in fact supplementary

details and are seen as being contradictory only when the stories are misinterpreted” (134). Thus the cases of Abraham’s and Isaac’s lies about their wives are confused and declared to be different accounts of the same incident drawn from different “sources,” a mistaken view of authorship. Pache says, “It is axiomatic among critics that an event cannot be reenacted at a somewhat later time and in a slightly different way. The second account is promptly labeled a ‘doublet,’ as evident proof that another author inserted into the text a plagiarism of the first version” (142). Pache thinks theological prejudice is responsible for the critics’ ideas on “doublets” and says, “This interpretation cannot in any wise be sustained” (143).

To whom was it said? Noah was told to build an ark; Moses was told to go to Egypt; we are told to repent and be baptized. When was it said? Old Testament statements regarding worship are not applicable to the New Testament era. In Abraham’s time, it was important to separate him from the idolaters of his native land, so he was sent to Canaan, whereas Moses was sent to Egypt to bring Israel out, and Paul was sent Cyprus and Asia Minor to preach the Gospel to Gentiles. In Noah’s day, an ark was needed to save him from the wickedness of the world of his day, according to Peter, who said they were saved **by** water, not **from** water; he concluded that Noah’s salvation was an analogy to the water of baptism saving us.

And why was it said? What was it about? What was the sense or topic? Under what circumstance was it said or written? Peter was told to put away his sword (Matt. 26:52); the Ephesians were told to take up the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). Obviously, they were two different kinds of swords used for two very different purposes. Noah built the ark to hold many animals (Gen. 6:14-16); the priests carried the ark into the middle of the Jordan River (Josh. 3:17). Obviously, it was not the same ark. Proper application of the context will solve most problems of interpretation or understanding. One example is where Genesis 2 is alleged to contradict Genesis 1 on several points having to do with Adam’s naming of the animals, with whether animals were created before or after Adam, and with other points. All of these supposed discrepancies disappear when one observes “that **Genesis 1 and 2 serve different purposes.**

Chapter One (including 2:1-4) focuses on the **order** of the creation events; Chapter Two (actually 2:5-25) simply provides more detailed information about some of the events mentioned in Chapter One” (Lyons 1: 26). Lyons devotes a whole chapter to the seeming problems of Genesis 1-2, and many commentaries deal with these alleged contradictions in great detail. Charles Pledge says, “The second chapter of Genesis is a sequel to chapter one. It is not intended to be an account of the creation at all. The purpose of chapter two is to manifest the goodness of God by showing that before man existed God had prepared for him a perfect place...The details of man’s creation are given in verses 4-7 and the emphasis is upon the fact that the earth is made for man and all things are provided for his welfare” (181, 184).

Failures of copyists and translators to accurately convey the original writings to us is also a source of some seeming discrepancies. Geisler and Nix note that some early copies of autographs were highly accurate because made by professional scribes and some others, made by nonprofessionals because professionals were too expensive, were less accurate (379). For instance, 2 Chronicles 22:2 says, “Ahaziah was forty-two years old when he became king,” but this would have made him two years older than his father, Jehoram, whose death at age forty made Ahaziah king (21:20). Second Kings 8:26 says Ahaziah was 22 when he became king, and 8:17 affirms that Jehoram (Joram) died at age 40. So some copyist or scribe wrote it as 42 when it was actually 22, an easy error to make because they used Hebrew letters instead of Arabic numerals. Several copyists’ errors are discussed by Eric Lyons (1: 129-144). All such errors may be seen to be errors and the correct information be seen by reference to other Scriptures and by the context in which they are found, and none has any bearing on our salvation unless we allow them to destroy our confidence in God’s Word.

Translating errors that cause seeming contradictions can also be found. For example, the *English Standard Version* of 2001 says in Genesis 2:5-7, “When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from

the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” This implies that man was created before vegetation, a contradiction of Genesis 1:11-13 and 1:24-27, which say plants were created on the third day and man on the sixth day. Probably the translators didn’t intend to make a contradiction here, but they did so. *The Revised Standard Version* and the *New Revised Standard Version* do the same thing, saying that **when** no plants had yet appeared, **then** God made man. Some other translations use dashes to set off verse 7 from parts of verses 5 and 6, but do not do it in a way that leads to the conclusion that man was created before any plants. This points up the need to compare translations when some questionable rendering is seen.

Failure to be objective and thorough in considering Scriptures is a source of alleged contradictions. For example, the three groups of 14 generations in the genealogy of Christ given by Matthew add up to only 41, but three times 14 is 42. Read the whole thing! It is easy to see that the groups overlap. This evidently was done by Matthew to use a memory device, listing David’s name twice to end one division of 14 and begin another division of 14. And “The sum of the numerical value of the Hebrew letters in the name of David is fourteen” (Thomas and Gundry 319), so it made an easy memory device for the ancient Semitic mind.

Another source of supposed discrepancies is the critics’ imagination—looking for trouble because of prejudice against the authority of Scripture. We live in an anti-religion society; the United States is following in the steps of Europe to become increasingly secular. The Czech Republic is 70% atheist, according to Allen Diles, a missionary there (31). That percentage is said to be typical of Europe. One need not be too well informed to know that atheists and agnostics are prejudiced against the Bible and that they fail to be completely honest in evaluating Scripture. So, they overuse their imagination to invent discrepancies in order to discredit Scripture.

Some Books that May Help

Several authors have written books about alleged

contradictions; three are, in my judgment, good enough that you should have them in your library. The oldest and perhaps the best of them, written in 1874, is **John W. Haley**, *An Examination of the Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible*, who discusses about 900 alleged discrepancies. Haley lists ten origins of them: (1) difference of dates of passages like Genesis 1:31 and 6:6; (2) differences of authorship as in Genesis 2:17 and 3:4 or Job 1:8 and 11:6; (3) differences of stand-point or of object as in Matthew 5:9 and Ephesians 6:11-17; (4) different methods of arrangement as in the Gospel accounts; (5) different methods of computation as in the Jewish civil year starting with autumnal equinox in September or October, while their religious year started with vernal equinox in March or April; (6) peculiarities of Oriental idiom and figurative language; (7) plurality of names or synonyms like Simon, Simeon, Peter, Cephas, Simon bar Jonah (8) diverse meanings of the same word like “cleave” and “let”; (9) errors in manuscripts like 2 Chronicles 22:2 versus 2 Kings 8:26, discussed above; and (10) imagination of critics like the supposed single event described as feeding of 5,000 and of 4,000 (1-29). Haley classifies alleged discrepancies as doctrinal, ethical and historical; then he discusses and explains them under these headings (55-436). His doctrinal discrepancies category includes problems supposed about God, the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures, man in relation to the present and man in relation to the future. Ethical discrepancies he relates to the duty of man to God, himself and his fellow-men. Historical discrepancies pertain to persons, places, numbers, time and a miscellaneous category. He has the text of the allegedly contradictory passages printed in parallel columns so the reader can compare them for himself; under these he has explanations that remove the supposed contradictions, or at least make it possible to see them as not contradictory.

George W. DeHoff in 1950 wrote *Alleged Bible Contradictions Explained*. He claims to cover some 500 alleged discrepancies and to have compiled some of this material from Haley and other books not in print. He includes three good chapters about inspiration, inerrancy and origins. It is well written and, like Haley, puts many discrepancies in parallel columns. DeHoff lists all of Haley’s origins and adds four more

(27-41): (1) the nature of the problem, including the nature of language, of the mind and of God himself; (2) misinterpretation of Scripture: not understanding or else ignoring the meaning; (3) misapprehension of the facts of history; and (4) ignorance— “If we knew more, the difficulty would vanish altogether. This is obviously the case in all historical accounts. It is always unfair to say a thing **cannot be** merely because we do not understand **how** it was” (35). DeHoff’s classification also covers essentially the same ground as Haley’s; his categories are God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures, man, moral and ethical, and historical facts (51-282).

Eric Lyons wrote two volumes in 2003 and 2005 entitled *The Anvil Rings: Answers to Alleged Bible Discrepancies*. Lyons approaches contradictions in a different way than either DeHoff or Haley, but covers much of the same ground. He goes into greater detail but covers fewer total discrepancies. His sources are intermixed (in his twenty chapters in two volumes) with good analyses and explanations of the alleged contradictions. Lyons’ work is less of a manual than Haley’s or DeHoff’s, but Lyons may have more popular appeal than the others, especially to youth. Lyons’ classification of discrepancies in his two volumes include those alleged in the creation account, Moses’ authorship of the Pentateuch, in numbers, in geography, in time and chronology, the reality of copyists’ errors, in genealogies, in the resurrection of Jesus, miscellaneous, alleged contradictions regarding God’s attributes, the deity of Christ, the flood, ethics, those pertaining to salvation and those involving the two covenants. This list makes it clear that Lyons covers some ground not included by DeHoff and Haley as well as much of the ground they have already covered.

Dealing with Alleged Discrepancies

In dealing with alleged discrepancies, it is important to recognize that the burden of proof is on those who criticize an ancient document, to prove it in error. To discount an alleged discrepancy, you need only show it can be explained in such a way that it need not be seen as a contradiction. Usually there are several options, but only one is sufficient. Innocent until proven guilty is the principle to be applied here; it is up to the critic to prove that a discrepancy really exists and that all explanations

for it do not apply.

It will be found helpful to get a good book on alleged contradictions like Haley, DeHoff or Lyons. Many others have been written, but these are the best ones this writer has found, and of these Haley has been found the most helpful because it is the most extensive. Then familiarize yourself with that book so that you can use it easily and quickly. When someone thinks they see a contradiction, look it up in one or more of these books, which notice both passages that are thought to contradict and list explanations of them, citing other Scriptures.

We should require those who claim contradictions to say exactly what the contradiction is and where it is found. Have them write it down; if they will not do it, we should, so we will be able to deal with it later. Ask them if they personally have read it in their Bible. If they can't tell you either what or where the contradiction is, they have no right to speak about it. Tell them so. If they say what it is but don't know where, get out your Bible and show them where (by using a good concordance). Learn to use your concordance as well as Haley and DeHoff effectively.

Don't let anyone undermine your faith by parroting claims that they have heard skeptics make. These claims have been being made for thousands of years. They have been answered by Bible scholars in every generation, yet the same old claims surface again and again. We should face alleged contradictions squarely and honestly, because truth has nothing to fear from honest and fair investigation. And we should not fall into the trap of trying to defend a particular translation on every point, but compare several translations made by groups of scholars rather than single individuals. Every translation has some elements of interpretation in them, and a dozen or so translations can be the equivalent of a good set of commentaries. A good commentary also should take note of and attempt to explain alleged contradictions.

A thorough, objective study of such issues as alleged contradictions will only strengthen our faith, but we should take our time and come deliberately to a conclusion only after studying the facts fully. Remember that ignorance of all the facts may prevent our complete understanding, but that does not

demonstrate a contradiction. Just because you don't understand something doesn't make it wrong. Archaeology, textual criticism and other studies have uncovered many formerly unknown facts and dissolved many puzzles and supposed discrepancies, but we still lack enough information to fully explain every difficulty.

For example, Ted Carruth lists three possible explanations for understanding Matthew's and Luke's genealogies of Jesus (Luke giving Mary's ancestry and Matthew giving Joseph's; or Matthew giving the legal and Luke the physical ancestry of Joseph; or vice versa), but concludes that we lack sufficient information from the Old Testament and from rabbinic literature to understand all the names listed and be certain which of three possibilities is the most accurate. However, he says that since the unbelieving Jews did not attack the genealogies they must have accepted them as valid in the way they viewed genealogies (271-280). Thus we observe that the genealogies do not contradict each other, but that our lack of information limits our understanding of them. Thomas and Gundry, perhaps with better information, say, "Matthew traces the Davidic descent of Joseph, and Luke the Davidic descent of Mary (with Joseph's name standing in)" (316).

We believe the Bible to be inspired by God so that the original writing was perfect, flaw-less and accurate in every way; and we are confident that complete and honest investigation will only confirm our faith in its authority as the only source of information about eternal life and how to attain it. Heaven and earth will pass away, but God's Word will still stand, whether it was spoken to us through his Son Jesus or to the fathers by the prophets (Matt. 24:35; Heb. 1:1-2).

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Biographical Sketch

Charles J. Aebi is a native of southwestern Pennsylvania. He was raised with a denominational background, but obeyed the Gospel in 1949 and began preaching in 1952. He has a B.S. degree from Penn State, an M.A. from Abilene Christian and a Ph.D. from Ohio University.

Charles has served as minister for churches in Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Texas, and has preached and held workshops in several states and in foreign countries. He currently serves as minister for the Barlow-Vincent church of Christ in Vincent, OH. He taught Bible for 34 years at Ohio Valley College, serving 15 years as Academic Dean and 6 years as Chairman of the Bible Department. He retired from the college in 1998 and now teaches at the West Virginia School of Preaching.

Charles and his wife, Imogene, have four children and twelve grandchildren. All of the men in the family preach; all of the men and women teach Bible classes; and all but the two youngest grandchildren have obeyed the Gospel.

Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?

By W. Terry Varner

In a day of growing unbelief, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ remains one of the great cornerstones of Christian joy and certainty. One grieves with the repudiation of the supernatural aspects of the Christian faith during the last half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century. It is found in all realms of thought—science, historical research, philosophy, sociology and, sad but very true, in religious thought within and without the Lord’s glorious church.

The literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus has always been central to the preaching of the Gospel. In A.D. 30, when the church was established, the apostle Peter preached that Jesus was “crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it...He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ that his soul was not left in hell [*hades*], neither did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up...” (Acts 2:23-24, 30-32). When the apostle Paul came to Athens, ca. A.D. 52, Paul’s apology of Christianity before the Athenian philosophers was reasoned of “Jesus, and the resurrection...whereof he [God] hath given assurance unto all men, in that he raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:18, 31).

Christianity was established and defended in the first century by the unshakeable and unmovable historic evidence of the literal, bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here you and I stand and do battle for the faith because we have historical events that cannot be contradicted. An empty tomb the critics can deny, but their denial cannot be proved and the resurrection of Jesus cannot be disproved.

In order to prove our affirmation that Jesus rose from the dead, we set forth the following argument:

Major Premise: If it is the case that the Bible sets forth evidence that Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead and therefore is the Son of God, then one can know that Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead and is the Son of God.

Minor Premise: The Bible sets forth evidence that Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead and therefore is the Son of God.

Conclusion: Therefore, one can know that Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead and is the Son of God.

We set forth the following evidence to warrant the conclusion that one can know that Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead and is the Son of God. (1) Jesus lived and died. (2) The burial of Jesus. (3) The empty tomb. (4) The testimony of the witnesses. (5) The relevancy of Jesus' resurrection to Christian doctrine.

Jesus Lived and Died

The Gospel of John records the terrifying words, "Crucify him, crucify him" (19:6) and then the inspired record records, "they crucified him" (John 19:18). The suffering of Jesus on the cross is beyond our comprehension, but he suffered and died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3).

Finally, after suffering six hours, Jesus cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30). This is a clear reference to his finishing the work he came to do—our redemption (John 6:38; Heb. 7:27). It is a cry of triumph, of victory, of completion of God's scheme of redemption (Eph. 1:7; 1 Tim. 2:5-6). He had drained the cup of suffering of its last drop (cf. Matt. 20:22). He had paid the ransom for the redemption of man. He had made atonement for all that will believe and obey. He had undone the work of the evil one (Heb. 2:14). How wonderful to know his redemptive work is finished and man can now have hope if he obeys (Heb. 5:8-9).

The event of the crucifixion verifies (a) Old Testament prophecy (Isa. 53:4-5, 7-8). (b) The words of Jesus (John 12:31-34; Luke 24:26). (c) The words of Peter, "For Christ also died for sins once for all...having been put to death in the flesh but made alive in the Spirit" (1 Pet. 3:18). (d) The words of Paul that Jesus "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8) and "that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3).

We do not question that Jesus both lived and died and that Christianity is true. "Some religions, both ancient and modern, require no historical basis for they depend upon ideas rather than events" (Harrison 11).

Jesus' life and death is documented as to time and place and the two bind Jesus and Christianity historically. Christianity

could not have been established and survived without the historical existence of Jesus Christ, the divine founder. We set forth briefly historical evidence that Jesus lived and died.

Jewish Testimony. The Old Testament is redound with explicit Messianic prophecies and the New Testament applies that fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The study of the Messiah in the Old Testament is most amazing. Consider Meldau's great comments:

One Man only in the history of the world has had explicit details given beforehand of His birth, life, death and resurrection; that these details are in documents given to the public centuries before He appeared, and that no one challenges, or can challenge, that these documents were widely circulated long before His birth; and that anyone and everyone can compare for himself the actual records of His life with these old documents, and find that they match one another to a nicety. The challenge of this pure miracle is that it happened concerning one Man only in the whole of history. (3)

While the biblical records are sufficient to confirm that Jesus lived and died, there exists a small body of non-Christian sources that verify the biblical records of Jesus living and dying.

In his *Works*, Josephus, a Jew, gives historical evidence of the life and death of Jesus. In a reference to James, he writes, "the brother of Jesus, who was called the Christ" (*Antiquities* 20:9). Also, "He was the Christ...he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold" (18:3).

The Talmud, which is the oral tradition of the Jews, is dated between A.D. 70 to A.D. 200 gives additional historical evidence. It was organized according to subject matter begun by Rabbi Akiba and completed by Rabbi Judah. In a highly significant quotation found in *The Babylonian Talmud* in *Sanhedrin* 43a, we read, "On the eve of the Passover Yeshu [Jesus] was hanged [crucified]" (Habermas 98). The Jews were indeed aware of Jesus living and dying!

Roman Testimony. The Roman historian, Cornelius Tacitus (ca. A.D. 55-120), describing Nero's persecution of Christians, wrote: "Christus [Christ], from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty [crucifixion] during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius

Pilate...” (15:44).

Another Roman historian, Gaius Suetonius, makes reference to Christ in his statement, “Because the Jews at Rome caused continuous disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus [Christ], he expelled them from the city” (25).

Christ and Christianity are inseparable and are tied to historical evidence. Jackson concludes our evidence that Jesus lived and died with the following outstanding thoughts:

Jesus Christ was a verifiably historical character. He was no myth! His name was Jesus and he was born in the latter half of the eighth century of the Roman era. His ancestry was Hebrew; his country Palestine. He died in Jerusalem in the administrations of governor Pontius Pilate and emperor Tiberius Caesar. These are incontrovertible facts; they are as historically certain as history can be. (22)

The Burial of Jesus

When Jesus spoke his last words from the cross, he cried “with a loud voice...Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). With these words, he was now prepared to die. The words must be understood in the light of his earlier statement, “no man taketh it from me, But I lay it down of myself. I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it again” (John 10:18). With the completion of his atoning work on the cross, he, by his own will, released his spirit from his body back to the Father. The tragic yet incredibly meaningful events of Calvary had run their course. The week of conflict was almost over. The body was taken from the cross and buried.

Evidence from the New Testament. Nobody today can know what happened to the body of Jesus, unless there are records that tell us. There are records of what happened to the body of Jesus. They were all written within thirty to sixty years of the crucifixion and burial. These records are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, known as the Gospels of the New Testament. Two records, Matthew and John, were written by men who were there when Jesus was buried. Two records, Luke and Acts, are written by Luke, who was an inspired historian.

With this being the only inspired historical evidence as to what happened to the body of Jesus, men have felt free to conjecture something other than what the divine record tells us.

Guignebert writes that the body of Jesus was “more likely to have been cast into the *pit* for the executed than laid in a new tomb” (500). Crossan argues that the body, while buried, was dug up and eaten by wild dogs (127). While there is no historical evidence, other than the Bible, that tells us what happened to his body, we stand by the divine record.

The divine record tells us that from the shadow of the cross came “Joseph of Arimathaea...and also Nicodemus,” who having been given the body of Jesus by Pilate, buried him in a “new sepulchre” (John 19:38-39, 41-42; Matt. 27:57-60; Mark 15:42-46; Luke 23:50-53). Joseph was a man of evident wealth and prominence. Nicodemus was the Jewish ruler who came to Jesus by night (John 3). The two disciples, with haste, prepared the body for burial and wrapped it in linen cloth and spices, according to Jewish custom. With the dusk of the Sabbath about to descend upon them, they reverently and tenderly placed his body in Joseph’s new tomb in the garden.

The reality of Christ’s death is attested by his burial. Death, burial and the tomb were real. Inspiration records, “Christ **died** for our sins...he was **buried**, and that he **rose** again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3-4 emphasis added). Dead and buried, but raised the third day in harmony with God’s plan of the redemption of man!

The Empty Tomb

On Sunday morning following his crucifixion and burial on Friday, the tomb was empty. As with his burial, we have inspired records stating the tomb was empty (Matt. 28:1-15; Mark 16:1-14; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18). These texts declare that, “He is not here, but is risen” (Luke 24:6), “he is risen; he is not here” (Mark 16:6), and “he is risen from the dead” (Matt. 28:7).

The prophecy of Jesus that he would be raised “the third day” was fulfilled. The phrase “the third day he shall be raised,” with slight variance, occurs in the New Testament ten times by five different writers: (Matt. 16:21; 17:23; Mark 9:31; 10:34; Luke 9:22; 24:7, 36; Acts 10:40; John 10:40). Paul records the statement in 1 Corinthians 15:4. Consider that the four Gospels are separate independent accounts as is Paul’s writing. Each account deals with eyewitnesses filled with unintentional evidence of words, phrases and accidental details. Each writer

wrote by inspired direction (cf. 1 Cor. 2:13) with their own naturalness, forwardness and simplicity. These biblical texts declare incontrovertibly the literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus! These were predictions! Anybody could say it. Only a fool will say he is going to rise again the third day—unless he is going to rise. An empty tomb does not prove the resurrection; however, the resurrection demands the tomb be empty! If the tomb remained occupied, then the resurrection from the dead would be disproved.

The Meaning of the Term “Resurrection.” Before we examine the various theories of the resurrection of Jesus, which date from the resurrection itself in A.D. 30 to the present, and examine the evidence for the empty tomb or resurrection, we need to define what is meant by the term “resurrection.” The word “resurrection” is from *anastasis* [its Latin equivalent is *resurrectio*] and refers to “a rising from the dead” (Thayer 41). What died? Jesus commended his spirit to the Father, so it was not the spirit (Luke 23:46). The spirit does not die. It is the body of our loved ones, and not their spirit, that are returned to the dust of the ground [grave]. The term “resurrection” cannot be applied to the spirit in this case, but to the body of Jesus.

There are those who claim to believe in the resurrection of Jesus, but they mean only that he still lives. The term “resurrection” applies to the body and the term “the resurrection of Jesus” applies to his body.

If death affects the body and the body is not raised, death is the conqueror; if Christ can be said to have conquered death then His own body must have been delivered from death’s power. One should be careful to recognize that resurrection means bodily resurrection...Any other use of the term is a misuse of the word.” (Smith, *Therefore* 363-64)

This is what Jesus **predicted** would happen to his body. This **is** what happened to his body. For me, this is my first deep conviction resulting from the resurrection of Jesus on the third day—that if this came true, then I am bound to believe everything else that Jesus said. In speaking reverently, may I say, that if Jesus had not been God’s Son as he claimed to be—One able to forgive sins, One able to judge the world in years to come, and One who is the **only** way to God (John 14:6)—then God

would have left him in the tomb to turn to dust.

The resurrection of Jesus is God's stamp of approval. Paul said that Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). The word "declared" (*horisthentos* from *horizo*) means "to separate; mark off by boundaries; appoint" (Abbott-Smith 323). This suggests, the uniqueness of his resurrection, as being "separate" from, "marked off by boundaries," "appointed" and "declared," as being different from all other resurrections recorded in the Bible. The resurrection of Lazarus (John 11), the resurrection of the widow of Nain's son (Luke 7:14-15), the resurrection of Jarius' daughter (Matt. 9:25) and the resurrection of Dorcas (Acts 9:40-41) were raised to die again; whereas, Christ was raised to die no more! We need to declare with fervency and conviction the resurrection of Christ to an ever skeptical and over-educated world, as did Paul on Mars Hill. Paul preached to the philosophers, "Jesus, and his resurrection" (Acts 17:18) basing his argument upon the divine declaration of a universal call of repentance of all men in preparation of the coming judgment. Paul reasoned from "the assurance unto all men that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

The Theories of the Empty Tomb. There are 283 references in the New Testament on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (Smith, *Great* 3). It is difficult to believe that anyone would deny the literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

First, His body was stolen by His disciples (Matt. 28:11-15). This theory occurs **within the same day** that the disciples rejoiced that their Lord and Savior had risen from the dead. The source of the theory was the Jews. It was the best the Jews could do. Gilbert West sets forth several interesting observations concerning the women at the tomb, the soldiers and the resurrection of Jesus.

In this report three things are affirmed, viz. That the disciples stole the body—that they stole it in the night—and that they stole it while the guards were asleep. That Jesus came out of the sepulchre before the rising of the sun. St. Matthew informs us, who says, that the earthquake, etc., happened at the time when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary set out in order to take a view of the sepulchre, which

just as the day began to break. This fact was undoubtedly too notorious for the Chief Priests to venture at falsifying, and was besides favourable to the two other articles: This being admitted; and taking the hint from what the soldiers told them of their being cast into a swoon or trance (becoming like dead men) at the appearance of the angel, and consequently not having seen our Saviour come out of the sepulchre, they forged the remaining parts of this story, that his disciples came and stole him away while they slept....The stone was rolled away from the sepulchre, and the body was gone; this the Chief Priests were to account for, without allowing that Jesus was risen from the dead. The disciples, they said, stole it away. What! While the guards were there? Yes, the guards were asleep. With this answer they knew full well many would be satisfied, without inquiring any farther into the matter: but they could not expect that every body would be so contented; especially as they had reason to apprehend, that although the soldiers, who had taken their money, might be faithful to them, keep their secret, and attest the story they had framed for them, yet the truth might come out, by means of those whom they had not bribed. (17-8)

The Jews, the chief priests (Sadducees) and the Pharisees, violated their own strict rules of the Sabbath. They approached Pilate the day after the burial, on the Sabbath, requesting, “Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again” (Matt. 27:62-63). We ask, why chief priests under any concern about this prediction of Jesus? The Jews requested a guard “until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first” (Matt. 27:64). The text proves Jesus promised to rise from the grave on the third day. Interestingly, Maimonides claims that three days was the limit of time after death for accepting evidence as to identity (Lightfoot 3: 367). Note well the admission of the Jews that the crucifixion was an “error.” The Jews commit a second error by claiming the disciples stole his body!

Pilate granted their request, which is quite different from earlier when he refused their request in reference to changing the wording on the tablet (*titulus*) which bore the title, “The King of

the Jews” and his supposed crime. The tomb had a large disk-shaped stone that ran in a groove in the front of the opening. The guard made up likely of “twelve men” (Lenski 1163) was posted. The grave was sealed by encircling the stone at the opening with “a cord covered with clay or wax on which the official seal has been impressed is affixed to the stone at the grave’s entrance. Surely, no one will dare to break the seal or to move this stone” (Hendriksen 982).

On the third day, Sunday, a great earthquake occurred and an “angel of the Lord rolled the stone from the door” of the tomb (Matt. 28:3). Jesus rose from the dead as He promised! The tomb was empty as the Jews feared! The guards at the tomb momentarily were “as dead men” (Matt. 28:4). When they awoke “some,” not all of the guards, came and told “the chief priests all the things that were done” (Matt. 28:11). The chief priest called a meeting with the Sanhedrin and took counsel as how to handle the empty tomb! The cunning minds of the leaders of the Jewish nation created a lie and bribed the Roman soldiers into spreading the lie. The Jewish leaders decided three things: (1) they gave the soldiers a large sum of money (Matt. 28:12). Considering they bought Judas for thirty pieces of silver, it would take considerable money to bribe twelve soldiers. But for this lie they were only too happy to pay. (2) They bribed the soldiers to say, “His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept” (Matt. 28:13). Thus, we have *the first and oldest theory* of the empty tomb! The soldiers knew this to be a lie! They had been awake until the earthquake! (3) They promised the soldiers that if Pilate heard of the empty tomb they would persuade Pilate otherwise in their behalf. (Matt. 28:12-14). The real risk the soldiers had was with Pilate finding that they were asleep at the post, a crime punishable by death (cf. Acts 12:19).

The soldiers joining the Jews in the duplicity, took the money. This resulted in the “saying commonly reported among the Jews until this day” (Matt. 28:15). Not wanting truth, the Jews were satisfied with falsehood. Matthew penned his Gospel ca. A.D. 65, some 35 years later, and the “lie” was still being told among the Jews. With the denial of the empty tomb, the Jewish leaders kept those of their own number from accepting the empty tomb and the resurrected Christ, their Messiah!

President Thomas Jefferson set out to rewrite the Bible after he no longer was the President of the United States. Jefferson was impressed with the life and morals of Jesus, but he was troubled with the miraculous events of the New Testament. So with scissors and a New Testament, Jefferson attempted to separate the “real” message of Jesus from all the “unnecessary.” He omitted every supernatural event—including the bodily resurrection of Jesus. He did the work in 1804. The closing words of Jefferson’s new version of the Bible reads: “There laid they Jesus, and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed” (83). [During the Fifty-Seventh Congress, the United States government published and distributed 3,000 copies for use in the Senate and 6,000 copies for use in the House of Representatives (19).]

For Jefferson, Jesus’ life story ended with his death. This was not a new thought religiously. More than 1700 years before Jefferson, a Roman governor named Festus summarized the trial of the apostle Paul to King Agrippa, and “had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive” (Acts 25:19). Festus asserted that Jesus had died and that Paul, and the early Christians, claimed Jesus to be alive; i.e., resurrected from the dead! Later when addressing Agrippa, Paul asked, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?” (Acts 26:8). Paul, while acknowledging that many stumbled at the matter of the resurrection from the dead, affirms that Jesus was raised! Dare we do anything less?

In replying to *the first and oldest theory* concerning the empty tomb, we mention these thoughts:

1. The Roman soldiers admitted the tomb was empty. They admitted the truth of the matter!
2. The Jewish rulers accepted the testimony of the soldiers and concocted a lie with bribery being their defense.
3. The Roman soldiers were shrewd in not reporting what had happened on their watch to their leader, Pilate, but reported this information to the chief priests.
4. The Roman soldiers, the chief priests, and the

Sanhedrin were anxious to cover the miracle of the resurrection and the empty tomb with the lie that the disciples stole his body while they slept. It would be an extreme situation for all the guards to have fallen asleep on duty. Remember there were at least twelve guards involved. Further, it is highly unlikely that **ALL** twelve guards fell asleep at the same time by natural cause from tiredness, rather than a supernatural cause which explains their sleep!

5. Their falling asleep was punishable by death. The fact that the members of the Roman guard were not tried for violating Roman law suggests that their superiors knew their testimony was false. Whereas, in Acts 12:19 when Peter was found not in jail, Herod “commanded that they [soldiers] should be put to death.”
6. The story of the Roman soldiers makes two compelling arguments: (1) *proves the resurrection of Jesus* and (2) *verifies the empty tomb*. If Jesus’ body was stolen, it had to be stolen by either his enemies or his friends. His enemies would refuse to steal the body because they would have defeated their own purpose. They had no motive and absolutely nothing to gain by stealing it. His disciples left the scene and were convinced he was dead. They could not have restored his body and would have been criminal behavior. They would have been exposed and punished.
7. Whoever stole the body would have also taken the grave clothes, but they were left “folded” in the empty tomb (John 20:5).
8. Jesus’ body was “taken away” or “out of” the tomb in the sense that God “raised him from the dead” (Col. 2:12; cf. Eph. 1:20). This gave Jesus victory over death and *hades* (Rev. 1:18), and gave to the obedient the promise of an identical resurrection from dead as Christ’s (1 Cor. 15:23).

Second, the Swoon or Apparent Death Theory. Those who hold to this popular alternative theory admit without

exception that Jesus was crucified, but argue that Jesus really did not die, but fainted. His body was removed from the cross and later revived in the coolness of the “new tomb.”

To reason that Jesus never died, but fainted or fell into a coma creates a number of major objections.

1. The theory fails to consider that he had no sleep the night before his crucifixion (Mark 14:32-41). Is it possible that this theory was developed as a takeoff from the Roman soldiers’ claim of having “slept”?
2. The theory fails to consider that in every New Testament book the death of Jesus is mentioned either directly or indirectly; i.e., all twenty-seven books!
3. The theory fails to consider that the Roman soldiers who crucified him also pronounced him dead (John 19:33). They made certain of his death by piercing his side (John 19:34) and knowing he was dead, they omitted breaking his legs (John 19:32-33).
4. The theory fails to consider the grave clothes in which his body was wrapped tightly. It would have been impossible for Him to gotten out of the grave clothes in a weakened condition as the theorists claim. Why were the grave clothes left behind?
5. The theory fails to consider that if Jesus had not died, but was revived in the tomb as they claim, he could not have removed the stone in his weakened condition, much less slipped pass the Roman soldiers guarding the tomb’s entrance.
6. The theory fails to consider the horrendous suffering he endured when he was scourged. The Jewish law limited scourging to 40 lashes, but the Pharisees limited the lashes to 39 *just* in case they miscounted. The Romans, who did the scourging, had no such limitations. The blows from the whip, known as the flagrum, would eventually, after repeated blows, cut deeply causing contusions and cutting into the subcutaneous tissues. McDowell quotes from Eusebius saying, “The suffer’s veins were laid bare, and the very muscles, sinews, and bowels of the

victim were often exposed” (44). This was all done in preparation for the crucifixion. Dr. William Stroud, whose excellent treatise on the physical cause of the death of Jesus, states:

That the immediate cause of the death of our blessed Saviour was—speaking medically—laceration or rupture of the heart, is a doctrine in regard to which there can be no absolute certainty; but, assuredly, in favor of it there is a very high amount of circumstantial probability...(1) His death was not the mere result of crucifixion; for the period was too short; a person in the prime of life, as Christ was, not dying from this mode of mortal punishment in six hours, as He did, but usually surviving till the second or third day, or even longer. (2) The attendant phenomena, at the time of the actual death, were different from those of crucifixion. The crucified died, as is well known, under a lingering process of gradual exhaustion, weakness, and faintness. On the contrary, Christ cried with a loud voice, and spoke once and again—all apparently within a few minutes of His dissolution. No known injury, lesion, or disease of the brain, lungs, or other vital organs could, I believe, account for such a sudden termination of His sufferings in death, except (a) arrestment of the action of the heart by fatal fainting or syncope; or (b) rupture of the walls of the heart, or larger blood-vessels issuing from it. (7-8)

Dr. William Edwards wrote a tremendous article titled, “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ,” in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* and states:

Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between his right ribs, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured his death. Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge. (1463)

Third, the Wrong Tomb Theory. The theory claims that when the women came to the tomb of Jesus, it being dark (Matt. 28:1; John 20:1), they went to the wrong tomb. Lake writes, “It is seriously a matter for doubt whether the women were really in a position to be quite certain that the tomb which they visited

was that in which they had seen Joseph of Arimathaea bury the Lord's body" (250). What fanciful reasoning by some, all in order both to deny and to circumvent the resurrection of Jesus and an empty tomb.

1. The theory fails to consider that the women had already been to Jesus' tomb and knew where his tomb was before their Sunday visit (Matt. 27:61; Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55).
2. The theory fails to consider that if the women went to the wrong tomb, why did not the Jews who opposed Jesus go to the right tomb and produce his body as evidence he was not raised?
3. The theory fails to consider that the Roman guards knew where Jesus' tomb was when they went to guard it. The Roman guards reported to the Jews, rather than to Pilate, that the tomb, they were guarding, was empty. The Jews accepted the Roman soldier's testimony (Matt. 28:11-15).
4. The theory fails to consider that Peter and John came to the right tomb, and the identical tomb that the women came to and that the Roman guards were guarding, and it was empty (John 20:2-8)! They also found the grave clothes still in the tomb, not in disarray, but folded neatly.

Fourth, the Vision or Hallucination Theory. All critics of the bodily resurrection of Jesus admit that it is the case that Jesus appeared alive following his burial. This theory argues that the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus are **only** "*supposed appearances,*" rather than actual appearances. Renan argues that it was the "strong imagination" of the disciples that "played an important part in this circumstance" (375). Strauss, who considers the miraculous as "myths" (201-14) handles the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus as follows:

they thought they perceived him, and perceived him in a visible form...The Evangelical testimony in favour of the resurrection of Jesus endeavours to bring forward the most convincing of all proofs; in doing so it breaks to pieces and shows itself to be the mere result of a wish to give support to a dogmatical conception, which so soon as the wish ceases

to exist, collapses for want of any support at all. (1: 400, 407-08)

The theory claims the bodily resurrection of Jesus is built totally upon the disciple's "wishes," "imagination" and "emotional let down" following Jesus crucifixion. The "supposed visions" or "supposed appearances," while imagined by the disciples, is argued as giving impetus to the establishment and growth of the church of our Lord. This is a philosophical way to admit the force of the bodily resurrection of Jesus, but at the same time explaining the reality away via natural means. The message of the bodily resurrection of Jesus was an empowering impetus in the growth of New Testament Christianity!

The length of and the extreme argumentation that men use in order to escape the reality of the resurrection of Jesus and that gives cause for the empty tomb is unreal. This is a clear denial of the supernatural in the life of Jesus.

1. The theory fails to consider that an "imaginary" resurrection and appearance of Jesus would not have satisfied the apostles and disciples. The disciples of Jesus did not function from "imagination," "visions" or "hallucination." Hope had been crushed as evidence in the words of the two disciples on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24:21).
2. The theory fails to consider that there are at least 12 recorded appearances of Jesus listed in Scripture (see below). These occurred in many places and in many different settings. It is impossible to explain his appearances away as mere "visions" or "hallucinations" or "wishes" of his disciples and/or the early church in the latter part of the first century!
3. The theory fails to consider that it is extremely unusual that so many saw the risen Jesus. On one occasion over 500 witnessed him alive simultaneously (1 Cor. 15:6). Generally speaking, "visions" or "hallucinations" are seen by one person at a time rather than a large group. It is highly improbable that 500 disciples would have seen him at one time if his appearances were not real.
4. The theory fails to consider Luke 24:39 where Jesus

instructed Thomas to touch his flesh and bones. Such an appearance cannot be “visionary.”

5. The theory fails, as all theories that reject the bodily resurrection of Jesus, in that all the enemies of Jesus needed to do was produce the body of Jesus and thereby silence his disciples! An apparent opportunity his enemies never took advantage of because it was impossible to do so. They could not produce a body from his tomb because he had risen bodily from the tomb.
6. The theory fails to consider that the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus ceased after his Ascension. The *only* post-ascension appearance was to Paul (Acts 9; 22; 26) in order to help qualify him as an apostle “born out of due time” (1 Cor. 15:8). Myths normally increase numerically and with complexity over time.
7. The theory fails to consider, that “it would still involve a miracle, and surely nothing is gained by substituting one miracle for another. It would have been a piece of deception on Christ’s part, for then he appeared to his disciples in a spiritual vision, and yet conveyed to their minds the impression that he appeared bodily” (Keyser 110).
8. The theory fails to consider that if the “vision” or “hallucination” theory is true, *then* what happened to the body of Jesus? Lee Strobel, an award winning journalist for the *Chicago Tribune*, writes:

In the face of the facts, they have been impotent to put Jesus’ body back into the tomb. They flounder, they struggle, they snatch at straws, they contradict themselves, they pursue desperate and extraordinary theories to try to account for the evidence. Yet each time, in the end, the tomb remains vacant. (223)

The Testimony of the Witnesses

When Peter preached the Gospel on the day of Pentecost, he stated, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses” (Acts 2:32). The text affirms the bodily resurrection of Jesus and an empty tomb; however, the text also serves as a

challenge to and opportunity to the enemies of Jesus. If they had only produced his body, they would once-for-all cut the Gordian knot of any and all future proclamations of the resurrection of Jesus by his disciples.

We ask seriously does there exist any historical source, friendly or hostile, claiming that the tomb of Jesus was occupied *after* the third day; i.e., that the tomb was *not* empty, that a body remained inside? **No authority makes this claim until several centuries later.** All sources, friendly and hostile, *agree* that the tomb of Jesus was empty!

The testimony of the witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus is not about vague appearances, but “This testimony must be treated in view of the actual circumstances and relations between persons in the Apostolic community” (Orr 145). The words of Peter confirm Orr’s comments, “Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead” (Acts 10:40-41).

While there are no literal eyewitnesses to the actual resurrection of Jesus from the tomb, there are several post-resurrection accounts of his appearance to many witnesses that testify to a risen Jesus and an empty tomb. H. P. Liddon states the appearances of Jesus to his disciples caused them to go forth after his Ascension “to do and to teach, no doubt, a great deal else, but especially, they went forth as ‘witnesses of His Resurrection’” (158).

Jesus was seen five times by different individuals the day He arose from dead.

1. Mary Magdalene saw Him in the garden (John 20:10-18).
2. Mary Magdalene, Mary, and Salome were met by him as they went on their way to tell the apostles that he was risen from the dead. They were allowed to hold him and worship him (Matt. 28:9).
3. Later in the day he appeared to Peter in Galilee (Mark 16:7).
4. In the afternoon of that memorable Sunday, Jesus appears to Cleopas and another disciple on Emmaus road (Luke 24:13-22).

5. In first evening following his resurrection, Jesus appears to ten apostles. Thomas was absent (John 20:19-23) and Judas was dead (Matt. 27:3-5).

Following these five appearances there are six appearances of Jesus before his Ascension.

1. The Sunday following his resurrection, Jesus appears to all of the apostles. Thomas was present and saw evidence he needed in order to believe in the resurrected Jesus (John 20:26-30).
2. On another occasion, Jesus appeared to seven apostles on the shore of Tiberias—Peter, Thomas, Bartholomew, James the Greater, John and two others (John 21:1-14).
3. He appeared to the twelve (1 Cor. 15:5).
4. He appeared to his brother, James (1 Cor. 15:7).
5. He “was seen of above five hundred brethren at once” (1 Cor. 15:6). “Once” (*ephapas*) meaning “at once, at one time” (Rogers 385). The word “seen” (*ophthe*) is translated “appeared” in the American Standard Version. Paul states “of whom the greater part” of the 500 were yet alive, indicating some had already died. Milligan makes the following succinct observation:

What the manifestation spoken of in verse 8 was to St. Paul, it was to all the others mentioned in the 6th and 7th verses, and *vice versa*. The constant use of the verb [*ophthe*] in the New Testament connects it with persons or things either seen or supposed to be seen in their reality, and not thought of as visionary appearances. (265)

6. The apostles saw Jesus at the Mount of Olives just prior to His Ascension where they worshipped him (Luke 24:50-52; Acts 1:4-9).

The *only* post-ascension appearance of the resurrected Jesus was to Paul. Paul writes, “And last of all he was seen of me also” (1 Cor. 15:8). The phrase “and last of all” (*eschatos de panton*) makes this the last and final appearance of Jesus to any individual (cf. Arndt and Gingrich 314).

Paul’s listing of the witnesses in 1 Corinthians 15:5-8 is extremely important. With Paul saying many of the witnesses to

whom he appeared were yet alive, Paul throws down the gauntlet giving any and all, who had any doubt about the validity of the resurrection of Jesus and the empty tomb, an opportunity to speak up and present evidence otherwise! In Paul's mind, these witnesses were solid proof, along with himself, of the central event of the Christian faith—the bodily resurrection of Jesus!

The Relevancy of Jesus' Resurrection to Christian Doctrine

Without developing in detail the following, we set forth from the Scriptures the relevancy of the Jesus' bodily resurrection to Christian doctrine.

1. The bodily resurrection of Jesus fulfills Scripture and conforms to God's eternal plan (Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:4).
2. The bodily resurrection of Jesus serves as the archetype or first fruits of our resurrection (1 Cor. 15:23). The resurrection of Jesus enables the physical resurrection of mankind (Acts 24:15; 17:30-32).
3. Jesus staked his entire work upon his bodily resurrection. When he was asked for a sign, he repeatedly appealed to his resurrection as his "single and sufficient credential (John ii.19; Matt. Xii.40) (Warfield 1: 195). (cf. Matt. 16:13-27; Mark 7:37-38; 18:1-9; Luke 9:18-26).
4. The historicity and reality of the bodily resurrection of Jesus is the basis of the center of the faith and preaching of the early church (Acts 1:22, 31-32; 2:24, 30; 3:15, 22, 26; 4:2, 10, 33; 5:30-31; 7:37; 10:40-41; 13:23, 30, 33-34, 37; 17:18, 30-32; 23:6; 24:15, 21; 26:8).
5. The bodily resurrection of Jesus gave the early Christians a lively hope and a steadfast faith (1 Pet. 1:3, 21; 3:21).
6. The bodily resurrection of Jesus gives both substance and power to the Gospel without which our preaching is vain, our faith is vain, and we are yet in our sins (1 Cor. 15:14-17; Rom. 1:4; 6:3-4; Col. 2:12).

7. The bodily resurrection of Jesus gives the Christian the earnest and pledge of his own resurrection. At the same time, the bodily resurrection of Jesus gives the Christian comfort as he lovingly lays the bodies of those faithful who are dear to him in their tomb. Consequently, he does not sorrow, “even as others which have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13).
8. The bodily resurrection of Jesus makes future life (immortality) certain (2 Tim. 1:10; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; John 5:28-29; Matt. 25:46; 1 Pet. 1:3-4; 1 Cor. 15).

Conclusion

Examine carefully the preceding evidence. We ask the reader to consider carefully, did Jesus rise from the dead? **Yes!** Is there sufficient evidence to warrant the conclusion that the cause of the empty tomb is the bodily resurrection of Jesus? **Yes!** Does the bodily resurrection of Jesus affirm that Jesus is the Son of God? **Yes!** (1 Cor. 15; Rom. 1:4). William Sherlock writes:

Presumptions are of no weight against positive evidence; and every account of the resurrection assures us, that the body of Christ was seen, felt, and handled by many persons; who were called upon by Christ so to do, that they might be assured that he had flesh and bones, and was not a mere spectre, as they, in their first surprise, imagined him to be...And that whoever admits that God gave man life at first, cannot possibly doubt of his power to restore it when lost. (65, 98-9)

The resurrection “distinguishes Christianity from every other religion and from every system of philosophy...the way in which [it] is bound up with the *Person of its Founder*” (Edgar 21). **“He is risen”** (Matt. 28:6).

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Biographical Sketch

W. Terry Varner is married to Lillie L. Garrison, Littleton, WV. They have four children and eleven grandchildren. He did located work at Shadyside, OH; Dunbar, WV; North Canton, OH; and Harmar Hill, Marietta, OH. He retired from located work in 1997 and has preached for more than 50 years.

He presently preaches for various congregations, holds Gospel meetings, speaks on various lectureships and teaches four classes at West Virginia School of Preaching. He is one of the four founders of the West Virginia School of Preaching along with Wirt Cook, Emanuel Daughtery and Charles C. Pugh III. He owns and edits *Therefore Stand*, an eight-page, monthly religious paper presently in its 21st year. He has written a number of books and writes for various religious papers.

Answering evolution

By Brad Harrub

The Miracle Before All Other Miracles!

“If we cannot measure it with our five senses, then it must not be real.” This is the central dogma of science. The scientific method is concerned only with those things that can be measured, tested and observed (which is extremely ironic, given that evolution itself has never been measured or observed and cannot be tested). Anything that falls outside of this scientific method is called into question. Thus, our society has been trained to discount and discredit ideas or theories that cannot be measured, tested and observed. This mantra is repeated over and over by evolutionists who claim that special creation is nothing more than “smoke and mirrors.” After all, it relies on supernatural miracles—which, scientists are quick to point out, are unscientific in nature. And sadly, many Christians find themselves trying to defend their faith by excising miracles from the Bible. They do not want to appear unlearned, so they stick to verses that are far removed from miraculous events.

This, however, is not what God intended when he said: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15). We should not be scared to discuss miracles—for their main purpose was to point to our Almighty Creator. Throughout past human history, God has performed many wonderful miracles for man. He caused the burning bush not to be consumed as he used it to speak to Moses (Exod. 3). He parted the Red Sea so Moses and the Israelites could escape from Egypt’s army (Exod. 14). He caused Balaam’s mule to speak (Num. 22) and brought the walls of Jericho crumbling down without anyone ever laying a hand on them (Josh. 6). He caused the sun to stand still so the Israelites could win a battle against their enemies (Josh. 10). He even raised his Son, Jesus, from the dead three days after he was crucified (Acts 10:40).

But none of these miracles would have been possible had it not been for a significant miracle that occurred many years

before. When Moses wrote in Gen. 1:1 that “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” he summarized in a single sentence one of the most important miracles of all—the miracle of creation. In a period of six literal days, God brought into existence a universe full of galaxies, solar systems, planets, stars and the first inhabitants of the earth. The writer of Hebrews said: “We understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (11:3). When God created, he did not use matter and energy that already were in existence. Rather, he spoke them into existence “by the word of His power” (Heb. 1:3). The psalmist wrote: “Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For **He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast**” (33:8-9). This is the Bible’s way of letting us know that God did not use natural processes to bring the universe, the earth, plants, animals and humans into existence. Instead, he used a great miracle—the miracle of creation! One that we should neither neglect nor be afraid to defend.

Christ is given credit for healing the lame, walking on water and feeding the five thousand. To Christians, those miracles are demonstrations of the power of God. We readily accept and believe them, along with the resurrection of Jesus following his crucifixion. Yet, we question God’s ability to create the universe and the earth on which we live. Scientists have inundated society with their scientific method and the belief that it would be impossible. “Six literal days? It would break all the known laws of science. It would be a Herculean task just to create one animal, much less all of them, in just 48 hours. After all, with all of our knowledge and wisdom, we still cannot produce life from non-life.” And yet, that is the whole point—**it was miraculous!** It **was** Herculean! God was able, not only to create and fashion the laws of science, but also to work outside of them for his own purposes. Have we forgotten that God is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient? If we are to believe and defend the rest of the Bible, then we must be ready to believe and defend that God did it the way he said he did—in six literal days.

Compromising our God who built all things

If we were to believe everything that the scientific

community has offered regarding man's origins, we would find that science's theories exclude acts by a supernatural Creator. We have forgotten that "great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: he also is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of people are idols: but the Lord made the heavens" (1 Chron. 16:25-26). Science has become many people's god. In fact, scientists are quick to point out that the universe took billions of years to form, and thus it would be absurd to believe that it was created in just six days. For instance, consider what Thomas Hayden wrote when he added another "certainty" of life, (besides taxes and death). His effort to shore up the ever-faltering theory of evolution was the cover story of the July 29, 2002 issue of *U.S. News & World Report*. In explaining "how evolution works, and why it matters more than ever," Hayden stated: "It's an everyday phenomenon, a fundamental fact of biology as real as hunger and as unavoidable as death" (43).

Sadly, this type of grandstanding and propagandizing in the media occur all too often. And people by the millions accept it as the "final word" on the subject—without any real knowledge as to what the evidence truly reveals. Even within the church, Christians often subconsciously find themselves favoring science over the Bible. We have forgotten the truth of the matter, which can be summed up simply with the first ten words that appear in the Bible: "In the beginning **God** created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1 emp. added). If this is not true, then every word that follows should be called into question.

Because of the prevailing idea of an ancient cosmos, many people have tried to find ways to fit evolution and its billions-of-years time frame into the biblical account of creation. In essence, they still espouse belief in God and the Bible, but they also pledge a great deal of allegiance to science and evolutionary theory. As the old adage says, they want to "have their cake and eat it, too." But can both the Bible and evolutionary theory be true? People clinging to both the Bible and evolution are commonly known as "theistic evolutionists." "Theistic" comes from the Greek *theos*, which means "God." Thus, theistic evolutionists believe God does exist, but they also hold to the theory of evolution. They rationalize their beliefs by stating that "Yes, God created the heavens and the earth," but he used (or

allowed) evolutionary processes to produce the universe we see today.

Thus, “Bible believers” find themselves in the awkward position of compromising the opening chapters of the Bible. If Genesis 1-11 is tossed aside as merely a mythological story, then we must toss out the entire Bible, because the one major theme that is taught throughout the Bible is redemption. Man’s relationship with God started at the pinnacle of the creation week in the Garden of Eden, and degenerated from there. Christians need to be fully aware that theistic evolution teaches that man started at the **bottom** and worked his way to the **top** (via the old amoeba-to-man story). Therefore, either man started at the top and fell, as the Bible indicates, or he started at the bottom and rose, as evolution teaches. Both cannot be correct! The prophets long ago declared the fall of humans, and the resulting need for a Savior. Scripture indicates that this was the reason for Christ’s death—to bring men back into a covenant relationship with God. If men truly did not fall as described in the creation account, then why did Jesus Christ, the Son of God, come to this planet and suffer a cruel death on the cross? Additionally, consider the following:

Surely evolution will not have to reverse itself and concede that it reached its zenith with the birth of the Christ child a long, long time ago. Surely this colossal system will not have to concede that it is less able now to produce a greater than Jesus than it did produce two thousand years ago. If evolution is not now able to produce a greater than Jesus, then it seems the system has ceased to be evolution and has become devolution, at least in one sense? (Taylor 3)

Today, this theory appears more like “devolution” than devolution.

As long as we are tossing aside Scripture, we might as well get out our scissors and excise all references to the creation, starting with the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Jesus Christ himself made reference to creation when he stated in Matthew 19:4 (c.f. Mark 10:6): “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female.” These words indicate that Adam and Eve had been on the Earth “from the beginning of creation” (Mark 10:6). Of course, we also would have to throw out John, because the first few verses of

Chapter One review the beginning and creation. Other Scriptures such as Acts 4:24, Acts 17:25, Romans 1:20, Colossians 1:16, 1 Timothy 2:13, Hebrews 1:2, 1 Peter 4:19 and Revelation 4:11 also would be called into question if the creation account is merely a nice “story” and not historically accurate. As a matter of fact, the only books that do not refer to the Creation in some fashion are the books of Philemon, and 2 and 3 John!

Additionally, if we do not accept that God created the heavens and the earth in six literal days, then we are making Jesus Christ—our Savior—a liar. Jesus stated: “But from the beginning of the creation male and female he made them” (Mark 10:6), affirming that Adam and Eve were on the earth since the beginning of creation. Paul stated in Romans 1:20-21 that the things God had made had been “perceived” even “since the creation of the world.” According to evolutionists, man did not come into the picture until about 3-4 million years ago. It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to figure out that if the earth is supposedly 5-6 billion years old, then the last 3-4 million years is not, by any stretch of the imagination, “from the beginning.” Rather, it is “from the end.” Therefore we are left with a choice: Either Jesus Christ lied and the evolutionists are correct, or we can believe that the words Jesus Christ spoke are true, and therefore evolution is 100% wrong. The belief in theistic evolution allows for the Savior to be called a liar!

Ah, but some say, “Adam was just a myth. We know today that man originated from a Neanderthal-type creature.” However, if this were true, why did the inspired apostle Paul pen these words: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22), and then in reference to Christ write, “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45)? If Adam and Eve are merely mythological, does this mean that this “last Adam,” Jesus Christ, was mythological as well?

Thus, the Bible believer who is intent on accommodating his theology to the uniformitarian dogma of an ancient earth must find a way to force vast time spans into Genesis 1. Without such vast stretches of time, evolution becomes impossible. But where and how can it be added to the biblical text? The fact of

the matter is, there are only three possible places to insert the billions of years required by evolution: (1) **before** the creation week of Genesis, (2) **during** the creation week, or (3) **after** the creation week. I invite your serious attention to the material presented below.

Before the Creation Week: The Gap Theory

In Genesis 1:1-2, the following statements are recorded by inspiration: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” These verses, and those that follow, discuss the creative activity of God. Bible believers who have been influenced by evolutionary pseudo-science, and who therefore are desirous of inserting billions of years of alleged geologic time into the creation account, must fit this vast amount of time into the first chapter of Genesis in one fashion or another. The Gap Theory is one way of trying to accomplish that.

For over 100 years, those who were determined to insert evolutionary time before the creation week studied Genesis 1 intently, and came to the conclusion that it might be possible to place the geologic ages between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. This view came to be known as the Gap Theory (synonyms: Ruin and Reconstruction Theory; Pre-Adamic Cataclysm Theory; Restitution Theory), and was made popular by such men as George H. Pember (*Earth's Earliest Ages*) and Harry Rimmer (*Modern Science and the Genesis Record*). The *Scofield Reference Bible* also popularized the theory by placing it in the footnotes of Genesis 1. In more recent times, even some in the church have accepted, in whole or in part, this false notion, and have propagated it in their writings. For example, J.D. Thomas of Abilene Christian University implied acceptance of it in his work *Evolution and Antiquity* (43). Donald England of Harding University, in his work, *A Christian View of Origins*, defended the Gap Theory or portions of it (110). In addition, in a series of lectures he presented to a group of young people in Memphis, Tennessee, in March 1982, Dr. England stated that no one could disprove the Gap Theory using the Bible.

The Gap Theory states that a vast “gap” of time existed between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, and that during this gap there lived

successive generations of plants, animals and even pre-Adamic men (some views omit the men). According to this theory, God destroyed the original creation because of a Satanic rebellion (some views omit this, too), and so Genesis 1:2 is translated to suggest, “the earth **became** waste and void.” Thus, the days of Genesis 1 are said to be days of “re-creation,” not days during which an “original” creation occurred.

It is a sad day indeed when men must stoop to such “exegetical hocus-pocus” to pervert the plain teachings of the Bible in order to accommodate the pseudo-science of evolutionary presuppositions. The Gap Theory is false, as are any and all modifications based upon it.

- (1) Exodus 20:11 plainly states that “in **six days** Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and **all** that in them is, and rested on the seventh day” (emp. Added). Notice what that the statement includes. If **everything** was made in six days, then **nothing** was created prior to those six days. The Bible always is its own best interpreter. This one verse demolishes the Gap Theory and all modifications of it.
- (2) In 1 Corinthians 15:45, Adam is called the “first man.” That, by definition, excludes any pre-Adamic race of men. Adam was the **first** (it is because of this passage that John Clayton has introduced his “Modified Gap Theory,” which omits references to pre-Adamic men).
- (3) At the conclusion of the sixth day, God saw **everything** he had made, and behold it was “very good” (Gen. 1:31). If Jehovah’s original creation had become contaminated through Satan’s rebellion and thus was subsequently destroyed—and the new creation rested on a veritable graveyard of corruption—it is difficult to see how God could have surveyed the situation and then used the expression “very good” to describe it.

Gap theorists claim that the Hebrew word for “was” (*hayetha*) in Genesis 1:2 should be translated “became” or “had become,” indicating a change of state from the original perfect creation to a chaotic condition (v. 2). Yet, none of the scholarly translations of the Bible translates the verse in this fashion. Noted Hebrew scholar J.W. Watts even stated: “In Gen. 1:2a the

verb is perfect. It indicates a fixed and completed state. In other words, original matter was in a state of chaos when created; it came into being that way” (16). Harold Stigers noted:

The cataclysmic theory (also called the restitution theory) respecting v. 2 can have no place in a proper translation. The construction of “became void,” etc., is not justified by Hebrew syntax. When the verb “to be” (*hayah*) is to be constructed as “become,” the addition of the prepositional *lamedh* is required with the following word to provide this meaning, and this preposition is absent here. (49)

(4) Gap theorists assert that the phrase “without form and void” of Genesis 1:2 (Hebrew *tohu wabohu*) can refer **only** to something once in a state of repair but now ruined. John C. Whitcomb replied to such a notion when he observed:

Many Bible students, however, are puzzled with the statement in Gen. 1:2 that the Earth was without form and void. Does God create things that have no form and are void? The answer, of course, depends on what those words mean. “Without form and void” translate the Hebrew expression *tohu wabohu*, which literally means “empty and formless.” In other words, the Earth was not chaotic, not under a curse of judgment. It was simply empty of living things and without the features that it later possessed, such as oceans and continents, hills and valleys—features that would be essential for man’s well being. In other words, it was not an appropriate home for man... (69-70)

There are many other points that could be made in regard to the fallacious nature of the Gap Theory. The book, *Unformed and Unfilled*, by Weston W. Fields provides what many consider to be the most exhaustive and powerful refutation of this theory ever put into print. The Gap Theory, despite the claims of its advocates, does not allow for an ancient earth. It is false, and as such should be opposed.

During the Creation Week: The Day-Age Theory

Not everyone tries to insert time into the biblical text by using the Gap Theory. Instead, some have argued that the “days” discussed in Genesis were not literal 24-hour periods, but rather were lengthy eons of time. After all, they say, the word translated “day” in Genesis 1 can have up to seven different meanings, and on rare occasions it even can refer to a long

period of time.

Let us examine this concept and see why the Day-Age Theory should be rejected by Bible believers who respect what God said he did. The Day-Age Theory states that the days of Genesis 1 were not **days** at all, but in reality were long **eons** or expanses of evolutionary time. Supposedly, during these “days,” evolutionary/geologic phenomena occurred (e.g., the formation of plant, animal and human fossils, the formation of coal and oil, etc.), thus allowing Bible believer to accept the old-Earth claims of evolutionists and those who are sympathetic to their cause. It is clear from plain statements of Scripture, however, that the days of Genesis are exactly that—days of approximately 24 hours each, just as we know them today. Consider, for example, the following.

(1) We know the days of Genesis 1 are literal 24-hour days because the Hebrew word *yom*, which is translated “day,” is **used and defined** in Genesis 1:5. The word is clearly defined the first time it is used. God defines his terms! “And God called the light Day and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day” (Gen. 1:5). *Yom* is defined here as the light period in the regular succession of light and darkness, which, as the earth rotates on its axis, has continued ever since. This definition obviously precludes any possible interpretation as a geologic age (Morris, *Scientific* 224).

(2) The Day-Age Theory is false because whenever the Hebrew word *yom* is preceded by a numeral in non-prophetical passages, it **always** carries the meaning of a 24-hour day. *Yom* occurs over 100 times in the Old Testament in this manner, and **always** the meaning of a 24-hour day is conveyed. There is no exception. Exodus 20:11 states that “in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is.”

(3) The Day-Age Theory is false because whenever the Hebrew term *yom* appears in the plural (*yamim*) in non-prophetical passages, it **always** refers to a literal 24-hour day. When the word “days” appears in the plural (Hebrew *yamim*) as it does over 700 times in the Old Testament, it **always** refers to literal days. Thus, in Exodus 20:11, when the Scripture says that “in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is,” there can be no doubt whatever that six literal days

are meant (Morris, *Biblical* 59).

(4) The Hebrew phrase translated “evening and morning” is used over 100 times in the Old Testament with the word *yom*.

Each time it refers to a literal 24-hour day...the writer of Gen. was trying to guard in every possible way against any of his readers deriving the notion of non-literal days from his record... The writer not only defined the term “day,” but emphasized that it was terminated by a literal evening and morning and that it was like every other day in the normal sequence of days. In no way can the term be legitimately applied here to anything corresponding to a geological period or any other such concept. (Morris, *Biblical* 55-56)

(5) Had Moses wanted us to understand these days as “long geologic periods,” he could have used Hebrew words to denote such. For example, he could have used the Hebrew term *olam*, or the word *dor*, both of which would indicate long, indefinite periods of time. But he did not! He could have modified the word *yom* with the adjective *rab* (*yom-rab*—“long day”). But again, he did not. Further, if God said he created everything in six days, yet he really used six eons, would not that make God deceitful?

(6) Genesis 1:14 is a deathblow to the Day-Age Theory. It is in this verse that God stated that he created the lights to divide the day from the night, and that they were to be “for signs, for seasons, for days, and for years.” If the “days” are “ages,” then what are the years? If a day is an age, then what is a “night”? As Marcus Dods pointed out: “If the word ‘day’ in this chapter does not mean a period of 24 hours, the interpretation of Scripture is hopeless” (4-5).

There are numerous other arguments that could be offered if space permitted. But surely, these few are enough to document the fact that the days of Genesis are exactly what God said they were—literal 24-hour **days**! If God **had** wanted to tell us that the earth, the seas, the heavens and everything in them were created in six literal 24-hour days, **what else could he have said?**

After the Creation Week

We have seen that the time needed for evolution to take place cannot be placed **during** the six days of creation because they were literal, 24-hour periods. We also have seen that the

time cannot be placed **before** the six days of creation, because the Bible says that God created everything in six days. The only possible place left for the eons of time is **after** the creation week. Some have suggested that perhaps Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden for many years before they sinned, and that vast amounts of time might be placed there. But Genesis 5:5 restricts the amount of time that Adam and Eve were in the Garden to a maximum of 930 years, since Adam died at that age. [We know that “days” and “years” already were being counted before Adam and Eve sinned, because Genesis 1:14 uses both of those terms in a literal, everyday sense.]

One other item needs to be discussed. It is extremely difficult to insert the time necessary for evolution **after** the creation week, since the biblical genealogies limit that time to a few thousand years. There simply is no room in the genealogies for millions (or billions) of years—which probably explains why very few people attempt to place the time necessary for an old earth after the creation week.

Other equally false ideas have been suggested, but the material presented here provides an airtight case, which shows that the earth is only about 6,000 years old. The billions of years required for evolution to have occurred find no place within the Bible. In fact, God did it exactly as he said he did. As the psalmists noted: “Praise him, ye sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heaven of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord: **for he commanded, and they were created**” (148:3-5 emp. added). Indeed, “For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” (Psa. 33:9)!

“He that built all things is God...”

The evidence is in. There is not room in the Bible for evolution. The universe and all the complexities of the earth point to an intelligent Designer. We would do well to recall the words of the prophet Isaiah: “Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein” (42:5). As the psalmist so aptly noted: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (19:1).

Science has failed repeatedly at explaining how life, and complex organisms like the cell, could have arisen from non-living matter. The statistical odds of man living in a place where the correct composition of the air, atmospheric pressure, gravity, heat, stability, etc. happening by chance are beyond measure. As NASA astronomer John O’Keefe explained: “We are, by astronomical standards, a pampered, cosseted, cherished group of creatures... If the Universe had not been made with the most exacting precision we could never have come into existence. It is my view that these circumstances indicate the universe was created for man to live in” (qtd. in Heeren 200). Dr. O’Keefe realizes the impossibility of things happening as the result of some cosmological accident. But he is not alone. Physicist Frank Tipler put it this way:

When I began my career as a cosmologist some twenty years ago, I was a convinced atheist. I never in my wildest dreams imagined that one day I would be writing a book purporting to show that the central claims of Judeo-Christian theology are in fact true, that these claims are straightforward deductions of the laws of physics as we now understand them. I have been forced into these conclusions by the inexorable logic of my own special branch of physics. (preface)

In fact, as more and more scientific evidence points towards a special creation, many scientists are re-evaluating their original positions on the origin of the universe. Paul Davies admitted: “There is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all... It seems as though somebody has fine-tuned nature’s numbers to make the Universe... **The impression of design is overwhelming**” (203). Overwhelming indeed!

Conclusion

“In the beginning, God...” The first chapter of the Bible tells how God created the heavens and the earth, and all of the animals, plants and humans that existed. His creative activities lasted six consecutive days, and on the seventh day, he rested from those activities. Exodus 20:11 sums it up: “For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day.” The Bible states quite clearly he who built all things, whether in the heavens or on the

earth, was God. All men should be interested in the history of the first man who ever breathed—man’s great ancestor, the head of the human family, the first being who trod upon the earth. What a beautiful world Adam inhabited. God first created, as it were, the great house of the earth, and then brought his tenant to occupy it. And it was hardly an empty house. Rather, the Master Builder had furnished it with everything man and woman would need to be happy and content. It was a place without sin or sorrow, where not a single need of mankind’s went unmet.

Mankind was a necessary complement to the divine plan. God made the earth for man, and then made man for the earth. Isaiah said that God created the earth “...to be inhabited...” (45:18). For those willing to search the Scriptures and accept their teaching, nothing could be clearer than the fact that mankind was created wholly distinct from the previously existing animals. The Bible paints a picture of man as a being that stands on a different level from all other creatures upon the earth. He towers high above all earthly creation because of the phenomenal powers and attributes that God Almighty has freely given him. No other living being was given the capacities and capabilities, the potential and the dignity, that God instilled in each man and woman. Indeed, humankind is the peak, the pinnacle, the crown, and the apex of God’s creation. And what a difference that should make in our lives.

As the zenith of God’s creation, and a special creature made in God’s image, man was granted authority and dominion over all the creatures of the land, sea and sky (Gen. 1:26-28). Additionally, all plants (1:29) and animals (9:3) were given to man as food. This freedom allowed man unparalleled use of the creation, but simultaneously required that he be a good steward of it. With freedom always comes responsibility.

On each day (except the second) of his creative activity, God pronounced what he had made as “good.” At the end of the creation, however, he surveyed all that he had done and proclaimed it “very good.” Everything was perfect—which provided a fitting end to the six days during which God created everything in the universe and on the earth. As humans, we indeed have been endowed by our Creator, for he who built all things was God!

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Pluralism

By Brad Harrub

Children are the prize

While shocking, the truth is that most Christians are paying for people to lead their children away from Christ. For twelve years, we send our most precious gifts, our offspring, off to be indoctrinated in secular humanism, pluralism and atheistic ideology—and our tax dollars are paying for this propaganda. And for the life of us, we cannot figure out why so many Christian teenagers abandon the faith when they leave home. Many Christians have not fully recognized that our children are the ultimate prize. Activists in our country have waged war on Christianity, and they are quietly enlisting our own children against us. By shaping their thoughts and molding their value system for twelve years, secular pluralists, humanists and evolutionists have fashioned their minds to reject the concept of the one true God. Instead, they return home to us embracing a philosophy of “eat, drink, and be merry, and always look out for number one!” By many counts, these militant groups have won many battles, as we observe indicators that our society is forsaking Christian values in favor of pluralism and humanism. But they are not just claiming street children or their own children in their victories—more importantly, they are taking away **our** children!

When Adolf Hitler was laying the foundation for his New World Order—the Nazi Party—he commented, “Let me control the textbooks and I will control the state. The state will take youth and give to youth its own education and its own upbringing.” Hitler knew that the youth were the key to his dominance and the future. During a speech he delivered on November 6, 1933, Hitler affirmed: “When an opponent declares, ‘I will not come over to your side,’ I calmly say, ‘Your child belongs to us already...What are you? You will pass on. Your descendants, however, now stand in the new camp. In a short time they will know nothing else but this new community’” (Shirer 249).

Hitler knew that youth held the ability to reshape the

cultural and philosophical framework of a nation. Hitler's premise sounds extremely similar to Abraham Lincoln's, who once noted: "The philosophy of the schoolroom in one generation will be the philosophy of the government in the next." Both of these men knew that the battleground was in the classroom. And that is exactly where American Christians have been losing the cultural and spiritual war. John J. Dunphy knew this when he wrote his infamous article "A Religion for a New Age," in which he boldly proclaimed:

I am convinced that the battle for humankind's future must be waged and won in the public school classroom by teachers who correctly perceive their role as the proselytizers of a new faith: a religion of humanity that recognizes the spark of what theologians call divinity in every human being. These teachers must embody the same selfless dedication of the most rabid fundamentalist preacher, for they will be ministers of another sort, utilizing a classroom instead of a pulpit to convey humanist values in whatever subject they teach, regardless of the educational level—preschool, daycare, or large state university. The classroom must and will become an arena of conflict between the old and the new—the rotting corpse of Christianity, together with all its adjacent evils and misery, and the new faith of humanism, resplendent in its promise of a world in which the never-realized Christian ideal of "love thy neighbor" will finally be achieved. (Dunphy 26)

Today, our classrooms are breeding an unrighteous nation.

Righteousness in the Classroom

American classrooms have not always discriminated against Christendom. In fact, many of our forefathers were formally trained using the Bible as their primary textbook. Historically, education in the United States combined learning and biblical instruction for many decades. Not only were young people learning to read and write, they were also being given a moral framework about life from the Bible and the one, true, living God. For example, in 1805 an "improved" version of the *New-England Primer* was printed for school children within the United States. It was printed by Whiting, Backus and Whiting, and was sold out of their retail store. This primer was designed to begin by teaching children the basics of reading (i.e., the

alphabet, short words, etc.). It starts out simple and progresses to the point that short stories are given to build the child's reading skills. An overwhelming number of these short stories mention Jesus Christ and contain passages from the Bible. For instance, here is a short summary of some of the things a child would be exposed to with this particular public school textbook. Page 2 is titled: "A Divine Song of Praise to God for a Child." Eight pages later, under the heading "words with three syllables," children learn the words "Godliness" and "Holiness." The next page discusses the duty of children toward their parents, stating: "God hath commanded, saying 'Honor thy father and mother, and he that curseth father and mother let him die the death'" (Matt. 15:4). This page also contained the words of Proverbs 30:8-9: "Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and dent thee, and say, Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of God in vain." On pages 12-16, the child is walked through the alphabet with a sentence following each letter to help reinforce that specific letter. It begins with "A" and the sentence below states: "In Adam's fall, we sinned all." Over 12 times, the sentence below each letter mentions God, or some biblical theme, finishing up with "Z": "Zaccheus he, did climb the tree, his Lord to see." Page 17 lists moral precepts for children and is followed by the "Lord's Prayer." Throughout the remaining pages, there are frequent allusions to Jesus, demonstrating a Christian orientation and perspective. On page 31 the question is asked: "What is the work of creation?" The answer given is: "The work of creation is God's making all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good." It then asks how God created man, and the answer is given: "God created man, male and female after his own image..." It is obvious that young people during this time were learning more than just long and short vowel sounds when they commenced reading.

The *McGuffey's Readers* became the standardized reading text for most American schools during the 19th century. They were first published in 1836, and featured six different "readers" with increasing levels of difficulty. These readers contained numerous religious messages and sought to instill morality in

children. Over 120 million of these readers were sold from 1836-1890—thus, practically every American who attended public schools during the second half of the nineteenth century learned moral and ethical lessons from their textbooks. Listed below are some of the chapters included in *McGuffey's Readers* (NOTE: the selected chapters below do not include all of the chapters which encourage good moral behavior):

From the *Eclectic Second Reader*.

| Chapter | Title | Page number |
|----------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| 33 | Praise to God | 77 |
| 44 | How the World was Made | 107 |
| 62 | The Lord's Prayer | 162 |
| 66 | Emulation without Envy | 173 |
| 73 | Story about Joseph | 198 |
| 83 | The Ten Commandments | 229 |
| 84 | About Using Profane Language | 233 |

From the *Eclectic Third Reader*.

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|-----|
| 40 | The Goodness of God | 157 |
| 41 | Ode from the 19 th Psalm | 161 |
| 50 | Consolation of Religion to the Poor | 194 |
| 55 | Touch Not—Taste Not—Handle Not | 208 |
| 61 | Awake, Zion! | 228 |
| 62 | Ministers of Religion | 231 |
| 63 | The Destruction of Sennacherib | 232 |
| 65 | Gospel Invitation | 238 |
| 66 | On Prayer | 240 |

From the *Eclectic Fourth Reader*.

| | | |
|----|---------------------------|-----|
| 45 | The Creator | 125 |
| 51 | The Golden Rule | 139 |
| 73 | The Sermon on the Mount | 204 |
| 75 | King Solomon and the Ants | 211 |
| 90 | A Mother's Gift* | 255 |

* The Mother's Gift discussed is the Bible.

From the *Eclectic Fifth Reader*.

| | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|-----|
| 13 | Respect for the Sabbath Rewarded | 69 |
| 116 | The Bible the Best of Classics | 350 |
| 117 | My Mother's Bible | 351 |

From the *Eclectic Sixth Reader*.

| | | |
|-----|-------------------------|-----|
| 121 | The New England Pastor | 419 |
| 122 | Death of Absalom | 420 |
| 129 | Immortality of the Soul | 438 |

When William H. McGuffey first published these readers, they were soaked in various aspects of Christianity. McGuffey believed that literature should teach as well as build good character. As such, children not only learned literature, they also learned about godly morals and integrity.

The *Elementary Spelling Book* (often referred to as *The Blue Back Speller*) was a national standard spelling book written by Noah Webster in 1857. It, too, frequently mentioned God, the Bible and the Scriptures. As students learned to spell, they were also edified with passages such as:

- The Holy Bible is the book of God (p. 26)
- Good men obey the laws of God...God created the heavens and the earth in six days, and all that was made was very good (p. 29).
- We go to church on the first day of the week (p. 30).
- God will bless those who do his will (p. 34).
- God makes the ground bring forth fruit for man and beast (p. 39).
- The preacher is to preach the gospel (p. 41).
- Blasphemy is contemptuous treatment of God. Litany is a solemn service of prayer to God. (p. 42)
- We do not like to see our own sins... God made the ear, and He can hear (p. 46).
- The devil is the great adversary of man (p. 52).
- The soul is immortal; it will never die. Our bodies are mortal; they will soon die (p. 54).
- God has made two great lights for our world—the sun and the moon (p. 64).
- We are apt to live forgetful of our continual dependence on the will of God (p. 66).
- God governs the world in infinite wisdom; the Bible teaches us that it is our duty to worship Him. It is a solemn thing to die and appear before God (p. 69).

- Examine the Scriptures daily and carefully, and set an example of good works (p. 121).
- The Bible, that is, the Old and New Testament, contains the Holy Scriptures (p. 135).

Children growing up during this time were immersed in both the three “R’s” of reading, writing and arithmetic, but also in biblical principles. A formal education in school also strengthened their belief in God and the literal interpretation of God’s Word. What children learned within the confines of a church setting was often reinforced five days per week in the school setting. Today, most children receive a steady diet of humanism, pluralism and atheism five days a week for six-seven hours per day (30+ hours per week), and only 1-2 hours of Bible class study. With such lop-sided odds, it becomes easier to understand why we are losing so many of our young people.

Rewriting American Textbooks with Secular Pluralism, Humanism, Socialism, Atheism and Evolutionary Beliefs

Textbooks have changed dramatically in the past few decades. In fact, many parents and grandparents would not recognize history, sociology or science books used in public schools today. History has been rewritten in an effort to eradicate any notion of God, and then this atheistic perspective is further upheld in science books that teach nothing but evolutionary origins. Students today are being taught to embrace every lifestyle and every belief, and that the only real sin is the sin of intolerance. A quick look at practices within the classroom easily demonstrates that the only religion currently being discriminated against is New Testament Christianity. Our children can be required to recite surah’s out of the Quran, and they can be asked to memorize writings of the Dali Lama. They are encouraged to participate in school plays celebrating Kwanza and Hanukkah. But the Bible and any notion of Jesus Christ has been outlawed and officially banned.

Consider the historical picture that used to be taught regarding the pilgrims and their voyage to America. Prior to the advancement of secular humanism and political correctness, we were taught that in the early years of the 17th century, small

numbers of English Puritans broke away from the Church of England because they felt that it had not completed the work of the Reformation. We were taught that the pilgrims committed themselves to a life based on the Bible. Today, students learn that the pilgrims were simply individuals who “took a long journey.” The entire concept of religion and God has been stripped from their legendary landing at Plymouth. Many history textbooks record the Pilgrims landing at Plymouth and the signing of the Mayflower Compact, paraphrasing it as simply: “We have undertaken a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia.” Most textbooks leave out a great deal of the original Compact. For instance, a common summation of the Mayflower Compact reads: “We whose names are underwritten...do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God, and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politick (*Mayflower Compact*, 1620.) In order to understand the true reason for the voyage, and to get the full context, students today ought to look up the original text, which stated: “We, whose names are underwritten, **the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord, King James, by the Grace of God, of England, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, e&. Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia;** do by these presents, solemnly and mutually in the Presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid (emp. and italics added).

Or consider the events that took place on March 20, 1775, when the Second Virginia Convention convened at St. John’s Church in Richmond. They assembled to consider weighty matters concerning the tyranny and oppression of the Crown. A thirty-nine year old delegate from Hanover County named Patrick Henry took a seat in the third pew and would later proclaim these famous words: “Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?... I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty

or give me death?” That version is the “politically correct” version appearing in many textbooks today. Yet, the original words of Patrick Henry were: “Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? **Forbid it, Almighty God!** I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death?” (emp. Added).

Or what about the historical document that ended the American Revolution? Most textbooks today completely omit the first paragraph of this historical document. The “massaged” version states: “ART. I.—His Britannic Majesty acknowledges the said United States...peace treaty to end the American Revolution, 1783.” The actual document stated: **“In the name of the most holy and undivided Trinity. It having pleased the Divine Providence to dispose the hearts of the most serene and most potent Prince George the Third, by the grace of God, king of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, defender of the faith, duke of Brunswick and Lunebourg, arch-treasurer and prince elector of the Holy Roman Empire etc., and of the United States of America, to forget all past misunderstandings and differences that have unhappily...”** (emp. added).

Entire portions of American history are being either deleted or rewritten to exclude any notion of God or Christianity. Additionally, Christians are commonly described in a negative or condescending light. For example, a tenth-grade home economics book titled *Relationships* discussed psychological character types, mentioning “irrational-conscientious” type as having strong religious faith and as being “cold and unfeeling.” Their “repressed hostility makes them far too literal-minded and rigid in their righteousness.” (In the teacher’s guide, Jesus, Mohandas Gandhi, and Martin Luther were listed as examples.) According to a New Republic writer, religious groups, if they were mentioned at all, were usually portrayed as the lunatic fringe.

Most textbooks consistently mention the first Pilgrim Thanksgiving, but give no credence to whom thanksgiving was given. They also omit the fact that 52 of the 55 signers of the Declaration of Independence identified themselves as deeply committed Christians. (The other three all believed in the Bible

as the divine truth, the God of Scripture.) Textbooks today neglect to inform students that in 1782, the Congress of the United States was responsible for America's first English-language Bible; and that in 1800, Congress voted that on Sundays, the Capitol Building would serve as a church building and that by 1867, the largest protestant church in America was the one that met inside the U.S. Capitol; etc. But these attacks are only one side of the coin.

Children attending public schools today will also be indoctrinated with the following:

- that it is acceptable to worship anything or a multiplicity of gods, and that the Christian religion is practiced only by fundamental radicals;
- that there are absolutely no concrete ethical or moral rules, and that all problems must be considered on a case-by-case basis (situation ethics)
- that there is really no good or evil, and that the concept of "sin" is judgmental and outmoded;
- that homosexuality is a perfectly acceptable alternative lifestyle;
- that abortion is a matter to be decided not by the church or by the state, but solely by a woman and her physician;
- and that, above all else, the highest of all virtues are "compassion" and tolerance.

Even our calendar dating system is under attack. Rather than using the familiar B.C./A.D. system, which uses Christ's appearance on earth as the central framework, humanists are now employing B.C.E. and C.E. which stands for "before the common era" and "common era." The Proverbs' writer declared that "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (14:34). And yet, our textbooks are in direct opposition to this inspired Scripture. At the exact same time that biblical principles are being expunged, the concept of evolution and man arriving by some Big Bang explosion can be found in almost every science textbook published today. We are effectively removing God, and now teaching children that life is the result of some cosmological accident, and that they have evolved from some ape-like creature. Consider the following examples which range from pure speculation to outright lies! (and these are just a

few; many more could be selected from each book):

Biology, Visualizing Life, Johnson, Holt Rinehart Winston, 1994.

...your body has been shaped by natural selection. For example, the ability of your eyes to focus, the way your hands grip objects, your upright posture, your large brain, the color of your skin and numerous other characteristics are all results of evolution by natural selection. (186)

Life's building blocks can form spontaneously." (200)

Soon after the Earth's surface cooled, life arose in the ancient seas. The first organisms to appear on the planet were bacteria, which are single-celled prokaryotes. These early bacteria are the ancestors of modern bacteria and of all the many different kinds of organisms living today, including you. (203)

Humans share a common ancestor with the living apes, but the apes from which humans descended are extinct. (224)

You are an animal, and share a common heritage with earthworms and dinosaurs, butterflies and sea stars. (453)

Biological Science: An Ecological Approach, BSCS Green Version, Kendall/Hunt, 1992.

Evolution is the source of all biological diversity and the one process that explains the unity in life. (213)

Our own group, the hominids, is a subgroup of primates. Ancestors of both humans and apes radiated from early hominidlike primates, evolving into hominids and apes. (594)

Biology (2nd ed), Essenfled, Gontang, Moore, Addison Wesley, 1996.

Billions of years ago, these materials came together and formed the first cells. (221)

Illustration 16.4. All organisms, living or extinct, are descendants of the first cells. Because they all share a common ancestor, all organisms are related to one another no matter how different they seem. (286).

The first animals with backbones to evolve were fish. From these early fish evolved all other vertebrates, including amphibians, reptiles, and even human beings. (552)

Biology, Miller & Levine, Prentice Hall, 1995.

We can learn a great deal about the nature of life by comparing body systems among invertebrate groups and by tracing the patterns of change as we move from one phylum to another. As we do so, it is important to keep this concept in mind: Evolution is random and undirected. (658)

We know, for example, that humans evolved from common ancestors we share with other living primates such as chimpanzees and apes. (757)

Active euthanasia has been performed in the Netherlands since the 1980's. Although it is illegal, the practice has been tolerated as long as doctors follow strict guidelines. A British medical institute recently published a report in which it appeared to endorse active, as well as passive, euthanasia. In the United States and elsewhere in the Western world, passive euthanasia is widely accepted. However, active euthanasia is a morally, politically, and legally debated issue. As the right-to-die movement becomes more widespread, laws no doubt will change. (273)

Problems of an Aging Population—An aging population could bring some difficult problems for the United States... Can America afford health care for both ends of the age spectrum? (780)

Like all other forms of life, humans are products of evolution by natural selection. (352 & Diagram, 353. See Appendix C).

Biology the Dynamics of Life, Biggs, Kapicka, Lundgren, Glencoe (MacMillan/McGraw-Hill), 1995.

But only since 1871 and the publication of Charles Darwin's book, *The Descent of Man*, have scientists realized the true evolutionary link between monkeys, apes, and humans. (454)

Apes are our closest animal relatives. (461)

Biology: A Journey into Life, Arms and Camp (Saunders College Publishing, Harcourt Brace College Publishers, NY) 1991.

At the beginning of the third trimester (6 months), the fetus is still tiny. It will normally more than triple in size before

birth. By 7 months, the fetus looks from the outside like a tiny normal baby, but it is not. (557)

The message our children receive is that **all** of the problems have been solved, and that we know **precisely** how every branch fits into the evolutionary tree of life—and humans are merely an accidental twig. Everything is presented as fact even though scientists oftentimes admit they have no clue as to what is really happening. For instance, Roger Lewin admitted: “The [evolutionary] transition to the first mammal, which probably happened in just one of, at most, two lineages, **is still an enigma**” (1492). It is still an enigma, but we are going to indoctrinate our children with the knowledge that they share a common heritage with an earthworm! Additionally, now that this political machine has taken root, data that come in that do not support this evolutionary view gets thrown out. Rather than the evolutionary theory being questioned and tossed out, scientific evidence that contradicts this atheistic worldview is quashed and kept far from the eyes of today’s pupils.

Court Decisions that Have Altered the Direction of Our Nation

While you may find the concept of men evolving from some primordial slime repulsive or sickening, the reality of the current politically climate is far worse. For in our country, the **only** theory about man’s origins allowed in the classroom is this fallacious concept of organic evolution: amoeba to man. And although our country declared its independence with these words: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are **created** equal, that they are **endowed by their Creator** with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” (emp. added), we now live in a land where we can no longer discuss that Creator in the classroom. When the Founders penned those famous words, they illustrated that from the very beginning, America recognized human rights as a gift of God, not something created by government.

Yet, science and “political correctness” have accelerated the complete renunciation of the one true God from public affairs. Displays of the Ten Commandments [which we are no longer under-BH] have been banned from public schools, courthouses

and other public property. Religious clubs have been denied equal access to public school grounds. Valedictorians risk losing their position if they make reference to God in speeches, or offer voluntary prayers at graduation ceremonies. And recently, a court in California found the words “One nation, under God” in our nation’s pledge of allegiance **unconstitutional**. Individuals who support these court decisions claim to be acting in defense of “the freedom of religion.” Yet, they are systematically tearing away the very foundation of that freedom—and abolishing any reference to an Almighty Creator. God has become a “bacteria” in our culture that must be expunged and eradicated at all costs. At some point however, we must ask our politically correct society, without a Creator, what can “endowed by their Creator” possibly mean?

This war to erase God has taken place in every form of media. If this movement had a special forces unit—such as the Navy Seals or Army Rangers—it would most surely be called humanism or neo-Darwinism. The belief of a special creation has been discounted in magazines, on the television and has now fallen under attack within the church. The atheists and agnostics of the world have been effective at casting doubt on the very first verse of the Bible, where it clearly states: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the Earth” (Gen. 1:1). These words are no longer viewed as the words of Almighty God, but rather as a nice introduction to a fable or myth. Day-after-day our children sit at the feet of professors who, using fancy words and scientific theories, teach that man’s origins are the result of some Big Bang or Punctuated Equilibrium. And thus, we find ourselves in a nation that has outlawed God from the classroom, and who now believes their own origin can be explained by some cosmological accident.

Consider the chronological progression that has occurred in the high court regarding these matters:

- *McCullum v. Board of Education*, 333 U.S. 203 (1948)—Court finds religious instruction in public schools a violation of the establishment clause and therefore unconstitutional.

- *Zorach v. Clausen*, 343 U.S. 306 (1952)—Court finds that release time from public school classes for religious instruction does not violate the establishment clause.
- *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962)—Court finds school prayer unconstitutional.
- *Abington School District v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963)—Court finds Bible reading over school intercom unconstitutional **and** *Murray v. Curlett*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963)—Court finds forcing a child to participate in Bible reading and prayer unconstitutional.
- *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97 (1968)—Court says the state cannot ban the teaching of evolution.
- *Stone v. Graham*, 449 U.S. 39 (1980)—Court finds posting of the Ten Commandments in schools unconstitutional.
- *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38 (1985)—Court finds state law enforcing a moment of silence in schools had a religious purpose and is therefore unconstitutional.
- *Edwards v. Aguillard*, 482 U.S. 578 (1987)—Court finds state law requiring equal treatment for creationism has a religious purpose and is therefore unconstitutional.
- *Board of Education v. Mergens*, 496 U.S. 226 (1990)—The court rules that the Equal Access Act does not violate the First Amendment. Public schools that receive federal funds and maintain a “limited open forum” on school grounds after school hours cannot deny “equal access” to student groups based upon “religious, political, philosophical, or other content.”
- *Lee v. Weisman*, 112 SCt. 2649 (1992)—Court finds prayer at public school graduation ceremonies violates the establishment clause and is therefore unconstitutional.
- *Lamb's Chapel et al. v. Center Moriches Union Free School District*, 508 U.S. 384 (1993)—Court says that school districts cannot deny churches access to school premises after-hours, if the district allowed the use of its building to other groups.
- *Kiryas Joel Village School District v. Grumet* (1994)—Court states that the New York State Legislature cannot

create a separate school district for a religious community.

- *Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe* (2000)— Court rules that student-led prayers at public school football games violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

And so now our children walk through the hallways of educational institutions that have been sterilized of any notion of Almighty God. A causal look back through history finds that the fall of superior nations usually comes from within. Once the citizens of a country become lazy, dependent, immoral, atheistic and humanistic, their fate is inevitable doom.

The Inevitable Doom of an Unrighteous Nation

When individuals step inside an election booth to select an elected official, often times various criteria are considered. For instance, the politician's views on defense, gun control, tax reform, social security, foreign policy, labor, education and immigration may influence the way in which many voters select their candidates. However, if one were to evaluate what political planks determine the course of the nation, the only ones that remain are religious factors.

Consider the biblical example we find in the Old Testament. A united Israel would see three kings (Saul, David and Solomon) before it would be torn into the northern kingdom (Israel) and southern kingdom (Judah). In I Kings 12, we learn that Judah was composed of only two tribes: Judah and Benjamin. The remaining ten tribes broke away and became known as Israel. After this, we learn Israel had 19 kings, every one of which was evil. In 2 Kings 17, we learn that these ten tribes were taken into Assyrian captivity. In only 213 years, the northern kingdom had strayed so far from God that they were conquered and completely taken over. During that time, we read the warning of prophets such as Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Amos and Hosea who warned against doing evil in the sight of the Lord. The southern kingdom did not fair much better. They, too, had 19 kings, most of whom were evil, and in 2 Kings 25 we learn they were taken over into Babylonian captivity. Judah lasted only 399 years. During that time prophets such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel spoke of the coming doom. Now with those facts in mind, we

turn our attention to America, a country that declared its independence in 1776, a little over 225 years ago. Can we honestly expect God to continue blessing America given the direction our nation has turned?

Two names stand out in the Bible for leading those nations away from God. In 2 Kings 16:3, we read that Ahaz “**walked in the way of the kings of Israel**; indeed he made his son pass through the fire, **according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out from before the children of Israel.**” In 2 Kings 21:2, we read that Manasseh “did evil in the sight of the Lord, **according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel.**” These men, along with their colleagues took what was once a righteous nation and turned it into a den of iniquity. What were these abominations? What was it that led both the northern and southern tribes into captivity? As we look over the behavior of those kings we quickly realize that these kingdoms had begun to practice things that were not in accordance of God—they were on course to become unrighteous nations. They practiced homosexuality, bestiality, mediums, killing children, adultery and even worshipped other gods—idolatry and pluralism reigned.

Pluralism and Idolatry

Idolatry is the practice of worshipping false deity while pluralism is the concept that there are many gods. Manasseh promoted both during his reign. We read: “For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; he raised up altars for Baal, and made a wooden image” (2 Kings 21:3). Manasseh’s evil practices were repeated countless times in the Old Testament as men in authority neglected commandments from God. Nevertheless, we must bear in mind that this idolatry was not condoned or overlooked.

And the Lord spoke by His servants the prophets, saying, “Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations (he has **acted more wickedly than all the Amorites who were before him**, and has also made Judah sin with his idols), therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Behold, **I am bringing such calamity upon Jerusalem and Judah**, that whoever hears of it, both his

ears will tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab; **I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.** So I will forsake the remnant of My inheritance and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become victims of plunder to all their enemies, **because they have done evil in My sight, and have provoked Me to anger since the day their fathers came out of Egypt, even to this day**” (2 King 21:10-15 emp. added).

Today, when one talks of idolatry and pluralism, many picture Hindu temples where individuals worship literally hundreds of gods. And yet, the Bible speaks clearly that there are other forms of idolatry. Paul, in writing to the church at Colosse, noted: “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and **covetousness, which is idolatry**” (3:5 emp. added). Covetous is defined as an inordinate, unhealthy desire for gain; the desire for more and more, even to the point of wanting that which rightfully belongs to another. Stated simply, covetousness is greed. Jesus warned: “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” (Luke 12:15-16). These words remind us of the Old Testament passage that affirms: “He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase” (5:10). Also, recall what Moses warned the people prior to their entering that land of milk and honey in Deuteronomy:

When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you. Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. (8:10-14)

I believe that Americans have built beautiful houses. Our flocks and our herds have multiplied. Our silver and gold has

multiplied. And somewhere along the way, our nation has forgotten God. Consider for just a moment the emphasis our society places on money and riches. Almost every state has legalized the lottery or some form of gambling. We turn on the television and see shows like “Who wants to be a Millionaire?” or reality shows offering huge prize money for ridiculous stunts. Las Vegas has become a vacation capital, with parents even taking their young children along. Our society is driven by the idea of money and getting rich quick. Americans may not be paying homage to wooden or golden images, but many are definitely worshipping material things such as luxurious homes, extravagant cars, diversified portfolios and expensive clothes. Sadly, we have become a nation not contented to give honor and praise to our Creator, but rather we shed our praise on a multiplicity of things.

Righteousness and Truth Do Not Change

Many people have adopted the position that if the masses are doing it, then it must be alright. They believe if an action or theory is viewed as satisfactory by the majority of citizens, then it must be acceptable. And yet, we know God’s Word does not change. The God who hated the abominable customs of the children of Israel is the same God we worship today. We must realize that just because the majority of society embraces a behavior or ideology does not make it acceptable in the eyes of God. We must go back and teach that there really is only one way, one truth and one light that will lead to eternal life—Jesus Christ (John 14:6). We must boldly teach the Truth regarding God’s plan for salvation and the church. Truth does not shrink from exhaustive examination, for it has nothing to fear. Rather, truth welcomes the searchlight of the severest scrutiny, unflinchingly confident that it cannot be disproved. A religion that discourages logical examination of its claims is tacitly admitting the doubtfulness of its position. Christianity has no fear of submitting its beliefs to the critical examination of skeptics. Nor does Christianity fear to have its proponents study the claims of other religions (or no religion at all). Truth will not bend or break beneath the onslaught. A faith that cannot withstand a terse, critical examination is a faith not worth having in the first place. As young people are shown the manifold evidences that

prove God's existence, Jesus' Sonship, and the Bible's inspiration—and as they examine other claims (atheism, agnosticism, skepticism, denominationalism, etc.) under the dissecting microscope of God's Word—eventually they will come to accept, and be able to defend, the one true religion of the one true God.

Let us, like Paul, never be ashamed of the Gospel, recognizing that it is the “power of God unto that salvation” (Romans 1:16). Let us study diligently to learn it well, and then in turn teach it to our children from the time we arise in the morning until the time that we lie down to sleep at night (Deut. 11:18-21), so that when the time comes for them to “leap” they will find themselves able to see a firm foundation underfoot.

Is America a Righteous Nation?

Following the World Trade Center tragedy, the expression “God Bless America” was heralded from the Hollywood Hills of California to the Appalachian Mountains of the East Coast. Signs were erected, and colorful posters proudly sought the blessings of the Almighty. But have you ever stopped to consider what it would really take to have “God Bless America”? God's blessings do not just come upon a people simply because the request is made. They also are not bestowed on a people just because those people possess wealth and power. The Lord, speaking to Solomon, stated: “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14). Clearly, the Lord wanted his children to come before his throne as supplicant servants—a fact about which the Scriptures repeatedly assure us.

But what about a land where the people are proud rather than humble? What about a land where humanism is taught in the classroom and people desire entertainment rather than praying and seeking Almighty God? What about a land where the people refuse to give up their wicked ways? Will they indeed receive the blessings of God? The prophet Isaiah delivered this scathing indictment to a wicked people that possessed an unwholesome spirit:

Hear the word of the Lord, You rulers of Sodom; Give ear to the law of our God, You people of Gomorrah: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" says the Lord. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats. When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, to trample my courts? Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, **I will hide my eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear.** Your hands are full of blood." (Isa. 1:10-15)

Were the people erring by offering animal sacrifices? No. Sacrifices were sanctioned years earlier by the Law of Moses. The problem was that the people were "simply going through the motions" and had wicked hearts. They were not truly seeking to please Almighty God. The book of Judges records several instances where "the people did evil in the sight of the Lord." Following this declaration, the children of Israel were delivered into the hands of their enemies. It was during this time of trial and impoverishment that the people always cried out to the Lord. After the children of Israel were delivered into the hand of the Midianites, we learn:

That the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage; And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drove them out from before you, and gave you their land; And I said unto you, 'I am the Lord your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: **but ye have not obeyed my voice**'" (Judges 6:8-10 KJV).

America clamors "God Bless America" and often seeks the assistance of God. However, we thoughtlessly continue to ban prayer from schools and public events. Drug and alcohol use rages on as it debilitates both young and old. Abortion clinics still stand with their doors wide open as their incinerators belch the ashes of our posterity. Classrooms still teach the atheistic

message that humans evolved from ape-like creatures and that the earth is a product of the Big Bang. Businesses continue to place money and performance at the top of their priority lists. Marriages continue to dissolve and end in divorce by the millions. Money continues to be shunted away from furthering Christ's Kingdom—as bigger houses and new cars take priority. Young people continue to disrespect their elders, and authority in general, as they do what they please. Worship services continued to be tailor-made in an effort to please the people—regardless of the directives that have been set forth in the Bible. And yet we stand tall and cry out “God Bless America”?

If we honestly want God's blessing, then, as a people we need to submit humbly to his Word and desire to seek him first. Our actions should reflect the fact that God is first in our lives. **Only then will righteousness exalt our nation** (Prov. 14:34). We should strive to maintain the integrity of all of God's Word—neither adding to it, nor taking anything away from it (see Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19). As a people, we should look forward to the opportunity to worship and praise our Almighty Creator. And finally, we should earnestly seek to proclaim the Gospel to all those who have not yet heard the Good News. Maybe then God truly will bless America.

Conclusion

Why do we find the world in the state it is today? Tim LaHaye, in his book, *The Battle for the Mind*, suggested: “Our present society is in a state of moral decay, not because the majority of Americans love degeneracy, but because the influence of humanism has been greater on our culture than the influence of the church” (189). The time has come to reverse that trend! Christ said:

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see

your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matt. 5:13-16)

God's people are to uphold that which is right, and oppose that which is wrong. In so doing, we set an example for all around us. We must oppose pluralism/atheism/humanism because its teachings are contrary to the teachings of God's Word. We must come to understand, and help others to understand, the folly of human "wisdom" such as is found in societies current philosophies.

For it is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe (1 Cor. 1:19-21)

Human wisdom leads away from God if not founded on, guarded by and subject to biblical revelation. Human wisdom is at war with God (Rom. 8:7) and is foolishness as far as God is concerned (1 Cor. 3:19-20).

In Ezekiel 22, we find one of the most troubling passages in all of God's Word. In reviewing the actions of Jerusalem, Ezekiel records that Jerusalem had violated most, if not all of the Ten Commandments. The vast army of Nebuchadnezzar was poised around the city, about to begin a two-year siege that would bring utter destruction to the city. In those days, the common practice to fortify a city was to build a giant wall. Enemies wanting to overthrow the city were then forced to concentrate their efforts on breaching a hole in one portion of the wall. But often, men of the city would step into the gap and fight to protect their homeland. They were willing to "stand in the gap." At the end of Chapter 22, we learn that this is not the case with Jerusalem. God said: "I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their heads," says the Lord God." No one was willing to stand in the gap. Parents and grandparents, we

must be to be ready, willing and able to stand in the gap and fight for the souls of our children! Unrighteousness still abounds. The laws and commands of God are still being violated. Jerusalem needed an individual who could step forward and stand for the truth. The absence of that individual led to their ultimate destruction. Homes that are absent of individuals willing to stand in the gap today can expect a similar destruction. Have you heard the battle cry? Precious souls are at stake!

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Textual Study of Acts 17:16-31

By Terry G. Jones

When the apostle Paul came to Athens, he found himself in the cultural and philosophical center of the Graeco-Roman world. Many of the greatest thinkers and orators the world has ever known made their home in Athens. The thing that consumed Paul's attention was that it was a city completely saturated by the worship of idols. It was a culture that freely worshiped anything and everything but knew nothing of the true and living God. Paul stood in the shadow of the Parthenon, a temple dedicated to the Greek goddess Athena, and beheld the outlandish acts of idol worship. While many would be tempted to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear, Paul believed that something must be done to introduce the Athenians to the God of heaven.

Paul's Anxiety (Acts 17:16)

Luke records that while Paul waited for the arrival of Silas and Timothy, "his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." Some translations say that his spirit was "provoked." It carries the idea of agitation, or even anger. When one considers that this great servant of Jesus Christ was surrounded by religious ignorance and pagan worship, it is easy to see the anxiety that would have built up within him. Pliny stated that during the days of Nero, Athens was adorned with some 30,000 public idols. Considering that the population of the city during that time is thought to have been about 10,000, that means that there were three times as many idols as there were people. No wonder it was said that it was easier to find a god in Athens than a man. It is easy to see why Paul's "spirit was stirred."

Paul was not upset merely because of the existence of images; in front of the idols were worshipers and sacrifices that had been left for these gods. Every vase filled with withered flowers, every bowl of rotting fruit represented someone's heart. Today, visitors to Athens classify the ruins of the ancient city as art and architecture. When Paul beheld the idols and magnificent temples, he did not see the beauty of architecture; he saw the ugliness of error. He did not see cultural progress; he saw spiritual pornography. He did not

see enlightenment of the mind; he saw ignorance of the soul.
(Roper 103)

These sights and sounds were not just upsetting to Paul, they were gut-wrenching. Surely, his feelings were similar to the prophet Jeremiah who said, "...But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jer. 20:9). Rather than keep silent, Paul anxiously sought opportunity to preach.

Paul's Approach (Acts 17:17)

Paul could wait no longer for the arrival of Timothy and Silas. Neither could he remain silent another minute. He did not come to Athens as a sightseer, but as a soul-winner. "Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him" (Acts 17:17). This verse reveals four things about the apostle's approach to introduce Jesus Christ to the Athenians.

The Plan—he "disputed." Sometimes translated "reasoned," it can also mean "debating."

The Place—"in the synagogue." When entering a city, Paul customarily sought out the synagogue as a place to preach Christ. This he had done in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1) and in Berea (Acts 17:10). He also reasoned in "the market." This was the place people came to buy food and other merchandise. It was also where philosophers, dignitaries and magistrates would gather for public discussions.

The People—"the Jews, and ...devout persons." Paul found a synagogue with Jews and proselyte Gentiles. Though not idol worshipers, they apparently were indifferent toward it and were not opposing idolatry. Like the Laodiceans, they were "neither cold nor hot" (Rev. 3:16). They likely received a rebuke from Paul for this attitude.

The Persistence—"daily." Paul's persistence is seen in his daily disputing with them. He kept on teaching any who would listen until they called him a "babbler" (v. 18).

Paul's Adversaries (Acts 17:18-21)

It was only a matter of time until Paul would be confronted by the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. Epicureans were basically materialistic deists. That is, they acknowledged the

existence of gods, but thought those deities were so far removed from the world that they could not exercise any influence on its affairs. Eventually, this deteriorated into an “eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die” philosophy. The Stoics believed in duty as the highest good and emphasized self-discipline and a denial of the flesh. They believed more in fate than in gods.

Because the Athenians “spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing” (v. 21), “they brought him unto Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?” (v. 19).

Paul’s Address (Acts 17:22-31)

Paul’s preaching about Jesus and the resurrection caused some to take hold of him and bring him to the Areopagus. “This is most likely an allusion to the legislative body (cf. “in the midst”—22), not the rocky hill known as “Mars Hill” (ASVfn)” (Jackson 221). As Paul took a standing position, he began his famous address to this council.

Paul’s Perception (22-23). The apostle began his address by saying, “Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” Paul was very perceptive and he declares three things he had observed in Athens.

First, he perceived **the idolatry of the Athenians** (22-23a). He pointed out that he perceived them to be “too superstitious,” or “very religious.” Everywhere he looked, he saw the objects of their worship.

Second, he perceived **the inscription on the altar** (23b). As Paul was traversing the city, appalled by the pollutions of idolatry, he found an altar inscribed, “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.” The Athenians were concerned that they might offend a deity of whom they were unaware. They constructed an extra altar to cover such a possible oversight.

Third, he perceived **the ignorance of their adoration** (23c). Paul declares that they were worshiping ignorantly. By this inscription the Athenians were admitting the possibility that there existed a god they did not know. Paul saw this as the very opportunity he needed to introduce to them to the God of heaven.

Paul's Proclamation (24-31). "...Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you" (23c). Now that Paul has their undivided attention, he proclaims four things about the God they did not know.

The Power of God (24a). "God that made the world and all things therein." This statement contains two very pertinent truths as proclaimed by Paul. (1) The omnipotence of God. He is the all-powerful Creator of the universe. The Athenians had not made God, but God had made them and everything they could see. (2) The oneness of God. Paul proclaims the one true God, while at the same time refuting the polytheism of the Athenians.

The Pre-eminence of God (24b-25a). Not only is God Creator of all things, "He is Lord of heaven and earth." Here Paul proclaims the sovereignty of God. Because he created all things, he is Lord, Ruler and Master of the universe.

The Provisions of God (25b-29). Since God made all things, that means he made us. As such, Paul proclaims that God is not only the giver of life, but also the sustainer of life. "...seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (25b). Every breath we take is a gift from God. Paul's address began with their notion of an unknown god, and now Paul is presenting to them the God who can be known. "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us" (27). Knowing of the existence of such a God, we ought to eagerly seek to know him. Jesus promised, "...seek, and ye shall find..." (Matt. 7:7). If we seek, we will find "that the Godhead is not like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (29). It is absurd that man would form an image out of dead matter then bow down to that which he had made.

The Precepts of God (30-31). As Paul draws this powerful sermon to a close, he emphasizes man's responsibility toward God. God had been patient throughout a time of ignorance, but he was now revealing himself. Now he "commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (30). Jesus said "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nation, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). The importance of that repentance is seen in that future appointment of judgment (31). We have the responsibility to obey the God of heaven

because one day we will stand before him in judgment.

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Biographical Sketch

Terry G. Jones was born in Parkersburg, WV and was raised in Toll Gate, WV. He is the son of Glenn and Linda Jones. He married Melinda S. Hilvers on August 10, 1985. They now have two sons, Austin (Age 19) and Quintin (Age 16).

Terry is a 1986 graduate of East Tennessee School of Preaching in Knoxville, TN. He received the A.A. and B.A. degrees from Ohio Valley College in 1996. He worked with the church in Mountain City, TN from 1986 to 1989. He then moved to Pennsboro, WV where he has been preaching to the present.

He serves as secretary on the board of directors of West Virginia Christian Youth Camp and is on the faculty of West Virginia School of Preaching. In addition, he is a writer for *West Virginia Christian* and has served as its lectureship director. He has preached in Gospel meetings and lectureships in West Virginia, Ohio, Tennessee, Kentucky, South Carolina, Indiana and Virginia. He also has made missionary trips to the countries of Moldova and Ukraine.

The Design Argument

By John F. Board

Introduction

For years, the questioning scientist and the investigative theologian have been at odds with one another. The scientist claims that the theologian is following superstition; the theologian claims the scientist will not budge from his materialistic viewpoints. Often times, the debate generates more heat than light. Such should not be the case.

At times, this author has seen unwillingness by scientists and theologians to be honest with the evidence. Each camp seems unwilling to concede any ground even if the evidence supports such concession. Also, there is a tendency on the part of some on both sides of the debate to overstate their case. Open discussion of any subject should be encouraged with both sides willing to listen objectively to the other's arguments in an effort to progress toward truth.

The purpose of this work is to examine the argument from design. The methodology employed will include a brief examination of some flawed thinking that fuels the debate (pro vs. anti), as well as both a "revisiting" of some of the evidence for the argument from design and an examination of some of the objections scientists advance. As such, this work will simply be an effort by one individual to provide some information, albeit not necessarily new, that may produce further dialogue in this ongoing discussion regarding the argument from design. This work is not considered by this writer to be the last word on the subject; this work is considered the author's current thinking on the subject of the argument from design. If new evidence is presented, this author may need to re-evaluate some of the conclusions currently held. This writer simply requests a similar attitude be possessed by those who read this work.

A Brief Examination of Flawed Thinking that Fuels the Debate

Both the theologian and the scientist, if not careful, can add fuel to the debate over the argument from design. Although the Bible is absolute truth, human interpretation is not without error.

Although science is dynamic, it is not static; by true definition, it is always progressing and as such is imperfect in its statement of truth. Science is also limited in that it deals only with such things that are repeatable and dependable. A failure to understand either of these concepts, in this writer's opinion, continues to hinder progress toward a proper joining of the scientist and the theologian in their thinking.

First, consider some of the ways that man's interpretation of the Bible has led to conclusions that are not supported by the scientific evidence of the day. Jack Wood Sears in his work *Conflict and Harmony in Science and the Bible* notes that for a long time scientists were regarded as heretics by theologians simply because the scientists believed the earth to be round. In the theologian's mind, a round earth was both contrary to how they visualized the earth with their own eyes and how Isaiah 11:12, through inspiration, described the earth. The problem as Sears conveys was the theologian's incorrect interpretation of the scriptures (Sears 20).

Sears also notes that science is subject to errors in its search for truth. Science and truth are not at odds; rather science depends upon many natural laws. Though science depends upon truth and natural laws to function, because it is dynamic, what the scientist views as true, changes as new discoveries are made. When in 1945-46 scientists believed as fact that the lifespan of a human red blood cell in circulation was 10-30 days, that "truth/fact" changed when new evidence suggested the life span of the human red blood cells in circulation to be 125 days. When Dr. T.S. Painter had established "beyond doubt" that the human somatic cell contained 48 chromosomes, the "truth" of his finding lasted only a few years when science declared the number of chromosomes to be only 46 (Sears 25-26).

Both the theologian and the scientist must be careful not to fuel the debate of the argument from design by failing to consider the errors that may exist in their thinking. The Bible is truth, but the theologian must be certain that his exegesis of the Bible is sound before pressing the truths in the design argument forum. The scientist must recognize the dynamic nature of his field—science does not contain absolute truth. These cautions should prove helpful to both the theologian and the scientist in

finding truth in the design debate for as Sears notes:

I believe that when ultimate truth is found we will know that the “real truths” of science do not conflict with Biblical truths, for I believe the same God is the source of them all.
(Sears 27)

A Re-visitation of Some Arguments from Design

The Law of Rationality states that one should only accept as true conclusions which follow from adequate evidence. Is there adequate evidence that God does exist? The theist and other intelligent design theorists believe that the argument from design helps provide the adequate evidence for the case of an Intelligent Being. The theist believes the argument from design, along with the other evidences for the existence of God, when considered in total, provide a rational basis for the belief in God.

The argument from design, or the teleological argument, is by definition an argument based upon studying the evidences of design in nature. Both David and Paul use this argument in their writings (Psa. 19; Rom. 1). In philosophy, the teleological argument was first suggested by Aristotle and Plato, but not logically formulated until Thomas Aquinas (McClintock and Strong 328-331). In His work, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Aquinas wrote:

Now we see that in the world things of different natures accord in one order, not seldom Or fortuitously, but always or for the most part. Therefore it follows that there is someone by whose providence the world is governed. And this we call God. (Dickson 71)

The argument was most notably set forth by William Paley in the eighteenth century but was cast aside by the philosophical world in the nineteenth century when Darwin’s theory of evolution was accepted by the philosophical world. Still, those known as creationists continued to use the argument to further their cause.

Since approximately 1990, a new form of intelligent design thinking has emerged. Some of the leading proponents are Phillip E. Johnston, Michael Behe and Jonathan Wells. Rather than think in terms of creation vs. evolution, the Intelligent Design (ID) movement likes to use the wording of Intelligent Design vs. Naturalism. Rather than enter into the realm of biblical interpretation, the ID movement is concerned with

scientifically investigating nature and leaving their views of God for other forums. One of the goals of the ID movement is to remove some of the emotion out of the debate that seems to come from language such as creation vs. evolution.

The argument for design simply stated notes where there is purposeful design, there must be a Designer. The implication of the argument is that where there is design and planning in an object, intelligence, purpose and specific intent must be evident in the first cause (Thompson and Harrub 41). For the purpose of the teleological argument, “design” involves “the arrangement of individual component parts within an object so as to accomplish a functional or artistic purpose” (Jackson, *Human* 1). In logical form the argument states:

1. If A evidences purposeful design, then it must have a designer.
2. But A does evidence purposeful design.
3. Therefore A must have had a designer.

Consider some of the examples of the argument that follow.

Intelligent Design in the Universe

Even among those who are atheists, complexity in the universe is acknowledged. The question for the atheist, as will be examined later in this chapter, is not whether design implies a designer; rather the problem for the atheist is whether there is design in nature adequate enough to support the conclusion that there is a God. The atheist concedes “complexity” where the theist sees “design.” The following information provides a sampling of the evidence for design as seen by the theist.

First, consider the size of the Milky Way Galaxy. The great size is evidence of design in that without such distance between the objects of the universe, the stars and planets would be drawn together by gravitational attraction (Clayton and Jansma 6). Earth is but one of nine planets that revolve around a star known as the sun. The sun is one of 100 billion stars in the Milky Way Galaxy. John Clayton and Nils Jansma in their work *The Source* (although quotations are taken from this monograph of Clayton and Jansma many of their works include error; caution must be exercised when reading any of Clayton’s works) provide information on a calculation of the diameter of the Milky Way Galaxy. They write:

Multiply the speed of light in a vacuum (186,317.6 miles per second) by the number of seconds in an hour (3600) to get the speed in miles per hour. Then multiply your answer by the number of hours in a day (23 hours, 56 minutes, 47 seconds). When you get that worked out, multiply again by the number of days in a year (roughly 365.25) and you will have the distance that light travels in one year. This number is approximately 5,880,000,000,000 miles, and it must be multiplied again by 100,000 (the diameter of the Milky Way) to get the diameter of our galaxy. Thus we determine that the diameter of the galaxy is something on the order of 588,000,000,000,000,000 miles. (7)

Such a number is truly incomprehensible to the human mind.

Second, consider that the Milky Way Galaxy is but a speck in the universe. One galaxy in close proximity to the Milky Way Galaxy is known as the Andromeda Galaxy. Andromeda is almost a twin galaxy to the Milky Way Galaxy. It is estimated to be 2.2 million light years from Earth. Clayton and Jansma illustrate the 2.2 million light years as follows:

If you were to send a radio signal to a friend of yours living in Andromeda and your friend were to send you an answer the instant he received your message, you would have to wait at least 4,400,000 years for the reply. Remember that this message was sent both ways by one of the fastest transportation systems we know—a radio wave that could orbit the earth over seven times in one second! (8)

The vastness of the universe cannot be denied. The atheist explains the vast size of the universe as an indication that the universe has existed eternally. The theist would use the expanding universe, the amount of hydrogen and the Second Law of Thermodynamics to argue that the vastness of the universe indicates it had a beginning. More importantly to this chapter, the theist would argue that the vastness of the universe argues for a God who created and cares for such.

Intelligent Design of the Earth

“We can be certain that when we compare the earth with the other planets, all the favours of fortune seem to have gone into its making” (Clark 90). How true this statement of Dr. Robert E. D. Clark is. The earth in its position and angle from the sun is perfect. The galaxy in which earth is found and its position in the

galaxy seem also perfectly designed. The atmosphere of the earth is unlike any other planet. Are all of these simply by chance? Consider a more in depth discussion of the design of the earth.

First, consider the earth's distance from the sun. The distance from the sun is important when one considers the powerful force of the sun. April Lawton in *Science Digest* wrote regarding the Sun,

The Sun is like a giant nuclear engine. It gives off more energy in a single second than mankind has produced since the Creation. It converts 8 million tons of matter into energy every single second, and has an interior temperature of more than 20 million degrees Celsius. (Lawton 98-105)

The sun also produces deadly radiation. The earth's position at 93 million miles away from the sun is just right to receive the proper heat and radiation necessary for life. The distance also protects earth from the destructive forces of matter being changed into energy. As Thompson and Harrub point out, a difference in position either ten percent closer or further away would spell destruction for the earth and her inhabitants (44). Clayton and Jansma record the added benefit of the earth's distance from the sun as being just right for the water one needs to sustain life. In order for water to sustain life, it must remain between 32 degrees and 212 degrees (Fahrenheit); the earth's position allows perfectly for its ground temperature to remain between these two safe ranges. Again, a ten percent change in distance either way would spell doom for the Earth. If the earth was ten percent closer to the sun, water would vaporize; if the earth was ten percent further from the sun, all water would be in a frozen state. Of all nine planets, only earth is in the right position to sustain life (24).

Second, consider the tilt of the earth on its axis and the complimentary heat retaining properties of the water and land as elements of design. Consider Clayton's and Jansma's explanation:

A casual look at any world map shows that most of the landmass of planet earth is in the Northern Hemisphere. This naturally leaves most of the Southern Hemisphere covered by water. Water has a large heat capacity, whereas land does not. This means that water both absorbs and releases a lot of heat slowly. Landmasses, on the other hand, do just the

opposite. Therefore, when the Southern Hemisphere is close to the sun, Most of the sun's intense heat is dissipated when it reflects off the water. Some of the heat that the water does absorb is circulated to the colder Northern Hemisphere by ocean currents. If water were not concentrated in the Southern Hemisphere, this heat dissipation and transfer system would not work. These two properties, working in conjunction with the earth's tilted axis, help to moderate global temperatures. The northern landmass area absorbs maximum solar energy when the earth is farthest from the sun, while the southern waters both store and reflect heat when the earth is closest. (26)

Clayton and Jansma continue to point out that the earth's tilt and the design of the position of land and water on the earth allow for the climatic variations necessary to sustain life. The chance of all of this occurring is 1 in 9 (or as the authors say 1 in 10).

Third, consider the atmospheric conditions of the earth that again are just right. Some 12-18 miles above the earth in the atmosphere of the earth is a layer known as the mesosphere. In the mesosphere, there is a special form of oxygen known as the ozone. One purpose of the ozone is to filter out harmful ultraviolet rays from the sun. In discussing the atmosphere, Clayton and Jansma also describe a magnetic field that surrounds the earth and repels the charged particles from space as being possibly "our most important shielding device next to the atmosphere itself" (26).

What are the probabilities by chance of earth having all the components that make it the perfect place for life? Clayton and Jansma have calculated the odds to be 1 in 150,000,000,000,000,000. They then put that number in perspective by illustrating that the odds of a person surviving a 10,000 feet fall from an airplane without a parachute would be 15 billion times better than the odds for there being an "accidental planet hospitable for life" (29).

No wonder then that even atheists are willing to admit that there is orderliness to the earth. A. Cressy Morrison noted regarding the earth, "Considering the bulk of the Earth, its place in space and the nicety of the adjustments...the chances of all of them occurring cannot be calculated even in the billions" (95). Sadly, though, the atheist can only see order and not the design

that seems to be overwhelming.

Intelligent Design in the World of Nature

The arguments from design are definitely not limited to the Cosmos. Although somewhat different in approach of study, the world of nature provides numerous examples of design. Only a few will be considered here due to the scope of this writing.

First, consider the migration pattern of the birds. Not much has changed in the scientific community since the *National Geographic School Bulletin* in 1967 stated “How birds migrate over such distances is a mystery” or since the *Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Animal Kingdom* noted, “Even after years of research and experiment, scientists speak of the mystery of bird migration, for they still do not understand it” (Kondo 17). Theists do not need to view bird migration as a mystery, for the theist knows who is behind migration—God who created the bird.

The Artic Tern is just one such example of the amazing design God has placed within his creation. From the Cape Cod area, the Artic Tern begins it’s journey across the Atlantic Ocean to the coast of Spain, down the western coast of Africa, across the Atlantic again and finally to Antarctica (Dickson 74). The Artic Tern follows the exact same path on its return journey. A one-way flight for the Tern is over 11,000 miles. How do these birds accomplish such a flight? Again the theist has the answer, but the scientist only has unanswered questions. Evolution has no answer for the migration pattern of the birds.

Another example of migration involves a different creature, the eel. Both the American and the European eels travel to the ocean depths off southern Bermuda and give birth by laying their eggs. After the female lays her eggs she dies. After the young hatch, they make their way back to their respective “homewaters” with no help from their parents. To date, no European eel has been found in American waters and no American eel has been found in European waters. How does the scientist explain such a phenomenon? He has no explanation. How is it that the eels find their way home with no parental guidance? The theist would answer that the eels have been provided guidance by the heavenly Father.

The Archer fish is another example of design in the world

of nature. This fish found in the area of India and northwest Australia has a unique system for obtaining its food. When an unsuspecting insect lands on a branch or leaf above the water's surface, the Archer will shoot a stream of water knocking the insect into the water where the Archer can easily eat its prey. Again, only the theist has an explanation for this phenomenon.

One last example of design in nature is the bee. Bees and other social insects have baffled scientists for years. These insects work together carrying out individual tasks to the accomplishment of a group purpose. The bee for example, may be a part of a group of bees (swarm) numbering up to 50,000 bees. Each of the bees belongs in one of three classes: Queen, Drones or Workers. The Workers accomplish a variety of tasks. So amazing is the organization and work of the bees that Eric Bonabeau wrote an article in *Scientific America* regarding how scientist are applying the behavior of the bees to the modern workplace with awesome results. Again, who has given the bees their working orders? Who is behind this organization? Again, the theist can provide an explanation.

Intelligent Design in the Human Body

E.J. Young in his comments on Psalm 139:14 records David's thoughts as David contemplates the design of his human body. Young states:

David indeed had a reason for praising God, and this reason lay in the fact of creation. It is not the creation as such, however, that David ponders, but the creation of himself. He is a creature of God. God has made him, he realizes, and that in a most wondrous manner. (71)

David penned that statement thousands of years prior to many of the medical advancements of today. Yet, one thing is for sure, his belief that God had made him in a wonderful way, has only been strengthened by the medical knowledge of today.

First, consider the fundamental unit of biological life, the human cell. The human body is considered to contain 100 trillion cells. Each cell is surrounded by a three millionths of an inch thick, thin membrane. The membrane will only allow elements vital to survival to enter the cell while at the same time, it expels waste products. Within the cell is the watery substance known as cytoplasm. Also, in the cell are over one thousand miniature

power plants called mitochondria. The brain of the cell is the nucleus. It is separated from the cytoplasm by a thin membrane. Inside the nucleus are chromosomes that contain the chemical substance of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid). DNA has been called the “stuff of life.” Within this DNA lies the blueprint for the production of the entire person. Regarding this information, Wayne Jackson states, “Only a very dull person fails to see the “design” (and thus a Designer) in this marvelous set-up” (“Zip Code”).

In October 1999, Dr. Gunter Blobel, a cell biologist and professor at Rockefeller University in New York, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology-Medicine. His work dealt with how proteins are transported from ribosomes into various areas of the cell. Dr. Blobel likened this process to the “zip code” system of the U.S. Post Office. Blobel notes that each new protein has been bar-coded with a specific address within the cell (qtd. In Jackson, “Zip Code”) Did this by chance occur, or like the “zip code” system of the Post Office, was it designed by Someone? Dr. Blobel, a believer, adds new information to the intelligent design of the human body.

Every single system of the human body evidences purposeful design and the shut down of any one system will lead to the destruction of all. Perhaps one system that is familiar to many would be the digestive system. All people love to eat. Consider some of the following regarding God’s design of the human body to accommodate food.

When food is taken into the mouth, it is usually in a form that is too large to swallow. This is where the design of the teeth come in. A healthy adult has 32 teeth, but not all of these teeth are the same shape. By design, different teeth have different shapes enabling them to perform different jobs. The incisors cut, the canines rip and the molars grind food. Working in concert with the teeth is a liquid, saliva, strong enough to help break down food. Interestingly enough, the teeth which are exposed to this liquid strong enough to break down food are not broken down themselves because the teeth are covered in enamel that protects them.

The tongue also plays a role in the digestion of food. It facilitates the swallowing of food by helping to form the food

into small balls that are more easily swallowed. Also, though, the tongue can serve as a protective agent. The tongue can sense when something is too hot and thus would damage the rest of the digestive system.

The stomach (skipping a few steps) has the responsibility of beginning to break down the forty tons of food taken in by the average human in a lifetime. Miller and Goode in their work *Man and His Body* note the remarkable feature of the stomach acid. They write, “We would have to boil our food in strong acid at 212 degrees Fahrenheit to do with cookery what the stomach and intestines do at the body’s normal temperature of 98.6 degrees” (Miller and Goode 108). Also, although the stomach contains a hydrochloric acid substance, it does not digest itself. One possible explanation to this phenomenon is that the stomach is lined with a mucus substance that serves as an acid neutralizer (Guinness 242).

Many other classic evidences of the design of the human body could be considered. The design of the eye will surface in the next section as this work examines objections to the argument from design. For the scope of this work, enough evidence has been presented to convey the concept of design in the human body. Further study will continue to intrigue each reader and will serve to further confirm the belief in the Designer.

Conclusions from the Evidences of Intelligent Design

The argument from design simply stated is “if an object evidences purposeful design, it must have a designer.” Many elements have been considered that show that the universe, nature and the human body all evidence purposeful design. The decision, though, is left to each individual reader as to whether they choose to believe in the ultimate Designer—for although he is the Designer, he forces himself and his will upon no one.

An Examination of Some Objections Advanced Against Intelligent Design

Almost from the inception of the argument from design, there have been those who have raised objections to it. Early in the debate, David Hume raised his objects based on the

imperfections of nature. William Paley was noted earlier as one who popularized the argument for design through his watch illustration. Shortly after Paley advanced his argument, Charles Darwin released his work on the Origin in 1859. In it, Darwin advanced the idea that rather than look to a Designer, one should rely upon time and natural selection to provide the answers to the unanswered questions of science.

Here again lies the area of disagreement. Where the theist sees design in areas unexplainable by the natural processes, he chooses to believe in a Designer. Where the scientist recognizes complexity, he says, "Let's give science time to find a naturalistic answer." Since the scientist really has no answers for the present to many of the complexities/designs found in science, he is left with little choice but to try to raise objections to the arguments advanced in favor of Intelligent Design. The remainder of this work will seek to evaluate a few of the objections raised by the scientists.

Objections Based on Faulty Design

Scientists for years have tried to discredit Intelligent Design arguments by advancing arguments that they believe show faulty design. Thus, they argue a perfect Designer would have perfect designs and not faulty ones. Most of the arguments along this line known to this writer are in the area of faulty design in nature/man.

Some of the arguments based upon faulty design of a Designer also have a flip side to them. Not only did the evolutionist employ them as opponents of design and a Designer, they also would use them as proof of evolution. One such argument was over what the evolutionist termed vestigial organs. These organs were either argued to be left over from the evolutionary process, and therefore no longer useful, or they were argued to be examples of where a lack of design for these organs argued against the concept of a Designer. Only a few of these vestigial arguments will be considered.

The pineal body is a small gland located in the brain. H.G. Wells thought the pineal gland was a "forehead eye which first became blind and useless and then was turned into another purpose, and made into a ductless gland" (Wells et al. 1208). As such, some would argue the gland was left over from the

evolutionary process, or on the other hand, that a perfect Designer would not create something that had no design. All such arguments have since been abandoned as science now knows that the pineal body serves a vital role in human reproduction.

The thymus was another example of a useless organ left over from evolution or proof that without perfect design there could be no Designer. The thymus is located between the lungs near the top of the breastbone. Science now recognizes the thymus as a chief component of the body's defense system so complex that it is greater than any defense system of any country (Ratcliff 65). So much for the argument against a perfect Designer.

Another type of argument based upon faulty design involves parts of the human body that men say are designed poorly. For example, many scientists believe that the human reproductive system has been poorly designed. One reason that such an argument is advanced is the amount of male sperm released in the fertilization process. The evolutionist argues that millions of sperm are wasted in the fertilization process. How God's wisdom makes man's wisdom look foolish. Here is a case where God's design is not recognized. Why would it not be the case, given the fact that it is so difficult for sperm to make the journey to the egg for fertilization, that many sperm being released argues for a better chance for fertilization and hence better design? According even to those unfavorable to the Intelligent Design argument, the greater the number of sperm there are, the greater the chance of fertilization there is (Guinness 268). The release of many sperm to target a single egg is not an argument against design; rather it is an argument for design.

Richard Dawkins is a name familiar to those who have studied the arguments from Intelligent Design. Dawkins wrote a book entitled, *The Blind Watchmaker*, in which he claims to negate Paley's argument from design. In this work, he claims that the eyes of all vertebrates have been wired in backward. Dawkins goes so far as to say the engineers would laugh at this design. Yet, like so many, when he comments on the eye, he notes that it works wonderfully well and confesses he "does not know the exact explanation for this strange state of affairs."

(Dawkins, *Watchmaker* 93) In another work, Dawkins argued against Behe regarding the eye. Dawkins said that all that was needed for the eye to have come about by chance was the “right components to come together at the right place and at the right time” (*Climbing*). But even with this argument, Dawkins uses an analogy that at best is not a parallel. The word puzzle began with a certain goal in mind; this is completely contrary to evolution, which they claim is completely blind. Other scientists with high credentials differ with Dawkins and see the eye as a highly complex or designed mechanism (Lenihan, Miller, Goode, Clayton, Nourse and Thompson). Here is a perfect example where one’s thoughts are clearly skewed rather than God’s design flawed.

Some see design flaws in the human body because the human body suffers from disease and deteriorates. Although it is true that the human body can be diseased, one must remember the Bible provides an answer for this condition of the human body. The human body as one knows it today is not the machine that was first created by God for man; the human body of today is a body affected by the entrance of sin into the world.

Other arguments advanced by man noting faulty design of the human body are so absurd, yet are listed here for the purpose of illustration of the lengths to which some go to deny design in the human body. Woolsey Teller in a debate with Bales noted that if he were the designer of the human body, he would have designed it to travel on all fours (he would place wheels where the hands and feet were) and he would have equipped the body with a zipper so that when something needed replaced surgery would not be needed—one would simply unzip the body cavity, replace the worn out part and re-zip the body cavity. Wayne Jackson points out the absurdity of such thinking when he notes “He (Teller) seems not to have anticipated that such a procedure would be rather difficult to accomplish since no one would have hands with which to perform the function” (*Human* 99). Then Jackson adds, “How would you like for someone to operate on you with nothing but his two bare wheels?” (*Human* 100).

Objections Based on Alternate Interpretation

Consider one argument offered by the atheist in an attempt to defeat the evidence of design in the universe that would

necessitate a Designer. Clayton and Jansma in their work address the atheistic position of the Oscillating Universe. The atheist believes that the Oscillating Universe answers the arguments from design that show the universe to have had a beginning. The theory stated in very simplistic terms involves the universe appearing to explode with a big bang and continuing to expand until it stops due to the internal gravity of its own mass. It then collapses upon itself again until it reaches a point where it explodes again. The process is said to continue eternally.

Clayton and Jansma point out in their work that both Hubble's Law and physical observation do not support this theory (15). They also note that the galaxies move so rapidly that there would not be enough gravitational pull to stop the motion nor would there be enough mass in the universe to reverse the process. The authors also note that the top scientific advance of the year for 1998 stated that the "universe will expand forever" (16). Clayton and Jansma continue to show how the concepts of missing mass, distribution of space, black holes and declining energy all negate the Oscillating Universe Theory (16-18).

Paley's long time example of the watch implying a watchmaker has also been challenged by some who oppose the arguments from design. Many say that since a watchmaker is a concept one already has in his mind, that of course if one found a watch he would think, "This was made by a watchmaker." The claim is the designer in the watchcase was already known to exist. The atheist says it is nothing more than an assumption to note that complexity in the universe necessarily means that the complexity or design must be the result of a designer. The argument that design demands a designer is based upon an assumption that will be answered below.

Arguments Advanced Against the Intelligent Design Movement

Despite the effort of those in the ID movement to remove themselves from religion in an effort to be taken more seriously as scientists, the scientific community still does not like to accept any idea of Intelligent Design. Those opposing the ID movement believe that there is complexity in the universe; they simply believe that complexity can be explained someday through naturalistic science. They believe it is an assumption to say that

where naturalistic explanations are lacking for “gaps” in science that necessarily means that a Designer must fill that gap. Again, they believe given enough time, science will find an adequate answer.

At first hearing, this argument may throw some theists. They may think, “Is it fair to make the assumption that the ‘gaps’ in naturalistic explanations should be filled with the designer concept?” The only problem with such thinking is that it is not an assumption at all to affirm that in the areas where science has no explanation, the theist can claim God as the one who fills the “gap.”

The reason the theist can fill the “gaps” with God is because to do so is not assuming anything. The theist has a body of writings to which he can go to explain certain things that science, no matter how much time it is given, will never be able to answer. The reason such is the case is that the “gaps” the atheists are trying to fill cannot be answered by naturalistic explanations. The answers lie in the realm of the supernatural.

In the realm of the supernatural, God has provided the theist with answers to some of the “gaps” left by science. It is not assumption to go to the body of doctrine and read what is given as an explanation for something science cannot answer, especially when the answer given by God is substantiated by science.

The problem in all the objections leveled against the argument from design lies simply in an unwillingness to accept the evidence. In some cases, man has determined for God what is proper design. In other cases, man has come up with alternate explanations that contradict scientific laws. Even when man tries to separate God from the picture and argue design from strictly a scientific point of view, many still will not give “sacred ground.” If they admit design, they know the admission of a Designer is not far off.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to re-examine some of the evidences for the argument from design. Also, objections to the argument from design have been considered. Although in neither of these areas was the author extensive (due to the wealth of material), this author hopes that this writing will serve to further

the discussion in this area. For those who read this work and observe errors in thinking, this author hopes that the reader will make these errors known to the writer. Open dialogue is the only way all can arrive at truth. Hopefully, all will be seekers of truth.

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Biographical Sketch

John F. Board is the son of John D. and Margaret Board of Toronto, Ohio. John is married to the former Brenna Sue Wiley. Brenna and John have two daughters, Kayleigh and Emaleigh. John is the minister for the church of Christ in Bridgeport, WV. Previously, John preached in Yreka, California and served as an associate at the Oakwood Road church of Christ in Fairmont, WV. John received his secular education from Oak Glen High School and West Virginia University. John received his instruction in the Bible from the church of Christ in Chester, WV as well as Freed Hardeman College and Southern Christian University.

How to Prove the Bible Is God's Word

By Kriss Cecil-Crihfield

Many in the world believe in God. They know that there is something greater and wiser than them in the universe. Unfortunately, while many believe in God, they do not believe that he **has ever** or **will ever** speak to them. To them, he is some cruel Cause who created us, and then like a negligent pet owner, left us to fend for our own. Fortunately, this could be no further from the truth.

There is an all-powerful God who created all that you are and see, and for that matter, all that you do not see as well. The very breath you take bears witness to the design from your Creator. This is called a **revelation**: something that through deductive reasoning brings another truth into focus. There are two great volumes of revelation: natural and supernatural, i.e., general and special.

General Revelation

This is the revelation of God to all of mankind through His creation. God did not create us and then leave us without a witness to him (Acts 14:17). The heavens declare his glory and the firmament shows His handiwork (Psa. 19:1-4). Hebrews 3:4 states, "For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God." Common sense tells us that if we are driving through the country and we come upon a two-story building with windows, doors and a porch, that someone at some time built that house. Most would not come to the conclusion that a terrible tornado took those materials and threw them into the structure before them. I say "most" because that is exactly what **some** do! They look at the creation around them and in them and conclude that there is no design. Unfortunately, it is not for lack of evidence that they think this way, for we are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psa. 139:14).

Even Voltaire said, "The world poses a problem for me, and I cannot suppose that this clock exists without there having been a clock-maker"....Still, it is this same ever-present revelation which fallen men refuse to accept. Blinded by sin,

they refuse truth. “Knowing God, they glorified him not as God...but became vain in their reasonings....Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:21-22)...Next to the rational principle indispensable to any logical reasoning, man has introduced an irrational principle. He knows the truth regarding the eternal power of the divine Creator and regarding the order in creation established according to His will—a truth which alone makes possible any rational, scientific understanding of the world. But at the same time he irrationally suppresses this truth. Not willing for God to govern him, he prefers to interpret the facts of the universe in terms of an egocentric philosophy rather than a theocentric one, glorifying man rather than God. (Pache 15-16)

So why did God proceed with this type of revelation when so many would stop even at this early step and refuse to listen? Whether we like the truth, it is exactly this truth that we need the most.

There were three major reasons why all men received this natural revelation. (1) Man could possess a sense of deity. (2) Man could possess a sense of right and wrong. Man knows that he has a sense which tells him that he ought to do some things and ought not do others. (Rom. 2:14,15) “Even dictators who are about to break a treaty or commit a flagrant aggression find it necessary to discover high-sounding moral reasons for their deeds.”

(3) Man would be without excuse. “For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made...that they may be without excuse.” (Rom. 1:20) (Flatt 51)

There is also general revelation in the moral sense of man. “In creating man in His image, God endowed him with a moral and a spiritual sense” (Pache 16). Note though, that the conscience is a trainable thing. With no input, or the wrong input, man will possess the sense of ought (I ought to do this or that), but this sense may equate jumping ahead in a line with crushing a child. The conscience tells man that there is a right and wrong, and when correctly trained will lead man to find that moral law that is greater than even he.

Special Revelation

There is an inherent problem with general revelation. While general revelation leads one to an all-knowing, all-powerful Creator and Designer of the world, one's relation to said Creator is left unanswered. Special revelation is not only letting the creation do the unveiling, but rather the active unveiling by that Creator himself to his creation. Special revelation results in knowledge of **God** and his **will** and **purpose** that cannot be known solely by general revelation. The Bible (which as we saw earlier implies the value of general revelation) affirms the need for this special revelation. In Jeremiah 10:23, the prophet declares, "O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps."

Without special revelation there are many things that man can never learn of, no matter how intelligent he may be.

1. Man's destiny. Jesus in John 5:28-29 states, "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation."
2. Man's fall from God's grace in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3).
3. God's plan of redemption (1 Cor. 1:21).
4. The number of persons in the Godhead (2 Cor. 13:14).
5. The person and work of Jesus (John 20:30-31).

Possibility of Special Revelation

We have discussed the necessity of general and special revelation. But is special revelation from this Creator even possible? This may seem like a useless point, but many in the world genuinely believe that special revelation is impossible.

Some philosophers have denied such a possibility, saying, "How could the Infinite communicate with the finite, the Creator with the creature? Is absolute truth expressible in the relative terms of human language?" But do we not see, as an everyday occurrence, a father instructing his son word by word, adapting his thought and vocabulary to the child's comprehension? Likewise, a traveler describes the unknown by beginning in terms of the known. God acts thus when He

condescends to where we are in order to communicate His truth to us in an intelligible manner. (Pache 12-13)

It is possible for God to reveal himself above what he has revealed in nature, because a Being who could not reveal himself above natural revelation would be a limited Being, and therefore would not be God. This sounds circular, but truly, if I, a severely limited man, can teach my pet dog to do tricks through communication, why could not the creator of the entire universe stoop to my understanding to communicate? The point is that if He **could not**, then he is not all-powerful, and thus, not truly God.

Since humankind needs revelation from God to reveal specifically his will, and since it must be in understandable language for us to receive it, surely it is possible that God in his infinite nature can provide such a revelation.

Probability of Special Revelation

Special revelation from God is not only possible, but is even probable based on two realities: (1) God's nature and (2) man's nature. First, let us examine the nature of a Creator who is all-powerful and perfectly good.

God is a moral being, and as such, if special revelation is good for man, it seems that God would then do that for man. It would seem that God would nurture his creation as a father to his children. It seems unlikely that God would make a creation and not want to communicate.

Let us emphasize one very important fact: revelation is of necessity an act of God. The intimate thoughts of a man can be disclosed only by the man himself (1 Corinthians 2:11). Even so, and in a far deeper sense, no one but the Spirit of God can make us understand the mysteries of the Deity...If man could sound out these mysteries all by himself and explain them, he would be equal with God. The thoughts of the Lord infinitely surpass ours. Irenaeus rightly said, "The Lord taught us that no one can know God unless God Himself be the teacher; that is, without God, God cannot be known. (Pache 13)

Now, let us examine the nature of man with respect to special revelation. It seems that man's nature is exactly fitted to receive such a revelation from God. His mental character is such

to understand this. His moral character is such to necessitate profit from special revelation. Man has within himself the capacity of no other creation on earth: to contemplate and to worship his Creator.

A revelation which would influence him to act right, and yet without forcing him, and thereby destroying his freedom, and making it impossible for him to act either right or wrong, is certainly not improbable....But more than this, not only can man understand and profit by a revelation, but he earnestly *desires* it. A thoughtful man cannot help wishing to know why he is placed in this world; why he is given free will; how he is meant to use his freedom; and what future, if any, is in store for him hereafter: in short, what was God's object in creating him...And therefore as this result of man's nature was not only brought about by God, but must have been foreknown, and intended by Him; it is not improbable that He should satisfy this craving which He has Himself produced. Moreover, it cannot be satisfied in any other way, for the knowledge is by hypothesis superhuman, and therefore out of man's own reach. And it may be added, the more we realise this, and feel that God is *unknowable*, in the sense that we can gain no satisfactory knowledge about Him by human science and reasoning, so much the more likely does it seem that He should give us such knowledge by revelation. (Turton 112-113)

Having examined both God's nature and man's character, we've learned three things about special revelation: it is necessary, it is possible and it is probable (not only probable, but highly probable).

Role of Logic

The logical question which should follow is how can the revelation be identified and verified? This is where the role of correct reasoning comes in.

The law of rationality says that men should draw only such conclusions as are warranted by the evidence, or, as Lionel Ruby put it, "We ought to justify our conclusions by adequate evidence." To say that evidence is adequate is to say that it is relevant to and/or sufficient to warrant the conclusion to which it is directed. (Warren, *Logic* 14)

To test the genuineness of a claim of revelation, one must

examine the evidence. We use reason to determine which claim to revelation is actually the revelation of God, we use reason to interpret it, then we depend on the Bible as the truth.

The following question might well be raised: How do you decide just what criteria a document would have to have in order to be regarded as inspired and authoritative? The answer is: By the use of reason. If the objector should then say, "But you thus make human reasoning the ultimate judge," then we reply that such is simply not the case. While it is true that we must use our powers of reason in order to ascertain the marks (criteria) which would identify a document as inspired and authoritative, it is not the case that reason thus becomes ultimately authoritative. We simply use our powers of reason to find out which claim to "revelation" really is *the* revelation from God to man. Further, we use those same powers to accurately interpret that authoritative revelation. But we insist it is the Bible itself, *not* human reason which is ultimately authoritative. (This is the case because it is *God's* word.) We must use our reason correctly in order to be sure that what we regard as the authoritative revelation from God really is such, but, having drawn the conclusion (by the use of our reason) that the Bible is inspired and authoritative, we then depend upon *the Bible* as the only source of the right answer to questions pertaining to salvation from sin. (Warren, "Bible" 18-19)

One must remember that when speaking about reason and logic, we are also examining the doctrine of belief. Belief is merely the assent of the mind, or understanding to truth supported by adequate proof. Man is a multi-faceted being. He is an intellectual, emotional, volitional and spiritual being. All of these facets, when used correctly, are needed in reasoning about anything.

Man is a rational being with the ability to reason properly. This would mean that man be looking at the evidence that is available, is able to come to a knowledge of reality, that is, the way things actually are. To say, "I know" is but to say that I, and others as well, have come to intellectual cognizance and certitude regarding a given state of affairs. In this case, that certitude is being claimed for the origin and nature of the Bible....Such a knowledgable [sic] claim is made to dispel any form of agnostic approach relative to the nature of God's word—the Bible. The Christian position is

the view which holds that man can come to know that the Bible is God's verbally inspired Word because the evidence demands such a conclusion. (Laws 15)

So many in the world today view logic and faith as diametrically opposed ideas. If a person has faith in the Bible, then he is illogical. If a person is truly logical, he will be "too intelligent" for the irrationality of faith. This attitude could be no further from the truth. **Faith cannot truly exist as such without logic.** Honestly, the seasoned student of the Bible would also affirm correctly that **true logic will not exist without faith.**

Concede, for example, that all men are mortal, and that Socrates is a man, and then Reason will, of necessity, draw the conclusion that Socrates is mortal. If she is not satisfied with the conclusion, she may review the premises. But let their correctness be conceded, and then *Reason has no alternative left but to draw the conclusion and to acquiesce in it, whether she fully comprehends it or not.* This, then, is her province in every department of truth to which the human mind has access. It is simply by a process of abstraction, comparison, and generalization to draw from the data otherwise furnished, the proper inferences and conclusions. And hence it is obvious that her relations to Divine Revelation are most intimate and important. The very first question that naturally arises in the mind of every man concerning the Bible respects its origin. Is it of human, or is it of Divine origin? Is it the word of man's wisdom, or is it, as it claims to be, the word of the living God? To answer this question, therefore, on the ground of all the evidence variously furnished, is the first province of Reason in matters pertaining to Divine Revelation. **God requires no man to believe without sufficient evidence.** (Milligan 18 emphasis added)

Remember, reason is what we use to determine what God's revelation is. Once God's revelation is found, **it** becomes the authority. Once this occurs, parts which previously could not be reached by reason alone can and should be accepted (e.g., The Bible is the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16), the Bible teaches the doctrine of the Trinity (2 Cor. 13:14), that burial in water is necessary for cleansing from sin (Mark 16:16)). If the Bible is the Word of God, and the Bible teaches doctrine X, then you can know that doctrine X is true. This must be true if the Bible is

God's Word. If the Bible stated that it and it alone is God's Word, then my search is over. I do not have to read every other religious work to prove or disprove its claim of inspiration; I already know it is not God's Word based on what God's **real** Word says. This is correct reasoning, plain and simple.

Inspiration Explained

There are many views of how the writers of the Bible were "inspired." Before we understand what inspiration **is**, let's notice some of these false views.

(1) There are some who forthrightly deny that there is anything special about the Bible. To these, the Bible is just another book—a good book, perhaps—but a book of human origin. (2) Modernism claims that the Bible is a compilation of previously existing human documents, brought together and edited by George—George Redactor, that is! (3) Some claim that the Bible is miraculously inspired in some places, or in a measure, or to a certain extent. We ask: in what places? in what measure? to what extent? who decides? This idea that God (somehow) bestowed upon certain men indefinite, nebulous thoughts, and allowed these men to place the "thoughts in their own words." (Deaver 7)

There is also the view of an inspiration much like mechanical dictation.

The sacred author was wholly passive, registering and transmitting the revelation the way a tape recorder would work today. His personality was completely set aside, so that the text might be free from any fallible human aspects. It would, therefore, be like the claims of the Muslims for the Koran [and similarly in Mormonism, KPC]: already fully spelled out in Arabic in heaven, it supposedly came down to earth with no change whatsoever...We declare, on the contrary, that God did not at all annihilate the personalities of Moses, David, John and Paul. Their style, temperament and personal feelings are everywhere apparent (see Rom. 9:1-5). (Pache 66)

There are obvious problems with each of these proposed explanations of the Bible's inspiration. In each, the problem can be precipitated to one word: authority. In each of the previous pseudo-explanations, the absolute authority for what was finally doctrine rests in a man; in either the writer or in the reader.

Neither of these can be the case. The very need for an absolute standard of morality necessitates an unchanging standard that rests in no man but in one superior to all men: God.

So, what is inspiration? “*Inspiration* (in the limited sense of the word, as used in this work) is the determining influence exercised by the Holy Spirit on the writers of the Old and New Testaments in order that they might proclaim and set down in an exact and authentic way the message as received from God” (Pache 45). In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Paul states, “All Scripture is given by **inspiration** of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” The Greek word Paul used was *theopneustos*, which means God-breathed. The message that comes from God’s Word did not originate in the writer, but in God himself. Second Peter 1:20-21 reads, “knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation [read origin], for **prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.**”

Plenary Verbal Inspiration

These two words are often included in explanations of biblical inspiration. “Plenary” means full or complete. This gives the idea that every book is equally inspired by God. “Verbal” inspiration is the idea that even the words and in fact the ideas behind the words are inspired by God through the Holy Spirit. The scholar Pache states it plainly: “We believe that in the composition of the original manuscripts, the Holy Spirit guided the authors even in their choice of expressions—and this throughout all the pages of the Scriptures—still without effacing the personalities of the different men” (71)

The Church has held from the beginning that the Bible is the Word of God in such a sense that its words, though written by men and bearing indelibly impressed upon them the marks of their human origin, were written, nevertheless, under such an influence of the Holy Ghost as to be also the words of God, the adequate expression of His mind and will. It has always recognized that this conception of co-authorship implies that the Spirit’s superintendence extends to the choice of the words by the human authors...and

preserves its product from everything inconsistent with a divine authorship—thus securing, among other things, that entire truthfulness which is everywhere presupposed in and asserted for Scripture. (Warfield 173)

Realize that inspiration is the guarantee that the revelation given is divinely accurate. Without that guarantee, all one has is a leap in the dark as to whether what he reads is really from God or just from some man.

The Basic Argument for the Inspiration of the Bible

It must be highlighted that the purpose of this study is to examine how to prove the inspiration of the Bible. It is not this treatise's duty to **disprove** all attacks on the Bible's inspiration. That will be dealt with in greater detail elsewhere in this series of lectures. Greater men than I have sought to form a logical argument that completely defends the Bible's claim as the Word of God. Credit must be given first and foremost to the late brother Thomas B. Warren for the following argument's creation and defense.

Here is the argument, set out in valid argument form.

1. If it is the case that the Bible possesses property A, property B, property C...property Z (where the total situation involved in having such properties makes it clear that the Bible is beyond mere human production) then the Bible is the word of God.
2. It is the case that the Bible possesses property A, property B, property C...property Z.
3. Therefore the Bible is the word of God.
4. In this argument, when I refer to property A, property B, property C, etc., I mean for these designations to stand for affirmative propositions regarding some fact regarding the Bible. It is clear that the argument is valid in form...Thus the only way the argument could be shown to be unsound (that is,

that the truthfulness of the conclusion does not follow from the premises) would be to show that at least one of the premises is false. (Warren “Bible”)

Many have tried to improve on this argument, to no avail. Some of the readers may respond that this argument is too simple. One will often find that when the Bible and logic are approached simply, the answer will be just as simple. To show the reader how the argument would be completely filled out, see the following.

1. If it is the case that the Bible contains predictive prophecies which were clearly made in advance of their unquestioned fulfillment, is characterized by a humanly impossible unity, treats matters of science in a way which transcends human invention in the days when its various parts were written, has a view of reality otherwise unknown in human thought, has been confirmed by all the accepted means of historical research (e.g., archaeology), and is free from demonstrable error (as well as possessing other features which are beyond mere human wisdom or invention) then the Bible is the Word of God.
2. The Bible contains predictive prophecies which were clearly made in advance of their unquestioned fulfillment, is characterized by a humanly impossible unity, treats matters of science in a way which transcends human invention in the days when its various parts were written, has a view of reality otherwise unknown in human thought, has been confirmed by all the accepted means of historical research (e.g., archaeology), and is free from

demonstrable error (as well as possessing other features which are beyond mere human wisdom or invention).

3. Therefore the Bible is the Word of God.
(Shelly ix-x)

Note that in this list of propositions there are two types of evidences: internal and external. Internal evidences are qualities within the Bible that, when examined, prove in and of themselves that the Bible is God's Word (e.g., unity, predictive prophecies made and fulfilled, scientific foreknowledge, etc.). External evidences are things outside the Bible that are brought to the Bible that verify its accuracy. Conformity to facts does not prove inspiration. Elementary school math books teach $2 + 2 = 4$. Just because this is true does not mean that the math book was inspired by God. External evidences are confirmatory in nature, rather than primary in nature. Realize though that it is essential for external evidences to be accurate for the subject to be the Word of God. If a book were found that claimed to be written by God in which was written, "Two plus two shall equal five, thus saith the Lord," the reader can know logically that the book is a farce. Why? Because for a being to truly be the absolute and almighty God, he would have to be perfect. No perfect being creates inherently imperfect creations.

Epistemic Distance

Some might object that an infinitely powerful Creator would be able to communicate with man in what ever media so as to completely convince all who heard it (i.e., God would be able to create a book with such overwhelming evidence in his favor, that the reader would be compelled to believe). This was alluded to earlier in the section on general revelation. A person **can** look at the world and decide to live as though there is no God. The same applies to the special revelation from God. A person **can** read the entire Bible from cover to cover and close it never to obey one command therein.

It may sound peculiar, but this is exactly as it must be. While God is more than capable of creating an overwhelming revelation that imposes his will on a person, he is not willing to do so. Such an act would be inconsistent with a perfectly good

God. How could a being be justly rewarded for doing something when it really had no choice in the matter in the first place? Also conversely, how could a person be justly punished when not enough evidence was given to support the desired conclusion? For example, in Genesis 4, when Abel offered the good sacrifice (according to faith in God's command, Heb. 11:4) and Cain offered the unlawful sacrifice (1 John 3:4), Abel was respected, and Cain was not. They both knew what God wanted from them (Rom. 10:17). God did not provide such overwhelming evidence for such a sacrifice that would have resulted in both Cain and Abel irresistibly compelled to do so. Likewise, God did not allow Adam and Eve to be so uninformed that they would have been forced by Satan to eat the fruit. They both had exactly enough knowledge to make the willful choice. One obeyed, the other did not.

What we are dealing with here is what is called the "epistemic distance." Epistemology is the study of the "origin, nature, method, and limits of knowledge" (Deaver 28). The epistemic distance is the exact amount of knowledge (read evidence) a person has been given to come to a correct conclusion, but not so much knowledge as to render the person helpless to resist. Some call this free will. Without this "free moral agency" man would be a programmed robot, incapable of disobedience, but also incapable of true obedience.

When the Bible is examined in this light, it reveals the extraordinary wisdom of God. Not only is he capable of giving the world the only way to heaven, but he has given it in a way that every person can accept it based on the evidence or ignore it as he chooses.

The Bible's Claim

The case for biblical inspiration must also be made from the Bible itself. Remember, if a book claims to not be from God, then it is not from God. If a book made no claim, it could be said that one is forcing the claim on it unnecessarily. If the Bible does claim to be from God, it deserves attention.

First, let us look at some of the Old Testament passages that speak of the origin and inspiration of the Scriptures. Moses in Exodus 4:10-12 pleads with God because he feels he is not eloquent enough to speak to Pharaoh, but God tells him, "Now

therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.” In Exodus 17:14; 24:4 and 34:27, God tells Moses what to write in the books. In Deuteronomy 18:17-18; Isaiah 51:15-16 and Jeremiah 1:9, God said he would put the words in the person’s mouth. No less than 420 times was the declaration of inspiration made in the Pentateuch.

Statements such as “God said,” and “the word of the Lord,” appear thousands of times in the Bible. There are over 3800 such statements in the Old Testament alone, all of which make direct claim that the Old Testament is the inspired word of God. In the first chapter alone, the statement, “And God said” is found at least ten times...There are some 175 claims of inspiration in Psalm 119 alone. (Walker 400-401)

Even Jesus claimed that the Old Testament was inspired by God. In John 10:34-35, Jesus quotes Psalm 82:6 and says that the Scripture cannot be broken. This shows the indestructible authority of God’s Word. This is a claim of plenary inspiration. In Matthew 5:17-18, Jesus then said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, **one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law** till all is fulfilled.” The “jot” was the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and the “tittle” was the smallest distinguishing mark in Hebrew (e.g., the mark that changes O to Q). This is a claim of verbal inspiration even down to the very letters and marks used. It is perfect, which is what you would expect if it were 100% the Word of God.

Now let us examine some of the New Testament claims for inspiration. As was noted earlier; 2 Timothy 3:16-17 teaches that all Scripture is “God-breathed.” When speaking to the apostles in Matthew 10:16-20, Jesus tells them not only will they be provided the words to speak, but even the manner with which to speak them. John 14:26, 29; 4:25; 16:13; 1 Corinthians 14:32 all teach that the Holy Spirit guides the men to accurately speak the Word of God.

Conclusion

Clearly, the Bible claims throughout its pages that it is in fact the Word of God. As was stated earlier, if the Bible were to make such a claim, then it must be given some attention. So why

is it so readily abused and ignored by the world today? Indifference? Ignorance? Remember that every person has the same evidence before him (Rom. 1:20). The answer then is rebellion. We have studied how to prove the Bible is inspired by God. Now it is our duty to determine if it is what it says it is: God's Word.

The world needs to know that God has given his word to man: That the Bible is that word: That the Bible is the inspired, the inerrant, the complete, the powerful, and authoritative word of the eternal God...The only good reason why religious doctrine should be accepted is that it is true. If a particular doctrine is not true then there is no really good reason why it should be accepted. (Warren, "Bible" 24)

Finally, in the words of brother B.C.
Goodpasture:

The Bible has been in the fiery furnace of human investigation and opposition for these many centuries, yet it emerges without the smell of fire upon its garments. It has stood the acid test of practical experience. It has never failed when fairly tried. We have seen it in the forum of public discussion, we have seen it at the bedside of the dying, we have seen it at the graves of the dead; yet we have never seen it weighed and found wanting. It is God's book. (39)

Amen.

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Biographical Sketch

Kriss Cecil-Crihfield is the associate minister at the Barrackville church of Christ. He has been working primarily with the young adults in that congregation for about three years. Kriss received his secular education at Hundred High School (1993-1997) and West Virginia University (1997-2000). He is a graduate of the 2003 class of the West Virginia School of Preaching. He and his wife, Courtney, live with their two-year-old son, Ashton, in Fairmont, WV.

The Miracles Of Jesus

By Eddie Cooper

Introduction

I appreciate the invitation to be with you for this great study, on the theme “Christian Evidences.” If anything is needed in our time, it is a study of “Why We Believe.” My prayer is that this lesson will be helpful to all who study the material given.

Recently, on one of the TV news shows, they discussed miracles. Much of the program was taken up with a discussion of modern miracles associated with the Catholic Church saints or with the Virgin Mary. It was interesting to hear one so-called Bible scholar say that miracles are really not important to the overall Christian message. He also expressed doubts that the miracles of the Bible actually took place. If they did not occur, what about the creation? “In the beginning God created.” (Gen. 1:1) This verse affirms that God exists, that God created; this was the **miraculous** beginning of created matter. “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3). The darkness surrendered to the voice commands of our Creator (Psa. 3:6-9; 2 Pet. 3:7).

“Divine revelation begins with the **miracle** of creation” (Miller 6). One of the problems with understanding the subject is the misuse of the word **miracle**.

What Is a Miracle?

A true miracle is not just a strange, unusual event or one out of the ordinary. A *miracle* is defined as “an event that transcends an ordinary happening and is viewed as a direct result of supernatural power” (*Gospels* 54).

James Dixon defined a *miracle* as “an act or happening in the material or physical sphere that departs from the laws of nature, or goes beyond what is known concerning these laws; a supernatural occurrence” (qtd. in Miller 7).

Lockyer defines a miracle as: “A work wrought by a divine power by means beyond the reach of man....The term “miracle” then, from the Biblical standpoint, is used to describe the wonderful phenomenon accompanying the Jewish and Christian revelation, especially at critical moments. The Biblical conception of a miracle is that of some extraordinary work of

deity transcending the ordinary power of nature and wrought in connection with the ends of revelation” (Lockyer 13-14).

Gus Nichols defined a miracle as “that which God performs aside from laws of nature as contrasted with that which is done through means of nature’s laws” (Nichols 13).

A *miracle* as the term is used in the Bible, is “an act of God superseding or suspending a natural law of God; neither should it be confused with a work of providence, which is an effect produced by a special act of God through natural means (Tolle 3).

The Purpose of Miracles

It is amazing to me that people could see the miracles Jesus did, admit they were miracles and still reject him, but they did. They brought a demon-possessed man, who was blind and dumb, to Jesus, and Jesus healed him. Instead of being grateful, or even acknowledging this as proof that he was from God, they said, “This man doth not cast out demons, but by Beelzebub the prince of demons” (Matt. 12:24).

A similar event is recorded in Mark 2 when they brought a man with a withered arm to Jesus to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. They had no doubt that Jesus **could** heal him, only if he would do it on the Sabbath Day. They misunderstood the **source** of his power, and thus rejected him.

Some people misunderstood the **purpose** of his miracles (Matt. 12:38). As the entire account shows, they were not interested in the truth, but in a circus-type sideshow in which they could ridicule and condemn him.

What a contrast in the attitude of Nicodemus, who came to Jesus and said: “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God: for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with His” (John 3:2). Nicodemus realized the purpose of the miracles of Jesus.

When Jesus drove out the legion of demons from the man in the land of the Gadarenes, his neighbors saw the miracle that was done, and then immediately began to plead with Jesus to leave the country (Mark 5:1-17).

Jesus tells us that the purpose of miracles was to “confirm the word” (Mark 16:20).

The purposes of Jesus’ miracles are as follows:

1. **So that men might know Jesus was Deity** (Matt. 9:1-8). In this text, Jesus healed a man of both his sickness and his sins, something a mere man could never do.
2. **Miracles were performed so that Jesus could show his glory** (John 2:11).
3. **Miracles were performed to produce faith** (John 2:23). The miracles not only produced faith in the first century, they were later written down in the Bible so that all might believe through the ages (John 20:30-31). We can have just as much faith as those who were healed over 2,000 years ago, but the perfect Word of God tells us it happened.
4. **The miracles of Jesus were to show his supernatural power** (Matthew 8:16, 23-27).
5. The basic purpose of the Lord's miracles is expressed in John 20:30-31. John affirms in this passage that the miracles of Jesus **prove him to be the Son of God**.

Before the New Testament was written, it was necessary that men believe in Christ on the basis of verbal teaching concerning miracles (thus the significance of the apostles' preaching). But now that the New Testament has been completely written, the basis of belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, are the **signs** or **miracles** performed by Jesus which are **written**, even as John affirms. **Men today are to believe in Christ because of his miracles that are recorded in the New Testament**. Those who believe that Christ's glory and divinity cannot be upheld today without the current performance of miracles deny the validity of John 20:30-31.

Jesus, the Son of God was given the Spirit to an unlimited extent (John 3:34-35). All the miracles of Jesus (whether miracles such as healing the sick or the miracle of inspiration) were performed through the influence of the Holy Spirit. In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus applies to himself a passage from the Book of Isaiah, a prophecy that sets forth the power of the Spirit in his life.

Other Bible passages declaring the power of the Spirit in the miraculous works of Jesus are the following: Luke 4:14; Matthew 12:18, 28. Since Jesus received the Spirit without limit, his power in the performance of miracles was unlimited.

Classifications of the Miracles of Jesus

Wendell Winkler has given the following classifications of Jesus' miracles:

1. Jesus had power over **death** (John 11:43-45; Luke 7:11-16).
2. Jesus had power over **disease** (Mark 2:1-12; Matt. 4:23).
3. Jesus had power over **demons** (Matt. 4:24; 8:16; Luke 8:26-40).
4. Jesus had power over **nature** (Matt. 8:23-27; 14:22-33).
5. Jesus had power over **material things** (John 6:1-14).
(27 used by permission)

Reactions to the Miracles of Jesus

Have you ever studied the reactions of those who witnessed his miracles? As they witnessed his miracles, some **feared the power** because they did not understand it (Luke 8:25, 27-37). But he used his power to reveal God's love for all people. So, there was no reason to fear that power (John 10:19-21).

1. Some **accused Him of working for Satan** (Matt. 9:34). His teachings were righteous and beneficial to mankind (Acts 10:38). His miracles worked against Satan. Even the evil spirits acknowledged that he was the Son of God and was working against them (Matt. 8:28-29).
2. Some **worried about what others would do or think** (John 12:37-57).
3. Some of them **witnessed his words and miracles, but stood against him** (Matt. 13:13-15). These were a stubborn people. No matter what miracles he performed to prove the truth that he taught, they would not change their minds.

Conclusion

The purpose of his miracles was to assure everyone that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of all those who obey his Gospel (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; John 8:31-32; 12:48-50).

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Biographical Sketch

Eddie is the son of Denver and Florence Cooper. Denver serves as the Director of the West Virginia School of Preaching in Moundsville, WV.

Brother Eddie Cooper is a graduate of St. Marys High School in St. Marys, WV and received an Associate of Science Degree from Ohio Valley College in 1966 and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Bible from Abilene Christian University in 1969.

He has worked for churches in Ohio, Texas and West Virginia. He has conducted radio programs in previous churches and also directed a television program for the Columbus and Chillicothe, OH churches of Christ.

Eddie has written articles for *Teenage Christian*, *Christian Bible Teacher*, *Bible Herald*, *Gospel Truths*, *Gospel Advocate*, *Therefore Stand*, *West Virginia Christian*, *Upon the Rock* and *Gospel Gazette*. He also writes articles for the *Faith* section of the *Parkersburg News and Sentinel*.

He has been with the North End church of Christ since the fall of 1995. He and his wife, Barbara, have two sons, Jason and Scott. Jason is a Captain in the Air Force, serving as a psychologist. His wife, Martha, was recently discharged from the Air Force, having served with the rank of 1st Lieutenant. They just moved to San Antonio, TX, where Jason is receiving more training. Scott is a manager of Tennessee Farmers Co-op in Nashville, TN. His wife, Leah, is a third-grade teacher. They are members of the Rivergate church of Christ in Madison, TN.

Archaeology Confirms Deity

By Louis Rushmore

Digging Up the Past

Archaeology is a science that sifts evidence of mankind's past to discern historical information. A dictionary definition for "archaeology" is "the scientific study of material remains (as fossil relics, artifacts, and monuments) of past human life and activities" (*Merriam*). A simplified, homespun definition of "archaeology" could be "digging up the past." **Bible archaeology** is archaeological excavation, examination and ascertaining information about biblical characters, biblical places or biblical times.

Since archaeology is a science, it is vulnerable to a degree of subjective assessment (i.e., educated guesses). Unfortunately, in every sphere of life, unintended biases as well as covert (or sometimes thinly veiled) prejudices influence conclusions to which one arrives regarding the *available evidence*. For instance, once biblical archaeologists were usually friends of the Bible and delighted whenever they found extra-biblical, archaeological evidence that validated the biblical text. Now, so-called *new* biblical archaeologists are pronounced enemies of the Bible and are horrified whenever extra-biblical, archaeological evidence is interpreted by anyone to validate the biblical text. New Bible Archaeology has boldly undertaken the reevaluation of past discoveries and revels in issuing new assessments of past archaeological discoveries that contradict earlier, published conclusions. Biblical archaeologists who characteristically diminish any possible relationship between archaeological discoveries and the Bible are called minimalists; biblical archaeologists who characteristically capitalize on any possible relationship between archaeological discoveries and the Bible are called maximalists.

Available evidence implies that what has been unearthed and examined may not represent all of the potential evidence that either has not been found yet, or if discovered, to date has not been examined. Literally, tons of excavated, but unevaluated antiquities, lie in the basements of museums around the world; some discoveries of which the world is routinely apprised are

literally *discovered* in museum basements years after their deposit there. This is because the volume of archaeological finds exceeds the time, money and expertise needed to carefully appraise them.

Nevertheless, biblical archaeology in reality is a tremendous friend of the Bible believer. Repeatedly, biblical archaeology when subjected to an honest, balanced treatment (neither minimalist or maximalist oriented) serves as extra-biblical validation of the biblical text and bolsters the Christian faith. A case in point concerns the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the malefactors crucified on either side of our Lord (Matt. 27:38). Though crucifixion dots the annals of secular history from times most ancient, archaeological evidence validating that mode of execution has been unavailable to corroborate either secular or biblical history respecting crucifixion.

However, “[f]ollowing the Six Days War in 1967, excavation of tombs around Jerusalem yielded several ossuaries (stone bone boxes)” (Rushmore 201). This manner of Jewish burial that prevailed only for a 200-year period (Humble 67-68) yielded a singular discovery that provided archaeological confirmation of both the secular, historical record and the biblical record respecting execution by crucifixion.

And in one ossuary were found the bones of a Jew who was named Yehohanan [John], and both his ankles were pierced by an iron nail of 15 centimeters long. And after examination of the bones, it was found this poor person was crucified, and for the first time we have a real archaeological evidence showing how people were crucified. But from the time of Jesus, we had no archaeological evidence... (Humble, *Archaeology* 61)

Wood rots and iron oxidizes (rusts). Consequently, wooden crosses or poles on which unfortunate persons were crucified have not survived to the present. Likewise, iron nails by which some persons were affixed to crosses have not before been known to survive to the present. The unique circumstance of a crucified person being entombed in an ossuary and that the iron nail lodged in his bones yielded a remarkable find that *illustrates* the value of biblical archaeology.

In the case of crucifixion, the abundance of secular, historical records verifying execution by crucifixion as well as

the biblical record evidencing the same needed no archaeological confirmation to establish historically crucifixion as a form of execution. However, regarding other biblical entries, either no historical records coincide with the biblical record (absence of historical information) or secular history actually conflicts with biblical data. In such cases, biblical archaeology is invaluable toward the unbeliever to assure him of the Bible's truthfulness. Further, extra-biblical, archaeological confirmation of Bible facts bolsters and enhances the Bible-believers faith. Archaeological discoveries that pertain to biblical characters, biblical places or biblical times, fairly and honestly evaluated, always befriend the biblical account as well as under gird the faith of believers.

Bone Boxes

Anciently, the Jews buried their dead in a number of ways in Palestine. Nomads, such as the Patriarchs, sometimes buried their dead along their route of travel (Gen. 35:19-20). Otherwise, natural caves or rock-carved tombs were often used as family burial sites (Gen. 23:1-20), especially by the wealthy. These rock tombs were used to bury several family members (Gen. 49:33—50:13). This custom of burying the dead was practiced in the time of Christ (Matt. 27:58-60). The poor were buried in shallow graves, the marking of which did not stand through time (Luke 11:44) or in a potter's field (Matt. 27:1-10). "The poorest Jerusalemites, who could not afford family cave-tombs, were buried in fields, about a foot below the surface" (Zissu 52). Another type of internment less often used and usually attributed to the ascetic sect of the Essenes was the shaft grave. These shafts were from four to six feet deep, unadorned, anonymous, boasting little to no items associated with the deceased and contained a single body (with rare exception).

Ossuaries or bone boxes, briefly introduced already, were employed in burial caves or rock-hewn tombs. The use of ossuaries predated and postdated the time of Jesus Christ: "The archaeological evidence from Jerusalem dates the use of ossuaries from c. 30 BC to AD 135" (Douglas). Bill Humble states, "Ossuaries were used for about a century, from the reign of Herod the Great (37 B.C.) until the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and on rare occasions in the early second century. Thus, when archaeologists discover a tomb with ossuaries, they know it is

about 2,000 years old” (“Soul-Stirring” 36).

An ossuary is a “bone box,” usually about two feet long and made of limestone or marble, which was used in a distinctive Jewish burial custom. After a body had been in a tomb long enough for the flesh to decay and disappear, the bones would be collected and given a permanent burial in the same tomb in an ossuary. This allowed the tomb to be used generation after generation. The custom of secondary burial began during the time of Herod the Great and continued for about 200 years. (Humble, *Archaeology* 67-68)

Several ossuaries (of the many hundreds recovered) provide valuable, extra-biblical information that corroborates the biblical text, as well as sometimes expands biblical knowledge with previously unknown details. For instance, a depiction of Herod’s Temple is inscribed on a limestone ossuary. “The ossuary with the depiction of the Temple is typical. It is a little over 2 feet long, 1 foot wide, and slightly more than 1 foot high... This ossuary, like a number of others, rests on four simple pedestals. Its barrel-vaulted lid is also common, as are both flat and peaked lids” (Grossberg 47). This picture inscribed in stone corresponds to descriptions of the Temple provided by Josephus.

One of the most thought-provoking ossuaries discovered is the one belonging to the high priest who condemned Jesus Christ and persecuted the early church (Matt. 26:3-4, 57-66; Acts 4:6). Interestingly, the physical remains of Caiaphas who caused Jesus Christ to be crucified by the Romans are yet with us, but the resurrected Christ Ascended back to heaven. Caiaphas’ ossuary, on which his name appears twice, is among the most ornate of bone boxes. There is a shrieking irony between the bone-filled ossuary of Caiaphas and the empty tomb of Jesus Christ (Feldman and Roth 37)!

Caiaphas “reigned from A.D. 18 to 36.” The occasion of the discovery of his ossuary “is the only time the actual physical remains of a biblical person have been found. The bones of Caiaphas...were reburied on the Mount of Olives” (Humble, “Soul-Stirring” 37).

One of the most controversial archaeological artifacts is an ossuary attributed to “James the son of Joseph, the brother of Jesus”; this particular bone box is 20 inches long (at the bottom but 22 inches long at the top), 10 inches wide and 12 inches high

(Lemaire, “Burial” 27-28). The primary reason that anyone views this ossuary and many other artifacts with critical suspicion is that they are unprovenanced. That simply means that mystery surrounds their origin, because they were not properly documented as recovered in strata (where they lay in the earth and associated with surrounding objects).

The historical appearance of artifacts that may have been unearthed illegally and without scientific oversight for sale on the antiquities market must be questioned, primarily because such an artifact must be discerned from possible forgeries. Second, there is a great reluctance among archaeologists and the organizations or governments with which they are associated to approve unprovenanced artifacts, even if genuine, for fear of encouraging more, future illegal disturbance of archaeological artifacts for sale on the antiquities market. Third, ideological, religious and political biases motivate various persons, organizations and governments to brand as forgeries, when they can, archaeological artifacts that may invalidate their belief systems or politics. These ardent critics are panic-stricken because: “The inscription provides the earliest attestation of three key New Testament figures and the first-ever reference to Jesus in the archaeological record” (Shanks, “Cracks” 21).

Does the fact that the inscription on this ossuary mentions not only the father of the person whose bones are enclosed but also the brother help us in our identification? It is common to mention the father in this context, but mention of the brother is very unusual, although it does happen (we have only one other example in Aramaic, in a similar formula). The mention of the brother probably means that the brother had a particular role, either in taking responsibility for the burial, or more generally because the brother was known, and the deceased had a special connection with him. When we take into account that this “James/Jacob, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus” had a brother who was by this time well known and that the “James/Jacob, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus” had a special relationship with this brother as the leader of the Jerusalem church, it seems very probable that this is the ossuary of the James in the New Testament. If so, this would also mean that we have here the first epigraphic mention—from about 63 C.E.—of Jesus of Nazareth. (Lemaire, “Burial” 33)

Before the James ossuary came to light, the earliest mention of Jesus was in the Rylands Papyrus—the earliest known Gospel fragment. Dating to 125 C.E.—about 100 years after Jesus’ death—measuring only 3.4 inches high, the fragment bears the Greek text of John 18:31-33 and 18:37-38. (Feldman and Roth 34)

The James Ossuary suffers the three-fold complaint of (1) being unprovenanced, (2) if authenticated, promoting future illegal disruption of archaeological beds, and (3) agitating ideological, religious and political biases. However, in the next place, an unprovenanced artifact may be a forgery, but a legitimate and supervised archaeological site can be *salted* with forgeries as well. Hence, irrespective of the origin of an artifact, it must be examined carefully and as honestly as possible to validate it as authentic.

The popular press, liberal news organizations and the Israeli government dismiss the James Ossuary as a forgery. The Christian’s faith is not the least damaged if the James Ossuary is not authentic—a fake. However, if the James Ossuary is genuine, it merely provides extra-biblical confirmation of the biblical text (and secular history) respecting the *historical Jesus*. The James Ossuary and every other potential archaeological artifact deserve a fair, unbiased analysis. Following is some of the evidence for the authenticity of the James Ossuary.

(1) World-renown paleographer (student of ancient writings and inscriptions) Andre Lemaire, as well as other paleographers, deemed the inscription to be authentic. (2) State of Israel Ministry of National Infrastructures Geological Survey concluded the inscription is authentic (Lemaire “Burial” 28-29). (3) The Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada studied the inscription, likewise concluding that it is authentic. (4) Professor Roni Reich of the Israeli Antiquities Authority’s (IAA) “Ossuary Inscription Committee” deemed the James Ossuary inscription as authentic, until capitulating on his assessment to concur with findings of the “Materials Committee.” (5) “Strangely enough, the subcommittee on the ossuary inscription did not include any paleographer or epigrapher [a student of engraved inscriptions]” (Lemaire, “Flawed” 51). (6) Jacques Neguer of the IAA’s “Materials Committee” asserted that the ossuary is authentic but that the inscription (not his field) was a forgery (“Storm” 26-31;

“Paleography” 37-38). (7) It is commonly acknowledged by all parties that the ossuary (and particularly its inscription) was cleaned in modern times with contemporary solvents that disturbed the patina (ages old film that develops on antiquities), making examination of the patina inconclusive rather than evidence of forgery (“Observations” 32-33). (8) The IAA did not realize the potential significance of the James Ossuary, because it did not realize that the inscription might refer to Jesus of Nazareth, when the IAA granted an export permit for the ossuary to be displayed in Canada. Only after the James Ossuary was published regarding its inscription did the IAA have any interest in or complaint about the James Ossuary (Shanks, “Cracks” 21-22).

“All agree that the ossuary itself is authentic and dates to the time of Jesus” (“Alleged” 61). The only question regarding the authenticity of the James Ossuary is whether the inscription is authentic or a forgery. Despite critics who decry the inscription as a forgery, numerous scholars and scholarly organizations, many of which are secular rather than potentially biased by ideologies, religion and politics, firmly assert that the James Ossuary inscription is genuine. I conclude by my preponderance of the published arguments respecting the James Ossuary that there is no reason to doubt its authenticity, and there is more reason to consider it simply one more of numerous extra-biblical, archaeological witnesses to the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth. Incidentally, both the secular historical record and the biblical text concur respecting the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth.

Almost as Old as Dirt

James Usher (1580-1656) “fixed the Biblical chronology” (*McClintock and Strong*), dating creation at 4004 B.C. by analyzing the Hebrew Old Testament. He crafted his biblical chronology by assuming an “unbroken succession of father-son relationship in the genealogical lists of Gen 5 and 11” (*New Unger’s*). Another chronologist, Hales, who used the Septuagint to derive a biblical chronology, dated creation at 5411 B.C. Usher’s biblical chronology appeared in the margin of the Authorized Version (KJV); he also dated Noah’s flood at 2348 B.C. (Easton). However, some say it is not possible to ascertain

with certainty when creation occurred because one cannot be absolutely sure that Genesis' genealogical lists do not omit any names of lesser importance. Yet, any conservative analysis of Bible information concurs with a relatively young earth, scientifically provable (but that is another study) to be not more than 10,000 years old (rather than the fanciful millions or billions of years old per the *theory* of evolution).

One of the most well known biblical accounts in Genesis following creation is the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden. Genesis Three portrays Adam and Eve in the Garden when Satan in the form of a snake tempts Eve to eat fruit off a tree from which God had forbidden the first pair even to touch. Remarkably, a pair of archaeological discoveries in the very part of the world where the Garden of Eden was located date back nearly to and depict the biblical account of the fall of man. By Usher's calculations, the earth is about 6,000 years old whereas these artifacts are about 5,500 years old. Hence, these artifacts are *almost as old as dirt* (i.e., just a little younger than the created earth itself).

Two Temptation Seals dating before 3,000 B.C. were discovered in excavations at and near Nineveh. Both picture a man, a woman and a serpent. One of them also shows a tree, the woman picking the fruit from the tree and a serpent that is standing erect. Early man appears to have acknowledged from antiquity the story of the temptation in the Garden of Eden. Archaeological discoveries once again bolster a biblical narrative. (Rushmore 80)

Actually, the first of these two seals is known as the Temptation Seal. "According to some archaeologists, the oldest piece of art known to the human family is that which is recognized as the temptation seal that pictures a tree on the opposite sides of which are seated two persons" ("Beginnings"). "[O]n the left, a woman [is] plucking fruit; behind the woman, a serpent, [is] standing erect, as if whispering to her" (Halley 68). "This ancient piece of art is recognized by scholars as a pictorial representation of the account found in Genesis 3 and is corroborative evidence proving the historicity of the Biblical narrative" ("Beginnings"). "Some of the most startling archaeological finds bear upon the historicity of the first eleven chapters of Genesis, a portion of the Bible that even some Bible-

believing scholars have had difficulty accepting at face value. Among these is the Temptation Seal, found among ancient Babylonian [clay] tablets, and presently in the British Museum...” (Riss).

The second seal is known as the Adam and Eve Seal. This seal depicts “a naked man and a naked woman, walking as if utterly down-cast and broken-hearted, followed by a serpent. The seal is about an inch in diameter, engraved on stone. It is now in the University Museum at Philadelphia” (Halley 68). This artifact dating to about 3,500 B.C. shows the first human pair bowed forward while walking, much like more contemporary artists’ conceptions of God driving Adam and Eve from the Garden.

Scholars from the time of the discovery of these seals through the present have recognized the significance of them as they relate to the biblical account of the fall of man. However, especially in recent years with the rise of so-called new biblical archaeology, critics of the Bible (and God behind the Bible) have capitalized on the subjectivity of interpretation to discount these seals as having any relationship whatsoever to the biblical account. Rather, critics assert that any resemblance to the biblical narrative is coincidental, and that the Temptation Seal, for instance, really depicts “a sacred marriage icon” (“Sacred”). However, a host of scholars, some of whom with which we are acquainted personally, continue to confidently avow the biblical application of these and other archaeological discoveries. The following observations deserve honest consideration:

Some writers have doubted that there is any real significance to these seals as evidence for the fall. However, the specific personages and elements cannot easily be dismissed in such fashion. For what reason should an artist select such a motif by which testimony is made as to the cause of man’s degradation? Rather, one should select a theme that would enhance man’s image. (qtd. in Jackson).

It is difficult to explain what the three figures, engraved on a seal dating from the beginnings of human antiquity, are doing if the artifact is not another depiction of the Genesis account. (“Adam”)

The Babylonian Flood Tablets also serve as extra-biblical corroboration of the biblical record. Excavation of Nineveh in

the 1850's unearthed clay Flood Tablets that correspond to the biblical account of the universal flood of Noah's day. A Sumerian version of the flood also was found at Nippur among tens of thousands of clay tablets (between 1880-1900) (Free and Vos 194). "The Bible tells of it; the ancient Mesopotamian epic of Gilgamesh tells of it: a terrible deluge left the whole earth under water" ("Evidence"). There are numerous similarities between the universal flood of Noah's day and the extra-biblical, ancient accounts that have surfaced through archaeology. The chief difference between the biblical narrative and the extra-biblical accounts of the universal flood pertains to the polytheism connected with the extra-biblical accounts versus the monotheism of the biblical account.

The same collection of tablets also recount the biblical account of the destruction of the Tower of Babel and the confusion by God of the languages. The Flood Tablets provide human commentary on the events surrounding the Tower of Babel. The tablets read, in part: "The building of this temple offended the gods. In a night they threw down what had been built. They scattered them abroad, and made strange their speech" (Free and Vos 41). Both biblical and secular history ascribe language to mankind from the beginning and that all humanity initially shared a common language. Some have observed that most languages demonstrate their origin from a single parent language.

So, biblical archaeology provides extra-biblical corroboration of the universal flood and the Tower of Babel also, neither of which events themselves removed overly much from when dirt was created (i.e., *almost as old as dirt*). Observations so far represent merely a sample of the vast amount of extra-biblical evidence available today through *digging up the past* or biblical archaeology.

Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls

Qumran consists of the ruins of a desert community on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. It lies just a few miles southeast of Jerusalem and south of Jericho. Caves adjacent to Qumran yielded a library of about 800 books, including biblical texts, non-biblical but religious texts and secular texts. Bedouin shepherd boys accidentally found the since famous Dead Sea

Scrolls while searching for lost sheep. This 1947 discovery eventually drew an extensive excavation of the cave in which the original find was located as well as neighboring caves.

Inside, the caves were not clean and neat and level. On the contrary, they were often very difficult to excavate in. In Cave 4 there were 6 feet of bat dung and dust deposited over 2,000 years that the Bedouin and the archaeologists had to wade through in the stifling heat in order to try to extricate the fragments. ...A few of the scrolls, about ten or so, were beautifully preserved and largely intact, like the scrolls of the Book of Isaiah. But most consist of a lot of tiny fragments. (Shanks, et al. 4)

Arguably, the most significant contribution of biblical archaeology in the twentieth century, both in importance and sheer number of pieces, must be the accidental discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. However, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the nearby settlement of Qumran still present some mysteries that no theory adequately and completely addresses. Unanimity as to who lived at Qumran, who put the scrolls in the caves, why the scrolls were placed in the caves and who wrote the scrolls continues to be elusive.

Every scholar recognizes that not all the scrolls were written at Qumran. Many of the scrolls even pre-date the settlement at Qumran. All scholars also recognize that many of the other scrolls are not Essene documents—for example, the more than 200 Biblical scrolls. (Shanks, “Who Wrote” 12)

In 1947, an ancient manuscript of the Book of Isaiah was found that predated the previously oldest copy of that book by 1,000 years. The fidelity in translating between the copies that many years apart warrants great confidence in the reliability of the current text of Isaiah and the Bible in general.

...a date of about 100 B.C. Such an early manuscript of Isaiah is of great significance, inasmuch as the oldest manuscript up to that time dated from about 900 A.D. Even more important was the close agreement between this newly found Jerusalem manuscript and the traditional Hebrew text, which was copied much later. ...there is nothing in this manuscript that can be called “a major addition or omission” ...The substantial agreement between this ancient manuscript and those of a thousand years later shows the

care with which biblical manuscripts were copied and adds to our assurance concerning the substantial accuracy of the later manuscripts from which our English translations were made. (Free and Vos 176)

It has every chapter and every verse that we have in our Bibles. Except for a few very minor variations, the Hebrew text is identical with the Massoretic text that was used for all our English translations of the Bible. (Humble, *Archaeology* 40)

This manuscript of Isaiah enjoys a singular distinction: "...2,000-year old manuscript—the oldest manuscript of a complete book of the Bible ever discovered (35)." The claims, then, that *new discoveries* somehow invalidated English translations of the Bible made before 1947 are baseless. This attempt to justify a myriad of new translations not only unnecessarily undermines confidence in the revealed will of God, but the numerous English translations themselves that have appeared shortly after each other in the twentieth century also undercut confidence in the Word of God. Especially, doctrinal differences that appear in the modern translations must be attributable to something other than *new discoveries*!

The Book of Isaiah cited above and later discoveries from a total of 11 caves near Qumran resulted in the discovery of a number of additional scrolls, together called the Dead Sea Scrolls. These scrolls are comprised of both biblical and secular documents.

...Cave 1 at Qumran. These include a complete scroll of Isaiah, a partial Isaiah, the Habakkuk Commentary (including two chapters of Habakkuk), the Manual of Discipline (rules for members of the religious community who lived nearby), Thanksgiving Hymns, a Genesis Apocryphon (apocryphal accounts of some of the patriarchs), and Wars of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness (an account of a real or spiritual war between some of the Hebrew tribes and the tribes east of the Jordan, Ammonites, Moabites, etc.). (Free and Vos 176)

Overall, tens of thousands of manuscript fragments of hundreds of scrolls were found in the 11 caves. Of the biblical manuscripts, only the Book of Esther has not been found.

One curious manuscript is on a copper scroll.

This scroll consists of two rolls of copper found in cave 3. Written in Hebrew, it contains a list of hiding-places in Palestine containing fabulous treasures, with instructions for reaching them. Whether these were real treasures of the Temple or the sect or purely imaginary is still a matter of dispute. In any case, attempts to locate some of the treasures listed have ended in complete failure. (*Archaeological Encyclopedia*)

More recently, other efforts to follow this so-called *treasure map* have met with limited, though, somewhat anticlimactic success. Perhaps an unlikely source, *Popular Mechanics* featured the copper scroll in its May 1999 issue. Further, the magazine sponsored an effort, which included its Science Editor and a *Popular Mechanics* Land Rover, to search for some of the 60 to 64 treasures. The adventurers found none on that outing. Purportedly, though, Vendyl Jones, a Baptist preacher from Texas, found two items described on the copper scrolls.

In 1988, Jones and his team hit pay dirt. They found one of the artifacts listed in the text, a small jug of ancient anointing oil. Four years later, in 1992, Jones and his team made a second discovery, a red organic material that the Weizman Institute, the Israel Institute of Geology and Bar-Ilan University would all identify as containing eight of the 11 spices used in making ancient incense. (Fillon 73-74)

The theory is that during an interim in the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the Jews hid temple treasures outside the city, and that the copper scrolls show where it was hidden.

Jerusalem, “the City of Peace,” has been besieged about 40 times and destroyed—at least partially—on 32 occasions. The battle that most interests us was waged here nearly 2000 years ago. In 70 C.E. (Common Era), after four years of war, a meeting was arranged between the Roman commander Titus and leaders of the Jewish community. They offered to abandon the city and live in the desert. Titus refused and the battle raged for another month. It was during this time that the treasures alluded to in the copper scroll—which eluded us on our trek into the desert—were supposedly spirited to the caves in the Judean Hills. Legends say some were hidden en route. (134)

The color photographs of the Bible lands and of the copper scroll in *Popular Science* are exquisite. The translation of the

map is awe-inspiring:

In Mount Gerizim, under the entrance of the upper pit: one chest and ...60 talents of silver ...In the vat of the olive press, in its western side, a plug stone of 2 cubits: 300 talents of gold. ...Under the Monument of Absalom, on the western side, buried at 12 cubits: 80 talents. ...towards the overflow tank: 80 talents of gold in two pitchers. ...under the wall on the east, in a spur of rock: 600 pitchers of silver... (72-73).

Some of the landmarks are either not discernible or are simply not there any more. Doubtless, many treasures have been found purposely or accidentally over 2,000 years. Other sites are not accessible.

The ruins of Qumran are usually attributed to the Essenes. However, even among on-site students of Qumran, there is hardly a consensus regarding any number of matters, including: who occupied Qumran and when as well as who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls and stored them in the adjacent caves. "Among scholars, it would be easier to get agreement on the size, color, location, and deer-power of Santa's sleigh than to reach consensus on issues relating to the Essenes and the Qumran community" (Weiss)

Excavation of the site yielded inkpots, tables and benches in what excavators call the scriptorium.

We know from the Manual of Discipline, one of the manuscripts found in Cave 1, that the Essenes worked in shifts 24 hours a day in this library, or scriptorium, writing commentaries and copying precious manuscripts of the Bible. (Humble, *Archaeology* 38)

Several additional buildings and large cisterns also comprise the ruins of Qumran. "[I]n July and August it gets to 135 to 140 here" (39)

Qumran was destroyed by the Romans along with other Jewish cities, including Jerusalem, following the Jewish revolt in A.D. 66. The Essenes may have hidden the scrolls in the nearby caves to protect them from the impending approach of Roman armies.

Several of the scrolls are displayed in the Shrine of the Book museum in Jerusalem. The building looks like the lid of a pottery jar in which the Dead Sea Scrolls were stored in the

caves at Qumran. In addition to scrolls containing biblical text, secular scrolls, including papyri letters, are kept in the Shrine of the Book. A letter by Bar Kochba, involved in an uprising against Rome (A.D. 132), advises ill treatment of Jewish Christians.

In this letter Bar Kochba orders one of his generals to put the Galileans in fetters. The “Galileans” were the Jewish Christians, and this is the first tangible evidence outside the New Testament of the persecution of believers. (42)

The Dead Sea Scrolls complement other ancient copies of the books of the Bible. The Sinaitic Manuscript was discovered in St. Catherine’s Monastery at Mt. Sinai in the Sinai Peninsula. It has all 27 books of the New Testament, and it was written in the fourth century A.D.

The oldest New Testament manuscript is the John Rylands papyrus. It’s only a small part of John 18, but this manuscript was made in the first half of the second century—perhaps within 50 years of the original writing of John. (43)

A burial cave in 1980 in Jerusalem yielded a silver amulet engraved with a priestly blessing from Numbers 6. “This is now the oldest fragment of Scripture ever discovered, about 500 years older than [sic] the Dead Sea Scrolls” (44). Finds like this, dating to 2,700 years ago, help verify the date that Bible books claim for themselves. Proper dating of biblical books is crucial especially to show prophecy and fulfillment. Demonstrating prophecy and fulfillment attests the divine origin of the Bible and its message.

The Temple Scroll is the largest Dead Sea scroll with an overall length of about 26.5 feet and a height of 9.5-10 inches. It reflects the mind of the Essenes regarding ceremonial laws in Judaism.

As an example, the Essenes believed that the Old Testament laws dealing with ritual cleanliness in the Israelite camp in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 23:10-14, for example) had to be applied to the entire city of Jerusalem. The Essenes were forbidden to have toilets inside the city. They had to go outside the camp (city) to go to the toilet. And because that was more than a Sabbath day’s journey, they just could not go on the Sabbath. (50)

One of the most famous Dead Sea Scrolls ...is MMT, which lists a series of religious laws ...over which the Dead Sea Scroll sect (perhaps the Essenes) disagreed with other Jews, presumably those Jews (probably the Pharisees) whose allegiance was to the Temple priesthood. ...Here are some of the concerns raised in MMT: If pure water in a pure vessel is poured into an [ceremonially] impure vessel, the water in the impure vessel certainly becomes impure; but does the impurity travel up the poured stream of water so that the remaining water in the pure vessel also becomes impure (along with the formerly pure vessel)? Further, when someone purifies himself or herself in a ritual bath... is the purification effective immediately ...or only when the sun sets? The centrality of these kinds of questions to the Dead Sea Scroll community amply demonstrates the importance of ritual purity at the time. ...Stone vessels, unlike ceramic and glass vessels, were not subject to impurity. ...It made sense to purchase a vessel that could not become unclean, for once a vessel became ritually unclean, it had to be taken out of use. An impure pottery vessel, for example, had to be broken. ...Dung vessels were made of a mixture of animal dung and clay, which was dried in the sun. They were used mainly for the storage of dry materials, such as wheat, barley and lentils. Earthen vessels were defined as having been made of unfired clay. Because stone vessels were also unfired, allowing the stone to remain in its natural state, they were grouped with earthen vessels. (Magen 46-52)

The Temple Scroll was confiscated by the Israeli military from an antiquities dealer following the 1967 Six-Day War. Before the Israeli victory in that short war, both the dealer's shop (in Jerusalem) and his home (in Bethlehem) were under Jordanian control. The dealer had attempted to negotiate the sale of the Temple Scroll for a million dollars, had refused \$130,000 and was paid \$105,000 following the confiscation of the scroll. (Shanks, "Magnificent" 35)

An interesting contrast occurs between the Manual of Discipline and the Gospel of Christ.

But in the Manual of Discipline, when a member was accepted into the Qumran community, he had to swear to love the sons of light and "hate the sons of darkness for all eternity." (Humble, *Archaeology* 50-51)

Jesus, however, taught: “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:43-44).

Thanks to the Dead Sea Scrolls and these many other manuscripts, we can have great confidence in the text of the Bible. When we read the Bible, we don't need to ask, “Is this book just like it was written by Matthew and John and Paul?” We don't need to ask that question. We can be sure that it is. (44)

The Missing Superpower

An ancient nation, a superpower, that though mentioned in the Bible was otherwise unknown was the Hittite Empire. Critics, therefore, indicted the Bible as historically inaccurate on this account—until through archaeology the Hittite Empire's capital city was unearthed in Turkey. The Hittites were contemporary with the Patriarchs.

In 1906 ...125 miles east of Ankara, Turkey... The massive site of more than four hundred acres (compare the eight and one-half acres of biblical Jericho) proved to be the capital of the Hittite Empire. ...a large Hittite royal archive of over ten thousand clay tablets in the citadel area. This archive included a treaty between the Hittites and Ramses II... (Free and Vos 108)

The Hittites are a striking example of a chapter in Old Testament history that was once dismissed as unreliable, or even mythological, but now must be accepted as trustworthy history thanks to 20th-century archaeological work. ...Who might be interested in the Hittites today? Anyone concerned about the credibility of Scripture. It is a moving experience for the Bible believer to wander through the ruins of Hattusas or view the Hittite art and clay tablets in the Ankara and Istanbul museums. Just a century ago, there were no Hittite ruins, no art and no written records, so the Bible accounts were brushed aside as myth. Not so today—thanks to these archaeological finds. (Humble, “Hittites” 36-38)

The Hittites were a European tribe that migrated south to Asia Minor and dominated native people there before extending its influence through the Fertile Crescent. A Hittite prayer

mentions seeing the sun rise out of the sea and may indicate that the Hittites formerly lived in the vicinity of either the Black or Caspian seas (Ceram 92-93). The Hittite Empire employed the first known “constitutional monarchy” (128). Their king lists have been deciphered, and their language has been successfully translated, too. Hittite control of Asia Minor extended from 1800 B.C. to 1200 B.C. (213).

The Hittite migration represents the first conflict between ‘East and West’ in recorded history. The Hittite Empire grew to become one of just a few major powers in the Fertile Crescent, conquering Babylon, fighting Assyria and successfully warring with Egypt (3-5). Assyrian and Egyptian records note skirmishes with the Hittites over a period of 700 years (27).

In part, their military prowess was dependent upon their refinement of the battle chariot—the tank of that era. The Hittites used spoked wheels instead of solid wheels on their chariots, which improved maneuverability and speed. Whereas their opponents assigned two personnel per chariot—a driver and a warrior, the Hittites assigned an additional warrior—for one on each side of the driver (156-157).

The Hittite empire was centered in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). At its maximum, it extended from the Aegean coast of Anatolia [Asia Minor], east to the Euphrates River, southeastward into Syria as far as Damascus, and south along the eastern Mediterranean coast of the Levant. Hittite King Mursuli sacked Babylon around 1600 BC, but did not attempt to hold the region. (Shelly 82)

The first battle in history about which enough written details survive to reconstruct it was between the Hittites and Egypt at Kadesh in 1296 B.C. on the Orontes River. Pharaoh himself and the remnants of his army only survived that contest because the Hittites stopped to plunder the abandoned Egyptian camp and lacked sufficient resolve to pursue the fleeing Egyptians. The two nations settled for an impasse in what was supposed to be a war to decide control of the land between the Nile and Tigris rivers. Consequently, the first detailed peace treaty in history brought peace between these two ancient superpowers. This peace treaty survives in both Egyptian and Hittite languages and has been unearthed respectively in their two nations (167-194).

Rameses II and Hattusilis made a treaty of non-aggression in 1284—the first known in history. Both Egyptian and Hittite copies of this treaty have been preserved; the border between the two powers is set to the south of Kadesh in middle Syria. (Lewis 92)

One copy of this treaty, in the Hittite language, is engraved in cuneiform script on tablets found near Hattusas; two other copies, in Egyptian hieroglyphics, are carved on walls in Thebes and Karnak. (Shanks, “Expedition” 76)

About a hundred years later, the Hittites themselves were annihilated by invaders, who instead of occupying the conquered cities, plundered and abandoned them. “At one blow the entire Hittite Empire was wiped out” (197-198). The swiftness and utter desolation of the Hittite Empire doubtless contributed immeasurably to its obscurity until unearthed recently.

Seldom has a world power collapsed more suddenly or completely. Having rivaled Egypt in the early thirteenth century for the control of western Asia, the Hittites were by the middle of that century having increasing difficulty in maintaining their position against coalitions of Aegean peoples in western Asia Minor. In spite of temporary successes, they were unable to stave off disaster. In the decades after ca. 1240 they were engulfed in a tide of race migration that tore their brittle structure from its moorings and washed it forever from the map of history. By the end of the century inscriptional witness fails, and it is evident that the Hittites have gone under. (Bright)

Usually a political and commercial economy maintains some residual presence even when overpowered (e.g., Greek), but the Hittite ruination was sufficiently comprehensive to erase their entire culture.

However, remnants of Hittites remained in various places. In the description of the land that the Israelites were to possess, God cited a people called the Hittites (Joshua 1:4). “The Hittite Empire dominated the heartland of Asia Minor from 1750 B.C. until about 1200 B.C. ...The Old Testament has about 40 references to the Hittites” (Humble and Fair 14).

Until early in the twentieth century, the Hittites were unknown and not considered historical. The Bible, accordingly, was faulted. Since the discovery of the Hittite capital city in

mountainous Turkey, additional Hittite sites have been discovered. Once more, the Bible has been exonerated by archaeological discoveries. This can only heighten the faith of Bible believers!

The Moabite Stone

A German Anglican medical missionary happened on the Moabite Stone (or Mesha Stele) on August 19, 1868 while visiting a Bedouin camp in what today is the country of Jordan. Dibon, the site where the Moabite was found lying atop the ground, fallen on its back, lies 20 miles east of the Dead Sea just north of the Arnon River (Halley CD-ROM). The Moabite Stone parallels the biblical account (2 Kings 3:4-27) of Moab's rebellion against the dominance over it by Israel. In this case, the nations of Israel and Judah collaborated to subdue Moab.

There are several reasons for which the Moabite Stone is an important archaeological discover. *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* records, "The Moabite stone has profound biblical relevance. Historically, it confirms Old Testament accounts" and "it mentions no less than 15 sites listed in a remarkable degree supplements and corroborates the history of King Mesha recorded in 2 Kings 3:4-27." "The incident is otherwise only in the Bible itself (2 Kings 3:4ff)" (Cross).

Its importance as an ancient monument can hardly be overemphasized. When translated, it turned out to be a victory monument erected in the ninth century B.C. by Mesha, king of Moab. The script is Phoenician, sometimes called paleo-Hebrew; it is the same script used by the Israelites. Also the language the Moabites used, as revealed in the inscription, is almost identical to that used by the Israelites. ...The conflict between Moab and Israel is also described in the Bible but, not surprisingly, from a different angle. ...The Moabite Stone describes events not mentioned in the Bible and the Bible describes events not mentioned in the Moabite Stone. Both accounts — in 2 Kings 3 and in the Moabite Stone — begin by telling the reader that King Mesha had been a vassal of the king of Israel, but had rebelled... Mesha's stele also makes sport of Israel's God, Yahweh... This occurrence of the name Yahweh, spelled just as it is in the Hebrew Bible, is the earliest reference to Yahweh in any known inscription or text.... Mesha's account of events confirms the fact that the area north of the

Arnon River was occupied by Israelites before Mesha's rebellion; Mesha also confirms that these Israelites belonged to the tribe of Gad...(Horn)

Easton's Bible Dictionary remarks:

This inscription in a remarkable degree supplements and corroborates the history of King Mesha recorded in 2 Kings 3:4-27. ...This ancient monument, recording the heroic struggles of King Mesha with Omri and Ahab, was erected about B.C. 900. ...It is the oldest inscription written in alphabetic characters, and hence is, apart from its value in the domain of Hebrew antiquities, of great linguistic importance. (Easton)

The *New Bible Dictionary* notes, "The great importance of this inscription linguistically, religiously and historically lies in its close relation to the Old Testament. The language is closely akin to Hebrew" (Douglas). Horn also says "the Moabite Stone with its text on 34 lines is still the longest monumental inscription that has been discovered anywhere in Palestine, east or west of the Jordan River."

"The Moabite Stone is a black basalt [smooth volcanic stone] stele; that is, an upright monument with a flat base and a rounded top. ...The inscription of 34 lines was incised on its front with a raised frame surrounding it on both sides and on its rounded top" (Horn). The Moabite Stone is three feet ten inches tall, two feet wide (*ISBE*). "A famous example of such a freestanding stele is the Moabite Stone, inscribed by the Moabite king Mesha in the ninth century B.C." (Lemaire "Fragments").

Negotiations to purchase the Moabite Stone were complicated when the Bedouins realized westerners had a keen interest in acquiring it. After more than a year of failed negotiations, the Ottomans or Turks who loosely controlled the Palestinian area determined to seize the Moabite Stone with a military force. Consequently, the Bedouins "broke the stone into countless pieces by heating it in a fire then pouring cold water on it while it was white-hot. The fragments were then distributed among the local Bedouin, who put them into granaries to serve as talismans to guarantee the fertility of the soil" (Horn). Fortunately, "a paper squeeze (a papier-mâché impression)" was made during the period of negotiations. "Later the French secured the pieces, and by putting them together—along with

pieces of the paper squeeze—saved the inscription. It is now in the Louvre Museum (Halley CD-CROM). “The 57 pieces thus salvaged comprise approximately two-thirds of the original inscription” (Horn).

Conclusion

Literally, there is no convenient stopping place when doing even a cursory overview of biblical archaeology. There is a nearly endless number of significant archaeological discoveries that deserve honorable mention whenever the topic of biblical archaeology is broached. The Black Obelisk and Hezekiah’s Tunnel, for instance, are two such entries that transport one’s mind to times ancient and substantiate the biblical narrative. (An “obelisk” is “an upright 4-sided usually monolithic pillar that gradually tapers as it rises and terminates in a pyramid”; a “monolith” is “a single great stone...” (*Merriam*).

Biblical archaeology reveals both events that are also recorded in the Bible and events that are not mentioned in the Bible, though the characters associated with these latter events are named in the biblical text. The Black Obelisk of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III records tribute brought to him by other kings. One of these tribute-paying monarchs was the Israelite Jehu. He brought tin, gold and silver. Though Jehu is a biblical character, this particular event is not chronicled in the Bible (Tammi).

This was an unhappy time in Jehu’s reign, but this scene on the Black Obelisk is very important because it is the only contemporary picture of a Hebrew king in existence — Jehu, who reigned about 840 B.C. (Humble, *Archaeology* 19)

The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser provides extra-biblical information regarding Israel’s King Jehu’s subjection to Shalmaneser III of Assyria.

Regarding Hezekiah’s Tunnel, it was in anticipation especially of the confrontation with Assyria that Hezekiah had a conduit constructed from a pool outside Jerusalem (Upper Gihon) to a cistern (Pool of Hezekiah) on the inside of the city walls (2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chron. 32:30). The tunnel is six feet high and about 1,800 feet long. A dedication inscribed in stone was found in 1880, which since has been removed to a museum in Istanbul. Workers constructed the tunnel from opposite ends,

following a serpentine route. Pick marks from opposite directions and an uneven floor evidence the juncture of the two construction crews (Free and Vos 182). The tunnel inscription reads:

This is the story of the boring through. While the workmen lifted the pick each toward his fellow and while three cubits remained to be bored through, the voice of a man was heard calling to his fellow, for there was a split in the rock on the right hand and on the left. And on the day of the boring through, the tunnellers struck, each in the direction of his fellows, pick against pick. And the water started to flow from the source to the pool, 1,200 cubits. And the height of the rock above the heads of the tunnellers was 100 cubits. (Humble, *Archaeology* 33)

The length and irregular path of Hezekiah's tunnel have bewildered contemporary men for years.

...[S]cholars have puzzled over how the two teams digging from opposite ends of the city managed to meet in the middle, especially after the winding route they took. And why did they follow such a circuitous route when it would have been easier — and shorter — to tunnel in a straight line? From the Gihon Spring to the Pool of Siloam in a straight line is only 1,050 feet; the actual length of the tunnel, however, is 1,748 feet, more than 66 percent longer than necessary. (Gill 23)

Perhaps the construction workers excavated to sufficient size a fissure through which water was already seeping at a rate inadequate to provide satisfactory water resources during a siege of Jerusalem.

Archaeological examination of this tunnel provided information by which the biblical *cubit* could be measured (though the cubit from time to time and nation to nation may have varied).

An inscription at the entrance written in the old Hebrew alphabet tells that this tunnel is twelve hundred cubits long. Measurement of the tunnel revealed that it was about eighteen hundred feet long, thus demonstrating that the cubit was about eighteen inches. (Free and Vos 39)

While the archaeological discoveries and potential archaeological finds are nearly inexhaustible, our time and space

for this lecture have long before now exhausted. So, finally, decades of unpublished archaeological discoveries line the basements of museums around the world, hundreds of archaeological sites have been or are being excavated and many thousands of mounds have yet to be explored. Every discovery relative to biblical archaeology, when given a fair and objective evaluation, exonerates the Bible as the Book Divine—with no peers. If the Bible mentions something historically, it is true. If the Bible asserts something geographically, it is reliable. The Bible and the Bible-believer have nothing to fear from the light of archaeological inspection. The Bible is found perfectly trustworthy in every area that lends itself to scientific scrutiny, such as through the science of archaeology. The Bible, then, also is credible in areas that do not lend themselves to scientific examination, such as theology or doctrine (e.g., salvation). All of this we would expect from the Perfect Book of which God is the Author.

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Biographical Sketch

Louis Rushmore has been preaching the Gospel of Christ for over 30 years and is married to the former Bonnie Reed. They have three grown children, each of whom is a faithful and active Christian: Rebecca, a schoolteacher; Raymond, a Deputy Sheriff (and his wife Vanessa) and Robert, a Gospel preacher. Bonnie and Louis have two young grandchildren: Elijah (6) and Nathaniel (2). Louis and Bonnie’s greatest contentment rests in the heavenly hope they entertain for their family and themselves.

The Bible's Scientific Accuracy

By David Everson

When we examine the Bible as a source information about how we should live on this earth, it is important that we be sure that it is what it claims to be, "God's inspired Word." There are many evidences that can be used to verify this claim. These include evidences that are external, such as its survival through the ages, its translation into more languages than any other book, its status as the best seller and most circulated book in the history of the world. Then there are internal evidences that are truths revealed within the Bible, and when mankind is finally able to verify its accuracy these show the Bible's absolute correctness. These include its unity in theme and outcome, its historical accuracy both in events as well as locations recorded, the truths revealed in prophecy and the biblical accuracy in the inspired text. Other speakers at this lectureship have spoken about other aspects of these internal evidences, but at this time we want to examine the points of scientific accuracy revealed in the Bible. If the Bible is not the inspired Word of an all powerful, all knowing creator, then there would be scientific information given that reflects the inaccurate knowledge of uninspired scientists of the day. But, if it is God's inspired Word, then it will contain **no scientific inaccuracies**, which it doesn't!

The Bible was not given to us as a scientific textbook, and students of the Bible that try to read into its inspired pages more than it was intended to reveal, such as the date of the creation of the world, do it a great injustice and harm. But when we examine the gems of truth revealed by God thousands of years before modern science "discovered" the scientific truths, it serves to strengthen ones belief in the Bible as a guide for how we should live to prepare for an eternity in heaven with God. Let's look for a few minutes at some of these great scientific truths given by God to mortal man that contradicted the popular superstitions in the world at the time of the writing of the inspired text.

The Bible opens with a very simple statement of the origin for everything that lays a great scientific foundation, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). In these ten words, Moses by inspiration highlights the five basic

foundation parts of science. Time (“In the beginning”), force (“God”), energy (“created”), space (“heaven”) and matter (“earth”). These foundations of science were then “discovered” by fallible man years later, and interpretations have been made about them. This scientific accuracy is how the inspired Word of God opens and each time throughout the Bible that God breathed into mortal writers scientific principles they have later been confirmed when humans became educated enough to understand them.

In Chapter One of Genesis, and other Scripture references, basic scientific truths of the Law of Genetics are put into place by the Lord. The Laws of Genetics are those that deal with the passing on of traits from parents to offspring. God commanded every living thing at the creation of the world to “be fruitful and multiply” “after their kind.” In the 1800’s, Louis Pasteur first disproved the concept of “spontaneous generation” which was the popular scientific answer for many living things till that time, and it was replaced with the “Law of Biogenesis,” or life coming from pre-existing life, which is what God said more that 4,000 years earlier. As well Gregor Mendel, the “Father of Modern Genetics,” proved that genetic traits are passed from parents to offspring by predictable patterns that follow to the word the commandment given by God “after their kind.” Yet today the similar and very popular, but unscientific concept of “punctuated equilibrium” is still making it’s rounds in scientific circles to try and explain the needed massive changes to living things for evolution to occur. Yet the only thing we see around us is that all living things are obeying God and are using the basic laws of genetics he established to reproduce themselves. This then leaves no way for new life forms to appear on the earth without these “hopeful monsters” as it was termed in the 1950’s. The idea that mutations can produce new life forms is true, but they are most often inferior to the original and most of these are harmful if not outright lethal to the organisms when they occur. When changes occur that are not lethal, they just make changes that are still within the geneticity just produces changes that are still in the “after their kind” description in Genesis Chapter One. God revealed these truths, and for thousands of years and until today, mankind searches for a way to get around these basic facts of

science so it can eliminate God from men's minds.

"After their kind" also explains the well-established scientific facts of microevolution (a change within a species). These are the changes (mutations) that scientists observe within all creatures, such as bacteria, moths, fruit flies and humans that are then stretched to try prove that macroevolution (a change between species) could occur. An example of this would be the supposed jump from a fish to a salamander. The Laws of Genetics discovered by Gregor Mendel confirm the truths that God commanded for all living things and should have wiped away the ignorance of thousands of years of human wisdom, but that ignorance still continues today in the evolutionary camp not because of good science, but as Paul said "... even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge..." (Rom. 1:28).

Other scientific truths revealed in Holy Writ include that of the biochemical make up of all living things being different as written by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:39, "All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of man, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds." When crime scene investigators find a blood sample, simple DNA tests can tell if it is human or some other animal just as Paul by inspiration said. This revelation was scientifically accurate for 2,000 years before DNA testing was ever developed.

Moses wrote by inspiration of the importance of blood in the body. This flew in the face of "intellectuals in the scientific community" for more than 4,000 years until the early 1900's. The popular scientific thought for that time was that blood was not really a necessary component in the body. Indeed scientists thought it was the source of many problems, and so "bloodletting" was a common practice and in doing so doctors and scientists contributed to the death of many people. But God said, "For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof..." (Lev. 17:14). When we look at the understanding we have of blood today, it is no wonder that God would say, "...it is for the life thereof..." Red blood cells carrying oxygen and carbon dioxide, white blood cells fighting off invaders, plasma carrying nutrients and waste products, platelets and other clotting factors to stop the flow of blood when injury occurs all play vital roles in health for each of us. The blood plays a major role in

temperature control as the plasma contains a large amount of water that transports the heat away from body organs to the surface of the skin. So it is very humbling to realize what God had shared with mankind from his wisdom as our designer if we would have only have listened. This statement of the value of blood in the body did not originate with the mind of mortal man, but the mind of an eternal God.

Again, by inspiration the Bible records, “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him... Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, **are necessary**...” (1 Cor. 12:18, 22) was the scientific fact as recorded by Paul. All of the parts that are found in our bodies are critical for its existence. And yet, for more than 150 years, the scientific community is still trying to say that there are parts of our bodies that are “vestigial organs.” These vestigial organs are supposedly the organs that our bodies no longer need from our earlier evolutionary ancestors. This was when our ancestors used tails to maneuver through the trees, when we had claws to defend ourselves and kill our food and from our leaf-eating kin. These organs then serve no function in our bodies today and are being lost over millions of years due to disuse. In 1893, the scientific establishment had 86 organs listed as “vestigial organs” in humans, but modern biology textbooks list just two or three as functions have been discovered for all of the other organs. Those include wisdom teeth, plica semilunaris (membrane at the corner of the eye), appendix and coccyx. Each of these “feeble” parts as God called them is necessary for our bodies because he put them there. Just because we do not currently understand their function and may never discover them, does not mean they have no function.

Certainly in the field of biology, it is very oblivious that humans are unique among the animals. While we share about 98% of our DNA structure with the chimpanzee, we show marvelous differences that reflect the uniqueness God created in us. In Genesis 1:26, God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:” Then later in Genesis 2:7, it is said that he “...breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” It is easy to see that our physical makeup is not how we are like God for “God is a spirit” (John 4:24); it should be

easy to see that our souls are what must set us apart from the other animals since we share so much in common biochemically. Mankind's complex society, written language, inventions, arts, religion and morality show that there must be more to us than just our biochemistry. Truths revealed by God thousands of years before DNA testing and Jane Goodall's studies of chimpanzee behavior are shown each year to be more and more true.

Truths revealed by God about geology also rocked the scientific world of its day, so much so that it was easy for the scientists to disclaim the Bible as a moral authority on the basis of what they understood of the world. Since the early days of modern science, we have become better informed about this planet we live on, and they have always backed up God's revealed truths. Let's look at a few. In Isaiah 40:22, we are told that, "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth..." describing the true shape of the earth. Job describes by inspiration how the earth is supported in 26:7, "...and hangeth the earth upon nothing." The gravitational forces that keep our earth and other planetary bodies suspended in space are still very mysterious and amazing to modern man. But the revelation of God through Job clearly indicated wisdom and understanding far beyond mortal scientists of the day. There are even illusions to the hot core of the earth in Job 28:5, "As for the earth, out of it cometh bread; and under it is turned up as it were fire." Is this a statement of scientific fact? Well, we certainly understand a fire under our food to cook it today, and know that the interior of the earth is hot, but whether that is what God was intending with a poetic writing we cannot be sure. None the less, it does show the wisdom of God to not give an inaccuracy for what the earth is like. If scientists of the day had been the source of this information, it is hard to imagine what would have been recorded! In part of the prayer of Jonah in Jonah 2:6, as he prayed from the belly of the fish, he referred to the "bottoms of the mountains" as a place he had been while in the fish. Today of course, we are very familiar with the Mid-Atlantic ridge which is a huge mountain range running under not just the Atlantic ocean but most of the oceans of the world. This statement during the prayer of Jonah may have been a first hand account or a revelation by God of what was at the bottom of the oceans.

Either way, it demonstrates an amazing revelation many years before “modern scientists” discovered the longest mountain range in the world.

Among the most amazing discoveries of a physical feature on the planet made by man would have to be one that God quizzed Job about early in man’s history. In Job 38:16, God asked, “Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?” Springs of the sea? No scientist had ever predicted the presence of springs of water that came out of the earth into the oceans. Yet, in 1977 a deep submersible craft located areas at the bottom of the ocean where superheated water pours out of the earth’s crust in an artesian spring type of effect. These springs that God asked Job about are a wellspring of life in the cold dark environment of the ocean depths. Minerals dissolved in the water coming out of the earth serve as the food source for bacteria that are eaten by other animals and leading to an amazing variety of life forms in an otherwise nearly lifeless world. It would appear that Job was the first human to know of this amazing geologic feature of our planet if he was able to understand what God was referring to.

From the science of meteorology are several revelations of scientific principles that were finally “discovered” by mortal scientists. Again, it was Job who was privileged to have another truth revealed to him by God. In Job 38:25, God asked Job, “Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder...” The phenomenon of lightning is one that still today attracts awe and fascination as we view its raw power. The natural process that causes lightning are still not completely understood, but we do know that there is a path “for lightning of thunder” as it travels between the earth and the clouds. The series of steps leading up to a discharge of electricity are very complex and include many different phases. Even before the lightning is visible, there are electrically charged particles that are in motion from the clouds and the ground that will determine the path the bolt will take as it looks for the easiest path to travel. Part of this series are the step leaders that are sent out from everything (including people) in the area of a static electrical buildup. Whatever path offers the least resistance to the flow of the electricity will be the one that will be the “way

for the lightning of thunder.”

Job also was the first human to be made aware that a cloud is made up of nothing but water. The three states of water, solid, liquid and gases, were not well understood in the days of Job as it is after thousands of years of investigation. But, God as Creator understood that water vapor is that material that makes up a cloud. The very complex interactions between temperature, barometric pressure and the amount of water vapor as well as the properties of water itself help to determine the make of the clouds. When God made that first revelation in Job 26:8, “He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them,” he revealed the true nature of the structure of a cloud thousands of years prior to modern science discoveries.

Solomon by inspiration revealed a complex system of forces that cause the movement of air around the globe. In Ecclesiastes 1:6, Solomon said, “The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits.” The dynamics of air flow in our atmosphere is one that is still being studied but there are very clear patterns of air flow. The westerlies, trade winds, jet stream are just a few of the regular patterns of air that swirl around the planet as it turns on its axis. The ancients believed in a god or other being that blew the winds around the earth, and yet Solomon referred to the wind as an object, not a personality or being.

These scientific revelations along with many others serve as examples of when the Almighty Creator revealed scientific truths when he provided information to mankind. These references to natural science components show that the Bible must be just what it claims to be, God’s infallible Word. Let us always praise God for what he has done in the world and what he has done to prove that he is the Creator.

Biographical Sketch

David was born on June 30, 1953 in Akron, OH to Billie and Mildred Everson. He attended West Virginia public schools, attended Shepherd University 1971-1975 (BA degree Biology and General Science Secondary Education). He received his Masters of Science degree from Mississippi State University (MA degree in Geosciences). He has worked as a Bio-Medical

Photographer at the Medical College of Virginia. For the past 29 years, he has been a science teacher at Philip Barbour High School, teaching Biology, Advanced Placement Biology, Integrated Science, Human Anatomy, Geology and Oceanography. He married the former Norma Jean Regester, and they have one son, Brian David.

He has a variety of speaking experiences on his intercollegiate public speaking team. He has served as a pulpit speaker for several congregations of the church of Christ with Christian evidences workshops. He currently serves as an elder for the Belington church of Christ and is on the Board of Directors for West Virginia Christian Youth Camp.

The Inexhaustibility of God's Word

By Denver E. Cooper

It is a gratifying experience to be granted the opportunity to appear on this program. God has been good to me, having spared my life till now, thus granting me this great privilege. I want to thank the elders and others who have provided the opportunity.

The subject assigned to me is, "The Inexhaustibility of God's Word."

"Inexhaustibility" is defined by *Webster's* as follows: "cannot be exhausted, that cannot be used up; tireless." "Exhaust" means "to use up ones resources. Exhaust a well, to drain of power; to make very weary; weaken; to deal with completely; (to exhaust a subject)."

The Bible Cannot Be Exhausted

From an unknown author comes the following:

No fragment of any army ever survived as many battles as the Bible; no citadel ever withstood so many sieges; no rock was ever battered by so many hurricanes; and swept by so many storms. And yet it stands! It has seen the rise and fall of Daniel's four empires. Media and Persia, like Babylon which they conquered, have been weighed in the balance and long ago found wanting. Greece faintly survives in its historic frame, and Rome of the Caesars has long since ceased to boast. And yet, the book that foretells all this still stands [as strong as ever, DEC]. While nations, kings, philosophers, have died away, the Bible engages now men's deepest thoughts, is examined by the keenest intellects, stands revered before the highest tribunals, is more read and sifted and debated, more devoutly loved and more vehemently assailed, more defended and more denied, more abused, than any other book the world ever saw. It survives all changes, yet is bourne along till the mystic angel shall plant his feet upon the sea, and swear by him that liveth forever that time shall be no longer. THE OLD BOOK STANDS! (Winkler 638)

The Word is inexhaustible!

The Word! What word? Words of men? Ingersol's words failed! Aristotle's words failed! Sagan and other scientists are gone and much of that which they wrote and spoke is now

obsolete.

True prophets of hundreds of years past are in eternity, yet their word, lives on. However, early Christians were informed “that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation [did not originate in the minds of the prophets] For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1: 20,21).

Paul declared, “But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me was not of man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:11-12).

The Word

It is interesting to note that often in the New Testament, reference is made to the **Word** without further explanation. For example, “that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the **word**” (Eph. 2:6). What Word? The Gospel! “Preach the **word**” (2 Tim. 4:2). What **Word**? The Gospel! Further, “But be ye doers of the **word** and not hearers only deceiving your own selves” (Jam. 1:22). Can anyone doubt the **Word** is the Word from God and Christ? The Gospel inspired by the Holy Spirit? **The inexhaustible Word!**

So many things with which we are concerned are durable. But nothing compares to the **Word**! Supplies of minerals, vegetation, life giving chemicals, our food supplies, though useful and helpful for many years, do not continue as did the barrel of grain or the cruise of oil for the widow of 1 Kings 17:14. “For thus says the Lord God of Israel, the bin of flour shall not be used up, [exhausted] nor shall the jar of oil run dry, **until** the day the Lord sends rain on the earth.” The modifying clause indicates a time limit on the food supplied even in this miracle.

The Psalmist declares, “I have seen an end of all perfection: But thy commandment is exceeding broad” (Psa. 119:96). The law of God, as seen by the Psalmist was so “broad” (inexhaustible) that all claims of men to perfection are nullified. Men thought that they were perfect. When men believe they are perfect, it is an indication that they have no just view of the inexhaustibility of God’s spiritual law. The Pharisees

thought themselves to be perfect (Matt. 6:1-8). “All claims of men to perfection are made simply because they do not properly understand what the law of God requires” (Barnes 206). Job said, “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: If I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse” (Job 9:20).

Most Things Are Exhaustible

Purchases are made which “guarantee” satisfaction forever, (for a lifetime). They don’t tell us whose lifetime and often failure of the company after a few years makes the guarantee absolutely void. We are told there are supplies of minerals that will last for hundreds of years. We are reminded, however, that even those may be eventually exhausted. Hence, we are called upon to conserve our present supplies. Scientists are constantly searching for new products, etc.

Medicines are prescribed with warnings. Though they are quite effective in helping our problems, they may, in time, lose their power and change their quality from a life saving element to a death causing one. There is often a new scientific discovery that makes the old obsolete. Does the soul saving remedy, God’s **Word**, reach the point that it has lost its power to reach the most depraved soul on earth? Absolutely not! Perhaps the most difficult thing to comprehend is how the blood of Christ, the Gospel of Christ, God’s saving grace and all other matters that share in the salvation of man’s soul can continue on and on throughout the generations without change or improvement and still be powerful enough to save all who want to be saved. Yet, Romans 1:16-17 tells us, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

God’s Word Speaks

Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God is quick [living]

and powerful [active], sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Please note! The **Word** is “living”! Certainly not a dead letter. It is no museum piece to be viewed from a distance in a glass cabinet (although many treat the Bible in such a manner).

Do you remember Peter’s description of Jesus as “Son of the **living** God (Matt. 16:16)? Jesus is “living” water (John 4:10-11). He is the “living” bread (John 6:51). Peter also refers to Jesus as the “living” stone (1 Pet. 2:4). How could the word that proceeds from their mouths be other than “living”? Our God is eternal. That one fact assures us of the inexhaustible nature of God’s **Word**. None of God’s attributes will ever be exhausted. His love, presence, wisdom goodness, the offering of redemption are just a few which can never be used up.

The Inexhaustible Word Addresses All of Man’s Needs

Generally speaking, man’s needs throughout the ages have not changed. Modernization has not removed the need for saving him from sin, the need for the necessities of life, tragedy, illness, death and innumerable reverses. “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). No pill, elixir, X-ray, MRI, mechanics tool, rule of logic or anything else qualifies as a remedy for sin. All of these are exhaustible, corruptible, subject to change and often become obsolete and are therefore useless at best in detecting and curing spiritual diseases. It takes doses of the **Word**, often strong doses, to eliminate man’s spiritual maladies. The inexhaustible **Word** is the **only** thing that will work.

The **Word** does not need scientific research or study to improve it, keep it uncontaminated or keep it from becoming weak and ineffective with passing of time. It “cleanseth us from **all** sin” (1 John 1:7). It does so for everybody. “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth

say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). Please note the condition! “Whosoever will.” The dosage is powerful and is a universal prescription. It was “once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). As with any prescribed remedy, it must be accepted. Pills do no good if placed under the pillow, thrown in the wastebasket or placed on the shelf and forgotten. God’s remedy is no different in this respect. The **Word** will open the heart of the worst sinner. The Lord opened Lydia’s heart (Acts 16:14).

All People Need a Standard

From childhood through youth there is a need for a good standard. Many psychology and how-to books have been written. They often differ in their instructions, are frequently revised and many have been determined failures when it comes to meeting the needs of young people. The best “lamp” for their feet and “light” for their pathway is the **Word** (Psa. 119:105). It never fades, but illuminates the way of a good life perfectly. “Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord (Col. 3:20). “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long upon the earth” (Eph. 6:1-3). Principles, commandments and examples of the Bible will enable you to resolve any problem. Though torn, rejected and hated by infidels, it is still the very best standard for young and old alike. No better example of self-control is there anywhere than Joseph. The moral character of this young man can only be explained as being the result of teaching of God’s Word from somebody. Else he would not have been concerned with “sinning against God” (Gen. 39:9). Orpha and Ruth are also great examples of those who were dependent upon God. When Orpha insisted that Ruth return with her sister-in-law to her homeland, Ruth replied,

“Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God” (Ruth 1:16). Great blessings providentially showered upon Ruth as a result of the unspeakable, inexhaustible nature of God.

Though throughout all ages there have been troubled marriages, it seems more marriages are in difficulty today. Marriage counselors are quite numerous, yet more homes are breaking up, more of all ages are becoming involved in immoral activities and dishonorable activities. Where once divorce was the exception, it now has become so widespread that it is almost the rule. While marriage counselors may offer some good instruction and advice, there is a perfect place to go for perfect advice and a standard. Brother Gus Nichols is reported to have asked troubled couples who came to him for help, three important questions. 1. Do you believe in God? 2. Do you believe the Bible is God’s Word? 3. Will you do what God says do? If the couple answered “Yes,” he would proceed in his efforts to help them. If they answered “No” he proceeded no further. If folks won’t listen to God, there is little one can do for them. The instruction book for a great and good marriage is the inexhaustible Word of God.

“Husbands, love your wives as long as they show no wrinkles or other signs of aging.” Does that sound right to you? So many today are passing the time till the kids have left the nest and then they abandon their wives or their husbands. Of course, society does not frown upon such actions today. It is rather expected. However, that inexhaustible **Word** actually reads, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also love the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5: 25). Many have a varied conception of the word love. It really includes being sensitive to all the needs of the wife. The **Word** instructs the husband to be the head of his house. The devil is doing his best to destroy God’s plan for marriage.

The roles and needs of the wives and mothers of their children are quite different from that of the husbands. By carefully studying the inexhaustible Word, husbands can learn their responsibility is not determined by his ability to produce an offspring. The physical, emotional and spiritual needs and the manner in which he cares for those needs shows whether he is heeding what God has to say.

Wives too, have need of a standard. It isn't the neighbor next door, the soap operas, Hollywood idols or famous ladies of history or some other husband or male friend. Again, it is the inexhaustible **Word**. Contrary to popular belief, God says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church" (Eph. 5:22-23). Are you looking for examples of happy wives? Look to the Bible. There is Hannah, Sarah, Ruth, Orpha and many others along with the godly woman of Proverbs 31. The power of the Word is never used up.

Man's Profound Questions Are Answered

In every generation, men have wanted to know their origin, purpose and destiny. Men have written thousands of books on these subjects. Over the years, those books become only reference books or are all but forgotten. The Bible? Not so! Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 25:35). Isaiah 51:6 states, "the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished." The **Word** answers these questions and leaves much to be pondered, studied and learned. Through the constant bombardment of television and modernistic theology, we have experienced an erosion of morals. Society accepts divorce and remarriage, homosexuality, premarital sex, cursing, foul language and using God's name in vain. What about dishonesty, cheating and deceiving one another? In God's image man was created (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1). We are his offspring (Acts 17: 29). Man shares in God's spirit: an everlasting spirit, something not identified with flesh and bones. Man's origin was miraculous. His continuance is according to God's law of nature, and that law shall never change.

What about getting along with each other? Is there a universal law that will never be used up? Will it help neighbors? Will it help Christians? Will it help civil authorities including world leaders? What do you suppose would happen if it were possible to persuade everyone to follow Jesus' instruction in John 7:12, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so the them: for this is the law and the prophets." This rule has never been proven faulty, inadequate or limited in what it will accomplish.

The **Word** enables us to live in a better society. Time was when deformed or mentally retarded children were drowned. God's inexhaustible **Word** has changed all of that. We now give them tender, loving care and call them "little angels."

Men no longer see human flesh being dried for human consumption where the **Word** of God has gone.

Hundreds of slaves are no longer placed in an arena with wild beasts for the pleasure of kings. Bodies are no longer cut in pieces to feed the fish of a pleasure mad person.

Sir Walter Scott as he was dying, said to his son-in-law, Lockhart, "Give me the book." Observing the many books on the shelves, the natural question was, "which book"? Scott replied, "there is only one book: the Bible.

No wiser instruction has ever been given than "Buy the truth and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction and understanding" (Prov. 23:23).

We are created to bring honor and glory to God (1 Cor. 10:31; Matt. 5:16). Do you want to be a good citizen? Study the **Word**! One can be a respectable, law abiding citizen in any country of the world. William McKinley is reported to have said, "The more profoundly we study the book, and the more closely we observe its divine precepts, the better citizens we will become and the higher will be our destiny as a nation."

Do you want to know your eternal destiny? The sophistry of men such as Billy Graham, Jerry Falwell, John Hagee, Max Lucado and a host of others does not change the unspeakable need for the proclamation of God's eternal Word. Though the universalist may declare, "all will be saved at last, because God is too merciful to condemn even one of his human family, is it really true? Even when it is preached

that being, just and moral is all one needs in order to have eternal life, is it really true? Where does one go to find out just what his eternal destiny is?

I plead with you to listen to what Jesus has to say regarding the destiny of men. One cannot remain a sinner and please God (1 John 5:4). Jesus said, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29). Jesus further declares, “And I say unto you my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.” Though “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” the Seventh-Day Adventists, the late Herbert Armstrong’s World-Wide Church of God, Christadelphians and even some who were once of us, have repudiated the notion of eternal, conscious punishment for the wicked, we must not waver from the written instructions of the God of heaven, the transcendent Creator of the universe.

But, then, there is a place called heaven. John says, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14). John further indicates in John 14:1-6 that Jesus has gone to prepare a place for a prepared people.

In 2 Corinthians 9:15, Paul uses a word found several times in the New Testament. The word is “unspeakable.” “Thanks be unto God for his **unspeakable** gift.” “Unspeakable” here means, throughout, thoroughly. It is, therefore, the unused, unending, inexhaustible Word of God. Let us never part to the left or to the right of it.

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Biographical Sketch

Denver E. Cooper was born April 2, 1923 in Cairo, WV. His parents were Jesse and Sarah Cooper. One sister, Doris, died in 1931. Donald R. Cooper, a Gospel preacher in Wadsworth, OH is his brother.

Denver married Florence Smith of Sistersville, WV March 25, 1945. To this union were born 8 children. Edward T. (Gospel preacher), Denver Jr., Kelly R., Timothy, Rebecca Vilga, Jesse, Prisca (deceased), Denise (Mrs. J.D. Conley, whose husband is the local preacher at Marietta, OH) and Martha Noland (whose husband, Bob, is a preacher).

Denver has served churches throughout the Ohio Valley for 62 years. He was located at Ironton, OH; Harrisville, WV; Chester, WV; Philippi, WV; Weirton Heights, Weirton, WV; Timberville, VA; Moundsville, WV and Valley Bend, WV. He returned to Moundsville from Valley Bend, at the request of the elders, to become the present director of West Virginia School of Preaching.

Textual Study of 2 Peter 1:16-21

By Keith G. Ball

When we consider the subject of fables, our minds quickly return to childhood and the reading of stories such as Aesop's Fables. Aesop, an ancient Greek writer, lived 500 years before Christ and wrote what is called by some, "beast fables." These fables, having been passed on for centuries as oral traditions, contain a variety of animals, fish, trees, rocks, mountains, etc. Some of the more notable are, "The Hare and the Tortoise" and "The Fox and the Grapes." These fables portray animals and inanimate objects performing actions that are outside their natural scope. Trees do not walk and talk, but in fables they do.

The use of the word "fable" in the New Testament is very different from this childhood acquaintance with fanciful stories. The Greek word, "*muthos*," found in our text of 2 Peter 1:16 and also in 1 Timothy 1:4, 1 Timothy 4:7, 2 Timothy 4:4 and Titus 1:14, is best defined as an absence of truth and having no connection with reality. Marvin Vincent, in his *Word Studies of the New Testament*, suggests that this word could refer to "rabbinical embellishments of Old Testament history or heathen myths about the descendants of the gods to earth...or to Gnostic speculations..." (685).

With this brief explanation of fables and myths before us, let us turn our attention to the assignment at hand. Let us consider our text of 2 Peter 1:16-21 as we seek to show that the Christian faith is based on verifiable information, not on myth or fable.

The agnostic does not believe that there is substantial proof that there is a God. He does not deny the **possibility** that God exists, but he demands proof. The proof is present. God has not left us to blindly leap into Christianity without faith and reason. Yes, we indeed do walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7), but that faith that God calls us into is a faith of intelligent reasoning and evaluation.

On the evening of the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus appeared to his disciples, blessing them and instructing them. All the disciples were present, with the exception of Thomas. When Thomas learned from his fellow disciples that they had seen

Jesus, he disbelieved. Before he would believe, he needed verifiable proof that Jesus had risen from the dead. The verifiable proofs for Thomas were "...Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John 20:25b). One week later, as the disciples were again being blessed, Thomas was this time with his brethren when Christ appeared. Jesus, knowing Thomas doubted, invited Thomas to come investigate and consider the verifiable proofs that he was resurrected. "Then he said to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing'" (John 20:27). It is important to note that Jesus did not rebuke Thomas for saying that he needed proof. There were numerous times during his ministry when Jesus said to the disciples, "O you of little faith," but this is not one of those times. He freely invited Thomas to consider the proofs. Just as Jesus invited Thomas to investigate and examine, Jesus today wants us to consider, examine, process and investigate the verifiable proofs found within his Word so that we may become true believers. Today, we do not have the privilege, as Thomas did, of being able to physically look with our God-given sight at the resurrected Christ. However, Jesus says, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). This blessing is reserved for all generations that follow who did not see the risen Christ in the days following his resurrection. In spite of the fact that we cannot physically lay our eyes on the risen Savior, we are in no way without convincing, verifiable proofs.

Two of the most compelling proofs as listed by Peter in our text of 2 Peter 1:16-21 are: eyewitness accounts and fulfillment of prophecy. As compelling as these proofs are, they are unfortunately rejected by many today as they were rejected by the masses in the first century. There are a variety of reasons that those today as well as those in the first century reject these proofs. It is believed that pride often stands at the forefront of the list. A notable example of this involved the chief priest and elders as found in Matthew 28:11-15. These men did not want to believe the resurrection of Jesus nor did they want anyone else to believe it. They fabricated a lie, altering the truth by saying that

the Roman soldiers fell asleep while guarding the tomb and the disciples stole the body of Jesus. These Roman soldiers agreed to perjure themselves and took the bribe money that had been offered to them. We have seen variations of this lie throughout the years in the forms of Gnosticism and Docetism.

The Faith Verified by Eyewitnesses

In a court of law, a case will at times stand or fall based on eyewitness accounts. If there is only one person who is eyewitness to an event and that person is judged to be credible and truthful, then the case is proven to be factual. If many people are eyewitnesses to an event, then the certainty and credibility of the facts to be proven become even more reliable.

It was part of the masterful plan of God that Jesus showed himself alive following his resurrection to reliable witnesses. On the day of Pentecost, Peter, speaking to a large assembly of people, informing them, “This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses” (Acts 2:32). A very compelling testimony of the resurrection of Jesus was the fact that he appeared to more than 500 people at one time (1 Cor. 15:6). Jesus did not keep his resurrection a secret! In the 40-day period from his resurrection to his Ascension, there are some 12 major appearances. The skeptics and disbelievers would have us believe those people were delusional. However, it is highly unlikely that all that saw the resurrected Christ were hallucinating or mentally unstable. It is noteworthy to consider that even the uninspired historian Josephus made mention of the resurrection of Christ in *Antiquities* 18:3.3.

Now, there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, --a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day. (Whiston 379)

Our text of 2 Peter 1:16 speaks of “eyewitnesses of His **majesty**.” The word “*megaleiotes*” translated majesty in our text can also be rendered “magnificence.” This wonderful word describes the mighty power to which Peter and others were witnesses. This word is used only one other time in the New Testament, that being in Luke 9:43. In Luke’s account, Jesus exercised complete control over a child that was severely demon possessed. The disciples were unable to help the child and the child’s father implored Jesus to help. The demon arrogantly threw the child into convulsions right in the presence of Jesus, but Jesus, with magnificent power, was able to cast out the demon and restore the child.

The disciples more than once stood in awe of the majesty or magnificence of Jesus. Before the time of the disciples, at the age of 12, Jesus was able to intrigue the intellectual scholars of his day at the Temple (Luke 2:47). When Jesus began to choose the twelve, Nathanael was amazed that Jesus had a unique ability to know things about him that ordinary man did not know. This prompted Jesus to say to Nathanael, “...because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these” (John 1:50). The twelve were privileged to many times see Jesus’ power over nature, which is a mighty power indeed. These men knew that nature, be it storms, floods, winds, etc. were one of the strongest forces with which they had to reckon. In Matthew 8:23-27, we read of Jesus and his disciples in a boat on the Sea of Galilee. Due to the geographic location of the Sea of Galilee, storms would come suddenly with little or no warning. While enough of the disciples were seasoned fisherman and thus would have been accustomed to this type of event, we would think that they would have known what to do in these circumstances. Jesus was peacefully sleeping in the boat during the storm, while the disciples frantically believed they were perishing. The disciples awakened Jesus and informed him of their plight. Before Jesus rebuked the wind and sea, He first rebuked His disciples, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” (Matt. 8:26). Once he had their attention, he proceeded to display his power and magnificence on the wind and the sea. This would have been a small miracle in the scheme of things; for it was Jesus that together with the other members

of the Godhead created the seas and all things (Col. 1:16). One of the most important points to be made regarding this incident on the Sea of Galilee is the impact that it had upon the disciples. "And the men marveled, saying, 'who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?'" (Matt. 8:27).

There is little doubt that the "eyewitnesses of His majesty" in 2 Peter 1:16 is speaking of the transfiguration of Jesus. Peter, James and John had the distinct privilege of being invited by Jesus up to a mountain where his appearance was changed before them (Matt. 17:1-5; Mark 9:2-10; Luke 9:28-36). The text tells us that Jesus was "transfigured" before them. Peter and the other two disciples observed a dramatic change in the complexion of our Lord's face. The Gospel account says that his "face shone like the sun." Not only was his face radiant, but his clothing was as "white as the light." Most clothing of this time period likely would have been drab, with "white" clothing being a dull gray. Yet in this incident, everything about Jesus was brilliant, bright and white! In the Gospel account of the transfiguration, Moses and Elijah were present and were talking with Jesus. The Bible student can only wonder what the discussion was about. The important matter for us is not that we know what this discussion was about, but that we understand the message that Jesus supersedes Moses, the great lawgiver, and the great prophet, Elijah.

In our text of 2 Peter 1, Peter acknowledges the "voice" that was heard from heaven at the transfiguration. Peter heard that powerful, booming, thunderous voice when he and the other two were on that mount. Peter says in our text that "He," Jesus, received "honor and glory" from God when the mighty declaration, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him" (Matt. 17:5) was made. These powerful words from God identify the relationship that Jesus has with God. God is pleased with Jesus and is shown by God to be Deity. These powerful words from the throne of heaven announce to all the world the great authority of Jesus.

This "voice" from heaven, showing the proof of Jesus as God's Son, was heard three times during the life of Christ. The first was when John baptized Jesus. "And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am

well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). The second was as we’ve just considered, at the transfiguration of Jesus. The third was when Jesus prayed shortly before his death, “‘Father, glorify Your name.’ Then a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘I have both glorified it and will glorify it again’” (John 12:28).

In our text, Peter places an emphasis on the word glory, as glory is what Jesus received from the Father at the transfiguration. An attribute of God the Father is that he is the “Father of Glory” (Eph. 1:17). This is honor, which is the result of his goodness. Closely akin to “glory” is “glorify,” which means to magnify, exalt, praise and ascribe honor. Peter says glory is what he and others were witness to when that unmistakable voice from heaven declared endorsement and approval of Jesus.

The Faith Verified by the Prophetic Word

One of the most compelling proofs of the inspiration of the Bible is found in the fulfillment of prophecy. It is estimated that more than 28% of Old Testament Scriptures contain prophecy. Many of these prophecies pertain to Judah, Israel or some of the surrounding nations such as Edom, Egypt, Babylon or Persia. Yet, the prophecies to which every Jew, Gentile, man, woman and child should give special attention are the more than 300 prophecies relating to the Son of God. “The apostles throughout the New Testament appealed to two areas of Christ’s life to establish His Messiahship. One was the resurrection and the other fulfilled messianic prophecy. The Old Testament, written over a 1,500 year period contains several hundred references to the coming Messiah. All of these were fulfilled in Christ and they establish a solid confirmation of His credentials as the Messiah” (McDowell 147). Isaiah is recognized as the Messianic prophet in Old Testament Scriptures because no other prophet portrays the Messiah as does Isaiah. Isaiah gives the recipients of his message a glimpse of the Savior’s sovereignty, birth, humility, nature and servitude. Among the many things that are noteworthy, Isaiah is quoted over 66 times in the New Testament.

The mathematical probability that all prophecy could be fulfilled in one person by chance alone has been calculated to be one in 84 times ten to the 123rd power (84 followed by 123

zeroes) (Jenkins 87-107). Peter, in our text, tells his readers that they would do well to heed these words of prophecy. Unfortunately, the writings of the Old Testament prophets are among the most neglected parts in the study of our Bible today. Many would agree that those living under the Old Law likewise neglected the prophets, else they would have more readily embraced Christ. Jesus would have been able to gain the attention of devout Jews who claimed to closely follow Moses when he said, "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" (John 5:46-47). Furthermore, Jesus acknowledged that Moses, the prophets and the Psalms spoke concerning him (Luke 24:44).

The theme of the Bible is human redemption. The prophecies given throughout the Old Testament, beginning with Genesis 3:15, highlight this scheme of redemption. Since the fall of man in the Garden, man's greatest need has been for salvation from sin. The first glimpse of God's intent is seen in Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel." One wonders if when Eve gave birth to her first child, Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the Lord" (Gen. 4:1) if she deep inside wished that this son would be the Messiah.

Of course, this was not to be because God had yet to teach mankind about sin, substitution, atonement and sanctification. Paul says that the Old Law was as a schoolmaster that served to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24). In Colossians 2:16-17, Paul says that things like festivals and Sabbaths were a shadow of the things that were to come, "...but the substance is of Christ" (Col. 2:17b). Jesus was born according to God's plan in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4; Matt. 1:22-23). As was prophesied, he was of the tribe of Judah and of the house of David (Gen. 49:10; 2 Sam. 7:11-14; Rev. 3:7). In addition to the numerous prophecies pertaining to the life and ministry of Jesus, one must consider the incredible ability Jesus had to predict his own death and resurrection. Today, doctors may call a family in to be near a loved one thinking that death is imminent only to find the sick one rally with renewed strength and health. Jesus was able to

prophecy the place—Jerusalem. He knew the key people involved: chief priests and elders, and Gentiles; and the time: the Passover and three days later there would be a resurrection (Mark 9:31; 10:33; Luke 18:31-33).

When we think of the **prophetic Word**, we often think of only the **future-telling** abilities of the Old Testament prophets. We must remember that these men did much more than predict the future. The primary role of the prophet, whether oral or written, was to reveal the will of God to his people. Ezekiel learned that God had made him a watchman and a harbinger to the people. “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from me” (Ezek. 3:17). The prophets also gave hope during the dark, depressing days of oppression. They prophesied that the people would return to their homeland and that their enemies would be overthrown. “For thus says the Lord: after seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place” (Jer. 29:10). As we mentioned, one of the greatest ways by which our faith is verified is in the more than 300 Messianic prophecies of the Bible that are fulfilled in Christ.

Conclusion

When we return to our text of 2 Peter 1:16, Peter states “for we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ...” The apostle wanted to make it known that he had not given the listener trickery or a cunningly crafted fable to be perpetrated on mankind. Peter is presenting the verifiable facts of God’s Word. He further encourages his readers to continuously fix their minds upon these verifiable evidences that are indeed a “light that shines in a dark place” (2 Pet. 1:19). The Bible is based on verifiable facts. Let us aspire to be truth-seekers, searching for those verifiable truths of God’s Word.

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Biographical Sketch

Keith Ball was born in Fairmont, WV, March 7, 1958. He prepared himself for the ministry by attending Ohio Valley College in Parkersburg, WV (1977-1979) and the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions in Knoxville, TN (1980-1982).

He is married to Brenda Cole and they have two children, Rachel and Joshua. Keith has preached on a fulltime basis since August 8, 1982. He has served as the minister for the Fairlea church of Christ in Fairlea, WV, the Beallsville church of Christ, in Beallsville, OH and the Delaware church of Christ in Delaware, OH. He has been involved in mission work in India since 1985. He has been involved with Christian youth camps for 27 years and was an instructor of church history at the West Virginia School of Preaching in Moundsville for four years (1996-1999). He is currently an instructor at the Central Ohio Bible Institute (COBI).

Answering Atheism's Argument

By Glenn E. Hawkins

I want to express my appreciation to the elders here and to the School of Preaching for the invitation to speak on this lectureship. The theme, Christian Evidences, is one near and dear to my heart as it was the major field of my study in graduate school.

The particular assignment given to me is: Answering Atheism's Argument (the answer to the atheistic argument of evil and suffering). Perhaps no argument from atheism has been used with greater frequency and force than this one argument.

This particular argument involving the existence of evil is not a new one. The Greek philosopher Epicurus is quoted by Lactantius, a fourth-century apologist in his "A Treatise on the Anger of God" in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* as follows:

God ...either wishes to take evils and is unable; or he is able and unwilling; or he is neither willing nor able, or he is both willing and able. If he is willing and unable, he is feeble, which is not according the character of god; if he is able and unwilling, he is envious, which is equally at variance with god; if he is neither willing not able, he is both envious and feeble, and therefore not god; if he is both willing and able, which is alone suitable to god, from what source then are evils? Or why does he not remove them? (Schaff 271)

Other philosophers have taken this argument and enlarged and built on it, such as David Hume and the particular philosopher that Dr. Thomas B. Warren dealt with, J.L. Mackie from Australia.

In its most basic form, the argument takes the following form:

1. God is omnipotent
2. God is perfect in goodness
3. Evil exists

Mackie maintains there is a logical contradiction here. One cannot consistently maintain all three propositions without involving himself in contradiction.

However, Mackie admits that the contradiction is not immediately evident. He also adds the following propositions:

4. Good is opposed to evil in such a way that a good thing always eliminates evil as far as it can
5. There are no limits to what an omnipotent thing can do
6. A good omnipotent thing eliminates evil completely
7. A good omnipotent thing exists
8. Therefore, there is a logical contradiction involved in the conjunction of promises 7 (a good omnipotent thing exists) and 3 (evil exists). (Warren, *Have Atheists* 11-12)

A theist (believer in God and one who is also a Christian) has no hesitancy in affirming proposition (1) that God is omnipotent, or proposition (2) that God is perfect in goodness. He denies, however, that there is a logical contradiction in affirming proposition (3) evil exists.

One point of attack to Mackie's arguments is to deny proposition five—there are no limits to what an omnipotent thing can do. God's omnipotence relates to what is possible to be done. God cannot do that which is in opposition to his perfection in goodness and justice (for example, it is impossible for God to lie). To say that God is omnipotent is to say that God can do what is subject to be done and that in harmony with his nature.

For example, some things that omnipotent power cannot do are to make a rock so big he cannot lift it; to make a four-sided triangle or a three-sided square; to make an object white all over and black all over at the same time; or to have an object be and not be at the same time.

What we are saying with these examples is that such things cannot be done at all! Thomas B. Warren stated:

God is infinite in power but power meaningfully relates only to what can be done, to what is possible of accomplishment—not to what is impossible! It is absurd to speak of any power (even infinite power) being able (having power) to do what simply cannot be done. God can do whatever is possible to be done, but he will do only what is in harmony with his nature. (*Atheists Proved* 27)

Mackie's proposition five—there are no limits to what an omnipotent thing can do—is false.

Also related to this proposition of Mackie's is that God could create persons who would always freely choose to do good and never commit a single act of sin. John Hick pointed out that

there would be a contradiction in holding that God made us so that we shall of necessity act in a certain way and that we are a genuinely independent person in relation to God (Hick 303-304).

God could create a puppet, robot-like creature who would always act in certain ways, but “it is logically impossible for God to guarantee that his creatures who are free, will always (i.e., without even one exception) freely choose to love and trust him. It is logically impossible for such beings to be created, and since this is the case, it is not a denial of the omnipotence of God to hold that men are, at times, guilty of failing to love, trust, and obey God.” (Warren, *Atheists Proved* 29)

It is a contradiction to affirm that it is possible to create an intelligent, true moral agent and then place him in a situation in which he was beyond all possibility of sinning. No power, not even infinite power, can create a being who is a free moral agent and who is yet beyond even the possibility of sinning. (30-31)

Both the atheist and the theist affirm that evil exists. While there are some things, actions, etc., which some would call evil, the only intrinsic evil is sin. The Bible certainly affirms such. Sin is failing to do what is right, or doing that which is wrong (against God’s will). Man then becomes responsible for evil, not God.

Since sin is the only evil, pain or suffering is not intrinsically evil. Both may be instrumentally good or instrumentally evil. There are some instances in which pain is good (a doctor inflicting pain to remove a gangrenous foot). Pain is often good because it reveals that something is wrong with our bodies. The same can be said for suffering. Suffering might draw a person away from God, or it may draw a person closer to God.

As a result of sin, suffering and/or pain came into this world. There are many reasons why we suffer—ignorance, accidents, the world we live in which includes natural disasters, the sins of others, our own sins, God’s providence in the affairs of men (like Joseph), because we follow Christ (John 16:33), from being tested (like Abraham, Job, Paul and others), and from rejecting God’s will. We may not always know the exact reasoning why we are suffering, but with the proper knowledge and faith, we can overcome it.

While the atheist might deny it, there are some benefits of suffering. These benefits come when we react to suffering as God would have us. In his book, *Our God — A Sun and Shield for Troubled Hearts*, brother Thomas B. Warren sets forth a number of benefits: (1) Suffering helps the sufferer to know himself; (2) Suffering helps the sufferer to attain a proper set of values; (3) Suffering helps the sufferer to be thankful for his blessings; (4) Suffering helps the sufferer to see the value of prayer; (5) Suffering helps the sufferer to understand what a blessing it is not to be able to see what the future holds. Brother Warren went on to list several more benefits of suffering. Therefore, the fact that human beings suffer does not prove God does not exist. There are benefits that come to us when we do suffer. (41-61)

I would encourage everyone to obtain a copy of brother Warren's book, *Have Atheists Proved There Is No God*, and the book *Our God — A Sun and Shield for Troubled Hearts*. The atheist has not made his case that the existence of evil and suffering proves that God does not exist. The very fact that there is good and evil demonstrates that there must be a higher power, God if you wish, by which one can determine good and evil.

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Biographical Sketch

Glenn E. Hawkins was born October 16, 1943 to Jack and Frona Hawkins (now deceased) in Dexter, MO. His father was a Gospel preacher for almost 60 years.

He graduated for Newark, OH in 1961. He has received degrees from Ohio Valley College (A.A. 1963); Harding

University (B.A. Bible, 1965) and Harding Graduate School of Religion (M.A. Apologetics, 1975).

He is married to the former Hope Shutts of Parkersburg, WV, since 1965. They have two sons, Kenny (age 36) and Adam (age 27). They have one granddaughter.

He has served several churches in St. Marys, WV; Waverly, TN; Memphis, TN; and has been at Massillon, OH since 1975. He writes a weekly religious column for the local newspaper.

Messianic Prophecy Proves Deity

By D. Gene West

F.M. Green, in his classic work, *The Life and Times of John F. Rowe*, told of brother Rowe's delivering a sermon to the Ministerial Association of the Disciples of Christ in Ravenna, Ohio on the 26th of June 1878 in which he made this statement.

That Christianity is the only true religion in existence is proven by the fact, that in the person of Christ all the predictions relating to that great Personage, covering a space of four thousand years, were literally and minutely fulfilled. His remarkable birth; his birthplace; the circumstances attending his birth; the manner of his life; his obscure education; his extreme humility; his perfect obedience to all law, civil and religious; the purity of his life and his absolute truthfulness; his assumption of all power, speaking as no other man spake; the holy anointing he received in the baptism of the waters of Jordan; his gospel mission to the poor as, par excellence, the chief charm of his life; his perfect freedom from selfishness, and his absolute self-denial in laboring and performing miracles only for the good of others; the manifestations of his supernatural power; his infinite capacity in reading the secrets of the human heart, and of revealing man to himself; his power to interpret the past and to discover the future; his betrayal, his mock trial, his tragic death, his sleep in the grave, his resurrection, his ascension to heaven, his coronation at the right hand of God; the setting up of his kingdom in the midst of the kingdoms of the world, the proclamation of universal freedom to all impenitent believers: all these wonderful developments in the life and character of the Savior were the burden of prophecy for the space of four thousand years—oracular utterances that fell from the lips of Moses, David, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah (who is the author of eighty distinct prophecies), Daniel, Nehemiah, Zechariah, Malachi, and other lesser prophets. (50-51)

With this single sentence from our good brother Rowe we heartily agree, and make it our goal today to demonstrate that messianic prophecy does, indeed, prove the Deity of our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

Due to the vast amount of material found in the Word of

God classed as “messianic prophecy;” there being seventy-five personal messianic prophecies, we realize that it is an impossible task to even mention all these, to say nothing of the other two hundred eighty-eight found in our Old Testaments. So, we have chosen to use only two of the three hundred sixty-three as evidence demonstrating that our Lord Jesus Christ is God, a person in that Godhead known in the Old Testament as *Elohim*. Of course, choosing which of the seventy-five personal messianic prophecies to use is a task that requires the wisdom of a Solomon, so we have chosen to use the method of the old-time preacher who said, “We gonna let da Bible fall open to wheresoeva she may, and we gonna take dat fo our text.” Well, we were not quite that random in our choice, but allowed personal prejudice to choose two of our favorites, the first of which is found in the magnificent Book of Deuteronomy, which name means, “the second giving of the law.”

The prophet like unto Moses—Deuteronomy 18:15-18

In his famous discourse dealing with the obligations of the people toward their leaders (16:18-17:20), their priests (18:1-8) and their prophets (18:9-22), Moses dealt with a prophet God would raise up like himself. This prophet, so said Moses, was to tell the people all they needed to know about Yahweh’s plans for their future.

The background of this prophecy is very interesting in that it is set in the context of God’s prohibition against his people’s offering human sacrifice and appealing to the occult practices of the people who were to be displaced when God gave the land to the Israelites (Deut. 18:9-14). However, before reading and commenting on the prophecy at hand, we wish to emphasize that Moses was an incomparable prophet, so far as God was concerned. At the funeral of Moses, after Joshua the son of Nun had taken leadership of the nation, as he had been commissioned by Moses to do, the testimony of the Scriptures concerning Moses is, “ut since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which

Moses performed in the sight of all Israel”(Deut. 34:10-12; see also Num. 12:3, 6-8). Hence, the prophet to follow Moses would himself be an incomparable prophet, the likes of which the world had never seen. He would be like Moses, yet far above Moses in that he would do for the world spiritually what Moses had done for Israel physically.

Moses quoted God as saying, “The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, according to all you desired of the LORD your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die. And the LORD said to me: What they have spoken is good. I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.” (Deut. 18:15-19 NKJV)

There are numerous matters regarding this prophecy we would like to discuss, such as whether or not God spoke of a special prophet or whether he was speaking of a specific prophet, but the constraints of time and space do not allow that. Consequently, we come to the passage of the New Testament in which this passage is quoted and applied to our Redeemer. Peter, preaching to the people on Solomon’s Porch of the Temple, proved that Jesus Christ is the Prophet whom God had promised would come and suffer for the people. On that basis he urged them to repent and be converted that their sins might be blotted out, for not only had Christ fulfilled his earthly mission, but he had ascended back to the Father, “until the restoration of all things which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21). Peter continued his discourse, identifying the Prophet who was to redeem the world by saying, “For Moses truly said to the fathers, The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people” (Acts 3:22-23 NKJV). That Peter quoted Deuteronomy 18: 15-19 and applied it to Jesus

the Christ cannot be doubted, and so far as we are concerned, this settles the matter regarding to whom the prophecy should be applied. With this conclusion, the late, erudite H.Leo Boles agrees, as he pointed out when he wrote:

This prophecy may be found in Deut. 18:15-19, and Peter quotes it without many variations from the Septuagint, Greek version of the Old Testament; Moses was a lawgiver, leader, ruler, deliverer, as well as a prophet; his prophecy had not been fulfilled. The Jews acknowledged that this had reference to the Messiah; they asked John the Baptist: “Art thou the prophet?” John answered that he was not; and they asked him then: “Why then baptizest thou, if thou are not the Christ, neither Elijah, neither the prophet?” (John 1:21-25.) Here Peter identifies “the prophet” with the Christ; this is exactly what the Jews had done. The Messiah was to be one from among the Jews; he was to bring blessing to every nation on the earth. They should obey this prophet ‘in all things whatsoever’ he should command them. Just as the children of Israel were to obey Moses, their deliverer, lawgiver, ruler, their leader, so the people now are to obey Christ as he is their Deliverer from sin, their Lawgiver, their Leader, their King, and Prophet. (60-61)

Probably ninety-nine percent of the great commentators of the Protestant world, with the exception of modernists and postmodernists, agree that Peter identified the Lord Jesus Christ as the prophet like Moses. It is not our purpose to look at their arguments so we ignore them at this time, but will turn instead to look at the appearance of this special Prophet, Jesus the Christ.

The first thing to which we draw attention is that this Prophet was to be **raised up**. Yahweh said he would “raise up” a Prophet like Moses. Literally, Hebrew scholars tell us, Yahweh said, “I will cause to stand up, establish, succeed, a Prophet like you” (Strong H6965). We notice that this was an action that Yahweh was going to take; it was a deliberate, planned and perfectly executed action depending on no one in the universe except Yahweh—the Cause of it.

A brief look at the word “prophet” is in order. It comes from the Hebrew (*nabiy*) and means, “a spokesman.” However, Dr. James E. Smith, Hebrew and Old Testament scholar tells us, “Throughout the passage the singular ‘prophet’ is used. The term ‘prophet’ stands in the place of emphasis in front of the Hebrew

verb in verses 15 and 18. A single individual is intended here” (67). Hence, this prophet was a very special one raised up by Yahweh himself, and not just any prophet who may come along. He was to be a “friend of God,” a concept inherent in the word “prophet,” when unattended by an adjective stating that he was some kind of prophet other than a true one. Like Moses, the Prophet to be established by Yahweh, was a friend of God. Only of Jesus can it be said, “This One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses” (Heb. 3:3).

On this note, we wish to point out that the prediction of the future Prophet, the Messiah-Prophet, says he would be “like” (comparable to) Moses. Let us, therefore, notice some of the similarities between Jesus and Moses. He was unique among the Old Testament prophets. As we pointed out earlier, at the funeral of Moses it was said, either by inspired Moses before his death, or by inspired Joshua after the death of Moses, that “there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses whom the Lord knew face to face” (Deut. 34:10). No student of the Bible, either in ancient or in modern times, would deny that Moses was a totally unique prophet, and there was none like him before or after his sojourn on earth. We believe there are five specific areas in which Moses was a type of our Messiah. Firstly, Moses and Yahweh enjoyed an intimate relationship in that God spoke to him “face to face.” God spoke to Moses in a far more intimate manner than any of the other prophets of the Old Testament to whom he spoke in dreams and visions. However, on more than one occasion Moses heard the voice of God directly. He heard the voice of God when commissioned to lead Israel out of Egypt (Exod. 3:2—4:17). He heard the voice of God on Horeb (Exod. 19:1-24). Moses heard the voice of God during their conversation over whether or not God should destroy the children of Israel and raise up a new nation from Moses in Exodus 32:9-14 and Numbers 14:11- 23.

Jesus and Yahweh enjoyed a similar relationship. We will notice only two instances in which this is brought out in the Sacred Text. In Luke 10:22, Jesus speaking of the close relationship between himself and the Father said, “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the

Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” Again, this time in John 1:18, Jesus declared, “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” Only Christ had a greater and more intimate relationship with the Father than did Moses.

Secondly, Moses and Christ are type and antitype in that Moses, by the power of Yahweh was a great worker of miracles. The miraculous punishments that God, through him, brought upon Egypt finally brought that mighty nation to its knees. He was also given power to work miracles to sustain the people of Israel during the forty years wandering in the wilderness. We think that it can be properly said that the miracles worked by Moses were more of a national nature than those of any of the other Old Testament prophets. Of him Stephen declared, “And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds” (Acts 7:22 NKJV). Our Lord had the reputation of the Prophet who was “powerful in word and deed before God and all the people,” according to Luke 24:19. When the disciples of John came to Jesus, after his imprisonment by Herod, and asked, “Are you the One who is to come, or should we look for another? Jesus replied, Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them” (Matt. 11:4-6 NKJV). Hence, the prophet and the Prophet like him were both miracle workers.

Thirdly, Moses was a great mediator and Christ is the ultimate Mediator. There are two instances, involving the same matter, found in the 32nd chapter of Exodus, in which Moses passionately pleaded with God for the well being of Israel. Not only did he mediate on behalf of the rebellious Israelites, but he interceded for them as well. God was very angry because his people had very quickly turned away from him to the worship of a golden calf, at the very foot of the mountain on which Moses was receiving God’s divine law which forbade such worship. In hot anger God Said to Moses, “Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation.” Moses advocated the cause of the Israelite people and God relented from his intention

to destroy all, but visited punishment on them (Exod. 32:9-14; 30-35). Had it not been for the mediatorship of Moses, the whole of world history might have been written very differently.

Of our Lord Jesus Christ, Paul declared, “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5 NKJV). Moses mediated for, and interceded in behalf of, the Israelites while on earth, but our Lord mediates on behalf of his brethren in heaven. John wrote, “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world”(1 John 2:1-2 NKJV). Jesus is our “defense attorney” who pleads our case before the throne of heaven. Furthermore, the eloquent author of Hebrews wrote to Jewish brethren in his day, “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:14-16 NKJV). Indeed, Christ is the Prophet whom God raised up like Moses.

Christ is the Prophet like Moses in that both were/are lawgivers. None of the great prophets of the Old Testament were to introduce any new law or code to replace, add to or subtract from the Law of Moses. As a matter of fact, they were strictly forbidden to do so. Moses himself quoted God, in Deuteronomy 4:2, as saying, “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deut. 4:2 NKJV).

However, Jesus of Nazareth set forth a new code called the Gospel for those who would follow him. It is this code, the Gospel, that is God’s power to save (Rom. 1:14-17). It is the incorruptible Word by which men are saved (1 Pet. 1:22-24); it is the engrafted Word that is able to save our souls (Jam. 1:21). While there are many other passages that teach the same thing, these must suffice for our purposes today.

Both Moses and Christ were great deliverers of God’s

people. No other person in the Old Testament was responsible for leading the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage, which is a type of sin. Moses led 1,500,000+ people out of the slavery of Egypt and eventually to the freedom of the Promised Land. Jesus has led, is leading and will lead countless millions out of the slavery of sin into the freedom of that celestial Promised Land.

Many other parallels could be drawn between these two Prophets, such as, seventy Spirit-filled elders prophesied in the days of Moses and Jesus sent seventy Spirit-filled disciples to evangelize the nation of Israel (Num. 11:16-23; Luke 10). However, time and space forbid that we peruse this matter any further at this time. While Moses stood head and shoulders above any prophet of the Mosaic dispensation, Jesus is infinitely superior to Moses. The Hebrews writer likened them to the son and heir in a family, and the chief steward of the family in 3:1-3. Jesus is the Son and Heir of God's family and presides over the true house of God of which the Old Testament Jewish nation was only a type, while Moses was but a servant in that earthly family, albeit a faithful one. As the founder of a dynasty is infinitely superior to those who come after him, so Jesus, the Son in the dynasty of God is superior to Moses. Jesus is the great spiritual Prophet raised up from among the Jews like Moses, and whoever refuses him refuses the last and only hope of salvation.

It is beyond thrilling to know that some fifteen hundred years before the birth of Christ, God inspired Moses to write that he was coming. How thankful we ought to be that God saw fit to tell us of his royal Prophet who would come to show us the way of salvation. How deeply loyal we should be to the One who may not deliver us from a physical bondage, but can and will if we allow him to do so, deliver us from spiritual bondage and set us free to be with him during the ceaseless eons of eternity.

David's Righteous Branch—Jeremiah 23:5-6

In this wonderful prophecy, almost universally recognized as being messianic, Jeremiah wrote the following words: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His

name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer. 23:5-6 NKJV). There are only three things in this prophecy we wish to look at in particular in this marvelous passage. These are: (1) the origin of the Messiah, (2) his reign, and (3) his name. Before looking at these things in particular, we wish to make a general observation about the text. Yahweh does not specify a time when the Messiah will come. (That was left to the prophet Daniel in 9:24-27.) Jeremiah simply pointed out that the Messiah was to arrive in coming days. This message is designed to be a message of hope and assurance for the people who are about to be taken into a captivity to last seventy years. God, through the prophet, emphasizes the coming of a messianic age, the one in which we live.

The origin of the Messiah is that he would be raised up by Yahweh, thus giving him a divine origin, but he would also be raised up from the family of David (2 Samuel 7). However, we learn from Jeremiah 22:29-30, that though the Messiah belongs to the royal tribe of David, he will not be raised up to sit on the physical throne of David to reign in Judah. (This prophecy must give Dispensationalists monstrous headaches.) He is called “a Branch of righteousness,” meaning he was a tender shoot growing from the stump of the family of David. He would be a Branch of righteousness, that is, One who was pure and sinless. (Isa. 53:9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15.) At the risk of being tedious, we wish to point out that the Messiah did not *become* righteous, or sinless, but he was that way from the time he was born through his death, resurrection and Ascension. Peter made that fact abundantly clear when he wrote, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth...” (1 Pet. 2:21-22 NKJV). Hence, the Messiah, though of divine origin, lived here as a fleshly descendant of David.

Coming now to the reign of the Messiah, we note several important facts. The second part of verse five tells us “a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.” This part of the passage tells us: (1) the King shall reign and prosper, meaning that his reign would be successful due to the fact that he would reign both insightfully and

intelligently. Since the word translated “prosper” (*hiskil*) can also be translated “wisely,” the synonyms tell us of the nature of his reign from his point of view. It will be a flawless one, perfect in every regard. (2) We are also told that during his reign, which is an eternal one, he would execute, or exercise, both justice, or as the NKJV says, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. The word translated “justice” in the passage is “*mishpat*,” meaning absolute fairness. There would be no errors in judgment on the part of this King of kings. The word rendered “righteousness” (*tsedaqah*), means that everything would be done absolutely correctly. Both of these characteristics were assigned to David and his reign in Israel in 2 Samuel 8:15. These qualities had long since been lost to the nations of Israel and Judah in the days when Jeremiah wrote this prophecy. Long before Jeremiah’s day, Isaiah had called upon the people to “preserve justice and do righteousness” (Isa. 56:1). Though these qualities can be lost to mere human kingdoms, as the nation of Israel plainly demonstrated, they would never be lost to Immanuel’s kingdom, for these qualities would faithfully be exercised by the Messiah-King during his reign.

The prophecy further states, in the early part of verse six, “In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely...” The saving (deliverance) of Judah and the safe dwelling of Israel, it seems to us is one and the same thing and suggests something that is going to begin at one and the same time. We must answer an important question or two, the first of which is: “Since the Kingdom of Christ was/is to be a worldwide kingdom, why is the salvation and safety mentioned only of Judah and Israel?” The most apparent answer is that these two nations, who were one when Messiah came, were to be the beginning place of the kingdom of Christ. The kingdom, established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, flourished among the Jews for nearly eight years before its gates were thrown open to the Gentiles in Acts Chapter Ten. Consequently, God inspired Jeremiah to speak of the nation where the Kingdom was to begin because the last of this nation (Judah) was about to be carried away in Babylonian captivity. Hence, both Judah and Israel would return from the captivity, and the Messiah would set up justice and righteousness,

salvation and safety (security) among them first. Even the great apostle Paul, apostle to the Gentiles, made it his practice to preach the Gospel to the Jews first wherever he went. In Romans 1:16, he spoke of the Gospel being the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, “for the Jew first and also to the Greek.” So, it was the divine plan of God that Messiah would bring deliverance and security to the people who had been his chosen people. Consequently, the prophecy uses the names of God’s Old Testament people, but does not exclude the Gentiles, as we learn from other prophecies in other places.

Followers of the Messiah are delivered and kept secure in the sense that no one can force them to leave the Messiah. They may do so voluntarily, but “no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand,” Jesus said in John 10:29. Paul reiterated this same great truth in Romans 8:31-39.

Let us turn now to the “name” that would be worn by David’s Branch. Names were originally used as terms of description; they were more adjectives than nouns. For example, Adam was called Adam because it is the Hebrew word for “man.” Man’s original name was “man.” Hence, we expect the name of the Messiah found in this prophecy to have some meaning. His name is “Yahweh Tsidkenu,” which means “Yahweh our Righteousness.” As the names, or titles given to our Lord in Isaiah 53 are meaningful, so the name given here is meaningful as well. (Contrary to the teaching of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who claim the name Yahweh (Jehovah) is reserved only for God the Father, we find here that our Messiah, Jesus, is called “Yahweh.” We are sure they would deny this great truth, but it is true nonetheless.)

It is interesting to take note of the fact that this name is very close to the name that was chosen by Eliakim, the son of Josiah, when he came to the throne of Judah. The name Zedekiah, chosen by Eliakim, means “Yahweh is righteous.” However, we note that the name given to our Messiah in the prophecy substitutes the pronoun “our” for the verb “is” in the meaning of the name of Eliakim.

The fact that this name is given to our Messiah points up two or three important points. (1) Not only is he, himself, righteous or just in the sight of God, but he makes it possible for

others to be as well. (2) He is the only true source of righteousness on the earth, and God will never send another. (3) He is “our” righteousness in that he grants righteousness, justification, redemption and salvation to all who come to him by faith. We are not saved for heaven and considered righteous because we have earned it, but because we have been cleansed by the blood of the only truly perfectly righteous Being who has ever lived on earth. (4) It is Yahweh our righteousness who shall one day redeem us from these humiliated and broken human bodies in which we sojourn on earth and give us those perfect bodies like his which are fit to live eternally with him. (See: Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:1-3.) Praise our Yahweh our Righteousness.

Incidentally, this prophecy is repeated almost word for word in Jeremiah 33:14-16. The 16th verse is very interesting due to the words that are changed there. It says, “In those days Judah will be saved, and **Jerusalem** will dwell safely, and this is the name by which **she** will be called, Yahweh our righteousness” (emphasis added). The antecedent of the pronoun she is Jerusalem. It is not physical Jerusalem who would be called “Yahweh our righteousness,” because physical Jerusalem was destined to be forever destroyed. The Jerusalem to be called by this name is the “Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all,” of which Paul spoke in Galatians 5:26 in the allegory of Sarah and Hagar. This Jerusalem, is of course, the church as all students of Galatians realize. Consequently, the church is to wear the same name as her Messiah. Do you think the Holy Spirit made an error when in Romans 16:16 he inspired Paul to write “...the churches of Christ salute you”?

Conclusion

After studying all these wonderful prophecies, an honest person cannot doubt that Jesus is, at one and the same time, Messiah, Son of God, Yahweh our righteousness, our Savior and Deity.

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Biographical Sketch

D. Gene West was born in Chester, WV and attended public schools in Hancock County. He earned an Associate in Arts Degree from Freed-Hardeman College, a Bachelor of Liberal Arts Degree from West Liberty State College and a Bachelor of Science Degree from Fairmont State College. He has served churches in Hundred, WV; Martins Ferry, OH; Kissimmee, FL; Moundsville, Vienna, Fairmont and New Martinsville, WV. He presently preaches for the Hillview Terrace church of Christ in Moundsville, WV and teaches at the West Virginia School of Preaching. He was baptized by the late Jess W. Nutter in 1950. He owned and edited *Bible Herald* for several years, later merging it with *Therefore Stand*. He has spoken on numerous lectureships, conducts four to six Gospel meetings each year and does mission work in Great Britain, especially England and Scotland. He married the former Shirley A. Bissett, and they have three children, Kandi Davis, Mary Amy Kessenger, Todd West and six grandchildren.

Will Jesus Find Faith on Earth?

By Wash McCall

The text that was assigned me is found in Luke 18:8. In the previous verses leading up to verse 8, the Lord taught a great lesson on persistence. In fact, he told of a widow who was seeking to be avenged of her enemy by an unjust judge who refused to help her at first, but after a while he said within himself “though I fear no God, nor regard man yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said hear what the unjust judge say.” Be persistent like the widow woman and you will have a successful life here on earth. There are times when we just give up too easily.

Will Jesus find faith on earth when he returns? We have several New Testament examples of some who did not believe (Mark 16:9-14). After the Lord had risen from the dead there were those who did not believe. He had told them that he would rise in three days but when it happened, they did not believe.

In Acts 12, after Herod had killed James the brother of John, he saw how it pleased the Jews so he captured Peter, put him in prison and while there the church prayed for him without ceasing. When he came to Mary’s house they were still praying. When he knocked at the door the damsel answered, but when she heard the voice of Peter she became excited and ran to tell the others. When she told them they did not believe. When they opened the door they were astonished.

Do we ever pray to God and when he delivers are we surprised like these were? Remember the Parable of the Unjust Judge. He did not fear God, or regard man. And in spite of his motives, he as an unjust person was able to avenge the woman. If he could avenge her, how much more can the great God of heaven avenge us? For he is loving, kind and merciful.

Will the Lord find faith among us when he returns? He will return at the proper time. Will you be surprised? Will you be astonished? When he comes with the clouds, how will you see him (Acts 1:9-11)? Will you see him as perhaps a possible hurricane? When the graves are opened, and the dead begin to rise (1 Thess. 4:13-17); the great separation (Matt. 25:31-46). Will Christ find faith on earth when he comes again?

The Virgin Birth

By Emanuel Daugherty

Introduction

I am greatly humbled by the invitation of the lectureship committee to have a part on this the Tenth Annual Victory Lectures of the West Virginia School of Preaching. The school of preaching was founded eleven years ago by the good will and good wishes of the eldership of the great Hillview Terrace church of Christ, and continues to serve our wonderful brotherhood in preparing men who are sound in the faith and of good character to send in the harvest fields. I am glad to have been a part of this school from the very beginning as director and teacher and to speak on her lectureships.

I am thankful that the lectureship committee has decided that this year the general lectureship theme is on Christian Evidences. Perhaps no greater subject is needed for our time. Our world is growing more and more jaded, pessimistic and unbelieving. Men and women must again be taught the very basics of Bible truth—belief in God and his Son Jesus Christ, the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, the vicarious atonement of Christ and his resurrection from the dead—these are some of the themes you will hear this week, plus many more. God bless each speaker in his task!

The Doctrine of the Virgin Birth of Jesus

The virgin birth is a quite plainly taught doctrine of the Bible. Though many deny the virgin birth, it seems convincing to this writer that the “nay sayers” have not (1) read the Bible text, (2) they do not understand what they read, and (3) have failed to weigh the line of reasoning, the evidence, given by the Holy Spirit to cause one to believe what is written (Rom. 10:17), or, (4) they are just plain prejudiced and have a bias against Bible truth.

One of the ways in which one can search the Scriptures to arrive at proper conclusions is by discovering the **what, where, when, who, how and why** of a particular topic; in this case, the virgin birth of Jesus. This will be our line of approach on this very vital subject, making it as easy to read, follow and

understand as we possibly can.

Prophecies from Old Testament Scriptures serve as the proper beginning for a study of the virgin birth. These will tell us the **what** of the virgin birth. There are three around which we will base our thoughts today.

First, is the prophecy that is as old as the history of man on the earth. From the Genesis Three Fifteen we read: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” The significance here is reference to the seed of the woman, “her seed.” In all other births the seed of the man is implanted in the womb of a woman to conceive children. Here, the emphasis is on the seed of the woman.

Second, is the famous prophecy from Isaiah Seven Fourteen: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a [the] virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” King Ahaz was fearful of the continuation of his throne in Judah because of the threats of the kings of Israel and Syria. God had taken several measures through the prophet Isaiah to bolster his courage. Finally, God told him to ask for a sign “in the heavens above or the earth beneath,” but he refused. The prophet then turns to the house of David, the nation and people, saying God will give them a sign that would assure them of the continuation of the throne of David in Judah. This is the context in which Isaiah tells them of a birth of such exceptional circumstances that it will be unmistakably *a sign* from God—a virgin would give birth to a son! Each succeeding generation of Jews, no matter what fiery tests and trials they passed through, should have been confident of the continuance of their nation and looking forward to the time when Immanuel, “God with us,” would arrive. This was the case of such individuals as Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:25-38); Andrew and Peter, “We have found the Messiah!” (John 1:41), and Philip and Nathaniel, “We have found him of whom Moses and the prophets wrote” (John 1:45). This was the purpose of the sign to the house of David! But it fell on deaf ears and blind eyes as far as the rulers of the Jews in Jesus’ time were concerned! They rejected their promised Messiah.

Please note and compare Genesis 3:15—the seed of the

woman—with the prophet Isaiah’s statement that “a **virgin** shall conceive, and bear a son.” No man is involved in the process of conception in either Scripture. If it were simply a young woman having a son in a natural way, as per some errant translations and arguments of unbelievers, this would not be a sign or miracle at all!

Third, is the statement from the Book of Jeremiah Chapter Thirty-one, verse twenty-two: “...for the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.” This verse in context is the same as that in Isaiah (i.e., God’s people are stubborn and obstinate and are on a path of destructive disobedience that will end with their 70 years captivity in Babylon). In this verse, again compare the wording to the two previous: (1) the seed of the **woman**, (2) a **virgin** shall conceive and bear a son, and (3) a **woman** shall compass a man. These are not just coincidental statements and every student of God’s Word will be impressed with what has been said! In each of these Scriptures we are given to understand that a woman is going to conceive and give birth to a son without the aid of a man in conception!

When we couple these passages from the Old Testament with the statement of the apostle Paul in the New Testament, the direction of thought is overwhelming. “And when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, **made of a woman**, made under the law” (Gal. 4:4 emphasis added). Putting these four Scriptures together, we get this information: that a woman will from herself bear seed, she will be a virgin that will bear a son, and that child will be **the Son of God!**

The Fulfillment of the Teaching of the Scriptures on the Virgin Birth

The fulfillment of these prophecies is found in the New Testament books of Matthew, chapters 1 and 2 and Luke, chapters 1 and 2. Please read carefully the content of these four chapters to have a full and complete knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the birth of the Son of God. In these chapters we find out the **where, who, how and when** of the Virgin Birth.

The **where** of this birth in answer to Isaiah’s prophecy is Bethlehem in Judea. Luke tells us that Joseph and Mary

journeyed to Bethlehem from Nazareth in Galilee for the purpose of being enrolled by the Roman government (Luke 2:1-5). The location itself was a subject of prophecy, and Matthew quotes for us from Micah 5:2: “But thou, Bethlehem in the land of Juda, art not the least of the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel” (2:6). Micah adds “whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” This gives us not only the location of the birth of the virgin’s son as Bethlehem in Juda (modernists have argued that Matthew and Luke were mistaken and they actually meant Bethlehem in Zebulon of Galilee, Robertson 120), but also that he is one who is eternal in his nature; “his goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” In other words his coming is an entrance of Deity into the affairs of man on earth.

The **who** of the one who was to be born of a virgin is none other than the Son of God. This is the child that came from the seed of the woman, from the virgin, the one who would be compassed by a woman, the one born in the fullness of time! She is described as a virgin in that she “had known no man” (Luke 1:34). This is the one of whom Isaiah spoke when he announced, “For unto us a child is born, unto a son is given...” (Isa. 9:6). Joseph was not to fear to take Mary his betrothed to be his wife, for the thing that was conceived in her was of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:35). Luke tells us plainly that this son to be born will be called “the Son of God!” (1:35). Matthew, quoting Isaiah, says he is to be called “Immanuel,” meaning “God with us!” Some critics say if he was to be called “Immanuel,” why wasn’t he? The fact is that Immanuel is a description of who he is—Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace—not the common name he would wear when he came to earth.

The **how** of the virgin birth is discreetly and delicately stated by Luke when he says “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you...” (Luke 1:35). Mary had protested, “How can this be, since I do not know a man!” The angel Gabriel proceeds to tell her of the miraculous circumstances of the pending birth of her cousin, Elizabeth, and assures Mary, “For with God nothing is impossible!” Mary’s humble response is, “Behold, the handmaid

of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word.”

Joseph, when it was discovered that Mary was with child, was filled with anguish and doubt. He ponders the situation and concludes that a quiet divorce is the only solution to this dilemma. It was the custom of the time that a marriage would be arranged, perhaps when the bride and groom were still children; then there was a betrothal lasting a full year. This betrothal was binding to such an extent that a divorce was necessary to end the relationship even though they were not yet legally married. The wedding and celebration and consummation would take place after the betrothal period. It would seem that at that very same night while Joseph was contemplating what to do, he had a dream in which he was told the circumstances of Mary’s pregnancy. Joseph accepted what he was told by Gabriel about Mary’s condition. “Joseph now would be in no way compromising his conscience, condoning sin, risking his own future happiness, nor otherwise doing something doubtful by fulfilling his promise to take Mary as his wife. The Holy Spirit is really the Father of her child” (Fowler 37).

The **when** of the virgin birth is an important piece of evidence in the overall testimony surrounding the birth of Jesus. Luke, the accurate biographer of Christ and dependable historian, tells us exactly when the virgin birth of the Messiah took place. “And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered” (Luke 2:1 NKJV). This registration of the citizens of Palestine was for the purpose of taxation by the Roman government. Luke further tells us, “This census first took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city” (2-3).

Modernists and critics of the virgin birth in the past have given little credence to such historical information (Warschauer 79). But researchers over the past fifty years have made great strides in identifying the governors of Syria before, during and after the birth of Christ, and records of the enrollment can be traced from the birth of Jesus until well into the next century A.D. (For more reading on Cyrinius [Latin, Quirinius] and the enrollment of the Jews, see Ernest L. Martin. *The Birth of Christ Recalculated*; A.T. Robertson. *Luke the Historian in the Light of*

Research; Sir William Ramsey. Was Christ Born in Bethlehem?)

It can safely be concluded that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, probably during the early fall season, in the years 4-2 B.C. This would mark the beginning of his earthly ministry at about November, A.D. 26, and his death in April of A.D. 30. (This statement reflects the adjustment to the Julian Calendar).

The Importance of the Virgin Birth To Christian Faith

Believing in the miraculous circumstances of the birth of Jesus is significant to mankind in several ways. In closing our lesson with this point, we will bring out the **why** of the virgin birth of Christ.

The doctrine of the Bible concerning Jesus Christ is of such nature that it is interwoven together to formulate the entirety of his life, both eternal and earthly. It is said by those who disbelieve the virgin birth that their denial of the Gospel accounts of the miraculous birth of the Lord does not affect their faith and confidence in the atoning work of Christ on the Cross. Can one really dissect the birth accounts of Jesus from the rest of the Bible doctrine concerning him? Is it really “harmless” to one’s faith to reject the virgin birth? The same sort of seductive reasoning and “logic?” can be applied to other teachings about Christ—his pre-existence, his role in the creation, his sinless life, his vicarious suffering and atonement, his resurrection and Ascension, and many other teachings about Jesus—are these (any one of them) able to be separated from the total Bible picture of the Christ and no harm done? The Psalmist said, “The sum of thy word is truth” (119:160 ASV), or as it is rendered in the New King James translation, “The entirety of Your word is truth.” Can we take out what the Scriptures teach about Jesus being the Creator and it still be just as weighty in its doctrine (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16)? Can we remove what the Bible says about Jesus being the promised Messiah and do no harm (Gen. 12:1-3)? Can we subtract what it teaches about his miracles and say “no harm, no foul? (Matt. 4:23-24; John 20:30-31)” **Just how much can one eliminate from the text of the Scriptures and still have the total picture of Jesus as the Savior of men?**

In truth, all these subjects of doctrine concerning Christ (and more) are part and parcel of the total picture of who the

Bible says Jesus was and is.

1. He is the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15; Luke 1:31; Gal. 4:4).
2. He is the promised blessing to all people (Gen. 12:1-3; Luke 1:46-55; Gal. 3:16).
3. He is the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament (Dan. 9:25).
4. He is the King who would sit on David's throne (1 Sam. 7:12-16; Luke 1:32-33).
5. He is the despised and rejected Savior (Isa. 53; Luke 2:34-35; Rev. 13:8).
6. He is Deity come in the flesh for an atonement for sin (John 1:14; Heb. 10:5-8).
7. He is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:22-23).

Conclusion

I close with what is the opening statement in the "Introduction" from J. Gresham Machen's book, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*: "According to a universal belief of the historic Christian Church, Jesus of Nazareth was born without human father, being conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the virgin Mary" (1). I might add, it still should be the universal belief of all the saints of God. The church of Christ universally ought to believe in the virgin born Son of God because it is the bold, plain, unabashed teaching of the Bible! Let us not be ashamed of Christ and all the Bible says about him (Mark 8:38)!

What the question of the virgin birth of Christ boils down to is this: Are the Scriptures, all of them from Genesis to Revelation, inspired? Are they inerrant? Are they credible? Men and women who believe the Bible to be the Word of God, **inspired and inerrant** have no difficulty believing in the doctrine of the virgin birth.

For more information on the virgin birth, see my chapter, "The Birth of the King" in *The King and the Kingdom in Matthew*, WVSOP Lectures (2003).

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Biographical Sketch

Emanuel Daugherty was born in Philippi, WV in 1939, and is married to the former Judith Null. They have four children and eight grandchildren. He has been preaching full time since 1966 and has served churches in Columbus, OH (Alkire Road), St. Marys, WV (Dewey Ave.). He served as Director of the West Virginia School of Preaching from 1994-2003 and is currently serving as a teacher in the school of preaching while also working with the Salem church of Christ in Glen Easton, Marshall County, WV.

The Christological Argument Proves God Exists

By Steve Stevens

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. (1 Pet. 1: 13–21)

In these few verses, the apostle Peter presents the plan of redemption which holds forth the hope brought to us “at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” He writes that our redemption was not with “corruptible things, as silver and gold,” but “with the precious blood of Christ.”

In verse 20, he reveals that this plan of redemption was “foreknown” and “foreordained” before the “foundation of the world” (cf. Matt. 25:34; Luke 11:50; John 17:24). Someone had thought out this plan of redemption requiring the blood of Christ before the world or any creature was brought into existence (Acts 2:23).

Furthermore, Peter goes on to declare that it “was manifest in these last times for you.” Not only was there a plan, but it was executed flawlessly. Someone through his power and overseeing presence made sure the plan to redeem man with the blood of Christ was demonstrated down to the slightest detail.

Who is that someone? The answer is in verse 21, and it is God! “By him” (that is by Christ) we believe in God. The God

who raised him up from the dead, and who gave him glory by exalting him to his right hand (Acts 2:32-33, 36). Our faith and hope stand in this God who sent his Son, the Christ, to redeem us from our vain conversation.

The text teaches us that God had a **purposed concept** to ransom man from sin. In his plan was a **provided currency** which was the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:2). He opened the **proposed corridor** to deliver the ransom by means of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The results were a **procured confidence** to all who would obey his will in the products of faith and hope.

It took the plan of God enacted by the power of God to accomplish the purpose of God. Christ was promised, prophesied and provided by the guiding hand of his Father. Christ is not a fable or fabrication of human origin. It took divine guidance and divine intervention to produce and secure his ancestry, conception, mission, life, death, resurrection, Ascension, intercession, mediation and glorification. It is indeed “by him” we do believe in God.

This is the scriptural foundation for the Christological argument for the existence of God. The formal statement of the argument would be:

1. If Jesus, the Christ, exists, then God exists.
2. Jesus, the Christ exists.
3. Therefore, God exists.

The balance of this lecture deals with proving the second point that Jesus, the Christ does exist.

There are many today in the world of religion that will admit that Jesus was a good man and even a religious prophet who said some very profound things. There are some in the world of skeptics who would allow that Jesus of Nazareth was a good moral man and a philosopher with very high ideals (Wilson 241). The fallacy in such reasoning is seen when one understands that Jesus did not claim such for himself and neither do his followers. Admitting that Jesus is a good man or that he even might be a prophet does not deal with the claims he makes for himself as the Christ, the Son of God. It does not deal with the claims that his followers and even that his enemies made that he was the Christ, the Son of God.

In John 4: 25-26, the woman at the well in Samaria states, "...I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things." Jesus answered her, "I that speak unto thee am he." In verse 42 many of the Samaritan people said, we "...know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

Jesus claimed to be the Christ, the people of Samaria knew he was indeed the Christ, Peter confessed that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16-18), Martha said she believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God (John 11:27), Apollos convinced the Jews showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 18:28), and John, the apostle, wrote his Gospel with the expressed purpose that "ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God..." (John 20:31). Jesus is claimed by God, the Father, as his beloved Son on two occasions (Matt. 3:17; 17:5).

In view of the claims made by Jesus, by his Father, by his followers and by the Scriptures, one cannot simply accept him as a great human teacher. Hopkins raises the question: "is it possible that he was either deceived or a deceiver?" (235). Filbeck states: "if this claim were not well founded it would either mean a 'lack of mental sanity' or a 'deep perversion of character'" (159).

Josh McDowell presents the issue under the heading: The Trilemma—Lord, Liar, or Lunatic. He writes: "Jesus claimed to be God. He did not leave any option open. His claim must either be true or false, so it is something that should be given serious consideration" (Wilson 242).

Let us deal first with the possibility that Jesus' claim is false. If it is false, there are two possibilities. The first would be that Jesus knew his claim was false, therefore making him "a deceiver," a man with a "deep perversion of character" and "a liar." The second would be that Jesus did not know his claim was false, therefore making him "deceived," a man with a "lack of mental sanity" and "a lunatic."

Was Jesus a deliberate liar about being the Christ, the Son of God? If he was, then he certainly could not be thought of as a good moral person by anyone! Worse yet, he would be not only a liar, but also a hypocrite because he taught everyone else to be

honest and truthful.

“How could he be a great moral teacher and knowingly mislead people at the most important point of his teaching—his own identity?” (Wilson 242).

Yet, the life of Jesus does not fit such a conclusion. “Look at His unaffected and all-pervading piety, at his universal and self-sacrificing benevolence; look at his purity and elevation above the world; listen to his prayer for his murderers on the cross; and say, is it possible that through all this he was meditating a scheme of deception deeper, more extensive, involving greater sacrifices and suffering, and more ultimate disappointment to human hope than any other? Do we not *know* that this was not so?” (Hopkins 236).

If he was not a liar, then could he have been so deluded and self-deceived that he mistakenly thought himself to be God? Pinnock writes: “Again the skill and depth of His teaching support the case only for His total mental soundness. If only we were as sane as He is!” (91).

Here is one who gives comfort, consolation, and hope to all around him. Here is one who confronts and confounds all who tempt and test him. Here is one who silences his critics face to face and in public. Here is one who trains twelve men to undertake the greatest mission in the world. His words are profound, even timeless. Is he a liar and a lunatic? No.

“These alternatives cannot be reasonably accepted. The life of sinless perfection characteristic of Jesus is equivalent to a miracle. It corroborates His claim of a supernatural mission and an exceptional relation to God” (Filbeck 159).

If Jesus, the Christ is not a liar or a lunatic, then his claims must not be false. What option remains? That his claims, the claims of his Father and the claims of his followers are true, and indeed he is the Lord Jesus Christ. This type of argument is often criticized as a false dilemma. It is suggested that the problem ignores the possibility that Jesus was a moral philosopher, but that his reported teachings have been distorted or misrepresented in order to bolster his claims as the Christ, the Son of God. However, this sort of dismissal is too quick for two reasons. First, empirical reasoning generally does not present evidence so strong as to exclude all theoretically possible alternatives to the

hypothesis in question. Even the best scientific theories are not supported by evidence of such strength, let alone most well substantiated historical claims. Secondly, there is no reason, in principle, why the argument cannot be added to the historical evidence that rules out other hypotheses besides the three considered in the argument.

There has been much evidence presented in this series of lectures regarding the proof that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God. Consider the evidence on the virgin birth, his masterful and unequalled teaching, the miracles that he performed, his resurrection from the dead, the fulfillment of over three hundred Old Testament prophecies in him and Christ's continuing influence throughout the world over nearly two millenniums. All of these evidences carry tremendous weight when considered together. The conclusion becomes inescapable: "...we have found the Messiah, which being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus..." (John 1: 41b-42a). Thus, we have proven that Jesus, the Christ does exist. His claims are true. That being the case, God exists! Our argument is valid and sound.

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Biographical Sketch

Steve Stevens is a native born West Virginian. He preached his first sermon at the age of nine at the church of Christ in Daybrook, WV. He was baptized by his father, Earl Stevens, Sr. on January 22, 1967 at Dewey Ave. church of Christ in St. Marys, WV. He began preaching on June 21, 1970 when he held his first Gospel meeting and conducted his first Vacation Bible School at the Norway Church of Christ near Fairmont, WV. From that point onward, he preached every Sunday, rotating Lord's Days between the Long Valley church of Christ, the Sancho church of Christ, the New Freeport church of Christ and the Pine Grove church of Christ (Hebron, WV) until December

1, 1975. During these years he conducted VBSs, preached in Gospel meetings, taught Bible classes and taught singing schools in over thirty-five congregations in West Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

On December 1, 1975 he began fulltime located work with the congregation at the Norway church of Christ near Fairmont, WV. He moved from there to the congregation meeting in Hundred, WV on April 1, 1981. He is currently in his 25th year of labor there.

He married the former Karen Barnhart of New Freeport, PA on July 16, 1976. The Lord has blessed their marriage with eight children. Two were born in the 1970s, two in the 1980s, two in the 1990s, and two in the 2000s. They range in age from 27 to 4 years old.

Steve served as a charter faculty member at the WVSOP from August, 1994 until June of 2000. During that time he taught the Life of Christ, Marriage and Family and New Testament Greek. Steve rejoined the faculty at WVSOP this year (2005), teaching New Testament Greek once again. He has written for *Therefore Stand*, preaches in several Gospel meetings throughout the brotherhood each year and conducts marriage and family seminars.

The Greatness of the Christian Faith

By Frank Higginbotham

Of all the religious movements that have influenced and affected the lives of men, there has not been one since the beginning of time that has had a greater influence than the religion of Jesus Christ. Its effect has been universal and is still exercising great power over men and women today. Prophets of old spoke in high praise for this way of life that was introduced by the Son of God. In speaking of the greatness of this way of life, the prophet Isaiah stated that it would surpass all other. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:2-3). Another of God's great prophets is the prophet Daniel. When Daniel was called upon to interpret the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, he explained that there would be kings representing four different kingdoms. The fourth period was represented by a multiple number of kings who were from the Roman Empire. It was during the times of these kings that God would establish the way of Christianity. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44). Daniel made it clear that the kingdom he was speaking about was a kingdom that would not be destroyed. Its influence could not be overpowered by anyone but would remain forever. In this lesson, we want to look at some of the things that make this way of life so great.

The greatness of the Christian faith is made clear to us when we consider the sacrifices that were necessary to make it possible and also the sacrifices that are constantly being made to contribute to its spread. It would be hard for us to imagine a greater sacrifice than the price God paid in order to bring it into

existence. Take time to consider the price paid for our redemption. “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:6-8). The price God paid for us is shown in the verse that we have come to know as the Golden Text of the Bible. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:16-17). Jesus also cooperated with the divine plan in that he willingly gave his life for us. “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:17-18). Jesus did not rebel at paying the price for our redemption. He made a willing sacrifice. No cause of man deserves this kind of sacrifice. Christianity does prompt such conduct. Sacrifice of a lesser degree was made by the apostles and the faithful brethren of the first century. When we consider the life of Paul, we are impressed with the price he was willing to pay for us. In writing to the church at Corinth Paul reminds them that he made great sacrifice to keep the Christian faith growing.

Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I *am* more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; *In* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. (2 Cor. 11:23-28)

It is hard for men to imagine such great sacrifices for a cause, however men who have found the truth of the Gospel have through the years been willing to make such sacrifices for this great cause.

Another evidence that Christianity is from God is seen when we consider the beginning and the growth of the Christian faith. As predicted by the prophet Isaiah, the beginning of the kingdom was in Jerusalem. Jews from every nation assembled and listened to the teaching of the Gospel. The message of salvation was plainly and boldly proclaimed, and it received a receptive ear. When convinced that they had killed the Son of God, the people wanted to know what they could do about this terrible sin. The response given by God through the apostles was that they needed to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). About three thousand souls obeyed the Gospel that day and became the beginning group from which the Gospel was spread in Jerusalem and then to other cities (Acts 2:41). In a short time, five thousand men were counted among the believers (Acts 4:4). Acts 6:7 tells of the number of disciples multiplying. The growth was so dramatic that some of the Jews began to plot ways to stop this great movement. As the Jewish council was in the midst of this discussion, there was a man named Gamaliel who offered some advice to them. He told of a man named Theudas who was part of a movement that gathered disciples but with his death, the movement came to an end. Then another man named Judas also was able to get others to follow him. Again, when he died his work came to naught. These facts cause Gamaliel to give this advice. "And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God (Acts 5:38-39). The works of men fail but all of the efforts of men to stop God have always failed. The fact that Christianity still survives in spite of the bitter opposition of men is evidence that it came from God. More than two thousand years have passed and Christianity not only is still in existence but it still abounds. The Gospel spread

was greatly increased by the persecution that was intended to bring it to an end. “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). The missionary journeys of the apostle Paul and the work of the church at Antioch caused the truth of the Gospel to be taken into many new areas. Paul stated that the Gospel had been taken to all the world (Col.1:23). This kind of work is still being conducted throughout the world. This great movement began according to prophecy and after more than two thousand years is still found alive and well in all the world.

Another evidence of the greatness of Christianity and the proof that it came from God is in the way the church has dealt with and survived the terrible attacks that have been continually thrown against it. Many times the efforts of men have been to use persecution to stop the diligent work of the followers of Christianity. Men such as Stephen and Antipas have died and others have lived in fear of their lives but have continued to live for this great cause. We are urged to “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). With great courage, martyrs have willingly stood up for this cause. Some of the opposition that we could expect comes from the forces of infidelity and atheism. There have always been those who deny that God exists. This is not because they have tried the evidence and found that it comes up short. The evidence is abundant in the creation. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork” (Psa. 19:1). We must conclude with David that the fool has said, “there is no God” (Psa.14:1). While we may not know the motives of many who deny God, it is clear that some have taken this position in order to sooth their consciences. They want to do wrong, and they do not want the knowledge of God to hamper their pursuit of evil things. “And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient” (Rom. 1:28). The atheist must close his eyes to the abundance of evidence of the existence of God. To argue that the universe and its uniformity is just a matter of chance is like arguing that the

New York phone book is a product of an explosion in a print shop. It just couldn't happen!

While we would expect opposition by those who say there is no God, it is also surprisingly true that Christianity through the years has had much opposition from those who claim to be its friends. Jesus fervently prayed for his disciples to be one. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:20,21). The world in general today views religious division as a good thing while Jesus declares that it contributes to making unbelievers. It is not uncommon today to see many of the various religious denominations unite in opposing anyone who will stand for the teachings of Christ. They have become proponents of the theory that says everyone and everything is right in religious activity. A few years ago, religious people had conviction that they based on the teachings of the Bible and thus tried to defend their positions by an appeal to the Word of God. This, now, does not seem to be the case. If everything is right and pleases God, why bother to try to prove the rightness of our practices by the Bible? We hear very little about earnestly contending for the faith. Instead of working for unity, the effort seems to be to defend the terribly divided state of religion. Has this united effort to oppose anyone who stands for truth been successful? The answer is no. Truth still does not fear investigation, and there are still those who courageously keep the faith (2 Tim.4:6-8). This way of religious activity has stood strong against the attacks of the enemies of Christ and even of many who claim to be its friends. The battle has been strong but truth will always prevail. God promised us the victory. "What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom 8:31, 37). While there are many things in the Book of Revelation that may be difficult to understand, we cannot miss the point that is made throughout the book. The forces of God are victors. Satan cannot prevail. Is not the survival of Christianity even in spite of vigorous opposition over many years an evidence of the greatness of the Christian faith? The

church is a kingdom that will never fail (Dan. 2:44). It cannot be shaken! “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Heb. 12:28).

The greatness of the Christian faith is made clear when we consider the great principles of life that have had great impact on the lives of men and the nations of men. It is true that many philosophies have been advanced by men, but none has had the impact on men that Christianity has had. It has not just been a rehearsal and the reworking of the ideas of men who have gone before, but is a new and better way of life.

Christ taught and exemplified the high principle that teaches us to return good for evil. It is not hard to return evil for evil nor is it hard to return good for good, but to return good when we have been treated badly is a higher principle of life than the world had ever known. Jesus demonstrated how this way of life should be followed at the time of his trial. “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Pet. 2:21-23). Even though he was falsely accused, Jesus did not respond with evil accusations. He opened not his mouth. Paul dealt with this manner of life in the great Book of Romans. “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:17-21). Living in peace with our fellowman becomes possible when men will follow this great lesson of the Christian religion. Jesus taught us to treat others in the manner we would want to be treated. “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matt. 7:12). If this idea were applied in the dealings of nations, look what a turn

around would occur. Apply it in matters of government in our own nation. What difference would take place if it were applied in everyday dealings with other people? How would marriages be helped by this way of conduct? God gave to us the highest way of life. No man or group of men has ever even come close to advancing such high principles.

The Christian faith teaches us to practice forgiveness in a way that is unheard of in the world. Many of us will admit that one of the hardest things we are called upon to do is to forgive those who sin against us. While hanging on the cross without cause, Jesus said, "Father forgiven them for they know not what they do." How could he express his forgiveness in such a forceful way? When the apostle Peter asked if he must forgive seven times, this very familiar statement was made. "Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22). While in our eyes seven times seems to be a reasonable amount of times, the Lord expanded it to include a limitless amount of times. What other way of life would require such patience with our fellowman?

The great principle of humble submission to the will of God is part of the Christian Faith. Jesus again becomes the perfect example for us. Submission to the will of God required that Jesus give his life. He willingly obeyed. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:17-18). The writer of the Hebrew letter discusses this time in the life of Christ in this way. "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:7-9). Our obedience to God is prompted by our love for him. "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Abraham obeyed God without even knowing the details of his obedience. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance,

obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Heb. 11:8).

The greatness of the Christian faith is a very compelling argument for the rightness of it. Its existence and survival is evidence that there is a God. No way of life has had such impact on the lives of men and has influenced the decisions of nations as the Christian way of life. If it were not of God it would have ceased to exist a long time ago. It will continue to exercise this great influence for all time because it is from God.

Biographical Sketch

Frank Higginbotham was born in New Martinsville, WV, February 21, 1933. He is the son of Mr. & Mrs. A.G. (Bus) Higginbotham. He graduated from Magnolia High School in New Martinsville and from Florida Christian College in Tampa, FL. His first located work was at Columbia Street in Fairmont, WV (1953-1956). This was then followed by Wellsburg, WV (1956-1958) and West Street in Weirton, WV (1958-1964) and the Virginia Avenue in Chester, WV (1964 to the present). He is currently in his 40th year at Chester. Radio preaching includes WETZ in New Martinsville, WMMN in Fairmont, WEIR in Weirton and WOHI in East Liverpool, OH. This program is a five-day-a-week, fifteen minute program that began in 1949. He was one of the speakers on a television program in Steubenville, OH over WSTV. He has spoken on various lecture programs (Ohio Valley College, Ohio Valley Lectures, Greater Kanawha Lectures, West Virginia School of Preaching). He is married to the former Rose King (1954). They had three children. Donna (passed away in 1965), Janie is married to Brent Gallagher, preacher at Oakwood Road in Fairmont, WV. Steve is the preacher at South Green Street in Glasgow, KY. The Higginbotham's have seven grandchildren.