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The Origin of the Soul in Light of Twinning, Cloning, and Frozen Embryos

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Précis:
Questions about the origin of the soul are of interest for at least two reasons. First, a developed version of substance dualism should include a treatment of the origin of the soul. Second, certain metaphysically and morally relevant phenomena—twinning, cloning, and frozen embryos—have been presented as evidence against substance dualism.[1] In this article, my main objective is to analyze three views of the origin of the soul in order to provide a rebuttal to those who would use these phenomena as defeaters of substance dualism.

Before diving into the issues, two preliminary points should be made. For one thing, justification for believing in substance dualism does not depend on developing a view about the origin of the soul. Why? Because the main issues that justify belief in substance dualism are quite independent of issues surrounding the soul's origin. If our justification for believing in substance dualism is solid, then one could have adequate grounds for believing that, say, Dolly the cloned sheep has a soul even in the absence of a view of the soul's origin. This often happens in our intellectual lives, i.e., we are often justified in believing that something exists even if we have no idea how the thing came about. Further, I believe that the defeating force of twinning, cloning, or frozen embryo cases is not sufficient to overturn the evidence for substance dualism, or so I shall argue.

For another thing, what exactly are we looking for when it comes to an answer to questions about the origin of the soul? Clearly,

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our answer should not contradict established scientific facts (though we should be sure that certain pieces of evidence are established scientific facts and not what naturalists tell us the facts have to be for philosophical or complementarian naturalism to be true).[2] In this sense, our answer should be consistent with science. But the nature of the question is not basically a scientific one. The core issues regarding the existence and origin of the soul cannot be resolved by science because 1) they are primarily philosophical and theological issues, and 2) different solutions are often, though admittedly not always, consistent with the scientific data and, thus, adjudication among those solutions is not a matter, or simply a matter, of the scientific data themselves. What we should be seeking is an answer that makes theological and philosophical sense while remaining consistent with genuine scientific facts.

As I mentioned above, twinning, cloning and frozen embryos have been raised as defeaters of substance dualism. In twinning, a single zygote splits to form identical twins during the early stages of development, while each cell is still totipotent, i.e., capable of making an entire new organism. The conclusion is sometimes drawn that during these early days of development, there is not a single human person present. Nor is there a soul, because a soul, if it exists at all, is not the sort of thing that splits—a view which one apparently would have to believe if one is committed to the idea that a soul comes into existence at the point of conception and that each zygote after twinning has its own soul.

In what is called nuclear transplant cloning, an individual organism is created from a single somatic (body) cell without sexual reproduction. In this case, the genetic material from a body cell is transplanted into an egg from which the nucleus (and, thus, the genetic materials) has been removed.

In cases where frozen embryos exist, some have wondered what to make of the soul's reality when it is not functioning. What is a substance dualist to make of the soul's existence and origin in light of these three phenomena? To answer this question I shall clarify two important differences between Cartesian and Thomistic substance dualism as I understand them, explain three views of the origin of the

soul in cases of normal procreation, and apply the insights gained to the problem cases.

Cartesian and Thomistic Substance Dualism

In the same way that Calvin may not have been a Calvinist, Descartes may not have been consistently a Cartesian dualist, and Aquinas may not have accepted all aspects of what I will call Thomistic substance dualism.[3] The views of Descartes and Aquinas are extremely sophisticated, and it is beyond my present concern to sort out the various details of their respective philosophical anthropologies. Still, there are certain broad features that have come to be associated with Cartesian substance dualism as advocated, for example, by Richard Swinburne and John Foster, and the same may be said for contemporary Thomistic substance dualists such as John Cooper, Peter Kreeft and Ron Tacelli.[4]

As I use the labels from now on, I will employ them in widely accepted ways while making no claim to be accurately representing Descartes or Aquinas in every detail. Still, I do believe my use of these labels accurately captures the spirit and, often, the letter of each thinker. It also needs to be said that, due to the current loathing for substance dualism, there is a widespread revisionist tendency among philosophers to show that, after all, Aristotle and Aquinas were not really dualists.[5] I do not wish to enter that debate here, but suffice it to say that its presence muddies the waters regarding Aquinas' actual position.

There are two key features relevant to our topic that distinguish Cartesian and Thomistic substance dualism as I am interpreting them. For one thing, Cartesians tend to identity the soul with the mind, and this generates a mind/body problem instead of what I believe to be the more preferable soul/body problem. For the Thomist, the mind is a faculty (a natural grouping of capacities) of the soul which may require certain physical states of affairs to obtain in the brain and central nervous system before it can function. But for the Thomist, the soul itself does not require these states of affairs to obtain before it is present and, in fact, it is the soul that is responsible for the development of the brain and nervous system and, more generally, the body. Descartes'

reduction of the soul to the mind brought about an identification of the person with a purely conscious substance, or at least a substance with the ultimate capacities for consciousness. For the Thomist, the soul is broader than the capacities for consciousness and is responsible for organic functioning and the activities of life.

Second, Descartes is typically interpreted as depicting the body as a physical machine with the result that he could not explain just what it is that makes the body human. His substance dualism involved a dualism of two separable substances—mind and body. For modern Cartesians, the mind is a substance, and the body is a property-thing or ordered aggregate. Either way, the body is merely a physical object totally describable in physical terms. The Cartesian notion of the body includes the idea that the sole relationship between the mind and the body is an external causal relationship. In this way, while Cartesian substance dualists do, indeed, treat the mind as a substance, they nevertheless depict the body/soul unity as a property-thing in which the substantial soul is externally related to an ordered aggregate, the body.

By contrast, Thomistic substance dualists, at least on my version, will admit that the body is a physical structure of (both separable and inseparable) parts, but they will want to insist that it is also a *human* body due to the diffusion of the soul as that which provides the essence of the body and which is fully present in every body part. In keeping with this view, the Thomist will insist on a deeper, more intimate relationship between soul and body than the mere causal connection between a Cartesian mind and a solely physical body. For the Thomist, there is a modal distinction between soul and body: the soul could exist without the body but not vice versa. Thus, Thomistic substance dualism is not a dualism of two separable substances. There is only one substance, though I do not identify it with the body/soul composite. Rather, I take the one substance to be the soul, and the body to be an ensouled biological and physical structure that depends on the soul for its existence.

On this view, function determines form, not vice versa. The various teleological functions latent within the soul are what guide the development, and ground the spatially extended structure, of inseparable parts (the body). Thus, the substantial soul is a whole that

is ontologically prior to the body and its various inseparable parts. The various physical/chemical parts and processes (including DNA) are tools, instrumental causes that are employed by higher order biological activities in order to sustain the various functions grounded in the soul. So the soul is the first efficient cause of the body's development as well as the final cause of its functions and structure which are internally related to the soul's essence. The functional demands of the soul's essence determine the character of the tools but they, in turn, constrain and direct the various chemical and physical processes that take place in the body.

Regarding the way the soul is in the body and vice versa, the soul is "in" the body as the individuated essence that stands under, informs, animates, develops, and unifies all the body's parts and functions and makes the body human. And the body is "in" the soul in that the body is a spatially extended set of internally related heterogeneous parts that is an external expression of the soul's "exigency" for a body, i.e. of the non-extended law (structural set of capacities) for forming a body to realize certain functions latent within the soul itself.

These two issues—the soul vs. mind and the humanness of the body along with its relationship to the immaterial soul or mind—are major factors that distinguish Thomist and Cartesian dualism.

Three Views of the Origin of the Soul in Normal Cases

In the history of the church, there have been two different positions about the origin of the human soul: Creationism and Traducianism.[6] Each has had its fair share of advocates. Briefly put, Creationists hold that at some point, God creates a new soul *ex nihilo*, and Traducians affirm that the soul is in some way generated by way of the act of reproduction and comes to be at the time of conception. For Creationists, God is the primary cause of the soul's coming to be; for Traducians, He is a secondary cause. In order to understand these views more clearly, let us call all the strictly physical conditions involved in reproduction (e.g., the chemical and physical aspects of

sperm, egg, and their union) the PR conditions. PR conditions are fully describable in the language of physical science.

There are two different versions of creationism: Cartesian dualist Creationism and Thomistic dualist Creationism. According to Cartesian Creationism, egg and sperm are merely physical/chemical entities, and the PR conditions are sufficient for the generation of a human's body which, you will recall, is merely a physical object. On the Cartesian Creationist view, at some point between conception and birth, God creates a soul and connects it to a body that results entirely from PR conditions.

By contrast, according to at least one form of Thomistic Creationism, PR conditions are not sufficient for the formation of a human body which requires ensoulment (and, thus, the instancing of human nature to form an individuated soul) to be human.[7] On this view, when PR conditions obtain, God directly instantiates the abstract property being human and creates an individual human soul. When the individual soul comes into existence, it is not then externally linked to a strictly physical body. Rather, the physical entities that constitute the PR conditions undergo substantial change and are incorporated into and subsumed under the new individuated essence to form one single substance.

There have been different versions of Traducianism, and some of them must be rejected. For example, one form of Traducianism found in Tertullian asserts that the soul of the child is a separated fragment of the father's soul. As one theologian put it, in this case, we are all literally a chip off the old block![8] While souls may certainly fragment in the sense of containing poorly integrated functioning (e.g., in multiple personality or split brain cases), because souls do not have separable parts, they are not the sorts of things from which pieces can be taken.

A more sophisticated form of Traducianism asserts that PR conditions are not merely physical. In addition to physical/chemical properties and parts, egg and sperm have soulish potentialities that, on the occasion of fertilization, become actualized. Here, the union of sperm and egg amount to a form of substantial change in which two different entities come together and this gives rise to the emergence of a new substantial whole, namely, a soul that informs the zygote body

and begins to direct the process of morphogenesis. This Traducian view has much in common with the Thomistic Creationist position, especially when it comes to describing 1) the incorporation of PR entities under the new essence to form a unified substance and 2) the subsequent role of the soul in the development of the body. The main difference between them is whether the soul is created on the occasion when PR conditions obtain or whether those conditions are sufficient for the soulish potentialities within sperm and egg to give rise to a new soul by way of God's secondary causality.

Application to the Problem Cases

What resources do these three views (Cartesian Creationism, Thomistic Creationism, and Traducianism) have for dealing with the abnormal cases mentioned earlier? To begin with, all three views accept various forms of relationship (e.g., causal interaction) between soul and matter. God, angels, and demons are not physical, but they can actually interact with matter.[9] Even if one does not believe in their reality, it is strongly conceivable that if they existed they could interact with matter. Moreover, my intending to raise my arm brings the latter about, and if I get stuck with a pin I feel pain, so soul/matter interaction is perfectly intelligible and actually takes place.

Second, Christian theists have developed different models for God's relationship to the laws of nature and to natural causal processes. The main views of the world's causal activity in relationship to God are 1) *the full secondary causality view* (God sustains the world in existence but in the normal course of things, the entities of the world exert their own causal powers, and such exertions are sufficient to produce changes in the world), 2) *occasionalism* (there are no autonomous, distinct causal powers possessed by created objects; God is the only true cause, and no effect in nature is brought about by natural entities), and 3) *concurrentism* (every event cause has God collaborating with the natural causal entity, cooperating with its causal activity by ratifying that activity which alone would not be sufficient to produce the effect). In all three views, the regularity of natural law and causal processes is due to God's faithfulness in regularly sustaining,

causing, or ratifying certain effects when certain causal conditions obtain in the world.

In light of causal interaction and God's relationship to natural causal processes, let us think through these cases beginning with the Cartesian Creationist view. For the Cartesian Creationist, God desires for a human soul to have a body through which it interacts with the world. The body is something God makes for a purpose: to be causally connected to a soul and to be its primary means of effecting the natural world. On this view, God regularly and faithfully creates a soul when the PR conditions for body formation obtain because that is why PR conditions were created in the first place. Now just as God continues to cooperate regularly and faithfully with laws of nature in general, so God continues faithfully and regularly to create souls when the normal PR conditions obtain *regardless of the pathway used to reach PR conditions*. Thus, if PR conditions obtain via cloning or twinning, God still honors his commitment to why he created those conditions in the first place, viz., to be the body of a soul.

In frozen embryo cases, The Cartesian Creationist has two options: she can deny that the soul has been created yet or, more likely, she can argue that the soul follows a pattern throughout reality, namely, something can exist without functioning. Just as the life principle in an acorn can exist even though its capacities are dormant and unrealized, so the soul can exist even if its capacities for organic functioning and consciousness are not actualized.

As I am representing the view, the Thomistic Creationist will adopt the same line of approach except for two differences. First, he will say that when PR conditions obtain in cloning or twinning cases, God uses this as the occasion for creating a soul that incorporates the physical PR constituents into one substance, rather than creating a soul and causally connecting it to a body developing out of PR constituents. Here the Thomistic Creationist adopts a form of miraculous concurrence as a model of God's activity in generating the body and its unity with the soul to form a substance: PR conditions are not sufficient for such a unity to appear, and God must exercise causal power and create a soul that, then, forms a body. Second, the Thomistic Creationist will say that in cases of frozen embryos, since the PR conditions have

obtained, there is a soul present with latent powers that, under the right circumstances, will begin to function.

The Traducian will agree that in frozen embryo cases the soul exists with dormant potentialities. But the Traducian will take a different approach to cloning and twinning cases. For the Traducian, there is no a priori way to read off from the abstract notion of a soul containing an essence the precise nature of the immanent laws that constitute that essence. We cannot specify what the boundaries are regarding what physical conditions can or cannot lead to the generation of a new soul.

For example, if we assume that a necessary condition for something being physical is that it is extended, and if we assume for the sake of argument that chemical elements and compounds are substances, then those elements/compounds have unextended, immaterial (though not soulish) essences (goldness, being salt). Moreover, on our assumption, chemical change is substantial change.[10] This means, for example, that when sodium and chlorine are brought together to form salt, purely physical processes of attraction, rearrangement of electrons, etc. cause two immaterial essences to cease to be exemplified (being sodium, being chlorine), and a new immaterial essence to obtain (being salt). Note carefully that even if this is the wrong read of chemical change, this understanding is certainly conceivable and, thus, the idea that purely physical conditions can affect the presence or absence of an immaterial essence is at least intelligible.

On this view, it would be wrong to say that sodium or chlorine is potentially salt. Something either is or is not sodium, chlorine, or salt, and sodium and chlorine taken as individual substances are not salt. If we wish, we could say that sodium and chlorine are *possibly* salt. This simply means that, under the right circumstances, sodium and chlorine are the right sorts of things that can undergo substantial change and form a completely new individual substance (salt) with a new nature.

In Genesis 1 we are told that animals (and plants) reproduce after their kind, and this has frequently been taken to imply a Traducian view of the generation of animal souls. Now in this case, it should be clear that the genetic materials of animals contain soulish potentialities and, thus, are not merely physical/chemical entities. In the case of chemical change and animal generation, physical changes, in some

way or another, give rise to changes in which immaterial essences are exemplified (chemical change) or to the generation of an immaterial soul. There was no way a priori to decide the precise nature of these causal connections, and empirical research was necessary for their discovery.

Applied to twinning or cloning, we simply discover as a brute fact that certain substances, once they have developed a structure adequate to provide a framework for part replacement or for generating new substances, have the capacities in question. Nothing whatsoever in the notion of substantial soul provides a bar to these realities. Because starfish are living, we take them to have souls. But a piece of a starfish can be split off and used to grow a new starfish. In this case, the soul of the original starfish is not losing a piece of itself. Rather, as a brute fact we discover that certain organic body parts of the starfish have totipotentiality, soulish potentials to develop a new organism.

Why should this seem odd if we grant the intelligibility of viewing chemical change as substantial change or if we grant that sperm and egg have these potentialities? In twinning or in cloning, certain organic entities (cells) simply have the relevant potentialities, and nothing whatsoever about belief in a substantial soul can place a priori limits on what physical conditions can or cannot give rise to a new soul. We must look to empirical study or revelation for help in that way.

I have not tried to argue for substance dualism nor for a specific version thereof. My purpose has been to clarify different views about the origin of the soul, taken as a substantial, immaterial entity, and to use the resources they provide to rebut the charge that the phenomena of twinning, cloning, and frozen embryos are defeaters for substance dualism. Much more work needs to be done in this area, but as an initial contribution to that broader project, I have tried to sketch out the general resources available to substance dualists to deal with these problematic cases.

Notes

1. Cf. A. A. Howsepian, "Who Or What Are We?" *Review of Metaphysics* 45 (March 1992): 483-502.
2. For more on these varieties of naturalism, see J. P. Moreland, Scott Rae, *Body and Soul: Human Nature and the Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000).
3. For more on Descartes' dualism, especially as it relates to the thought of Aquinas, see Theresa M. Crem, "A Moderate Dualist Alternative to Cartesian Dualism," *Laval thaeologique et philosophique* 35 (June 1979): 153-175; John Mourant, "Cartesian Man and Thomistic Man," *The Journal of Philosophy* 54 (June 1957): 373-382; Albert G. A. Balz, "Concerning the Thomistic and Cartesian Dualisms: A Rejoinder to Professor Mourant," *The Journal of Philosophy* 54 (June 1957): 383-390; J. P. Moreland, Stan Wallace, "Aquinas vs. Descartes and Locke on the Human Person and End-of-Life Ethics," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 35 (September 1995): 319-30. For helpful treatments of Aquinas, see Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), pp. 207-226; Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind* (London: Routledge, 1993).
4. See Richard Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, rev. ed., 1997); John Foster, *The Immaterial Self* (London: Routledge, 1991); John Cooper, *Body, Soul, & Life Everlasting*; Peter Kreeft, Ron Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), pp. 227-256. Though she is not happy with the term, Eleanore Stump defends a version of Thomistic substance dualism that has many (but not all) things in common with the view I am defending. See her "Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism and Materialism without Reductionism," *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (October 1995): 505-531. William Hasker develops a view that, while different from traditional versions of substance dualism, is certainly closer to substance dualism than to physicalism or property dualism. See "Emergentism," *Religious Studies* 18 (December 1982): 473-488; "Brains, Persons, and Eternal Life," *Christian Scholar's Review* 12 (1983): 294-309; "Brains and Persons," in *The Reality of Christian Learning*, ed. by Harold Heie and David L. Wolfe (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 181-203; "Concerning the Unity of Consciousness," *Christian Scholar's Review* 12 (October 1995): 532-547.
5. Cf. Howard Robinson, "Aristotelian Dualism," in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy: 1983* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 123-144.
6. Creationism is fairly familiar to most people today. For an analysis of traducianism, see *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, special edition, s.v. "Traducianism," by C. A. Dubray; *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v., "Soul, Human, Origin of," by J. E. Royce,"; s.v. "Traducianism," P. B. T. Bilaniuk; William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology Volume II* (Grand Rapids:

Zondervan, 1988; original edition, 1888), pp. 3-94; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Volume II (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 65-78.

7. Aquinas himself believed that as the fertilized egg developed, it was animated first by a purely vegetative, then by a sensitive, and finally by an intellectual, human soul. See *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, Question 118, Article 2, Reply Obj. 2.
8. Cf. Richard Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, p. 199.
9. For defenses of dualist interaction, see Keith Yandell, "A Defense of Dualism," *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (October 1995): 551-553; J. P. Moreland, "A Defense of Substance Dualism," in *Christian Perspectives on Being Human: A Multidisciplinary Approach* ed. by J. P. Moreland, David Ciocchi (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), pp. 75-77.
10. For a defense of this view of chemical change, see Richard Connell, *Substance and Modern Science*, pp. 81-87; cf., Enrico Cantore, *Atomic Order* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969), pp. 254-280; J. Van Brakel, "Chemistry as the Science of the Transformation of Substances," *Synthese* 111 (June 1997): 253-282.

A New Approach to the Apologetic for Christ's Resurrection by Way of Wigmore's Juridical Analysis of Evidence

John Warwick Montgomery

Précis:
Philosophical and theological arguments for Christ's deity based on his miracles have not always had the convincing force expected of them. As epistemological efforts in general move more and more in a juridical direction, we apply for the first time the most sophisticated of these—Wigmorean analysis—to the central apologetic for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

In my books, *Human Rights and Human Dignity* and *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus*,[1] I emphasised the shift on the part of distinguished philosophers such as Mortimer Adler and Stephen Toulmin toward a juridical approach to the solving of epistemological problems. At a recent conference at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies at the University of London, Professor David Schum of George Mason University, who instructs at the U.S. Joint Military Intelligence College, pointed to the same phenomenon in the field of military strategy: juridical argument, particularly Wigmorean argument construction, is now being employed in the analysis of potential insurgency operations and analogous tactical themes.[2]

The prime reason for the move toward juridical thinking in these fields is the sophistication with which lawyers must deal with evidence questions. Decisions of law can only be made once facts have been established, so lawyers and legal scholars must employ the

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most effective techniques possible in arriving at factual conclusions on which life or death may depend—and these must be sufficiently persuasive to convince the "triars of fact" (juries and judges) to arrive at just verdicts.

Moreover, the factual decisions to be reached in the courts are seldom of a single-issue character; they generally involve a great number of factual particulars and the interlacing of numerous sub-arguments. Even Toulmin, who argued so eloquently in his classic, *The Uses of Argument,* for replacing the epistemological models of "psychology, sociology, technology and mathematics" with "the discipline of jurisprudence,"[3] when he produced his highly useful text, *An Introduction to Reasoning,* never went beyond two levels of analysis.[4]

In diametric contrast, John Henry Wigmore (1863-1943), the greatest common-law specialist on the law of evidence after Harvard's Simon Greenleaf,[5] endeavoured to treat what he termed "the ultimate and most difficult aspect of the principles of Proof; namely, the method of solving a complex mass of evidence in contentious litigation."

> Nobody yet seems to have ventured to offer a method. . . . The logicians have furnished us in plenty with canons of reasoning for specific single inferences; but for a total mass of contentious evidence, they have offered no system. . . .
>
> The problem of collating a mass of evidence, so as to determine the net effect which it should have on one's belief, is an everyday problem in courts of justice. Nevertheless, no one hitherto seems to have published any logical scheme on a scale large enough to aid this purpose.[6]

Wigmore produced what is still the most comprehensive work in the field of legal evidence, his *Evidence in Trials at Common Law*; the fourth edition (1985) runs to eleven volumes,[7] plus a massive 1999 supplementary volume.[8] Even Wigmore's sharpest critic, one Edmund Morgan, called it "the best work ever produced on any comparable division of American Law."[9]

We therefore have every good reason to examine Wigmore's method of proof, and, having done so, to discover its relevance to the question of the facticity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Wigmorean Chart Analysis

In his biographical sketch of Wigmore, Professor William Twining comments that Wigmore's *Principles of Judicial Proof* "remains largely forgotten, perhaps because it placed too much emphasis on an ingenious system of analysing masses of evidence through elaborate charts that involved resort to unfamiliar symbols."[10] Yet Twining himself, in his own publications in the field of reasoning and legal evidence, has seen the tremendous value of this complex analytical technique and has endeavoured to explain it to the *non cognoscenti.*[11] In the explanations to follow, we rely heavily on Twining's materials, developed largely to present the Wigmorean method to law students unacquainted with it.

One begins with an overall analysis of the problem. Here is Twining's seven-step summary of the methodology:

1. Clarification of standpoint, purpose, and role;
2. Formulation of potential ultimate *probandum* [that which is to be proven] or *probanda* [those things which are to be proven];
3. Formulation of potential penultimate *probanda*;[12]
4. Formulation of theory and themes of the case: choice of strategic ultimate, penultimate, and intermediate *probanda*;[13]
5. Compilation of a key-list;
6. Preparation of the chart(s); and
7. Completion of the analysis.

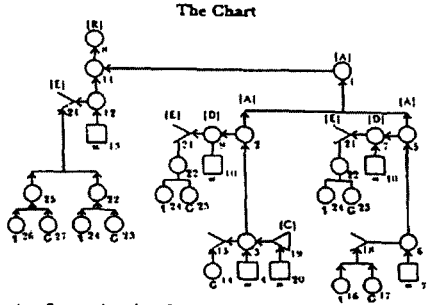
Twining illustrates by way of simple criminal case. The *ultimate probandum* is that "X murdered Y," or, stated more formally, that "(A) Y is dead; (B) Y died as a result of an unlawful act; (C) it was X who committed the unlawful act that caused Y's death; and (D) X intended

(i) to commit the act and (ii) thereby to cause Y's death." The coroner's report and observations at the scene satisfy all concerned that "Y died at approximately 4:45 p.m. on 1 January in his house as the result of an unlawful act committed by another." We thus develop a key-list and corresponding chart involving some five testimonial assertions and related inferences that appear relevant to the *penultimate probandum* (C) that "It was X who committed the unlawful act that caused Y's death."

The Key-List

1. X was in Y's house at 4:45 P.M. on January 1.
2. X entered Y's house at 4:30 P.M. on January 1.
3. W_1 saw X enter Y's house at 4:30 P.M. on January 1.
4. W_1: I saw X enter Y's house at 4:30 P.M. on January 1 as I was walking on the sidewalk across the street.
5. X left Y's house at 5:00 P.M. on January 1.
6. W_3 saw X leave Y's house at 5:00 P.M. on January 1.
7. W_3: I saw X leave Y's house at 5:00 P.M. on January 1.
8. X was *not* at Y's house on January 1.
9. X did not enter or leave Y's house on January 1.
10. X: I never went to Y's house on January 1.
11. X was at her office at 4:45 P.M. on January 1.
12. X was working at her office from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. on January 1.
13. X: I was working at my office from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. on January 1.
14. A claimed eyewitness identification by a pedestrian walking on the other side of the street is doubtful.
15. It may be someone other than X whom W_1 saw enter Y's house.
16. The sun had set before 5:00 P.M. on January 1.
17. A claimed eyewitness identification made after the sun has set is doubtful.
18. It may have been someone other than X whom W_3 saw leave Y's house.
19. W_1 saw X enter Y's house at 4:30 P.M. on January 1.
20. W_2: I saw X enter Y's house at 4:30 P.M. on January 1.
21. X's testimony should not be accepted.
22. X is lying about her actions and whereabouts on January 1.
23. A person accused of a crime has a strong motive to fabricate testimony that might exonerate her.
24. X is the accused in this case.
25. X was probably not in her office on January 1.
26. January 1 is New Year's Day and a legal holiday in this jurisdiction.
27. Few people go to their office and work all day on New Year's Day in this area.

The Chart



A = assertion; E = explanation; R = rival; and D = denial. Note that a defendant becomes a "proponent" of rival and denial assertions, and thus the prosecutor may use the process of "opponent's" explanation to undermine these assertions.

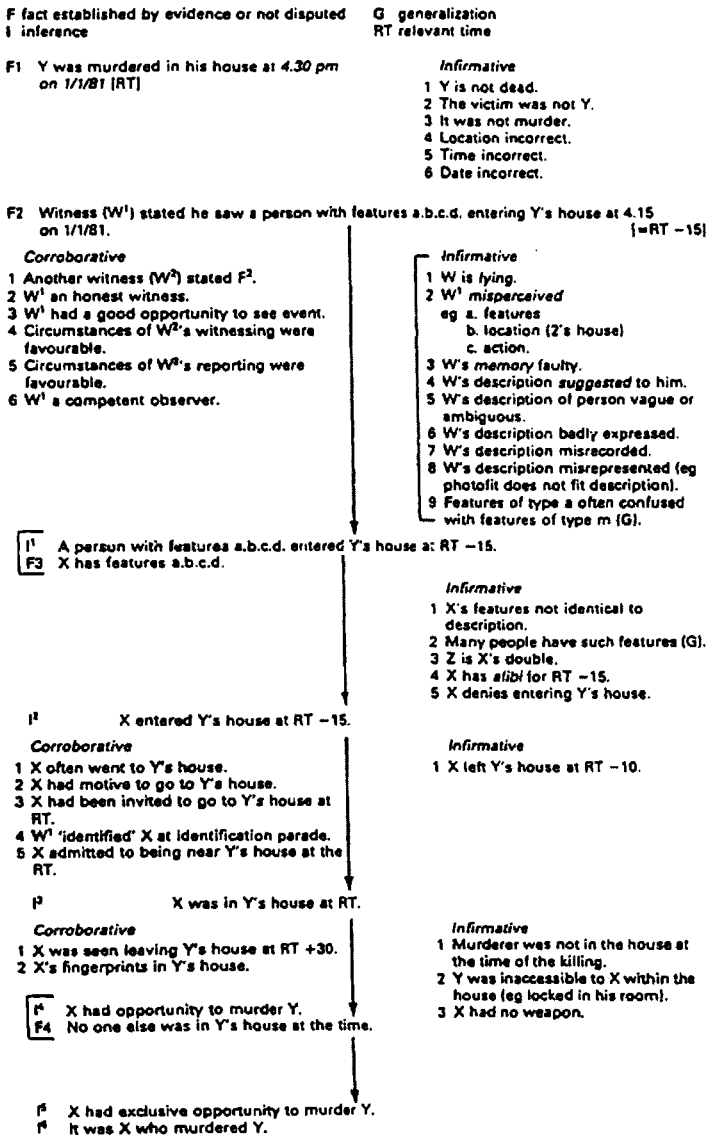
We do not need to go into the details of this illustration. Just a few basic points require clarification.

The chart symbols vary somewhat from one Wigmorean analysis to another. In general, a *circle* represents evidence; more explicitly (and not used in this chart), a *filled-in circle* is used to depict factual, empirical data—what Sherlock Holmes called the "trifles" which are capable ultimately of deciding issues —as contrasted with *unfilled-in circles*, representing circumstantial evidence or mere inferences; a *square* depicts testimonial assertions (it does not have to be used when the entire case is a matter of testimony or conflicting testimony); a *triangle* identifies an argument that corroborates a fact or inference to which it is related; an *open angle* represents an alternative explanation for an argument given by the other side; *arrows* show the direction of an inferential relationship between one fact or fact to be proven and another; and the letter G is used for generalisations which are taken (correctly or incorrectly) as not requiring proof because they are accepted as such and would supposedly be received by a tribunal as worthy of judicial notice.

It will be noted that in the illustration one single chart has been used to show both the "prosecution" and the "defense" arguments (thus, for example, items 1 and 8 are mutually contradictory and cannot both be true). A clearer picture and a more effective analysis is usually possible by separating the pro- and the con- streams of argument by the use of separate, parallel charts. Either way, it is vital to chart the strongest arguments both *for* and *against* the ultimate *probandum*.

Below, in an unpublished chart which avoids the use of symbols, Twining separates pro- and con-lines of argumentation, designating the opposition case with the term "infirmative":

Inference upon inference (source: Twining, unpublished)



Note that the "RT" (relevant time) category would be employed only when the issue in question turned on a matter of chronology.

Application to the Claim That Jesus Christ Was Resurrected

We are now in a position to use the foregoing style of analysis to evaluate the evidence for Christ's resurrection.

Before we do, however, it may be well to observe the desirability of employing this approach rather than the Bayesian probability calculus. Bayes' theorem, in essence, asserts that the probability of an event can be calculated by multiplying posterior odds by prior odds to obtain a likelihood ratio. But as Earman (the secular author of a devastating critique of Hume's argument against the miraculous) observes:

> Attempts to objectify priors run into notorious difficulties. . . . The anomalous advance of the perhelion of Mercury was known to astronomers long before Einstein formulated his general theory of relativity. A naïve application of Bayes's theorem would seem to imply that no incremental confirmation takes place, despite the fact that physicists uniformly claim that general relativity receives strong confirmation from the explanation of the perihelion advance.

True, the Bayesian approach has been usefully employed by Richard Swinburne in his book, *The Resurrection of God Incarnate.*[1] But a particular problem with using it in arguing for the resurrection of Christ (or any miracle, for that matter) is the number of prior events which do not have a miraculous character. Wigmore's approach, based solidly in historical and testimonial evidence for events themselves rather than in philosophical speculation or probablistic calculation involving prior events, bypasses this problem.

In arguing for the resurrection of Christ, our terms are as follow:

> **Ultimate probandum [UP]:** "God raised Jesus from the dead as Saviour of the world."

> **Penultimate probandum [PP]:** "Jesus rose from the dead."

Stated more formally:

[PP(A)]: "Jesus died on the Cross";

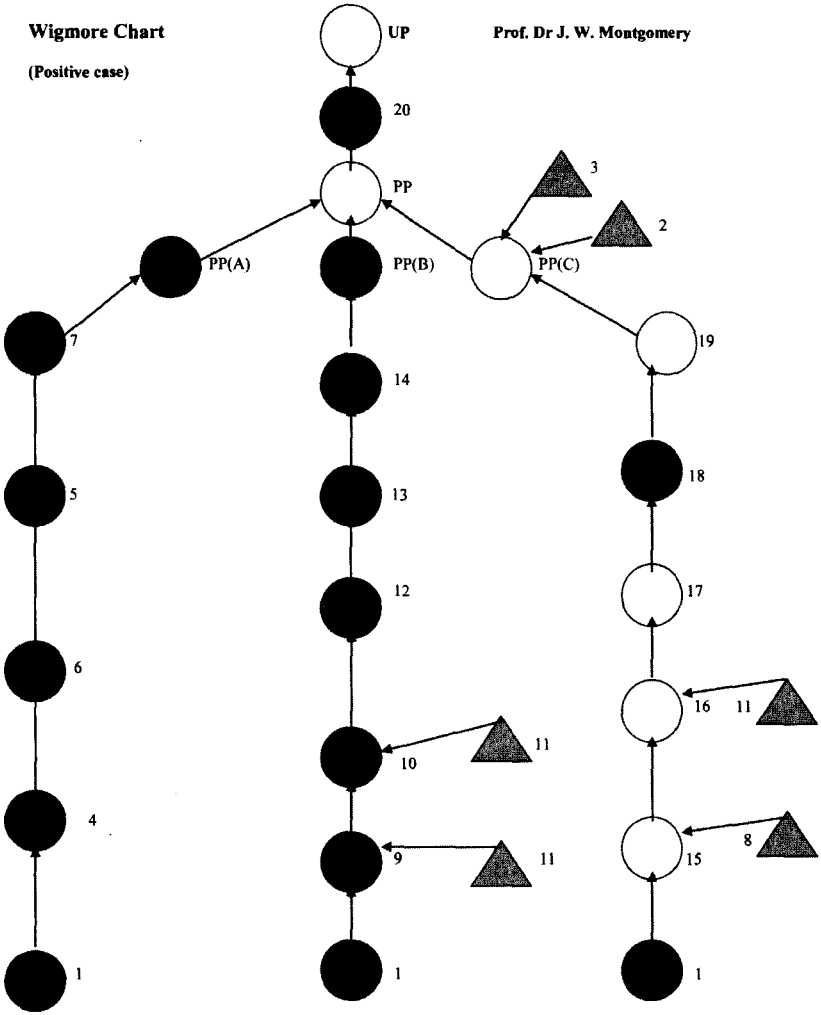
[PP(B)]: "On and after the first Easter morning, Jesus was physically alive."

[PP(C)]: "Jesus' transition from death to life occurred miraculously—without third-party human agency."

The Positive Key-list:

1. All events related to Christ's death and resurrection were reported by eyewitnesses or associates of eyewitnesses.
2. Jesus is said by these witnesses to have been born miraculously and performed numerous impressive miracles, including the raising of Lazarus, during his public ministry.
3. On several occasions, Jesus predicted his resurrection.
4. Jesus was tried publicly by Jewish and by Roman leaders, given a death sentence, and executed by crucifixion.
5. On the cross, a sword was driven into his side to assure the soldiers in charge that he was indeed dead.
6. Jesus' crucifixion occurred publicly in Jerusalem at the high season of the Jewish religious year.
7. Jesus' body was then placed in a well-known tomb belonging to a prominent Jewish religious personality.
8. Efforts were made by the Jewish religious leaders to prevent a stealing of Jesus' body and to suppress any rumours of resurrection.
9. On the first Easter morning, Jesus' disciples encountered a Jesus who was alive.
10. Jesus appeared subsequently to his followers over a 40-day period, followed by his public ascension into heaven.
11. Jesus' disciples did not believe that he would rise prior to the event having occurred—as evidenced, for example, by "doubting Thomas."

12. Jesus' resurrection appearances were physical in nature (Jesus eating fish, Thomas able to touch wounds in Jesus' hands and side).
13. Paul testified to having seen and spoken to the risen Christ on the Damascus road.
14. Paul provided a list of named witnesses to the risen Christ and claimed that over 500 were still alive to testify to it in A.D. 56 (1 Cor. 15)—as well as claiming when on trial before the Roman governor that Christ's death and resurrection were "not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26).
15. Absence of motive to steal Jesus' body on the part of the Romans or the Jewish religious leaders, and every reason on their part not to do so.
16. Irrationalism of any argument that Jesus' disciples or followers would have stolen his body and then claimed he rose from the dead—thus inviting persecution and death.
17. Irrationality of any unnamed third parties stealing the body or inventing such a story.
18. No contemporary refutations or attempted refutations of the fact of the resurrection by those with means, motive, and opportunity to do so.
19. Explanations of the event other than that by Jesus and the firsthand witnesses have no cogency and should be rejected.
20. Jesus claimed to be God incarnate, raised up by his Father, and the unique Saviour through his death and resurrection.



The Negative Key-list (based on Twining analysis):

F Fact established by evidence
I Inference

Infirmative

F-1 [PP(A)] Jesus died on the cross
1. He did not die on the cross (*2*)
2. Victim was someone else (*3*)
3. He died later under other circumstances (*4*)
4. One cannot trust the documents/witnesses (*1*)

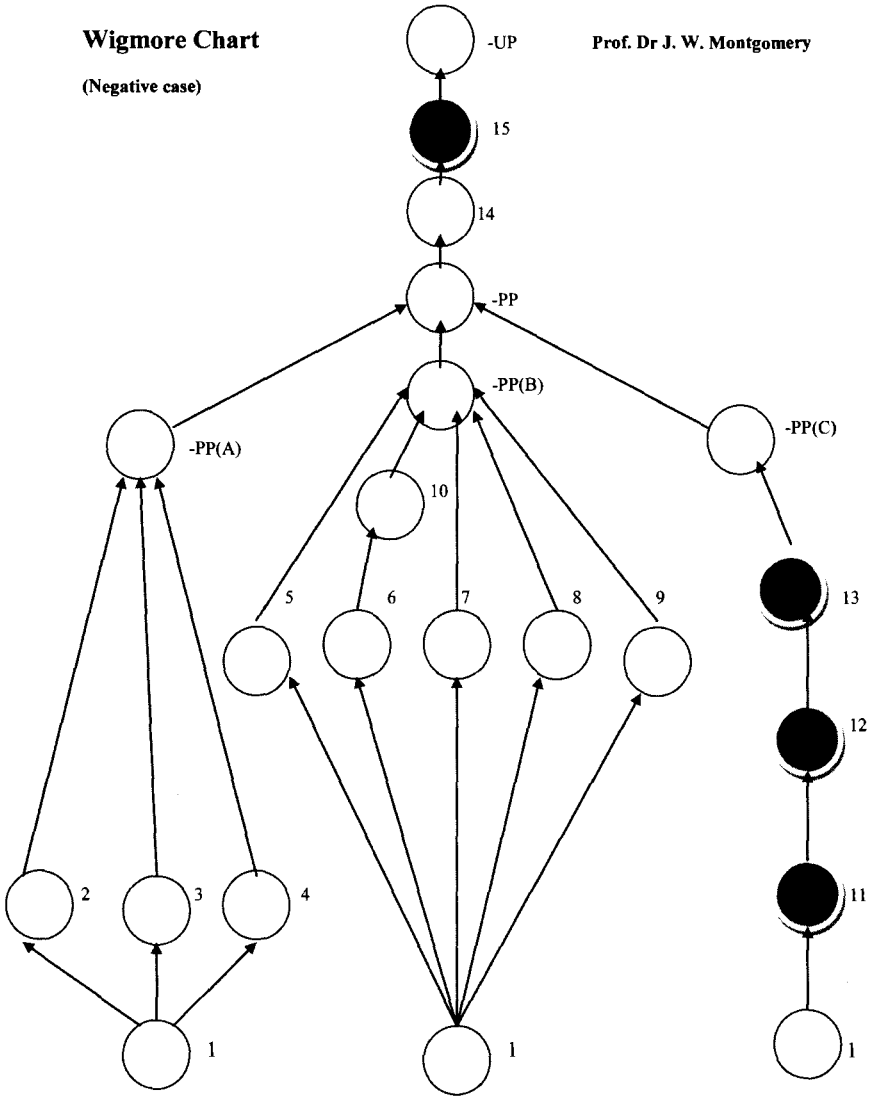
F-2 [PP(B)] On and after the first Easter morning, Jesus was physically alive

1. Disciples mistook someone else for Jesus (*5*)
2. Disciples had a mystical vision (*6*)
3. Disciples suffered from a collective hallucination (*7*)
4. Disciples stole the body (*8*)
5. Unnamed persons stole the body (*9*)
6. Jesus rose "spiritually" but not physically (*10*)
7. One cannot trust the documents/witnesses (*1*)

I-1 [PP(C)] Jesus' transition from death to life occurred miraculously—without third-party human agency

1. Miracles simply do not happen: people who die stay dead (*11*)
2. To prove an extraordinary event, you would need extraordinary evidence—which we don't have (*12*)
3. Any natural explanation is preferable to a supernatural, miraculous explanation (*13*)

Notes: In the positive Chart (across), filled-in circles (facts) and unfilled-in circles (circumstantial evidence or inferences) need to be distinguished, and it is important also to observe the difference between the circles and the triangles (=corroborations). In the Chart of the negative case (pg. 24), numbers correspond to the italicised figures in parentheses which appear at the end of each Infirmative in the corresponding Key-list. Filled-in circles with white outlines represent generalisations (G)—items which the proponent assumes to be universally accepted without requiring proof.



Conclusion: What This Evidential Approach Reveals

It would be inappropriate here to present the data underlying each of the items in the Key-lists. Such data can readily be obtained elsewhere, and I myself have devoted a fair number of my writings to this very purpose.[19] What we wish to do instead is note how the Wigmorean method assists in revealing the core issues at stake in

reaching a proper decision on a vital factual issue—here, the central epistemological question of Jesus' resurrection and divine claims.

First, as we compare the negative with the positive Key-lists by way of the Charts, we observe that the objector to the facticity of the resurrection relies entirely, not on factual data, but on conjecture, inference, and supposed universal generalisations. This in itself places the negative case in the worst possible light.

Secondly, it is plain that in the final analysis the issue of the truth of the resurrection and of Christ's claims depends squarely on the reliability of the New Testament records—not on philosophical, presuppositional, or sociological argument. It follows that the apologetic task is best carried on in an evidential context, and that any and all dehistoricising and higher critical dismembering of the New Testament documents must be shown as fundamentally erroneous methodologically—as bad scholarship—rather than being somehow baptised as theologically legitimate.

Finally, the Wigmorean approach keeps the resurrection question focused on those considerations which are truly determinative: a genuine death, a subsequent living, physical presence, the absence of human third-party agency, and the Subject's explanation as to the divine source of this miraculous event. The charting offers a systematic justification for the juridical argument which I have presented elsewhere that the case for Christ's resurrection fulfils precisely the conditions of legal proof by the principle of *Res ipsa loquitur*:

1. Dead bodies do not leave tombs in the absence of some agency effecting the removal.
2. The tomb was under God's exclusive control, for it had been sealed, and Jesus, the sole occupant of it, was dead.
3. The Romans and the Jewish religious leaders did not contribute to the removal of the body (they had been responsible for sealing and guarding the tomb to prevent anyone from stealing the body), and the disciples would not have stolen it, then prevaricated, and finally died for what they knew to be untrue.

   Therefore, only God was in a position to empty the tomb, which he did, as Jesus himself had predicted, by raising him from the dead: "the event speaks for itself."[20]

Notes

1. John Warwick Montgomery, *Human Rights and Human Dignity* (2d ed.; Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Canadian Institute for Law, Theology and Public Policy, 1995), pp. 134-36; *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* (3d. ed; Bonn, Germany: Verlag fuer Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2004), para. 3.126.
2. "Teaching Evidence and Fact Analysis," 9 June 2006.
3. Stephhen E. Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958, p. 7).
4. Stephen E. Toulmin, Richard Rieke, and Allan Janik, *An Introduction to Reasoning* (New York: Macmillan, 1978). An apparently unchanged "second edition" was issued in 1984 by the same publisher.
5. See Greenleaf's "Testimony of the Evangelists," reprinted in Montgomery, *The Law Above the Law* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1975), pp. 91 ff.
6. John Henry Wigmore, *The Principles of Judicial Proof: As Given by Logic, Psychology, and General Experience, And Illustrated in Judicial Trials* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1913), pp. 3-4, 747.
7. Published by Little, Brown, with various editors following Wigmore's death.
8. Published by Aspen Law & Business; edited by Professor Arthur Best.
9. Quoted by William L. Twining, "Wigmore, John Henry," in A. W. B. Simpson (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of the Common Law* (London: Butterworths, 1984), p. 533
10. Twining, op. cit., p. 534.
11. Twining, *Theories of Evidence: Bentham and Wigmore* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1985), pp. 125 ff.; *Rethinking Evidence* (2d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 426-28 *et passim*; Terence Andreson, David Schum, and William Twining, *Analysis of Evidence* (2d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 123-44 *et passim*.
12. The "penultimate *probanda*" remind one of mathematical philosopher Imre Lakatos' use of the term *proof* for "a thought-experiment—or 'quasi-experiment'—which suggests a decomposition of the original conjecture into subconjectures or lemmas" (Imre Lakatos, *Proofs and Refutations: The Logic of Mathematical Discovery*, ed. John Worrall and Elia Zahar [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977], pp. 9, 13-14). On Lakatos, see John Worrall's article in the *Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 449-50.
13. Step 4 is clearly unique to advocacy and persuasion: choosing the strategy most likely to convince the triar of fact and win the case; it would presumably not figure into a straight investigation of a factual issue.
14. "You know my method. It is founded upon the observation of trifles" (*The Boscombe Valley Mystery*). "It is, of course, a trifle, but there is nothing so important as trifles" (*The Man with the Twisted Lip*). Cf. John Warwick

Montgomery, *The Transcendent Holmes* (Ashcroft, British Columbia, Canada: Calabash Press, 2000), especially pp. 97-139.

15. John Earman, *Hume's Abject Failure: The Argument Against Miracles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
16. John Earman, "Bayesiansim," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy Supplement*, ed. Donald M. Borchert (New York: Macmillan Reference, 1996), p. 52. Cf. Earman's book-length treatment of the problem: *Bayes or Bust? A Critical Examination of Bayesian Confirmation Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992).
17. Richard Swinburne, *The Resurrection of God Incarnate* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), especially pp. 206 ff. I have cited Swinburne's conclusions positively in my *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* (*op.cit.*), para. 3.8732.
18. It is worth stressing that (1) he who rises from the dead is in a far better position to explain how this happened than are those who have not (cf. Montgomery, *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* [*op. cit.*], para. 3.72 – 3.7321), and (2) Jesus' factual claim can be accepted without prior proof of God's existence—*pace* Norman Geisler, R. C. Sproul, William Lane Craig and the so-called "classical" apologists (see Gary R. Habermas, *The Risen Jesus & Future Hope* [Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003], especially chaps 2-3; also Habermas's contribution to *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Steven B. Cowan [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2000], pp. 91 ff.).
19. Montgomery, *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus (op. cit.)*; Human Rights and Human Dignity (op. cit.): *The Law Above the Law (op. cit.)*; *History, Law and Christianity* (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Canadian Institute for Law, Theology and Public Policy, 2002); *Faith Founded on Fact* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1978); etc.
20. John Warwick Montgomery, *Law and Gospel: A Study in Jurisprudence* (2d ed.; Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Canadian Institute for Law, Theology and Public Policy, 1995), p. 35.

The Return to Myth: Apologetics for Postmoderns

Louis Markos

Précis:
At first glance, postmodernism, with its desire to move away from that which is fixed, systematic, and logical, would seem antithetical to apologetics. In "Return to Myth," I argue that postmodernism, despite the dangers it poses to doctrinal Christianity, can provide apologists with a challenge and an opportunity to reach out to a generation of people hungry for spirituality and purpose. In making my argument, I appeal to the more mystical view of nature and of language that were current in the Middle Ages and then survey the work of three recent, non-apologetical apologists (John Eldredge, Donald Miller, and James Choung) who have pointed the way toward an effective and fruitful engagement with postmodernism.

Although apologetics has traditionally focused on logical, rational proofs for the existence of God, the goodness of God in the face of pain and suffering, the authority of Scripture, and the claims and miracles of Christ, a number of more recent apologists, sensing a widespread cultural change, have sought a less rationalistic approach to the defense of Christianity. That cultural change goes by the name of postmodernism, a worldview that has consciously broken from modernism's focus on system, structure, science, and empiricism. Whereas modernism is very compartmental in its attempt to categorize all knowledge and phenomena in discrete boxes, postmodernism takes a more holistic approach. Postmoderns yearn to break out of the box in search of mystery, wonder, and awe. As a result, they tend to privilege intuition, imagination, and synthesis over logic, reason, and analysis. They think less like Western surgeons, who divide up the body, than Eastern chiropractors or acupuncturists, who see the parts of the body as being intimately connected.

And they think this way too about the arts, religion, and language. Modernism wants all forms of expression—whether

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scientific or aesthetic, secular or sacred—to "behave," to line up in a clear, logical series of one-to-one correspondences and mechanical causes and effects. Postmodernism, in contrast, yearns for an aesthetic and sacred language that is less fixed and systematic, that is more strange and startling and slippery. People who identify with the postmodern worldview find *both* science and the church to be too constrictive, too black-and-white. They can find no place in either of these "institutions" to breathe or grow or create. They long to resolve rather than to solve, to experience rather than to figure out, to embrace the mystery rather than to capture and tame it. And the same goes for our interaction with the natural world. Modernism has reduced nature to an object to be studied; postmodernism seeks to restore meaning to the cosmos, to return to a sympathetic universe in which the turnings of the seasons and the orbits of the planets have something to do with us. For a postmodern, the universe is our *home*; for a modern, it is only our house.

In laying out this dichotomy between modern and postmodern, I know that I risk falling into the modernist trap of establishing air tight binaries. Still, though it is true that not all individuals will identify with one side or the other of this binary, I find it helpful to lay out a basic framework for understanding those areas of modernism against which a large number of postmoderns have reacted.

The Resurgence of Paganism and Sophistry

On the one hand, aspects of postmodernism pose a major threat to orthodox Christianity and to apologists who would defend Christianity as a worldview that is rational, consistent, and universal. Many today who yearn for a sympathetic universe reject the (western) church and its "overly constrictive" credal statements in favor of a smorgasbord of (eastern) spiritualities: horoscopes, transcendental meditation, the occult, yoga, Indian spirit guides, tarot cards, cabbalism, mediums, martial arts, and so forth. Such postmoderns are still referred to as New Agers, but they might better be called neo-pagans, for they tend to share a pantheistic worldview in which God is not viewed as the Creator of nature but as a part of nature. Pantheists direct their worship

not to the personal God of the Bible but to an impersonal force or spirit that pervades all things.

Though the majority of these neo-pagans seek not power (black magic) but spiritual connection (white magic), they nevertheless find Christian doctrine to be cold, confining, and exclusivist. For the neo-pagan the staleness and rigidity of Christian doctrine can't compete with the awe and beauty of myth. Where, they ask, is the story, the adventure, the romance? What do those old, dusty biblical stories have to do with me? What role do I play in the sacred narrative? How can I feel-experience-know a spiritual reality that is locked up in old books and creeds?

Meanwhile, within academic circles, postmodernism has led to a resurgence not of ancient Greek paganism but of Athenian sophistry. Like Socrates and Plato's enemies, the sophists, many postmoderns consider truth and morality to be relative, changing from culture to culture and polis to polis—even individual to individual! Rather than treat words as potential containers of absolute truth, postmoderns sever the words we use (signifiers) from the meaning they purportedly point back to (signifieds). The postmodern school of deconstructionism posits a breakdown between signifiers and signifieds that prevents us from getting back to any fixed, originary meaning. Every time we try to trace a signifier back to a signified, it turns out to be yet another signifier; in the end we get caught in a swirl of signifiers that lead nowhere.

Deconstructionism, I would argue, has brought back the three propositions put forward by one of Plato's nemeses, Gorgias the sophist. Gorgias rejected the existence of any kind of original, fixed, transcendent Meaning (like Plato's Forms) and posited instead that: 1) nothing exists; 2) if it exists, it cannot be known; and 3) if it can be known, it cannot be communicated. Twentieth-century deconstructionists like Derrida have affirmed Gorgias' cosmic and linguistic skepticism by essentially reasserting his three propositions: 1) there are no signifieds to fix meaning, and no single Transcendental Signified that can fix the meaning of the signifieds; 2) fixed, originary Meaning, even if does exist, cannot enter into our playhouse world of signifiers; and 3) even if Meaning were to exist, and even if it could somehow enter our world, human language would not be able to contain

or express it. For a religion like Christianity, whose faith rests not only on a book (the Bible) that is considered to be the revealed Word of God but on a Savior who is himself the Word of God in human flesh, deconstructionism poses a clear and present danger. If the commands and promises of God can neither be known nor communicated, either in the form of an inspired book or an incarnate savior, then Christianity loses its claim to be God's ordained path to salvation, truth, and eternal life.

The great twentieth-century apologist Francis Schaeffer (who understood, a decade before most of his colleagues, both the benefits and dangers of a postmodern worldview) pointedly titled one of his key apologetical works *He is There and He is not Silent.* By declaring war on all signifieds, deconstructionism has turned God's Presence into absence; by cutting signifiers adrift from any final meaning, it has turned God's Voice into gibberish.

Postmodernism, it would seem, can only pose a threat to the integrity of Christ, the Bible, and Christianity. Surely, therefore, modern apologists should avoid it at all costs. Or should they?

Thinking Outside the Enlightenment (and Reformation) Box

Despite the dangers described in the previous two paragraphs, I nevertheless believe that, if handled properly, postmodernism can provide Christian apologists with a challenge and an opportunity to reach out to a generation of people hungry for spirituality and purpose. But it can only do so if apologists are willing to think outside the box—that is to say, to extend their vision to pre-Enlightenment and, yes, pre-Reformation ideals that can coexist and even be strengthened by a little postmodern slipperiness!

Though the modern world has taught us to dismiss (unfairly) the Catholic Middle Ages as dark, ignorant, and superstitious, the medieval vision was wider than our own and better enabled its adherents to embrace mystery and to perceive wonder and magic in the world around them. There was no need for neo-paganism in the Middle Ages, for the Medievals already *lived* in a sympathetic universe. Though the

Latin word universe, which suggests "unity in diversity," points to the dynamic vision of nature held by the Medievals, their other word, cosmos, better embodies the fullness of their vision. Cosmos comes from a Greek word whose root meaning is "ornament," an etymological detail that capture perfectly the medieval faith that the universe is the ornament of God: a thing of beauty to be loved and known rather than merely studied.

In keeping with this medieval view of the connectedness of all aspects of God's creation, Francis of Assisi wrote hymns to brother sun and sister moon and called the animals his brothers. Rather than dismiss nature as "pagan" or study it as a dead object, St. Francis reclaimed nature from the pantheists, and, through it, celebrated God's presence in the world. Two centuries later, Dante invited readers of his *Divine Comedy* to join him on an exciting, whirlwind tour of our God-fashioned sympathetic universe. On his way through the heaven of the fixed stars, Dante passes by the constellation of Gemini (his "horoscope") and thanks it for shining down on him the gift of creativity. No, neither Dante nor his fellow medieval Christians believed that the stars controlled us, but they did believe that the stars *influenced* us with their particular virtues. Today most non-believers *and* believers are likely to reject as foolish (or heretical) the idea that the motion of the stars or planets or seasons can influence us; yet, scientists believe that microscopic strands of DNA determine everything about us, while Christians believe that it was a "star" (most likely a conjunction of stars) that led the Magi to Christ and an eclipse of the sun that marked his death.

The Medievals knew that the world was good and meaningful, for not only had God fashioned it and called it good; he had even deigned to enter into his creation in the form of his Son. Granted, nature and man are fallen and in decay, but God's entry into man and nature redeemed both. There is no greater miracle, no greater *magic* than the Incarnation. Christianity alone of all religions fully affirms the value and significance of flesh while fully affirming the reality of the spiritual realm. Can there be a more exciting story than that of a supreme, limitless God who stoops down and confines himself to the limits of flesh that he might win his bride, the church, and rescue her from the grip of the devil? Christianity has the best story to tell, and

it needs to be told to postmoderns who yearn to participate in such a story.

As for Christianity being too exclusivist to appeal to postmoderns, we need only recall that most of the early and medieval Church Fathers understood that the writings of the highest pagans (Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Virgil) did not so much contradict Christianity as point forward to it. That is why the Medieval Dante chose the pagan Virgil as his guide through hell and purgatory, and why the Renaissance Michelangelo included pagan sibyls on the Sistine Chapel. It is also why the Apostle Paul quoted two, possibly three, pagan poets (Epimenides, Aratus, and Cleanthes) when presenting the gospel to a group of pagan Stoic and Epicurean philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:28).

Although Dan Brown's infamous claim (in *The Da Vinci Code*) that Constantine invented the Incarnation is false, Constantine likely helped influence the way we celebrate Christmas. Faced with the monumental task of converting a pagan empire into a Christian one, the fourth-century church, probably guided by Constantine, wisely chose to celebrate Christmas on December 25: at the time, the winter solstice. In addition to marking the first day of winter, December 25 stood at the convergence of two popular pagan celebrations: the birthday of the Unconquerable Sun and the Saturnalia (an anarchic, Mardi-Gras-like festival that hearkened back to a lost Golden Age). The early church Fathers who agreed to celebrate Christ's birth on a day when pagans were already open to the kind of sacramental magic that was ushered into our world by the Incarnation were not guilty of "watering down" Christian doctrine, but of attempting to build a bridge to people hungry for the True Myth, for what John calls "The true light, which enlightens everyone" (John 1:9; all Bible quotes taken from the ESV). They understood, as post-Enlightenment Christians often do not, that Christ does not kill but consummates the yearning for myth and the desire to return to Eden.

And they knew something else that modern apologists would do well to learn: that rather than browbeat pagans (or neo-pagans) into blowing out their mythic candles, we can encourage them instead to trade them for the Sun (the full Truth revealed through Christ and the Bible).

Four-Fold Meaning

The apologist who would reach postmoderns with the gospel must not be ashamed of the mythic qualities that hang around the gospel story. Rather, he must embrace the supra-rational mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection, and then present those mysteries as the answer to mankind's yearning for a magic that connects, synthesizes, and transforms. He must gain eyes to see the paradoxes that underlie the Christian faith, and he must be courageous enough to face those paradoxes in the Bible as well. Only by doing so will he be properly equipped to confront the challenges of neo-paganism and deconstructionism by offering in their stead a higher, redemptive postmodernism.

Far from demanding a one-to-one correspondence, the Bible is rich with poems, symbols, parables, and prophecies that are decidedly slippery. When the early and medieval Church Fathers read the Bible, they discerned in its stories and images not one but four overlapping levels of meaning. Dante, who factored these four levels of meaning into his *Divine Comedy*, offers, in a letter to one of his patrons, just such a four-fold reading of a single verse from the Bible: "When Israel went out from Egypt" (Psalm 114:1). Taken *literally*, this verse refers to the Exodus; *allegorically*, it signifies how Christ freed us from sin; *morally*, it describes the conversion of the soul from bondage to sin to freedom in Christ; *anagogically*, it prophesies that final, glorious moment when the soul will leave behind the body's slavery to death and corruption and enter the Promised Land of heaven. For Dante and the Medievals, these four meanings, though they can be described in terms of an ascending ladder of spiritual revelation, exist simultaneously. Rather than deconstruct or cancel each other out, they are held in tension within the overall biblical narrative. They are slippery, but it is a kind slipperiness that leads toward rather than away from meaning and truth.

And this redemptive slipperiness extends from the Bible to Christ himself. In the Incarnation, God (the Transcendental Signified), emptied himself and took on the form of a lowly signifier (Jesus of Nazareth) while continuing to be a signified (fully God as well as

fully man). As with the four levels of meaning, the Incarnation reveals that our world is more "open" than modernists like to admit, but that that openness does not lead, as a postmodernist might claim, toward relativism and meaninglessness, but toward the mystical yoking of heaven and earth, spiritual and physical, eternal and temporal, God and man.

That is why the best answer to Gorgias' three propositions is not to be found in a formal proof or syllogism but in the highly literary, decidedly slippery prologue of John's gospel (1:1-18). For each proposition of Gorgias, John offers a verse that asserts the true existence, knowability, and communicability of the Triune God: 1) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (verse 1); 2) "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (verse 14); and 3) "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known" (verse 18).

Non-apologetical Apologists

Though I have been calling in this essay for a new kind of postmodern apologetics, I am aware that the very phrase "postmodern apologetics" is something of an oxymoron. How, after all, can one present a rational defense of the Christian faith if one privileges emotion, mystery, and slipperiness over logic, system, and evidence? If an apologist accepts the ground rules of postmodernism, will he not, by so doing, sacrifice the absolute truth claims on which Christianity rests? In some cases, I am grieved to say, the desire on the part of well-meaning Christians to accommodate the relativistic perspective and worldview of postmodernism has led to a fatal downplaying of key Christian doctrines (indeed, of the very idea *of* doctrine), a suicidal dilution, if not a dismissal, of biblical authority, and/or a self-destructive compromising of basic biblical morality.

Still, Christians who are eager to reach out to neo-pagans and to present the gospel in a language that postmoderns can understand and receive should not be discouraged. Though the danger always

exists that the would-be apologist or evangelist will succumb to the relativism, syncretism, and radical individualism of the postmodern ethos, if he will keep himself grounded in the central credal statements of Christianity and place himself under the authority of the Incarnate Christ, the revealed Word of God, and (forgive me my fellow evangelical brothers and sisters!) the sacred tradition of the one holy, catholic, and apostolic church, then he need not be afraid.

I have already suggested above ways in which a vigorous and centered postmodern apologetics can be constructed by rehabilitating medieval notions of the sympathetic universe and the four levels of meaning. I would like to conclude by suggesting a second method for reaching postmoderns that involves emphasizing the narrative and restorative aspects of the Christian faith while not compromising the basic tenets of orthodox Christianity. To illustrate this second method, I will consider briefly three recent works that, though they may not technically be works of apologetics, point the way toward a type of engagement with the postmodern world that I find both effective and fruitful.

In *Epic*, John Eldredge helps bring to life the sacred narrative of the Bible by linking it to some of the greatest and best known fantasy stories.[1] With great passion and bravado, Eldredge draws fascinating parallels between the Bible's story of creation, fall, and redemption and such books and films as *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Gladiator*, *Paradise Lost*, *The Lion King*, and the Harry Potter series. By drawing these connections, Eldredge not only keeps his postmodern audience alert and entertained, but invites them to participate in a great struggle that began long before they were born.

The great stories move us, argues Eldredge, because we are *in* one. In the beginning, the Bible assures us, there was a time of perfect fellowship, a golden age of innocence that is not only recorded in the account of Eden in Genesis 2-3, but that breaks through in those thousand beguiling glimpses that greet us in the pages of our favorite fairy tales. Unfortunately, that fellowship and that innocence are shattered by the appearance of a villain (Satan, Sauron, the White Witch, Voldemort) who breaks into Eden and ignites a struggle between good and evil. In the end, however, a hero, a long awaited Messiah

(Christ, Aragorn, Aslan, Harry Potter), appears and brings victory (the Resurrection) out of what seemed to be utter defeat (the Crucifixion). But the story does not stop there, for the restored and renewed Messiah leaves us with the promise that a time will come, and already is, when he will make all things new. Until we understand this story and our place in it, argues Eldredge, we will feel displaced, unsure of our true identity and purpose. Until our eyes are opened to the true nature of our world, we will understand neither the danger that surrounds us nor the glory that awaits us.

In *Blue Like Jazz*, Donald Miller also seeks to open our eyes to the true nature of our world and of ourselves, but he does so by reflecting not on the great stories and fairy tales but on the everyday trials of his own Christian walk.[2] Through confessing his own struggles and temptations and sharing his own little triumphs, Miller also makes Christianity come to life as something that is both real and relevant to our postmodern world. In a non-linear, fragmented, improvisatory style, he presents the Christian life not as rigid or restrictive but as something that fosters humility, growth, and community. It is only by accepting God's free grace and unconditional love, he argues (or, better, demonstrates), that we can be freed to forgive ourselves and others, to move out of our existential isolation, to take emotional risks, and to accept others as they are. And, since we cannot be fully alive, or even fully human, until we can do those four things, the Christian message becomes not only a means for salvation in the next world but for self-actualization in this one.

Like one of his key mentors, postmodern guru Brian McLaren, Miller connects with his postmodern audience by privileging authenticity over social conformity, by rejecting all forms of self-righteousness, and by embracing the myriad mysteries that meet us at ever turning of the road. For Miller, as for most "postmodern apologists," two counterintuitive principles stand at the center of his dynamic vision: 1) the journey is as important as the destination, and we are therefore more in need of guides than preachers; 2) Christian community is not something we join after we are saved, but something whose reality and genuineness lead us to salvation.

In *True Story*, James Choung, another disciple of McLaren, also attempts to expand our vision of Christian salvation by presenting the gospel not just as a get-out-of-hell-free card but as the only force that can renew and transform our world.[3] Choung, who is more an evangelist than an apologist, presents his fuller gospel through a series of four circles that unintentionally parallel the four acts of Eldredge's epic story, though from a more socio-political perspective. And, in true postmodern fashion, he does so not in the form of a systematic slide presentation but through the mediation of a fictional narrative: a "true story" that he hopes will encourage his readers to participate in the greater "true story" of the gospel.

Choung's first circle presents us with a picture of our world as it was meant to be, a world of perfect harmony between God, man, and nature. Unfortunately, that original plan has been shattered, and so the second circle represents our world as it actually is: broken, unjust, rife with pain and oppression. We all know our world is like this, argues Choung, yet we all know in our hearts that it should not be in this state. The third circle embodies the inner restoration that Christ effected through his death and resurrection. In the fourth, Christians extend that inner restoration to the world that they might bring about the vision of the Lord's Prayer: "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). Just as moderns must realize that the gospel is not complete until it is extended outward to encompass this circle-four vision, so postmoderns hungry to bring social justice, political reconciliation, and environmental harmony to our torn world must realize that we are powerless to carry out this vision until we have been restored from within by the power of the atonement (circle three).

Eldredge, Miller, and Choung represent but three of a growing number of postmodern apologetical voices that the church needs to hear. Yes, the dangers inherent in such an apologetic are real (Brian McLaren has, to my mind at least, been slowly slipping away from doctrinal orthodoxy), but so are the rewards. The Chinese word for crisis is composed of two characters, one meaning "danger" and the other meaning "opportunity." Postmodern apologetics offers, I believe, just such a crisis.[4]

Notes

1. John Eldredge, *Epic: Discover the Story God is Telling*, DVD (Nashville, Nelson Impact), 2005.
2. Donald Miller, *Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thought on Christian Spirituality* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson), 2003.
3. James Choung, *True Story: A Christianity Worth Believing In* (Downers Grove, IVP), 2008.
4. This essay is adapted from Chapter 21 of my *Apologetics for the 21st Century*, forthcoming from Crossway Books (www.crossway.org) in 2010.

John Hick's Pluralism—Hypothosis or Religious Worldview? A Comparison with a Religion Specific "Hypothesis"

David C. Cramer

Précis:
John Hick is arguably the most influential proponent of religious pluralism of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. While his "pluralistic hypothesis" has been analyzed and criticized from many angles, his basic claim to be presenting a "hypothesis" has received a relatively free pass. This essay challenges that claim by comparing Hick's pluralistic hypothesis with a proposed religion specific hypothesis. Each hypothesis is analyzed in terms of its ability to explain the relevant data from the world religions. In light of this comparison, it is concluded that Hick's pluralistic hypothesis fails to adequately explain all of the relevant data and that Hick's pluralism is thus more akin to a religious worldview than to a scientific hypothesis.

In the fourth part of his seminal work, *An Interpretation of Religion*, John Hick proposes a "pluralistic hypothesis" to account for the variety of religious experiences and traditions around the world. In earlier chapters Hick rejects "the sceptical view that religious experience is *in toto* delusory" and argues that it is rational for those who experience the world religiously to "believe and live on this basis."[1] However, given this epistemological foundation and the observable differences between various religions, Hick argues that religious adherents cannot "reasonably claim that our own form of religious experience, together with that of the tradition of which we are a part, is veridical whilst the others are not."[2] Thus, Hick offers his pluralistic hypothesis, which claims in short that "the great world

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traditions constitute different conceptions and perceptions of, and responses to, the Real from within the different cultural ways of being human."[3]

Even with the plethora of responses to Hick's view over the years, it seems that one aspect of his position has been given virtually a free pass, namely, his claim to be presenting a *hypothesis* in the first place. Thus, when the criticisms of his view become particularly troublesome, Hick still has an available recourse: He can respond that he is not really arguing for a view at all; he is simply presenting a hypothesis to explain the observable data. Unless and until someone can offer a rival hypothesis that can explain the data as well or better, there is no reason to abandon his own.

In this paper, then, I take Hick at his word and assess his view *as a hypothesis*. What data are being taken into consideration? How well does Hick's hypothesis explain the data? Have any data been left out? Could a rival hypothesis explain the relevant data as well or better than Hick's? It is my contention that if Hick's view is to survive as a viable hypothesis, it will need to provide adequate answers to these questions. To the extent that Hick's view cannot provide adequate answers, we cannot continue to speak of it as a hypothesis (or at least not as a viable one) but will need to think of it in other terms.

In the following I first examine Hick's pluralistic hypothesis, given the relevant data from religious experience and traditions. I am not concerned with assessing the strength of Hick's hypothesis on the basis of its internal or external consistency *per se*—a task that has been undertaken virtually *ad infinitum* with varying levels of success[4]—but rather on its strength *as a hypothesis*. Again, this will be done by reviewing the general relevant data from religions. Second, I present my own religion specific "hypothesis." Next, I compare Hick's pluralistic hypothesis with my posited religion specific hypothesis. Based on this comparison, I then argue that Hick's pluralistic vision fits the paradigm of a religious worldview much closer than it does the paradigm of a scientific hypothesis. Finally, I conclude that while the viability of Hick's pluralistic vision can be assessed on its own merits—just as that of any worldview[5]—Hick can no longer deflect the most acute criticisms of his pluralism by maintaining the veneer of

objectivity as one presenting a hypothesis, and thus, he can no longer use his view to assess the relative merits of other religious worldviews.

Hick's Pluralistic Hypothesis

Hick is very intentional in the designation of his view as a pluralistic *hypothesis* (hereafter PH). His most complete and straightforward single articulation of PH states that

> the great world faiths embody different perceptions and conceptions of, and correspondingly different responses to, the Real from within the major variant ways of being human; and . . . within each of them the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness is taking place. These traditions are accordingly to be regarded as alternative soteriological 'spaces' within which, or 'ways' along which, men and women can find salvation/liberation/ ultimate fulfillment.[6]

As best as I can tell, there are at least five distinct, though related, tenets of PH as stated above. These can be restated as the following propositions:

(1) There is a Real.
(2) The great world faiths embody different perceptions/ conceptions of the Real and different responses to the Real.
(3) The great world faiths embody different perceptions/ conceptions of and responses to the Real *from within variant ways of being human.*
(4) Within each great world faith, the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness is taking place.
(5) Each tradition (i.e., great world faith) is an alternative soteriological space within which, or way along which,

men and women can find salvation/liberation/ultimate fulfillment.

By (1) Hick means to assert that there is some ineffable Ultimate Reality. Hick develops this in the ensuing chapters by discussing how the Real is experienced both as the *Personae* and the *Impersonae*, though in itself the Real transcends the categories of personal-impersonal (as well as all other non-formal categories). The main thrust of (2) is that the great world religions all relate to the same Reality, though each does so through different embodiments. Tenet (3) is perhaps the most ambiguous, but it seems to make a correspondence between the different ways religions relate to the Real and the different *cultures* (i.e., "ways of being human") in which the religions are found.

Tenet (4) encapsulates what Hick takes to be the primary function of religion, namely, to transform human existence from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness. Further, (4) asserts that this transformation is actually taking place within each great world religion. Finally, (5) states the means by which this transformation takes place, that is, the soteriological space or way that each religion creates. With these five tenets of PH specified, we can now move to specify the relevant data and assess how well (1)–(5) explain the given data and thus how well PH works as a hypothesis.

The Religious Data

Hick tends to be a bit general in his presentation of the data PH is intended to explain. As he explains in one passage, his "project here is to outline [PH] without attempting the impossibly large task of filling in every detail of the map which it proposes."[7] While this could be seen as an evasion of the problems PH faces when encountered with the data, a more generous reading might recognize that the amount of data to be considered is indeed too vast to be discussed in any detail and thus forgive Hick for some generalizations. Nevertheless, I believe that we can still identify (generally) the religious data that Hick considers relevant to the problem of religious diversity and for which

PH is offered. These religious data (hereafter RD) can be enumerated as the following five propositions:

(6) There have been many religious people over the ages who have reported experiencing the world religiously (including billions today).

(7) "[T]here are a number of different . . . traditions and families of traditions witnessing to many different personal deities and non-personal ultimates."[8]

(8) For each great religious tradition there are cultural contexts in which it arose and within which it operates.

(9) Within each of the great religious traditions there have been (and are today) people who have achieved sainthood.

(10) Within each of the great religious traditions there is a similar ethical core guiding the respective religious adherents.

Again, while Hick does not explicitly articulate all of these propositions in exactly the above manner, a reading of his arguments for PH can glean something close to RD.

Two observations can be noted about RD. First, the majority of the five propositions is uncontroversial and can be accepted by nearly anyone who has studied the great world religions. Perhaps (8) and (10) would be disputed by some, but it would only require a bit of further clarification to make them as generally accepted as the others.[9]

The second and arguably most important observation about RD is that each of (6)–(10) has a striking correlation with each of (1)–(5), respectively. Indeed, the five points of PH can be seen as offering explanatory analogues for the five pieces of RD. From (6) and Hick's argument that religious experience cannot all be delusory, Hick proposes (1) as the explanation of how religious experience could in some sense be veridical. Then, given that varied religious experience is in some way veridical and (7), Hick proposes (2) as the explanation of how the Real can be the "ground of this varied realm of religious phenomena."[10] Hick proposes (3) as an explanation of how and/or why the Real relates in different ways through different religious traditions,

based on his analysis of (8). Regarding conflicting truth claims, Hick states, "Each such belief has arisen within a complex religious tradition or family of traditions to which it is integral, and each such belief contributes to one or more of the religio-cultural 'lenses' through which the Real is humanly perceived."[11] For Hick the data from (8) is therefore nicely explained by (3).[12]

Perhaps the strongest and most compelling piece of data for PH is (9). The major thrust of PH rests on the argument that all major religions provide avenues for human transformation to take place. Proposition (9) provides empirical evidence for Hick that this is taking place, and Hick thus explains this data by offering (4). Finally, Hick argues for the explanatory basis of the connection between (9) and (4) by observing the religious teachings of the major religions themselves and aptly notes (10). In (5) Hick interprets the data from (10) as providing the means for (4). Building off of each other, then, and taken together as a whole, (1)–(5) seem to individually and collectively explain (6)–(10) quite well.

If RD are as uncontroversial as I have suggested, and if they comprise the primary data to be explained, then it would seem that PH does explain the data quite well and that it should therefore be regarded as a viable working hypothesis, as Hick has suggested. Hick's ensuing arguments for PH would then only strengthen its credibility as a hypothesis and perhaps move it from a working hypothesis to a more established theory. However, RD may need to be reconsidered before coming to such an optimistic conclusion for PH.

Reassessing the Data

The above section has shown that if one accepts RD as the primary data to be explained, then PH can be shown to work quite nicely as a hypothesis (whatever else its strengths or weaknesses may be on other grounds). However, the strength of a hypothesis lies not only in how well it can explain a certain set of data but also in whether it accounts for all of the data relevant to the case. Since it appears that PH has explained RD quite well, the next question regards what other data it might be leaving out. Here PH may run into a bit of difficulty.

Consider the amount of violence committed in the name of religion across the world and throughout world history.[13] Might not this information count as data to be considered (as our 'new atheist' friends continually remind us)? Indeed, Hick is keenly aware of these travesties. Based on this information, he assesses "the great world traditions" accordingly:

> Taking the great world traditions as totalities, then, we can only say that each is an unique mixture of good and evil. Each has been and is responsible for or associated with immense contributions to human welfare; each has also been and is responsible for or implicated in vast evils afflicting some part of the human race.[14]

Hick thus summarizes:

> It is not possible, as an unbiased judgment with which all rational persons could be expected to agree, to assert the overall moral superiority of any one of the great religious traditions of the world. This is the rather modest conclusion to which our discussion points.[15]

Modest though it may be, Hick's conclusion is at best irrelevant and at worst contrary to PH.

Two of the fundamental tenets of PH are (4), that the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness is taking place within each of the great world faiths, and (5), that the great world faiths offer the means for this transformation to take place. Based on (9) and (10), these tenets are well supported. However, based on the data from religious violence and Hick's own comments regarding this data, (9) must be amended to include the following:

> (9*) Within each of the great religious traditions there have been (and are today) people who promote violence.

Hick could argue that (9*) is merely the result of the particularist commitments of these religious adherents and that if PH were accepted, religious strife would be eradicated. But again, this misses the point, which is simply that PH only works as a hypothesis if it can adequately explain the data as it stands. Hick attempts to circumvent the unwanted data by discussing it in terms of the criteria for assessing religions, given the truthfulness of PH, rather than the criteria for assessing PH, given the facts of RD. By doing so he does not allow anything that does not fit his criteria to be counted as data. But by putting the proverbial cart before the horse here, Hick unwittingly acknowledges that he is not utilizing the full scope of RD for PH.

Moreover, even (9*) does not complete the data to be explained by accounts of religious violence. For surely the violent actions of many religious people are not always completely isolated from the teachings of their respective religions. Thus, in addition to (9*), (10) will also need to be amended to include the following:

> (10*) Within each of the great religious traditions, there are teachings that guide respective religious adherents to violent actions.

Here again, Hick acknowledges that (10*) is the case, but he refuses to count it as data for PH. Rather, based on PH he offers criteria intended to weed out any of this unwanted data from his overall religious picture. As prime candidates for weeding, Hick proposes the "Hindu doctrine of reincarnation and the closely related Buddhist doctrine of rebirth . . . the Jewish doctrine of 'the chosen people' . . . the Muslim doctrine of the *jihad* . . . [and] from Christianity . . . the doctrine of double predestination . . .[16] Hick argues, "Such doctrines cannot be defended by an appeal from divine love to divine justice," and thus they "cannot express the unqualified love, limitless compassion or generous forgiveness which constitutes the common ethical ideal."[17] However, this assessment seems to arbitrarily trump (9*) and (10*) with (9) and (10). Until Hick can find a way to integrate all of the relevant data—(9*) and (10*) included—into his hypothesis, PH will fail to offer a viable explanation for the diversity of religious experiences around the

world. Perhaps, then, an alternative hypothesis based on the entirety of the available RD could be offered. To this project we now turn.

A Religion Specific "Hypothesis"

Thus far it has been argued that PH works well with the data that it includes but that the omission of other important data weakens PH's explanatory power. The current task is to provide an equally compelling hypothesis that not only explains Hick's data equally well but also takes into account the data that Hick omits. For this I propose a religion specific hypothesis (hereafter RSH). For the sake of discussion, no particular religious tradition will be singled out, but rather, the hypothesis will be based on the way one holding to a non-pluralist view of religions could interpret RD from within the commitments of one's own religious tradition. Taking into account (6)–(10), including (9*) and (10*), I propose the following five tenets of RSH:

(11) There is a Real.

(12) The great world faiths offer different perceptions/conceptions of what the Real might be and different responses based on each faith's corresponding perceptions/conceptions of what the Real might be; and, to the extent that a particular great world faith's perceptions/conceptions of and responses to what the Real might be correspond to the way the Real actually is, that great world faith offers the corresponding extent of truth about the Real.

(13) The great world faiths embody different perceptions/conceptions of and responses to what the Real might be *based on numerous cultural, historical, scriptural-revelatory, and doctrinal factors.*

(14) Within each great world faith, sincerely religious people behave in sincerely religious ways—many toward moral transformation, some toward moral denigration; and, the extent to which a great world faith's soteriological solution addresses the *actual* primary soteriological

need is the extent to which sincerely religious people behaving in sincerely religious ways within that tradition may be able find the true soteriological solution.

(15) Each great world faith offers different soteriological solutions based on what each faith takes to be the primary soteriological need, that is, salvation, liberation, or ultimate fulfillment; and, the extent to which a particular great world faith's understanding of the primary soteriological need corresponds to the *actual* primary soteriological need, and the extent to which that faith's soteriological solution meets the actual primary soteriological need, is the extent to which that faith offers a way in which men and women can find the solution to their primary soteriological need.

Both PH and RSH are in agreement that there is a Real (from (1) and (11)) and that religious beliefs and practices are conditioned by various factors (from (3) and (13)), though the latter offers a more comprehensive understanding of what these factors might include. The two hypotheses primarily differ in that PH regards the Real as ineffable and all great world religions as thus relating to the Real in equally valid ways (from (2)), while RSH is committed to the view that some information about the Real is knowable and thus that some world faiths present more truth about the Real than others (from (12)). Moreover, on PH all great world faiths provide equally valid soteriological means, by which are understood ways for human transformation to take place (from (4) and (5)), while for RSH there is only one actual primary soteriological need, and the differences between the religions in assessing that need and providing a solution for it point to their respective potential efficacy regarding that primary need (from (14) and (15)).[18]

It seems, then, that PH and RSH simply provide fundamentally different ways of viewing RD. It could be argued by a defender of RSH that PH has not taken into consideration the full account of the data (as I have argued above). On the other hand, Hick would likely respond that RSH has not only interpreted the data wrongly, but that it is wrongheaded to begin with. After all, RSH holds that some religions

offer more access to Reality than others, which according to Hick is simply an unacceptable assertion in today's religious atmosphere. Indeed, Hick argues that we cannot

> reasonably claim that our own form of religious experience, together with that of the tradition of which we are a part, is veridical whilst the others are not. We can of course claim this; and indeed virtually every religious tradition has done so, regarding alternative forms of religion either as false or as confused and inferior versions of itself . . . [but] the only reason for treating one's tradition differently from others is the very human, but not very cogent, reason that it is one's own![19]

Thus Hick would argue that RSH fails by treating the religious experiences within one tradition as veridical and those in other traditions as less than fully veridical. While RSH may indeed be committed to such a position, ultimately PH resorts to a similar picture as well by arguing that most of what is experienced within the world religions is—literally speaking—*false*. According to Hick particular religious commitments still contain mythological value in evoking "an appropriate dispositional attitude to" the Real, but regarding the "literal conformity of what is said to the facts," every religion falls short of the mark on PH.[20] Perhaps an addendum to (2) might thus be added:

> (2*) The great world faiths' embodied perceptions/ conceptions and responses to the Real have no correspondence to the way the Real actually is, and thus the great world faiths offer no literal truth about the Real.

Whether or not this premise is less wrongheaded than those of RSH is difficult to decide, but it clearly does not bode well for the argument that because RSH considers some religious experiences as less than veridical, it is therefore arbitrary or irrational and should accordingly be rejected. In fact, on RSH it seems that quite a few more of the claims from those within various religions can be accepted as possibly true than on PH. For example, if it is literally true that the Real is as

described by Muslims, then Christians and Jews assert the true claim that the Real is personal and monotheistic; Buddhists and Hindus still assert many true claims about ethical behavior; Shintos still make true claims about the existence of lesser spiritual beings; etc. In other words, RSH is not an all-or-nothing enterprise, as Hick suggests. A good argument could be made that RSH salvages quite a bit more of the literal truth-claims of religious adherents than PH. Since both RSH and PH are attempting to explain the phenomena of religious diversity without discounting any more RD than necessary, whichever hypothesis can account for the most religious truth-claims seems to have more in its favor *vis-à-vis* a hypothesis. It is my contention that RSH may very well edge out PH in this regard.

However, Hick still has one trump card left: On RSH many people fail to attain the solution to the primary soteriological need. From a monotheistic perspective, this could entail the sobering consequence that many people in the end will be damned.[21] Even from an Eastern perspective, this may entail that many people will never become liberated or reach Nirvana. This does *prima facie* pose a problem for RSH.

But then, what *from the data itself* suggests that everyone will be saved, liberated, or find ultimate fulfillment? There are data suggesting that moral transformation takes place in various religions, but according to Hick, the data are ambiguous over whether this transformation is typically for good or ill. Moreover, there is no obvious necessary link between moral transformation and salvation/liberation/ ultimate fulfillment. Hick clearly sees a connection, but many religions explain things differently. It seems, then, that while Hick may have many good reasons to believe that all will be saved/liberated/ultimately fulfilled, this belief has no basis in RD. Instead, I would argue that Hick's pluralistic project rests on more fundamental presuppositions or worldview commitments, akin to those of religious worldviews. It is simply an empirically unsubstantiated faith commitment that leads Hick to believe that all will ultimately be saved/liberated/fulfilled. This of course is none the worse for Hick's faith commitment, other than the fact that it cannot be treated as a tenet of a hypothesis based on observable RD.

Conclusion: Hypothesis or Worldview?

Most religious adherents would scoff at the idea that the religious Ultimate which they worship—be it Yahweh or Shiva or Allah—is a postulate offered to explain a given set of data from religious experience. Because of this understandable sentiment, it is a bit artificial to call RSH a hypothesis. Each religion's view of the world is based on a variety of scriptures, doctrines, traditions, and religious experiences. These views are not formed merely by analyzing RD. In this respect RSH would be more rightfully regarded as a religion specific *worldview*. Its ability to explain the phenomenon of religious diversity is only secondary to its commitment to explain how to best relate to the Real. Such a worldview could be summarized as follows:

> (RSW) The Real is best described by one great world faith, and there is one primary soteriological solution to the actual primary soteriological need.

Happily, most religious adherents would prefer to understand their faith commitments as a worldview rather than a hypothesis, and this is none the worse for the religious adherents' faith.

Likewise, I submit that PH should more rightfully be regarded as Hick's pluralistic *worldview*, which could be summarized as follows:

> (PW) The Real is experienced equally well through all great world faiths, and all great world faiths offer equally efficacious soteriological solutions based on equally valid assessments of soteriological need.

Both RSW and PW already presuppose certain things about the world before considering what the relevant RD allows, which in turn does not allow either to assess the data in a disinterested way. Again, this is no fault of the worldviews *per se*, for perhaps truth on such matters is not best attained through empirical investigation. If not, then so much the worse for empirical investigation. Still, these presuppositions require that RSW and PW do not hide behind the mask of RSH and

PH. Happily for RSW, it rarely attempts this guise; unfortunately for PW, it does.

Very little of what has been said above has anything to do with the merits of Hick's pluralism *per se*. The aim of the present work has simply been to show that Hick's pluralism is much more akin to a religious worldview than it is to an empirical hypothesis. Hick's presuppositions don't allow for his view to be truly considered a hypothesis. Much of the data that needs explaining is either ignored or is bracketed by Hick's pluralistic worldview. While I have argued that much of the religious data can be better explained by a religion specific view, this point is secondary to the argument that neither Hick's pluralism nor a religion specific view should be treated as a hypothesis. Rather, as worldviews, both Hick's pluralism and any given religion specific view can and should be assessed on the strengths and weaknesses of their own doctrines and dogmas.[22]

Notes

1. John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 2d ed. (New Haven: Yale, 2004), 235, 233.
2. Ibid., 235.
3. Ibid., 376.
4. See, e.g., Philip Quinn and Kevin Meeker, eds., *The Philosophical Challenge of Religious Diversity* (New York: Oxford, 2000).
5. See Hick, *Interpretation*, Part Five: Criteriological, 297-376.
6. Ibid., 240.
7. Ibid., 340.
8. Ibid., 233.
9. All that (8) is claiming is that each great religious tradition had its origin in some particular cultural context—*viz.*, the ancient Israelites for Judaism, first century Judeo-Greek culture for Christianity, ancient India for Hinduism and Buddhism, seventh century Mecca and Medina for Islam, etc.—and that the regional practices of each great world faith over the ages and today cannot be separated from the cultural context in which it is practiced. This is not to say that none of the faiths have been able to transcend their original cultural contexts; indeed, most of them have to a greater or lesser extent. Rather, it simply means that in the religious thought and practice of any particular individual or regional worshipping community, the cultural context will inevitably be an influential factor.

   Similarly, (10) does not imply that every great world faith has an exact

analogue to the Ten Commandments or the Eightfold Path. It simply states that at the core of the ethical teachings of each great world faith, there can be found a comparable ethical thrust, which may be articulated in various ways. Hick suggests the Golden Rule as this unifying ethical thrust, and I think we can do no better.

10. Hick, *Interpretation*, 350.
11. Ibid., 269.
12. Keith Yandell thinks I am being too generous with Hick here. For if the Real is completely ineffable, then it is extremely difficult to see how it could be used as the explanation for any empirical data of any kind. If by the very nature of the Real, no non-formal properties can be ascribed to it, then it seems difficult to see how the Real could serve as the explanation for the data of religious experience. But I suppose it is better to be too generous than not generous enough, so we will bracket Yandell's important criticisms for the sake of our discussion.
13. For example, in his essay, "Political Tolerance in an Age of Renewed Religious Warfare" (in Mehdi Amin Razavi and David Ambuel, eds., *Philosophy, Religion, and the Question of Intolerance* [Albany: State University of New York, 1997], 29), Robert Cummings Neville offers an account gleaned from the *New York Times* of religious violence in Europe alone: "In Europe of course there is the war between Roman Catholic Croats, Christian Orthodox Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia; the simmering conflict between Catholics and Orthodox in Croatia; the ongoing battles between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland; the intermittent violence in Germany between right-wing Christian Germans and the Muslims and Orthodox from Bulgaria, Romania, the Balkans, and Turkey; the conflicts in Romania of the Orthodox Catholic ethnic Hungarians and the Gypsies; the conflicts in Russia between the Orthodox and the Muslims in Chechenya and Ingushetia, and between the Orthodox and the secular heirs of communism; the continued fighting in Georgia between the Muslims and Orthodox."
14. Hick, *Interpretation*, 337.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., 340.
17. Ibid.
18. This of course does not mean that there could not be other lesser problems that other religions might be able to address. For example, if the *actual* primary soteriological need is to break free from the cycles of rebirth, then Buddhism has best assessed the problem and likely offered the best solution as well. Still, many people may also have the very real existential problem of being burdened by the guilt of their sins, in which case Christianity may provide a remedy, though this remedy would not be for the primary human soteriological problem of the cycles of rebirth, which the doctrines of Christianity would have misdiagnosed.
19. Hick, *Interpretation*, 235.

20. Ibid., 348.
21. Notwithstanding monotheistic universalist views.
22. An earlier version of this essay was presented at the Evangelical Philosophical Society Midwest Regional Meeting held in Chicago, Illinois on 28 March 2008 and was also included as an appendix to my thesis, "Nonevidentialism, Pluralism, and Warrant: Plantinga, Hick, and the Epistemological Challenge of Religious Diversity" (M.A. thesis, Trinity International University, 2009). Special thanks to my thesis readers, Harold Netland and Keith Yandell—as well as those in attendance at the EPS meeting—for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

Methodological Problems with the Jesus Myth Hypothesis

Stephen J. Bedard

Précis:
While many Christians have seen the options for the identity of Jesus as the 'trilemma' of Lord, liar or lunatic, there is an increasing trend to see the story as legend. This is not the Bultmannian view of seeing mythic aspects within the Gospels, but rather seeing the Gospels as completely mythological. The existence of a historical Jesus is denied and pagan parallels are presented as the sources for the Gospels. This Jesus myth hypothesis is flawed at its basic methodological foundation. These errors include misuse of both biblical and pagan texts, forced parallelism, and an artificial combination of myths.

Although largely ignored in academic circles, the Jesus myth hypothesis has grown in visibility on the popular level. There are two basic aspects to the Jesus myth hypothesis: (1) that Jesus never existed, and (2) that the Jesus story as we have it is based on pagan myths. Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy, in explaining their own support for the Jesus myth hypothesis, ask this question: "Why should we consider the stories of Osiris, Dionysus, Adonis, Attis, Mithras and other Pagan Mystery saviours as fables, yet come across essentially the same story told in a Jewish context and believe it to be the biography of a carpenter from Bethlehem?"[1]

Claims that the story of Jesus was a Jewish transformation of pagan myths are found from a number of sources. Popular religion writer and former professor of Greek, Tom Harpur, made this claim in his best-selling book, *The Pagan Christ*: "The truth is that the Gospels are indeed the old manuscripts of the dramatized rituals of the incarnation and resurrection of the sun god Osiris/Horus, rituals that were first Egyptian, later Gnostic and Hellenic, then Hebrew, and finally adopted ignorantly by the Christian movement and transferred to the arena of history."[2] Robert Price, member of the controversial

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Jesus Seminar, states:

> The Mystery cultists became God-fearers on the margin of the Jesus martyr cult, just as the Jesus martyr cultists had once been positioned at the border of Judaism. Then the Mystery cultists joined, reasoning that they weren't losing an old savior, they were only adding a new one. Jesus Adonis, Jesus Dionysus was the result.[3]

Dan Brown, in his extraordinarily popular *Da Vinci Code,* does not deny the existence of Jesus but does affirm that the Gospels are based on pagan myths. Brown puts these words into the mouth of his character Leigh Teabing:

> Nothing in Christianity is original. The pre-Christian God Mithras—called *the Son of God* and *the Light of the World*—was born on December 25, died, was buried in a rock tomb, and then resurrected in three days. By the way, December 25 is also the birthday of Osiris, Adonis, and Dionysus. The newborn Krishna was presented with gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Even Christianity's weekly holy day was stolen from the pagans.[4]

While such statements are filled with error, they have had a deep impact upon many modern readers.

Although such claims are abundant among modern authors, the Jesus myth hypothesis is not a new innovation. Bruno Bauer (1809-1882) was the first major scholar to actually deny the existence of Jesus.[5] He was followed by Albert Kalthoff (1850-1906) who also embraced this extreme skepticism toward the historical Jesus.[6] Friedrich Wilhelm Ghillany (1807-1876) did not deny the existence of Jesus but did see pagan origins to Christianity.[7] Rudolf Seydel (1835-1892) saw Buddhist roots to the Gospel story.[8] On a popular level, people such as Gerald Massey (1828-1907)[9] and Alvin Boyd Kuhn (1880-1963)[10] also argued for the non-existence of the historical Jesus and the pagan origins of Christianity.

It is easy enough to disprove the details of such claims about

the historicity of Jesus or the supposed pagan origins, but the role for Christian apologists goes deeper.[11] Beyond demonstrating the alleged parallels with pagan myths to be false, it is also important to reveal the basic errors of the Jesus myth theory on a methodological level. This paper will highlight some of the major methodological errors of the Jesus myth theory.

Inappropriate Disqualification of Sources

Proponents of the Jesus myth theory are able to boldly claim that there is no evidence for the historical Jesus. That claim may leave some traditional Christians confused as there seems to be ample evidence for the historical Jesus. What Jesus myth theorists really mean is that after they have disqualified most of the sources, there is no longer any evidence for the historical Jesus. For them: the Roman sources are mere hearsay and refer more to Christians than to Christ; Josephus has been tampered with by Christians and is no longer reliable; the Gospels are documents of faith and have nothing to do with history; Paul writes only about the heavenly and glorified Christ and never about the historical Jesus. If one accepts these claims, the first century evidence for the historical Jesus is sparse indeed.

The problem with this is that it is unfair to rule out all opposing sources before even beginning the conversation. Each source must be evaluated on its own merits. The Roman sources will not be dealt with here as they are the weakest evidence.[12] The rest of the evidence is far from deserving of disqualification. It is true that the *Testamonium Flavianium* does show evidence of Christian tampering. However, most scholars claim that it is possible to determine the original pre-Christian version of the passage. Even Robert Price's colleague in the Jesus Seminar, John Dominic Crossan, has this to say about this passage once the Christian interpolations are removed: "That is how Jesus and early Christianity looked to a very prudent, diplomatic, and cosmopolitan Roman Jew in the early last decade of the first century: miracles and teachings, Jews and Greeks, our 'men of highest standing' and Pilate, crucifixion and continuation."[13] Regarding the Gospels, it is true that there is a strong Christian bias to them. Yet, it is

impossible to separate any writing, ancient or modern, from a religious, philosophical, political, or social bias. While at one time the Gospels were seen as a non-historical or non-biographical form of religious instruction, times have changed. Mark Roberts explains: "The Gospels are distinctive in some ways, including their theological emphases and their focus on the death of Jesus, but they fit the general category of Hellenistic biography."[14] In addition, the claim that Paul never mentions the historical Jesus is highly exaggerated. It is true that Paul does not spend much time passing on details of Jesus' earthly ministry, but neither does Paul spend much time sharing biographical details of his own life.[15] Yet, even a perusal of 1 Corinthians will demonstrate that Paul was aware of details of Jesus' teaching and events of his ministry.[16] In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul is so confident in the reality of the earthly Jesus that he encourages his readers to go and interview the eyewitnesses. Albert Schweitzer, who was not the most conservative scholar, had this to say about the evidence for the historical Jesus:

> It is not that the sources are in themselves bad. When we have once made up our minds that we have not the materials for a complete Life of Jesus, but only for a picture of His public ministry, it must be admitted that there are few characters of antiquity about whom we possess so much indubitably historical information, of whom we have so many authentic discourses. The position is much more favourable, for instance, than in the case of Socrates; for he is pictured to us by literary men who exercised their creative ability upon the portrait. Jesus stands much more immediately before us, because He was depicted by simple Christians without literary gift.[17]

This is not the place to go into detail regarding the reliability of the historical evidence, other than to say that it is inappropriate for Jesus myth theorists to disqualify all of the evidence out of hand.

Inappropriate Ignorance of Chronological Diversity among Ancient Texts

Jesus myth theorists have been known to make blanket statements about what ancient religions, such as Egyptian mythology, believed and what ancient Christianity believed. With a large amount of material on both sides, it is not surprising that some areas of overlap are discovered. Yet, to get to this point, such theorists must treat both ancient mythology and Christianity with disrespect. Such authors do not discuss what first century worshippers of Egyptian gods or mystery religions believed and then compare that with what first century Christians believed.

For example, in describing what Egyptian mythology consisted of, ancient pyramid texts (24th century BC), records of the reign of Akhenaten (14th century BC), the Book of the Dead (11-7th century BC), Greek historians such as Herodotus (5th century BC), and Greek philosophers such as Plutarch (2nd century AD) are taken and mixed all together as if it was uniform body of material. In fact, there was great diversity within Egyptian mythology, and it greatly evolved over time. For example, the afterlife began as something only for the Pharaoh, gradually became available to the wider aristocracy as long as they could afford the proper funerary rites, and eventually became available to the average Egyptian if they lived a good life. This diversity is not taken seriously when Jesus myth theorists make their claim for pagan origins for Christianity.

The same mistakes are made when describing Christian beliefs. Instead of relying on the New Testament documents, a wide range of texts from diverse theological positions and time periods are artificially mixed together. It is popular to take Gnostic texts, most of which are from the late second century and into the fourth and using them as if they had the same value for describing early Christian beliefs as the first century canonical writings.[18] For example, some authors have noted that the ox and ass of the infancy narrative have parallels in pagan infancy narratives. The only problem is that the ox and ass are never mentioned in Matthew, Luke or any other first century text. This image, found in popular Christmas carols, actually comes from

the eighth century *Pseudo-Matthew* or *Infancy Gospel of Matthew*. The same could be said about the connection regarding Christmas on December 25. It is true that the Christians likely first celebrated Christmas on December 25 because it was already a pagan festival (it is easier to Christianize a pagan festival than to ban a popular pagan festival). However, this says nothing about pagan origins for the Bible as we have no evidence of Christians celebrating the birth of Jesus on December 25 before the fourth century. We should not be surprised that over time Christians began to adopt themes and images of the surrounding pagan culture, but that is not evidence for pagan influence on the original belief system. Just as Jesus myth theorists misuse pagan texts, they misuse Christian texts and traditions by artificially blending naturally diverse sources.

The Peril of Parallelomania

When one begins to read the writings of Jesus myth theorists, one is amazed by the numbers of parallels that are presented. Some readers are convinced by the shear weight of the parallels even before looking at primary texts for confirmation. This is one of the primary tools of the Jesus myth theorists, not to rely on the quality of any one particular parallel but to rely on the quantity of parallels they have found, no matter how minor each might be. By doing this, they fall into the trap of something that Samuel Sandmel called 'parallelomania.' In an influential article, Sandmel argued that many scholars end up finding parallels wherever they look because that is what they are looking for. Sandmel defines parallelomania as "that extravagance among scholars which first overdoes the supposed similarity in passages and then proceeds to describe source and derivation as if implying literary connection flowing in an inevitable and predetermined direction."[19] Sandmel goes on to share these wise words: "It would seem to me . . . in dealing with similarities we can sometimes discover exact parallels, some with and some devoid of significance; seeming parallels which are so only imperfectly; and statements which can only be called parallels by taking them out of context."[20]

It is in this final category that many of the supposed parallels

of the Jesus myth theory are found. For example, it is often claimed that the gods Mithras and Horus experienced a virgin birth just as the New Testament claims for Jesus. That would seem to be an impressive parallel until one looks at the actual myth. Mithras emerged from a rock and Horus was the result of postmortem sexual intercourse between his parents Osiris and Isis. Neither case can be considered a true example of a virgin birth. It is claimed that Horus experienced a similar crucifixion and resurrection as Jesus. The actual myth says that Horus was left in a swamp as a child, died from a scorpion sting, and was immediately brought back to life after his mother prayed to another god. Mithras is said to have twelve disciples as Jesus had. There are no accounts of this in the Mithraic myths but cultic art does depict the twelve signs of the Zodiac surrounding Mithras to indicate the importance of astrology within the movement. One of the worst examples is the frequent claim of Mithras as a dying and rising god.[21] It is understandable why Jesus myth theorists would want this with the December 25 connection and the fact that Mithraism was contemporary with early Christianity and was an important rival. The only problem is that Mithras never dies in the myth. It is a primeval bull that Mithras kills who is raised back to life. Unless one goes to the actual myths or at least good scholarship, they would never know that they were victims of parallelomania.

Another aspect of parallelomania is a lack of understanding of common cultural images. The fact is that societies across the world have embraced similar images and symbols. Light and darkness, fertility and drought, famine and feast are common images and need not require derivation or connection from one culture to another. When we read about a flood in Genesis and the Epic of Gilgamesh, we suspect a connection because of the common appearance of water, ark, animals, and birds seeking for dry land. However, the appearance of shepherds or fisherman in two different religious systems is not enough to claim more than the presence of universal symbols.

Misunderstanding of Cultic Identification

One of the challenges for Jesus myth theorists is the fact that there is no one god or hero that is a complete parallel. Mithras is an

intermediary between the supreme god and humanity, but he is not a dying and rising god. Horus has a miraculous birth, but the people find no hope in his resuscitation. Osiris provides hope for an afterlife, but he does not have a miraculous birth. Dionysus is persecuted and betrayed, but he does not experience death. In order to find a pagan parallel to Jesus, one must combine different aspects of all these gods into a composite god.

To be fair, there is ancient precedent to this. As one reads ancient texts, it is evident that different cultures identified their gods with the gods of their neighbors. Sometimes that identification is complete as is the case with the Greco-Roman pantheon. For example, the Greek Zeus is the same as the Roman Jupiter, and the Greek Hermes is the same as the Roman Mercury. Most often, however, this identification is not so complete.

In the ancient world, as in our own, there were challenges for different cultures to co-exist. One of the ways to build bridges was to find similarities among their religions. Both cultures might have a thunder god, and so by identifying the two gods there was an opportunity for greater cooperation between the two cultures. That did not mean that the one culture adopted the entire mythology or religion of the other culture, only that it was now acceptable to use their names interchangeably. An example of this is the calling of the gods of the Mithraic mysteries by Greek names. Franz Cumont (a respected Belgian archaeologist and historian) explains: "A pious mystic could, without renouncing his faith, dedicate a votive inscription to the Capitoline triad,—Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva; he merely invested these divine names with a different meaning from their ordinary inscription."[22]

Jesus myth theorists often note the identification of the Egyptian Osiris and the Greek Dionysus. This is an example of cultural identification being used for political purposes.[23] There were a few things that these gods had in common which was useful in building bridges between the cultures. But the Greeks did not bring the entire story of Osiris into their understanding of Dionysus, and the Egyptians did not bring the entire story of Dionysus into their understanding of Osiris. The ancients would not recognize the artificial identification of various gods that many Jesus theorists have presented to their readers.

Conclusion

The Jesus myth theory has been popular for hundreds of years and will continue to be attractive to a certain segment of society. The new atheism has already begun to latch onto this theory.[24] It is important that Christians not ignore this trend, even if they see it as nonsense from a scholarly perspective. It is important for the church to both point out the problems in the details and in the methodology of the Jesus myth theory. The best evidence continues to point toward the existence of the historical Jesus and the uniqueness of the Christian Gospel.

Notes

1. Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy, *The Jesus Mysteries: Was the Original Jesus a Pagan God?* (London: Element, 2003), 11-12.
2. Tom Harpur, *The Pagan Christ: Recovering the Lost Light* (Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2004), 80.
3. Robert M. Price, *Deconstructing Jesus* (Amherst: Prometheus, 2000), 93. Price also strongly questions the existence of the historical Jesus and places him in the same category of other legendary figures. See *Deconstructing Jesus*, 261.
4. Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Anchor, 2003), 252.
5. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (Mineola: Dover, 2005), 137-60. Schweitzer, who is sometimes cited approvingly by Jesus myth theorists, is quite critical of such extreme views.
6. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 313-18.
7. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 167.
8. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 290-91.
9. Gerald Massey, *The Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ* (Edmonds: Holmes Publishing, 1990). Massey was a self-educated layperson.
10. Alvin Boyd Kuhn, *A Rebirth for Christianity* (Wheaton: Quest, 2005). Kuhn's Ph.D. was in the area of Theosophy, and he writes from that religious perspective.
11. Stanley Porter and I dealt in detail with the form of the Jesus myth theory as formulated by Tom Harpur in Stanley E. Porter and Stephen J. Bedard, *Unmasking the Pagan Christ: An Evangelical Response to the Cosmic Christ Idea* (Toronto: Clements, 2006). Although focused on Tom Harpur's *Pagan Christ*, much of the work is useful in dealing with other forms of the Jesus myth theory.
12. That is not to say that they are without value. See Porter and Bedard, *Unmasking*, 129-39.

13. John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 374.
14. Mark D. Roberts, *Can We Trust the Gospels?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 85. Roberts sees Luke-Acts as fitting within the genre of Hellenistic history, 86.
15. Paul seems to hold back on biographical details of both Jesus and his own life until they are required for particularly difficult arguments.
16. Stephen J. Bedard, "Paul and the Historical Jesus: A Case Study in First Corinthians," in *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry* 7:9-22.
17. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 6.
18. A helpful resource for sorting through these issues is Darrell L. Bock, *The Missing Gospels: Unearthing the Truth Behind Alternative Christianities* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006).
19. Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," in *Journal of Biblical Literature* Vol. 81, No. 1 (Mar., 1962), 1.
20. Sandmel, "Parallelomania," 7.
21. For example, see Freke and Gandy, *Jesus Mysteries*, 31 and Harpur, *Pagan Christ*, 37.
22. Franz Cumont, *Mysteries of Mithra* (New York: Cosimo, 2007), 175-76.
23. One of the best examples of identification of gods being used for political purposes is that of Sarapis who was created by the government in Egypt in an attempt to unify a nation of various cultures. See Francoise Dunand and Christine Zivie-Coche, *Gods and Men in Egypt* (Ithaca: Cornell, 2004), 218-21.
24. Christopher Hitchens, *God is Not Great* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2007), 109-22.

Paul Davies and the Philosophy of Science

John D. Wilsey

Précis:
Beginning with a recognition of significant epistemological authority in science, Paul Davies concludes that the universe is indeed meaningful and purposeful. He points to the laws of nature as evidence for this intrinsic purpose as well as for process theology. While not a follower of historic Christian orthodox theology, Davies's positions on cosmology are much to be preferred over those scientist's views which affirm a purposeless, meaningless universe defined by random accident. While Davies is reluctant to accept a transcendent Creator who made the universe by sovereign, supernatural power, it is encouraging to find a non-Christian scientist acknowledge unambiguous theological realities—that the universe is fraught with evidence for rationality, meaning, and purpose.

Introduction

Paul Davies is a widely recognized scientist, author, and lecturer. He has written and edited over twenty-five books including *The Mind of God*, *The Last Three Minutes*, *The Cosmic Blueprint*, *About Time*, and *Are We Alone?* Davies is director of Beyond: Center for Fundamental Concepts in Science, and co-director of the Cosmology Initiative—both at Arizona State University. He has also held appointments in astronomy, physics and mathematics at the Universities of Cambridge, London and Newcastle upon Tyne, and Adelaide. He is an authority in the fields of cosmology, gravitation, and quantum field theory. Other interests of Davies include the nature of time, high-energy particle physics, the origin of life, and the nature of consciousness. Davies is the recipient of many awards, the most noteworthy being the 1995 Templeton Prize for progress in religion. This is one of the world's most prestigious prizes for intellectual endeavor and is presented adjacent to the tombs of Charles Darwin and Isaac Newton in Westminster Abbey. Davies is one of the most significant scientists of our time, not only

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because of his research and accomplishments, but because he writes on a popular level as well as an academic one.[1]

Davies' philosophy of science is to a great extent derived from his extensive research in cosmology, physics and astrobiology. Perhaps the single most important religious statement on Davies' view of science was made when he said, "science offers a surer path to God than religion."[2] Davies meant what he said. He went on to say,

> I made the statement to be deliberately provocative, and it is often quoted, so I suppose I got it right! I distinguish between God and religion. I think religion often gets in the way of our understanding of God, because it is based on faith and ancient scripture, and not reasoning and evidence.... However, I would not wish to claim that science can provide the whole truth. It is just that what science does provide is 'reliable knowledge 'rather than Truth. So it is a 'surer path.'[3]

Starting with the crecognition of significant epistemological authority in science, Davies concludes that the universe is indeed meaningful and purposeful. He points to the laws of nature as evidence for this intrinsic purpose as well as to the God of process theology. Davies sees further evidence for transcendent purpose in the emergence of life in the universe—particularly on earth but also, in his view, probably elsewhere in the universe. The aim of this essay is to examine Davies' view of science and his stance on purpose and meaning in the cosmos based on his broad research. My hope is that this study will lay the groundwork for further work and assessment.

Paul Davies' Notion of Science

Davies contends that "science offers a surer path to God than religion." This statement is an encapsulation of his overall notion of science. Upon this statement, Davies builds an entire worldview of a purposeful and meaningful cosmos with life—especially human life—filling an elemental role in it. Davies writes, "I belong to the group of scientists who do not subscribe to a conventional religion

but nevertheless deny that the universe is a purposeless accident."[4] Furthermore, Davies asserts that "human beings are built into the scheme of things in a very basic way."[5]

While science does have great authority in revealing the truths of the universe, it has limits. Something must pick up once science can go no further. Davies states, "I am not saying that science and logic are likely to provide the wrong answers, but they may be incapable of addressing the sort of 'why' (as opposed to 'how') questions we want to ask."[6] Davies rejects established religion as a guide to ultimate truth, but he has no problem with a mild sort of spirituality in dealing with "ultimate questions." Michael J. Buckley notes that Davies identifies with some of the thought of Werner Heisenberg, who defined God as "the central order of things or events" and the "inner core of a being whose outer manifestations may be highly diverse and past our understanding."[7] Davies' view of God will be discussed later, but it is appropriate now to consider that Davies does recognize the limits of science and acknowledges that spirituality does play a role in the investigation of the cosmos.

Davies' belief that science plays the key role in the investigation of the cosmos cannot be overstated, however. Answers to deep philosophical and religious questions can depend on the power of science. Issues such as an ultimate meaning to our existence—whether human beings are the only sentient beings in the universe, or whether life is the product of chance or of law—"hinge on what science can reveal about the formation of life."[8] It is also of utmost importance to stress Davies' statement that "science takes as its starting point the assumption that life wasn't made by a god or a supernatural being: it happened unaided and spontaneously as a natural process."[9] So, it is fair to say that Davies is a methodological naturalist, even though he affirms purpose and meaning in the universe to the exclusion of blind chance.

Davies' view of the difference between science and religion is seen in the disparity between objectivity and subjectivity. He perceives science as having an advantage because "the alleged order claimed by science is open to direct test, whereas religious experience is a private phenomenon."[10] Furthermore, a scientist stands ready to abandon a position if that position is disproved in the laboratory. In contrast,

Davies asserts that religion rests on the authority of revelation and a religious person will hardly abandon a position based on what is interpreted as revealed wisdom from God.[11] Perhaps for Davies, the most important distinction between science and religion is seen upon consideration of the momentous advances made by scientific discovery and their impact on religious questions. According to Davies, "the very conceptual framework in which the religious questions are posed can be altered by scientific advances."[12] This statement is bold, but it is not flippant.

Davies' Templeton Prize address provides some context to the above statement. He discusses the character of the laws of nature, laws that are based upon mathematics, which are not discernible to us through casual observation. He speaks of the great complexity of those laws, which are veiled at first, but are later revealed having been "painstakingly extracted from nature using arcane procedures of lab, experiment and mathematical theory."[13] Davies marvels at man's ability to discern the secrets of nature, to "decode" its messages. The wonder of science is that human beings can "use it to decode nature and discover the secret laws the universe follows."[14]

To summarize, it is clear that Davies places the highest confidence in science to find answers to the deepest questions of the cosmos and mankind's place in it. The great leaps forward over the centuries as a result of deep labor in the laboratory and faithful reliance on inductive reasoning have proven that science is at least as worthy as religion, if not more so, in the quest for knowledge of the universe. Science has shown us, in the discoveries of Copernicus, Galileo, Darwin, and Einstein that it can even change the parameters wherein the fundamental questions of religion and philosophy are asked. Science has benefited mankind in ways that cannot be enumerated, and promises to continue to do so at an even more rapid pace.

The pace of science is quickening because of an emerging paradigm that is replacing that of Newtonian mathematics and physics. The details of this new paradigm will be explored later, but Davies sees this new paradigm as one that will exercise great influence on scientific thought. It provides an optimistic picture of a dynamic, growing universe over and above the Newtonian pessimism of a dying universe.[15]

The important thing to observe about Davies' notion of science is that science provides a way for mankind to understand the universe in which we live. Science is sufficient to "explain the existence of complexity and organization at all levels" and thus show that there is meaning in the universe.[16] This is the subject of the next section of the essay.

Davies' View of Purpose and Meaning in the Universe

The centerpiece of Davies' philosophy of science is that the scientific method can be used to comprehend the universe, and the universe can be understood as being rational, intelligible, meaningful and purposeful. All scientific inquiry depends upon this fact. If the universe were a chaotic mass of unruly systems, there would be no ability to fathom any of those systems. Since the universe does show meaning, rationality, intelligibility, and purpose, it can be studied, and the laws of nature can be induced from its repeatable processes. Indeed, those laws are the best evidence for purpose in the cosmos. Davies notes in many of his writings that if the laws of nature could be adjusted, even at minute levels, the universe as we know it would cease to exist, and life itself would not be possible. The laws of nature even seem to have life written inextricably into them. Davies quotes Freeman Dyson in his Templeton Address to make this point when he states, "the universe knew we were coming."[17]

Davies has much to say in his writings about life, specifically about its origin and meaning. His book *The Fifth Miracle*[18] was written for this exact purpose, but the subject is treated in some of his other works as well. While Davies certainly does not view life as merely an accident of chemistry that occurred in the primordial soup of 3.5 billion years ago, he is quite careful not to ascribe a miraculous[19] divine origin to life on earth or elsewhere in the universe. Thus, there is a substantial gap in human explanation for life in the universe. While science maintains the ability to explain many of the particulars about the when and where of the origin of life, it cannot account for how it originated. Davies' position on this gap in understanding is simply

that scientists are missing a major piece in the puzzle. Life was clearly meant to exist in the universe, but the fine points of how it originated in the universe remain a great mystery. Davies contends "that a fully satisfactory theory of the origin of life demands some radically new ideas."[20]

What is one to make of this statement? What does Davies mean when he calls for "radically new ideas"? Davies is prepared to challenge the orthodoxy of Darwinism with respect to the origin of life. He accepts the notion of natural selection once life has been established. He is even open to natural selection occurring on other planets. However, when it comes to the issue of life's origin, Davies is not convinced that biological evolution can give the satisfactory answer that is required.

The orthodoxy of biological evolution teaches that life is not a preordained phenomenon in the cosmos. Life began on earth as a result of random chemical processes about 3.5 billion years ago. In other words, since the origin and development of life is a meaningless set of accidents, there is no ultimate cause for it. If Davies is correct in his assertion that life is built into the laws of nature at the most deep-seated level, then orthodox Darwinian evolution is flawed at its core. For Davies, not only is life preordained; it is moving toward a particular end. According to Davies, the sticking point for scientists who still cling to accepted orthodoxy is that "'end' sounds suspiciously like 'goal' or 'purpose'—taboo words in science for the last century, redolent as they are of a bygone religious age."[21] But this kind of "radical" idea is what is called for, in Davies' estimation. He goes on to propose that the laws of physics include the property of self-organization. That is, matter and energy are encouraged to evolve from simple to sophisticated levels of complexity. This property of self-organization will be treated later, but the point is that Davies does not trifle when he proposes "radically new ideas."

Davies points to the deep and organized complexity in life that simply could not be the result of accidental spontaneity. Given the fact that in order to initiate life certain specific chemical forms and reactions must be present and take place, the explanation that biological evolution offers is implausible. As Davies writes, "a random complex network of reactions is unlikely to yield life."[22] The implausibility of

the accidental formation of life by a spontaneous chemical event has been compared by Fred Hoyle "to a whirlwind passing through an aircraft factory and blowing scattered components into a functioning Boeing 747."[23] The odds against the random formation of molecules constructing DNA are one to $10^{40,000}$. To put this into perspective, one would have the same chance at flipping a coin and coming up heads 130,000 times in a row.[24]

The notion of the inevitability of life and consciousness in the cosmos is recognized in part by the theory known as the anthropic principle. This theory states that "the universe is designed in such a way as to make intelligence emerge, so that the inhabitants of the universe . . . possess an ever-increasing consciousness."[25] Davies accepts this principle. Because Davies is not satisfied with the idea of a random universe or the accidental origin of life from haphazard chemical processes, it is important to note that he sees human existence as meaningful. While he is not ready to say that human existence is at the center of meaning in the universe, he does find it encouraging that humans are not trivialized by a view of life's origin as a freak event. Davies writes,

> I don't mean that Homo sapiens as a species is written into the laws of nature. The world hasn't been created for our benefit; we're not at the centre of creation. We are not the most significant thing. But that's not to say that we are totally insignificant either. One of the depressing things about the last three hundred years of science is the way it has tended to marginalize . . . human beings and thus alienate them from the universe in which they live. I think we do have a place in the universe—not a central place but a significant place nevertheless.[26]

Earlier in this essay, the property of self-organization was introduced in the context of the origin and meaning of life. This property is fundamental to Davies' thesis of a meaningful and purposeful universe. To review, the property of self-organization is a tendency found in the laws of physics that encourages matter and energy to evolve from simple to sophisticated levels of complexity. It is neither miraculous nor accidental.

So then, what is the source of the creative power of the universe?[27] Over the course of history, most people have attributed this creativity to an omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God who stands transcendent over space and time, having created both. The big bang theory seemed to affirm the belief in a supernatural creation event and also seemed to generally track with the Genesis account of creation. Most people have accepted the premise that creation was a singular act, occurring at one spectacular event.

Rather than accept this position, Davies stresses that the creation has not stopped since the big bang. "[T]he universe has never ceased to be creative," Davies asserts.[28] In saying this, not only does Davies deny the necessity of a Creator God; he denies that God creates anything at all. Rather, it is the universe itself that creates, using the laws of nature as the agency of creation. The self-organizing property of the laws of nature allow for the continual creation of new matter and energy. Thus, the universe is not dying a slow death by the gradual dispersal of heat throughout space, but progressing through the creation of new forms. Davies states, "[e]vidently physical processes exist that can turn a void—or something close to it—into stars, planets, crystals, clouds and people."[29] Furthermore, Davies writes,

> Only very recently have scientists begun to understand how complexity and organization can emerge from featurelessness and chaos. Research in areas as diverse as fluid turbulence, crystal growth and neural networks is revealing the extraordinary propensity for physical systems to generate new states of order spontaneously. It is clear that there exist *self-organizing* processes in every branch of science.[30]

How can something be created out of nothing? How can something be caused without a cause? How can true spontaneity exist in the cosmos? Whereas these questions have been addressed by theology and philosophy for generations, they have fallen into the realm of science in the past few decades. The central scientific authority for answers to these questions comes from quantum physics.[31] Quantum theory, simply put, states that energy and light do not flow in consistent patterns, as previously thought, but instead exist in ultraminute

packets called quanta.[32] Quantum physics has turned the worldview of scientists upside down by invalidating Newtonian physics and mechanics. Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy asserts that the behavior of matter is essentially uncertain rather than predictable.[33] As Davies explains, "Quantum processes are inherently unpredictable and indeterministic; it is generally impossible to predict from one moment to the next how a quantum system will behave. The law of cause and effect, so solidly rooted in the ground of daily experience, fails here. In the world of the quantum, spontaneous change is not only permitted, it is unavoidable."[34] Thus, citing quantum physics, scientists such as Davies allege a universe that can indeed create itself from nothing, organize itself into its present state, and continue to renew itself using self-organizing principles.

What are the far-reaching scientific and philosophical consequences of quantum physics? To state them in two words, provocative and staggering. Davies notes that, even though attributing quantum physics to the whole universe (a field known as quantum cosmology) is speculative and provisional, "it is no longer entirely absurd to imagine that the universe came into existence spontaneously from nothing as a result of a quantum process."[35] Some other scientists that Davies references are Nobel Prize-winner Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, authors of *Order Out of Chaos*. According to these scientists, "Our universe has a pluralistic, complex character. Structures may disappear, but also they may appear."[36]

Although scientists have been enthralled by the discoveries and ramifications of quantum physics, there is a lack of agreement on the source of nature's creative power. According to Davies, there are three positions on the issue. The first position is that of complete reductionism. According to this view, there are no truly developing phenomena. Instead, every physical process, either explainable by mathematical principles or by observation, is reduced to the behavior of elementary fields in interaction. All levels of complexity can be described using the laws of mechanics directing those fields and particles. Any gulf of knowledge must be attributed to the current ignorance about the details of the given process. To Davies, this is an unacceptable position, because it is based on the outdated concept of determinism.[37]

The second position is that of uncaused creativity. Adherents to this position recognize the existence of highly organized forms and processes and that they do not necessarily follow from lower level laws. New forms are created in the universe separately from what came before and are not compelled by any predetermined goal. Again, Davies rejects this position because it leaves the nature of organization unexplained. An orderly progression from featurelessness to complexity can be seen in the universe, but to hold to uncaused creativity would be to oversimplify the process. Uncaused creativity is an unscientific attempt at answering a scientific problem.[38]

The third position, preferable to Davies, is that of organizing principles. Given the existence of a proclivity in nature to organize simple forms into complex ones independently of lower level laws, there is a necessity to find some physical principles in addition to the lower level laws to explain the transition. One of the fundamental properties of nature is its ability to steadily organize simplicity into complexity. This phenomenon can be observed in physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, and ecology. Spontaneous self-organization is not unusual in nature, but rather, is the norm. Organizing principles must exist that are transcendent over the known laws of physics that have yet to be discovered. In Davies' estimation, science is on the verge of discovering these new general principles, and these discoveries will not only affect science but also the way scientists think about science.[39]

While it is clear that science alone cannot reveal the meaning of life or the purpose of the existence of the universe, scientific paradigms do profoundly influence thought on these issues.[40] Two paradigms now seem to be in conflict, the one having dominated scientific thought for three centuries and the other emerging out of new discoveries in physics and taking the place of the first. The first paradigm, the Newtonian paradigm, considered the universe to be a great machine. To understand this great mechanism, one could reduce the universe to the behavior of each individual mechanism and find that it was under the control of deterministic forces.[41] While change and evolution may be observed in the universe, no such thing was possible in reality. There was only a reorganization of particles, and no fundamental change at the atomic level. A central tenet of the Newtonian paradigm is the second law of thermodynamics, which points to the inevitable

deterioration of the cosmos by heat death, the dispersal of all energy to uniform levels throughout the universe. Also, the creation of the universe was seen as an instantaneous event, and once creation was effected, nothing else was created.[42]

The new paradigm, which is replacing that of Newton, is centered upon the principle of self-organization. This principle does not belong with the Newtonian paradigm because at its core is the notion of dynamism and real change, rather than a mere rearrangement of atoms. The predictability of the deterministic Newtonian paradigm is lost and replaced by the unforeseeable modes of behavior of physical systems in the new paradigm. The characteristics of this new paradigm are spontaneity, complexity, collectivity, global coherence, unpredictability, growth, continual creation, and "unidirectional change in the direction of *progress*."[43]

An analogy that Davies uses is that of a flower. He writes, "Instead of sliding into featurelessness, the cosmos rises out of featurelessness, growing rather than dying, developing new structures, processes and potentialities all the time, unfolding like a flower."[44] This analogy suggests that there is a plan built into the universe, and the universe is progressing toward realizing that intrinsic plan. While the new paradigm calls for unpredictability in the universe, that is to say that certain states of affairs arise in which many possible lower level potentialities of development present themselves. Thus, an element of innovation and creativity exist along with unpredictability. But the key to this paradigm of growth and progression is that higher laws of nature—self-organizing laws—encourage the development of deeper complexity and orderliness rather than compel it by some arbitrary act either of God or of nature. Davies affirms, "In physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, biology, computing—indeed, in every branch of science—the same propensity for self-organization is apparent."[45]

This new paradigm can be called predisposition. It is not to be confused with predeterminism, which holds that everything in the universe in its particular state has been established from the beginning of time. Predisposition also denies the inevitability of any particular life form, so human beings cannot be said to be at the center of meaning in the universe. Predisposition's claim is that nature has an innate tendency to progress in the way that it has from the big bang forward, given the

rule of its laws. The future cannot be known, but room is left for true creativity and endless potential, as well as human free will. One strong aspect of the predispositional paradigm is the anthropic principle. Here it is apparent that the laws of physics call for the rise of complex life forms, including consciousness, but without the deterministic aspect of the Newtonian paradigm. The anthropic principle also calls for life to exist and develop elsewhere in the universe.[46]

What does this new paradigm have to do with meaning and purpose in the universe? As Davies says, predisposition calls for a "cosmic blueprint."[47] Thus, there exists a set of laws that call for a progression from simplicity to complexity to develop in the universe. The universe has the freedom to create itself again and again. There is a "blueprint" for development, but this is not pre-determinism, because at the lower levels of physics, there is profound unpredictability. The principle of stochasticity is central to the predispositional paradigm. In a stochastic system, unpredictability is there, but rationality exists in fixed mathematical laws. At the atomic level, there is instability and fluctuation that ensures the open nature and inscrutability of the future. New forms and systems are available to arise, and the universe has great potential to advance. The difference between stochasticity and anarchy is seen in the fact that the expansion of systems in the universe is achieved by laws and principles that encourage them rather than coerce them. Davies even sees stochasticity as a device conveniently used by a Deity. So, what one finds is order proceeding from disorder.[48]

The paradigm of predisposition, the anthropic and self-organization principles, and the stochastic system all point to a universe that is meaningful, intelligible, purposeful, and rational. Davies takes great pains to build a strong foundation for these claims using science that is governed by sound method. But Davies is a scientist who seems to recognize divine action in the cosmos. While he has said that he shies away from established religion ("science offers a surer path to God than religion"), he admits that science can only take a person so far when addressing ultimate questions.

Conclusion

Paul Davies is without question one of the most renowned scientists of the twenty-first century. His knowledge base is broad, covering the fields of quantum physics, astrobiology, cosmology, chemistry, and mathematics. His positions are much more preferable to those scientists who would hold to a purposeless, meaningless universe that is defined by random accident after accident when the evidence suggests that God is the Designer of this universe. It is regrettable that Davies is reluctant to accept a Creator who made the world by a miraculous demonstration of His sovereign power. He certainly seems to move closer in that direction than many scientists, and perhaps his research will ultimately persuade him. Still, it is encouraging to find even a non-Christian scientist come face to face with unambiguous theological realities—that this universe is fraught with evidence for rationality, meaning, and purpose. It is not so by accident. Humanity does indeed fulfill a most essential and significant role. And finally, as Davies says himself as he concludes *The Mind of God*, "We are truly meant to be here."[49]

Notes

1. "Paul Davies: A Short Biography," *The Australian Centre for Astrobiology*, October 23, 2003, <http://aca.mq.edu.au/PaulDavies/pdbiography.htm> (November 23,2004). Further biographical information on Paul Davies can be found at <http://aca.mq.edu.au/PaulDavies/pdavies.html>. The publisher of these sites is The Australian Centre for Astrobiology, Sydney, Australia. See also http://cosmos.asu.edu/index.html.
2. Paul Davies, *God and the New Physics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), ix.
3. Paul Davies, "Re: A Question for You, Sir," November 21, 2004, personal e-mail (November 21, 2004).
4. Davies, *The Mind of God* (New York Simon and Schuster, 1992), 15.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 226.
7. Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Beyond: Encounters and Conversations*, in "Religion and Science: Paul Davies and John Paul II," Michael J. Buckley *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 312.
8. Paul Davies, *The Fifth Miracle* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 27.

9. Ibid., 28.
10. Paul Davies, "Re: A Question for You, Sir," November 22,2004, personal e-mail (November 22,2004).
11. Paul Davies, *God and the New Physics*, 6.
12. Ibid., 218.
13. Paul Davies, "Physics and the Mind of God: The Templeton Prize Address," *First Things* 55 (August/September 1995): 32.
14. Ibid.
15. Paul Davies, *The Cosmic Blueprint* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 197.
16. Ibid., 203.
17. Davies, "Physics," 34.
18. The subtitle of this work is *The Search for the Origin and Meaning of Life.*
19. In an analysis of Davies' philosophy, it is important to distinguish between "miraculous" divine work and "natural" divine work. As we shall see, Davies does not discount the possibility that God works within the laws of nature to initiate the forms and processes of the universe.
20. Davies, *The Fifth Miracle*, 17.
21. Ibid., 247.
22. Ibid., 27.
23. Ibid., 27-28.
24. Ibid.
25. Jeffiey Marsh, "Explaining the Universe-*The Mind of God: The Scientific Basis for a Rational World* by Paul Davies," *Commentary* 94 (August 1992), 58.
26. Davies, *Are We Alone?,* 128.
27. Davies' work, *The Cosmic Blueprint*, is dedicated to the exploration of this question.
28. Davies, *The Cosmic Blueprint*, 1.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. For a detailed study of quantum physics, two works of Paul Davies in particular can be referenced: 1) Davies, Paul ed., (*The New Physics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and 2) Davies, Paul. *Other Worlds*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990). *The New Physics* is a collection of highly technical essays, while Other Worlds is written for a general audience.
32. Hyman Frankel, review of *The Mind of God* by Paul Davies, *Science and Society* 58 (Summer 1994), 233.
33. Ibid., 234.
34. Davies, The Cosmic Blueprint, 5.
35. Ibid.
36. Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos*, in *The Cosmic Blueprint*, Paul Davies (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 5.
37. Davies, *God and the New Physics*, 139-140.

38. Ibid., 140-141.
39. Ibid., 142.
40. Ibid., 197.
41. These deterministic forces comprised a central role in complete reductionism, according to Davies. This was one reason why he found the position wanting.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid., 198.
44. Ibid., 200.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., 201.
47. Ibid., 202.
48. Davies, *The Mind of God*, 191-192.
49. Ibid., *The Mind of God*, 232.

Searching for the Historical Jesus: Does History Repeat Itself?

F. David Farnell

A wise old saying has warned, "Those who do not learn from the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them." Does history repeat itself? Pondering this question is important for current evangelical Gospel discussions, especially in reference to modern Gospel research. In terms of searching for "the historical Jesus," history has indeed repeated itself through the First and Second Quest and is threatening to do so again in the contemporary Third Quest. Below it is argued that based on the lessons of the first two quests, evangelicals should be leery of involvement in the Third Quest lest history repeat itself yet again.[1]

The Consistent Testimony of the Orthodox Church for 1700 Years

From the nascent beginnings of the church until the A.D. 17th century, orthodox Christians held that the four canonical Gospels, Matthew, Luke, Mark and John were historical, biographical, albeit selective (cf. John 20:30-31) eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life written by the men whose names were attached to them from the beginning.[2] These Gospels are virtually the only source for our knowledge of the acts and teachings of Jesus.[3] The Gospels were considered by the Church as the product of Spirit-energized minds (John 14:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:4) to give the true presentation of Jesus' life and work for the thirty-plus years that He lived on the earth. The consistent, as well as persistent, testimony expressed in early church history was that the Apostle Matthew, also known as Levi, wrote the book of Matthew

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as the first account of Jesus' life; the physician, Luke, companion of the Apostle Paul, wrote the Gospel based on careful interviews of those who interacted with Jesus (Luke 1:1-4); Mark, the interpreter for Peter, wrote his Gospel based on the preaching of Peter; while the Apostle John, an especially intimate disciple of Jesus—"the disciple whom Jesus loved"—wrote the last canonical Gospel that bears his name. Since these men had either accompanied Jesus' ministry from its inception (Matthew, John) or been in direct contact with those who had (Mark, Luke), the accounts were considered absolutely trustworthy witnesses to Jesus' life and ministry as it actually occurred in history.

Most likely, the reason why four independent gospels would attest to His life is found in the Old Testament Mosaic legal concept of establishing matters on the basis of eyewitness testimony: "on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed" (Deut. 19:15b cp. 17:6-7). God, who knows that we depend on the testimony of those who themselves saw and heard Jesus, made sure that the message necessary for salvation was transmitted to us not singly but through multiple eyewitnesses to affirm the matter. The independent witnesses confirm one another in a complementary fashion.[4] The Old Testament penalty for false testimony regarding anyone who would lead God's people astray in prophecy or toward false gods was death. The early church maintained that gospels are supplementary and complementary, not contradictory, to one another. Importantly, from the early church until the 17th century no differences between these Gospel accounts and how Jesus actually was in history was conceptualized.[5] The Jesus of the Gospels was the Jesus of history down to His uniqueness as well as His supernatural character as God-man. The rise of modern *philosophical* ideologies inherent in historical criticism generates such distinctions.

The Rise of Modernism Creates a Chasm Between the Jesus of the Bible and the "Christ of Faith"

One cannot overstress that the rise of modern *philosophical* ideologies inherent in historical criticism generates any such

distinctions between the Jesus as he is presented in the canonical Gospels and any conceptualizations of how he is alleged to have been actually in history. Hostile philosophical underpinnings of a virulent *anti-supernaturalism* create these hypothetical distinctions.

The "Historical Jesus" Research is Searching for a Definition of the Term

The term "historical Jesus" cannot truly be defined with any degree of satisfaction or consensus among those who advocate such research. These researchers search for a concept of Jesus that cannot be defined. The irony of this state of affairs in its definition has resulted from the fact that no consensus has occurred as to what the "historical Jesus" is or was. Donald Hagner incisively comments,

> It deserves to be emphasized that in both the nineteenth-century writing on Jesus and that of today, what seems to be wanting is not so much *a truer* view of Jesus as an *alternative* view. The traditional view of Jesus, the view held by the early church, is old-fashioned, uninteresting, and thought to be unconvincing. What the world craves is a debunking of the traditional Jesus, a Jesus rescued from the dogma of the church for twenty-first century human beings. What will sell books and bring fame or notoriety and new explanations of Jesus—explanations acceptable to the proclivities and sensitivities of the modern world.[6]

After two hundred-plus years of questing for whatever the "historical Jesus" might be, involving possibly three perceived "quests" (whether three exist is debated as will be discussed), no general agreement exists among biblical scholars who pursue this discipline as to what the term means. William Hamilton, reflecting somewhat of a Bultmannian or Tillichian mode that assumes *a priori* negative historiography involved in historical criticism, rejects the whole process as "beyond belief," concluding that "Jesus is inaccessible by historical means" and preferring instead a "Quest for the Post-Historical Jesus." Jesus in history can never be defined or known. Thus, not only is the Gospel portrait rejected but no certainty can exist or be known about Jesus

even in an alleged post-Easter circumstance.[7] Perhaps the crescendo of this type of thought is found with Jewish theologian Jacob Neusner, who argues that the questing for the historical Jesus is "disingenuous" and "irrelevant," since modern standards of historiography "cannot comprise supernatural events," and "religious writings such as the Gospels cannot, and should not, attempt to meet [such standards]."[8] Since the heart of the Gospels entails the supposition that God entered human history with Jesus, anything supernatural is *a priori* ruled out from being investigated historically.

Whatever the "Historical Jesus" is, it must *not* be the Christ of the Gospels

In 1959, James M. Robinson, a leader of what is now known as the "second quest" period, did, however, stress what the term could *not* mean:

> The term "historical Jesus" is not simply identical with "Jesus" or "Jesus of Nazareth," as if the adjective "historical" were a meaningless addition. Rather the adjective is used in a technical sense, and makes a specific contribution to the total meaning of the expression. "Historical" is used in the sense of "things in the past which have been established by objective scholarship." Consequently the expression "historical Jesus" comes to mean: "What can be known of Jesus of Nazareth by means of scientific methods of the historian." Thus we have to do with a technical expression which must be recognized as such, and not automatically identified with the simple term "Jesus."[9]

Robinson continues regarding the first alleged quest that "[t]his was in fact the assumption of the nineteenth century quest of the historical Jesus. For this quest was initiated by the enlightenment in its effort to escape the limitations of dogma . . . unrestricted by the doctrinal presentations of him in the Bible, creed and Church."[10] Since no perceived agreement or consensus exists as to who or what the "historical Jesus" is or even if such a definition can even be determined, the consequence appears to be that it is to be defined negatively

since a general agreement exists among questers that whatever the "historical Jesus" is or was, He is not, indeed cannot be, equated fully with the Jesus who is presented in the Gospels. Since historiography, i.e., hypotheses of what can take place in a time-space continuum in reference to historical critical ideology, cannot encompass the supernatural—indeed, rules it out from the very beginning—whatever the "historical Jesus" is, He cannot be equated with the Jesus as He is presented in the Gospels.[11]

The Existential Jesus or What Does the "Historical Jesus" Mean to You?

As a result, the term "historical Jesus" is best perhaps termed the "existential Jesus," for, as will be seen, a close examination of the questing reveals that the "historical Jesus" is whatever the quester *a priori* determines Jesus to be or wants him as somehow significantly in distinction from the biblical documents. This subjectivity is highlighted in reviewing terms used today in the "third search" to define the "historical Jesus": an eschatological prophet, a Galilean holy man, an occult magician, an innovative rabbi, a trance-inducing psychotherapist, a Jewish sage, a political revolutionary, an Essene conspirator, an itinerant exorcist, an historicized myth, a protoliberation theologian, a peasant artisan, a Torah-observant Pharisee, a Cynic-like philosopher, a self-conscious eschatological agent, and the list would go on and on.[12] No one embraces all of these images, but they are presented by their advocates as the most reasonable reconstruction of "the historical Jesus." After an *a priori* decision has been made on a preconceived concept of Jesus, criteria of authenticity, stemming from tradition criticism, can be applied to the Gospels, and that concept of Jesus affirmed. Since the criteria are subjective and conflicting, other criteria can be invented and applied to ensure the outcome desired. The critical weakness, as well as subjectivity, of these criteria lies in the fact that the same criteria can be applied or countered with different criteria to ensure whatever view has already been assumed.[13] The current situation of widely conflicting views on whom the "historical Jesus" was has prompted Jesus Seminar participant John Dominic Crossan to comment that "*Historical Jesus research* today is becoming something of a scholarly bad joke" and "an academic embarrassment"

as well as giving the "impression of acute scholarly subjectivity in historical research." He goes on to note, however, something he deems positive: "the number of competent and even eminent scholars producing pictures of Jesus at wide variance with one another."[14] As a consequence, he deems necessary a re-examination of methodologies involved in the search.[15]

Philosophical Basis of Questing: The "Historical Jesus" is a True Historical-Critical Myth Centering in the Philosophical Basis of Errancy[16]

The "questing" or searching for the historical Jesus may be defined as *a philosophically-motivated historical-critical* construct that the Jesus as presented in the Gospels is not the same or not to be identified fully with the Jesus who actually lived in history. Underlying the questing is the assumption that "scientific" research showed that the Jesus of history was different from the Christ of Scripture, the creeds, orthodox theology and Christian piety.[17] To some degree or another, such an activity has as its underlying operating assumption that the gospels cannot be taken as wholly trustworthy in their presentation of Jesus' life since belief or faith has mediated their presentation. In other words, faith and history are perceived as in opposition in reference to proper or legitimate historical methods due to its standard pronouncement of a closed-continuum of cause and effect. This idea of historiography means that the phrase "historical Jesus" is oxymoronic. If Jesus is to be understood historically, according to the standards of accepted historiography replete in the ideology of historical criticism, then He cannot be the Jesus presented in the Gospels. If one accepts the Jesus in the Gospels, then such a Jesus is not historical. One must default to a departure from the New Testament presentation of Jesus out of perceived necessity so that the "historical Jesus" *must be* something other than exactly the Jesus of the Gospels.[18]

One cannot overstress that *presuppositional philosophical underpinnings* of historical criticism have driven a qualitative, as well as quantitative, wedge between how Jesus is presented in the Gospels and current hypothesizing as to how Jesus actually was alleged to be

in history in *all* quests for the "historical Jesus." This philosophical, presuppositional basis for the "historical Jesus" or the "Jesus of history" results in a Jesus removed from the supernatural as well as much of the uniqueness of Jesus as He is presented in the Gospels. The separation is, admittedly, somewhat one of degree depending upon the philosophical underpinnings accepted by the individual "searcher," but usually, it is a very sharp separation, especially in terms of any violation of a closed-continuum of cause and effect. As a result, biblical scholars who follow this mode of thought are forced *a priori* to "search" for the historical Jesus to find how He actually was in reality.

Importantly, the idea of a "historical Jesus" distinct from the Gospel presentations as well as practice of "questing" or "searching" for this presumed historical Jesus is an axiomatic consequence foundational to the tenets of historical criticism. The more one is consistent with the application of historical-critical ideology, the further the concept of a "historical Jesus" is removed from the Gospel presentation of Him. To put it bluntly, the "historical Jesus" is a *chimera* of historical criticism that has at its basis philosophical motivations. For evangelicals who hold to an orthodox view of inspiration and inerrancy as maintained in church history, the great irony is that the true "myth" of historical criticism is its idea of the "historical Jesus." That is, this historical-critical "Jesus," whatever the viewpoint or conclusion of the plethora of researchers in the quest, never existed except in the minds of historical critics. The only Jesus that existed was that Jesus as He is accurately, and historically, portrayed in the Gospels. This conclusion is quite the opposite of historical-critical ideological assertions.

Baruch Spinoza Stimulated the Questing

Questing is usually traced to the Enlightenment as its stimulating force, for it was during this period that a strong "prejudice against prejudice" was developed, whereby scholars rejected previous opinions of the ancients as tenuous. Orchard and Riley observe, "The Enlightenment not only witnessed the rise of critical history . . . it also signaled the triumph in the eighteenth century and subsequent European culture of rationalist ideals and antipathies, and the consequent divorce of Reason both from the tradition of faith and from tradition in principle, that is, from all tradition. The result was an

era of wholesale 'prejudice against prejudice' . . . the emasculation of tradition."[19] Whatever the ancient, early church said about the Gospels in terms of their authorship or integrity was rejected in favor of more current approaches of the time.

While very few ideas stem from an absolute beginning or a single root cause, the nascent beginnings of the historical-critical ideology of all these searches can be largely traced, not only to the Enlightenment, but to the profound, albeit belated, influence of the Jewish apostate Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677).[20] Spinoza, to a large degree, may truly be regarded as the progenitor or father of modern historical-criticism of the Bible. Spinoza himself was a rationalist and pantheist, who for overriding personal reasons, disdained the plain meaning of the biblical text because of the implications as well as affect that it had upon him as a person as well as society as a whole.[21]

To have sympathy with Spinoza's situation that inspired his philosophical approach, one must remember that he grew up in a world where he observed the use and abuse of Scripture as applied by both government and institutionalized religion. Both before and during the time that he lived, Jews in many places had been forced to deny Judaism or die a martyr's death; gentile kings had justified their dubious actions by use of Scripture in policy and war; personal freedoms and actions that were considered contrary to Scripture were forbidden in many places impacted by Christianity.[22] In other words, Spinoza's views arose at a time of a "war of worldviews" that competed with Scripture and what role in society Scripture should play, if any. For Spinoza, his intent was that Scripture should have no role or influence in the modern world. His magnum opus, *Theologico-Political Treatise*,[23] was a landmark as "both the first theoretical defense of the idea of liberal democracy and the first extended treatise on biblical criticism to employ recognizably modern methods of analysis."[24]

Spinoza's method had a simplistic genius behind it. He set in motion the modern nature of biblical criticism "*as a weapon to destroy or at least discredit the traditional metaphysics of Christianity and Judaism.*"[25] Its purpose was to remove all influence of the Bible not only in the religious sphere, but also in the economic as well as political areas of society. Commenting on the antecedent developments of historical critical ideology, David Dungan relates,

> Spinoza and his followers multiplied questions about the physical history of the text to the point that the traditional theological task could never get off the ground. That, however, was precisely the intended effect of the first step: to create an endless "nominalist barrage" if you will, an infinitely extendable list of questions directed at the physical history of the text, to the point where the clergy and the political officials allied with them *could never bring to bear their own theological interpretations* of the Bible. In other words, Spinoza switched the focus from the *referent* of the biblical text (e.g., God's activity, Jesus Christ) to *the history of the text.* In doing so, he effectively eviscerated the Bible of all traditional theological meaning and moral teaching.[26]

Dungan goes on to comment, "In short, the net effect of what historical critics have accomplished during the past three hundred years—apart from accumulating an enormous heap of data about the physical history of the text—has been to eviscerate the Bible's core religious beliefs and moral values, preventing the Bible from questioning the political and economic beliefs of the new bourgeois class [that arose in the modern historical-critical era]."[27] Simply put, biblical criticism from this point on would spend its time on issues regarding the accuracy and relevancy of the text (questions behind the text) that would leave very little room for exegesis or authority of the actual text itself.

Spinoza's "weapon" succeeded, perhaps not in his lifetime but soon afterwards, even more than Spinoza may have imagined or hoped. One need only examine modern Gospel commentaries—liberal, conservative, and evangelical—to see Spinoza's handy-work realized: to see how much effort is today expended in historical-criticism's ideologies of source, form/tradition, redaction criticism, etc. studies of the Gospels (and other OT and NT books) and to see how much discussion space is utilized on such issues where the text of the Gospels is largely mixed, intermingled or even deflected. As Norman Geisler comments, "virtually all the central emphases in modern liberalism . . . are found in Spinoza."[28] The German philosopher, Heinrich Heine,

remarked well: "All of our contemporary philosophers, perhaps often without knowing it, see through the lenses ground by Baruch Spinoza."[29]

Spinoza's mantle was taken up by the English deists who, "together with Spinoza on the Continent, may be regarded as the forerunners of biblical criticism" and "the initiators of the quest for the historical Jesus" who attempted "to desupernaturalize and secularize religion in general and Jesus in particular."[30] Although English deists disappeared by 1750, their ideas took root everywhere. The most pervasive thought was that the miraculous cannot be accepted as a factor of history. According to deism, reason precludes the supernatural so that miracles and prophecy must be rejected. This idea, in turn, eventually lead to the concept of searching for the real Jesus of history since the historical Jesus, according to this type of thinking, could not have been the supernatural person performing miracles as depicted in the New Testament.[31] This helped create deist Lessing's "ugly ditch" of a large, unknowable gap between the Jesus as He was in history and the Christ of faith (miracles of Jesus and especially His resurrection): "That, then, is the ugly ditch which I cannot get across, however often and however earnestly I have tried to make the leap."[32] To this day, all searching for the historical Jesus has not surmounted this abyss, for its negative historiography, i.e., that the historical Jesus must be someone other than the Jesus of the Gospels, has not been overcome.

A Historical Sweep of Stimuli

Due to space limitations, a sweeping selective summation of events afterwards can only be given. Spinoza's 17th century ingenious deflection away from the Scriptures as credible sources due to rationalism's virulent anti-supernaturalism (in this case with reference to the historiography of the Gospels) to issues behind the text and deist Lessing's (who personally promoted Reimarus' thinking) philosophically imposed gap between the Jesus of the Gospels and any certainty of who Jesus was in history became crystallized and popularized in subsequent philosophical movements to the present time.[33] The philosophy of the Enlightenment in the 18th century popularized a prejudice against prejudice so that any testimony of the early church regarding the Gospels could be dismissed. Importantly,

everyone, both liberal and conservative, who engages in being dismissive of early church statements regarding the canonical Gospels, has been influenced by Enlightenment thinking in Western culture. Although Spinoza's view found little following in his day, in the Age of Enlightenment he attracted many followers. Gerhard Hasel notes that the rationalists had quite an influence on historical criticism:

> René Descartes made reason the sole criterion of truth and elevated doubt to range unchecked through the whole fabric of customary convictions. Shortly later Benedict de Spinoza published his famous *Tractatus Theologico-Politicous* (1670) in which he dealt with the question of the relation of theology to philosophy. He argued that both needed to be carefully separated and suggested that reason is men's guide to truth. All of these influences were powerful catalysts toward the formation of the full-fledged historical-critical method.[34]

The philosophy of Romanticism following later in the 18th century sought a naturalistic mechanistic explanation of all history in terms of development and change so that any concept of inspiration was removed.[35] The 19th century philosophy of evolution sought that mechanistic development in terms of simple to complex that became a large impetus around popular Synoptic source hypotheses, while the existentialist philosophy of Kierkegaard (1813-1855) opened up the door to the idea that even if a belief in the historical credibility of Scripture could no longer be maintained, an irrational leap into subjective believe was still allowable. Jesus could now be defined as to the personal predilections of the interpreter.[36] Nothing could be known of him with any objective certainty.

In the mid-19th century the New Testament Enlightenment scholar David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874)[37] who popularized the "mythical" view of Scripture, would characterize Reimarus (and Lessing's promotion of it) as one of Christianity's "most courageous and worthy representatives" of biblical criticism in the eighteenth century.[38] The views of Strauss were close to that of Reimarus. In 1862, Strauss published a tribute to Reimarus who maintained a rationalistic interpretation of Jesus' life.[39] In 1835-36, Strauss wrote *Das Leben*

Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet ("The Life of Jesus Critically Examined") that set forth the concept of "myth" in the Gospel accounts. Strauss removed any element of the supernatural from history, especially biblical history. He saw a closed-continuum of cause and effect that admitted no divine intervention. To Strauss, whenever the biblical data presents the supernatural or abnormal, the mythopoeic faculty has been at work. Although Strauss allowed a minimal historical framework for the life of Jesus, he considered the vast majority of material in the Gospels to be myth.[40] Neill and Wright remark regarding his work that "if Strauss's interpretation of the Gospels came to be accepted, Christianity as it has been understood though the centuries would come to an end in a generation."[41]

Around the turn of the 20th century, Wilhelm Wrede, in *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* ("The Messianic Secret"—1901) would undertake a similar tactic in rejecting the historicity of Mark and asserting that Mark's gospel represents creative, dogmatic ideas which the evangelist imposed on the tradition, i.e., Jesus never claimed to be Messiah during his lifetime; the church superimposed this post-Resurrection idea upon the lips of Jesus.[42] Any perceived historical elements or markers were merely a vehicle to conveying the theology of the evangelist. Norman Perrin remarks that "Wilhelm Wrede (1859-1906) . . . sounded the death knell" regarding the historicity of Mark "by demonstrating that a major aspect of the Marcan narratives was precisely the 'mythic' and, in so doing, opened the door for the entry of redaction criticism upon the scene."[43] History was no longer a consideration or a factor in gospel composition, for according to form criticism the Gospels were an expression of the theology of the church, not Jesus, and in redaction criticism the theology of the unknown evangelist was expressed rather than Jesus, so that any expression of Jesus' actual teaching was rendered highly dubious.

Around the same time as Wrede, Ernst Troeltsch—whose essay "Historical and Dogmatic Method in Theology" (1898) delineated the principles of historical criticism—believed that the unifying factor in the thinking of the Enlightenment was the rejection of the supernatural and that deism was its religious philosophy.[44] Troeltsch's three principles of historical criticism evidence the antisupernatural bias: *(1) The principle of criticism or methodological doubt:* In the realm of

history there are only judgments of probability. Nothing can be known for certain—doubt everything. One must subject religious tradition (especially the miraculous) to rigorous criticism. *(2) The principle of analogy:* Present experience is the key to probability in the past. Thus, since miracles or the supernatural do not occur today, such events did not occur in the past. *(3) The principle of correlation or mutual interdependence:* A closed continuum of cause and effect exists, i.e., no miracles or salvation history is possible.[45] Troeltsch argued, "It was not until the Enlightenment that an essentially historical [i.e., historical-critical] outlook emerged."[46] Krentz concurs, arguing that "Historical method is the child of the Enlightenment."[47]

All Questing for the "Historical Jesus" Originate in Common Philosophical Roots

As the above overview indicates, quests for the historical Jesus, however many and varied, share the same roots as the ground cause for their existence, whether acknowledged by liberals or evangelicals alike. These roots are the developmental heritage of historical criticism.[48] Such a heritage has been clearly set forth in such works as Edgar Krentz's *The Historical Critical Method* that gives an honest assessment of the discipline. Hostile, alien philosophies and world-views have succeeded in separating Jesus from the documents that gave primary witness to His life and teaching (Col. 2:8; 2 Cor. 12:5). By the beginning of the 20th century, Bible-believing people had been marginalized through the overwhelming predominance of such thinking and withdrew to contend for an orthodox presentation of "the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" through the Gospels and Epistles (Jude 3).

An intellectually honest assessment in light of the historical developments of historical-critical ideology is that a pronounced anti-supernatural—indeed anti-Christian—sentiment is at the historical, presuppositional core of historical-criticism and its concomitant and variegated searching for the "historical Jesus" as traditionally developed, expressed and refined from Spinoza forward. It stands in stark antithesis to the Apostle Peter's statement, "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and

coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His Majesty" (2 Peter 1:16—*NASB*).

The Lessons of History—Doomed to Repeat Themselves?

This is the pressing question that current evangelicals must now face with urgency and honesty as the twenty-first century starts. Are evangelical scholars being wooed by modern quests for the "historical Jesus," which have been shown historically to produce results at odds with the traditional view of Jesus affirmed by the early church? To address this question, a brief overview of the three quests may be helpful.

The First or Old Quest (1778-1906)

The first quest for the historical Jesus ended in failure. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the battle between liberals and fundamentalists had reached somewhat of a crescendo.[49] In 1906, Albert Schweitzer, in his now famous *The Search for the Historical Jesus*, declared that the "critical study of the life of Jesus" or what has now become known as the original quest for the "historical" Jesus or "the first quest" had failed to find Jesus.[50] Fifteen years before, Martin Kähler had called "the entire Life-of-Jesus movement" during this time as "a blind alley" as well as "[t]he impossibility of [writing] a biography of Jesus."[51] With the substantial historicity of the Gospels rejected, two hundred years of liberal questing had failed to find Jesus anywhere. One thing that the Quest did overwhelmingly agree upon was that the Jesus of the Gospels was not the Jesus that actually lived in history. This was due to the virulent anti-supernatural bent of historical criticism employed. Notably, however, conservative evangelical scholars of the time—such as Charles Spurgeon, R. A. Torrey, and those who founded the many evangelical colleges and universities across the U.S.—adamantly rejected this first quest. The history of the so-called modernist-fundamentalist controversy that ensued is often told and thus need not detain us here.

The No Quest Period (1906-1953)

After the first quest failed to find whatever is meant by "the historical Jesus," a period known as the "No Quest Period" (1906-1953) ensued. This terms "No Quest" is largely a misnomer, however, since Jesus research continued—it never stopped. Even the radical historical critic Bultmann wrote Jesus and the Word.[52] In his various works, Bultmann accepted only around forty sayings as genuinely attributable to Jesus. He also considers only the bare facts of the life and death (not the resurrection) of Jesus to be authentic. Some other German form critics, such as Dibelius, were slightly less radical than Bultmann regarding historical judgments. Dibelius asserted at times, "That the words of Jesus were preserved, that they were put together to form 'speeches' with a single theme, and . . . that the sayings and parables were edited in the interest of exhortation, shows the Church's concern for shaping the life according to the commands of the Master."[53]

The New or Second Quest (1953-1988)

The New or Second Search for the historical Jesus began in 1953. As with the first quest, the second quest was German led. Reacting to the negative assessment of his mentor Bultmann, this new effort was sparked by Ernst Käsemann in his "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," which was a lecture given at the reunion of former Marburg students on October 20, 1953.[54] Käsemann argued that "there are still pieces of the Synoptic tradition which the historian has to acknowledge as authentic if he wishes to remain an historian at all."[55] German form and redaction critics applied themselves to the task. Nonetheless, if the proverbial door was "open" to knowledge of Jesus by this second quest, it was barely ajar. Marcus Borg notes, "its methods and results remained largely the same" as in the putative "no quest period."[56] This second quest was increasingly characterized as at a "dead-end."[57]

The Most Recent Quest: The Third Quest (1988-)

In 1988, a third quest began. This time the British have been instrumental in sparking and leading the most recent endeavor. The beginnings of what is now being termed the "Third Quest" is not easily marked by a particular year but seems to have been gradually

implemented through the 1970s and into the 1980s. Some choose 1985 with the publication of E. P. Sanders' *Jesus and Judaism*, which continued a similar line of thinking of placing Jesus within Judaism as Sanders' approach had done with Paul in his *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977).[58] Others mark the beginning at 1988 with Neill's and Wright's *History of Interpretation* who coined the phrase, "the Third Search" in his 1982. The reviews on the current endeavor of a possible "third" quest for the "historical Jesus" are quite mixed. In spite of current hopes among some scholarship who promote it as to its viability, terming it "A Renaissance in Jesus Studies,"[59] strong pronouncements of its demise have already come out. Still others see both "loss and gain."[60]

Growing Evangelical Participation in the Third Quest

What marks out the third quest from the other two is perhaps the rapidly growing evangelical participation in it. With the perceived shift toward more openness to the historicity in the Gospels—a shift in the burden of proof—as well as a perceived openness to the miraculous among some third questers, some evangelicals now desire to participate. One evangelical scholar writes, "this third quest for the historical Jesus . . . provides the greatest possible hope for a more sympathetic reading of the gospels as historical sources and is likely to provide a reasonable answer as to why the church began, and why it believed what it did and acted how it did."[61] Another writes about the third search that "the miracle stories are now treated seriously and are widely accepted by Jesus scholars as deriving from Jesus' ministry" and "myth has ceased to be an item of importance. . . . the miracle tradition is no longer the stumbling block that it once was."[62] Still another evangelical has declared that his work on the Gospels "belongs to the third quest" even though he admits that the third quest is not "fundamentally conservative."[63] He sees the "strength" of the third quest in the following terms: "the strength of the so-called third quest, whether or not it is really a third quest, is its starting point in the very milieu in which Jesus lived and spoke. . . . So there is value in seeing

what can be shown historically to be likely in understanding Jesus and his relationship to his Second Temple Jewish context, as long as one keeps in mind that the Jesus of Scripture is a Jesus remembered."[64] Indeed, in a very recent book on the third quest, this evangelical writes:

> Can the lion and the lamb lay down together? For many people, the idea of an evangelical engaging in a historical Jesus discussion is oxymoronic. For many critics, the evangelical view of Scripture is said to skew evangelicals' discussion of Jesus issues. . . . So can there be evangelical approaches to the historical Jesus?
>
> I believe the answer is yes. To get there, however, one must appreciate the nature of what historical Jesus work seeks to achieve as well as the limitations under which such a historically oriented study operates when it seeks to cross thousands of years to do its work. [65]

While such sentiments may be understandable, in light of the history of the failed quests for the "historical Jesus," several responses should be noted to this current evangelical enthusiasm regarding the third quest. Firstly, in the recent book, *The Historical Jesus: Five Views* (2009), the evangelical participant is rightly criticized by Dunn with erroneously trying to equate the term "historical Jesus" with the biblical Jesus of the Gospels: "The question of what we mean by *historical* is also raised by . . . [his] somewhat casual use of the term 'the historical Jesus.'" Dunn goes on to criticize this evangelical rightly in his incorrect use of this term in that

> properly speaking, "the historical Jesus" denotes Jesus as discerned by historical study. Those engaged in the quest of the historical Jesus, those at least who have sought to clarify what the phrase "the historical Jesus" denotes, have usually made the point that the term properly denotes the life and mission of Jesus as they have been "reconstructed" by means of historical research—"historical" in that sense.

He then criticizes this evangelical for his improper defining of the term "as a reference to the historical actuality of the first-century Jesus of Nazareth."[66] For Dunn, this evangelical's concept of Jesus came too close to the biblical presentation of Jesus for it to be a permissible view of the "historical Jesus" in the third quest, especially in any certainty of the resurrection.[67] In other words, the view in the third quest that will *not* be accepted in searching is one that comes closest or wholly approximates that of the portrayal of Jesus in the Gospels. While this evangelical commendably sought to convince third questers that the Jesus of the Bible can be proven through the ideologies of third questing, such an attempt is flatly rejected as coming too close to the biblical portrait of Jesus. While third questers such as Dunn may allow for some measure of historicity in the gospels, they do not appear to tolerate evangelicals superimposing their evangelical presuppositions upon the text. For Dunn, at best, only "probabilities" are possible "rather than certainties."[68] Ironically, under the third search, the closer evangelicals attempt to equate the "historical Jesus" with the biblical Jesus, the more the third questers outright reject their suppositions and cry fowl for imposing evangelical views on the concept.

Secondly, a close corollary is that the concept of the "historical Jesus" in these quests is rooted in philosophical concepts that stand opposed to the full integrity of the Gospels, as discussed above. In other words, *no "historical Jesus" ever existed except in the minds of those who pursued one of the quests, for the conception of "the historical Jesus" is that of Jesus divorced from the biblical portrayal in important ways, especially in terms of Jesus' distinctiveness as well as supernatural content relayed of him in the Gospels*. Hence, the term "historical Jesus" is ironic in that it really is a fiction of historical criticism without any connection to how Jesus really was. For those who would take the Bible as *a priori* an inspired work, as hopefully evangelicals would, the Jesus in the Gospels is how He actually was. No separation exists.

Thirdly, evangelical participation in the third search is a direct consequence of the growing evangelical acceptance of historical-critical ideologies of source, form/tradition, and redaction. These are philosophically-motivated hermeneutical constructs that, regardless of whatever search, philosophically construct a separation from Jesus

in the Bible from some concept of Jesus in history. The more one adopts these premises as well as their philosophical underpinnings, the more one is forced to search for the historical Jesus. If, however, the integrity of the Gospels are maintained as they are, as the early church so strongly and unanimously espoused from its nascent beginnings, then they are eyewitness accounts of the actual life and activities of Jesus written by the men whose names the Gospels were connected with in church history. The anonymity of the canonical Gospels is a potently powerful witness to the apostolic origin of these documents, for only the certainty of their having come from apostolic origins can reasonably explain their unanimous acceptance. If evangelicals are operating from this supposition instead of adopting historical-critical approaches, any need for searching for the historical Jesus is null and void.

Finally, perhaps some evangelicals suppose that they can turn this quest into an apologetic, evidential value for the trustworthiness of the gospel by participating in this dialogue with third questers. Perhaps they sincerely want to affirm the gospel in joining third questers. While this attempt may have an appearance of wisdom, it too is dubious. The moment one begins questing for the "historical Jesus" an immediate pale of doubt is placed on the Gospels from which these documents can never recover. These ideologies were never intended to affirm the Gospels but to deny the substance of them. Each time evangelicals participate in questing, Spinoza's intent of deflecting away from Scripture to an endless barrage of questioning and doubting succeeds quite well. Spinoza's shadow casts a long pale in evangelical participation.

Conclusion

The present writer finds that the Jesus Seminar has issued a warning that is *very pertinent* to the activity involved in searching for the historical Jesus: "Beware of finding a Jesus that is entirely congenial to you."[69] All three searches, as well as the non-search period, are guilty of violating this apothegm, including the Jesus Seminar, for all three seek a Jesus that is in some way or another separated from the biblical

portrait of Jesus. The only portrait that conveys how Jesus truly was is that which was given by the eyewitnesses and followers of Jesus in the Gospel accounts. The only portrait that can produce belief and salvation is that found in the Gospels written by those who had direct, eyewitness contact with Jesus. As John, direct eyewitness to Jesus' life and ministry, wrote in his portrayal: "these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). The irony of these searches is that they are the ones who truly have produced a fictional account of Jesus since they have departed from the Gospel testimony that alone is sufficient in truly understanding Jesus as He actually was in history. The moment one departs from this fundamental understanding, the search for a truly fictional "historical" Jesus has begun.

Notes

1. A much more expanded treatment of this subject will be forthcoming in the 2012 Edition of *The Master's Seminary Journal.*
2. These views of the early church regarding the four gospels as coming from the eyewitness Apostles whose names were attached to them are ancient and persistent. For example, Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.1-6, 14-16; 5.11.1-4; 5.20.4-8; 6.14.5-7; Clement *Hypotyposeis* 6; Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 5.33.3-4; Clement *Stromateis* 1.1.1.11. For greater delineation of these references, see F. David Farnell, "The Synoptic Gospels in the Ancient Church: The Testimony to the Priority of Matthew's Gospel," *MSJ* 10/1 (Spring 1999) 53-86.
3. In a disputed passage, Josephus has a brief reference to Jesus' ministry, see Josephus *Antiquities* 18.;3.3 § 63-64; Acts 20:35 has a record of a saying of Jesus quoted by Paul ("it is more blessed to give than to receive").
4. For an excellent discussion of this point, see "The Purpose of the Four Gospels," in Eta Linnemann, *Is There a Synoptic Problem?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992) 195-203.
5. See F. David Farnell, "The Case for the Independence View of Gospel Origins," in *Three Views on the Origins of the Synoptic Gospels*. Ed. Robert L. Thomas (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002) 235-241.
6. Donald A. Hagner, "An Analysis of Recent 'Historical Jesus' Studies," in *Religious Diversity in the Graeco-Roman World.* Eds. Dan Cohn-Sherbok and John M. Court (Sheffield: T & T Clark, 2001), 82.
7. William Hamilton, *A Quest for the Post-Historical Jesus* (New York: Continuum, 1994) 8-9, 19. See also Dieter Georgi, "The Interest in Life of

Jesus Theology as a Paradigm for the Social History of Biblical Criticism," *Harvard Theological Review* 85/1 (1992) 51-83.

8. Jacob Neusner, "Who Needs, 'The Historical Jesus'? An Essay-Review," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 4 (1994) 113-126. For how Jewish theologians have used historical-critical ideologies to find a Jesus compatible to them, see Donald A. Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997).
9. James M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: SCM, 1959) 26-27.
10. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 27-28.
11. For further discussion of the operating agenda of historical criticism, see F. David Farnell, "The Philosophical and Theological Bent of Historical Criticism," in *The Jesus Crisis*. Ed. Robert Thomas (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998) 85-131; Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method*. Ed. Gene M. Tucker (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); Ernest Troeltsch, "Historical and Dogmatic Method in Theology" (1898), in *Religion in History*. Essays translated by James Luther Adams and Walter F. Bense with an introduction by James Luther Adams (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) 11-32.
12. For these various portraits of what or whom the "historical Jesus" has been in the search since its beginnings to the present day, consult Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. Translated by W. Montgomery from the first German edition, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* (1906). Introduction by James M. Robinson (New York: MacMillan, 1968); Walter P. Weaver, *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century 1900-1950* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity International, 1999); John K. Riches, *A Century of New Testament Study* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity International, 1993); Eds. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, *The Historical Jesus: Five Views* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009).
13. For discussion of these criteria of authenticity as conflicting, see F. David Farnell, "Form Criticism and Tradition Criticism," in *The Jesus Crisis*, 199-207. As will be shown in this article, the "Third" quest has developed additional criteria of authenticity.
14. John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus, The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991) xxvii-xxviii.
15. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus, The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant,* xviii.
16. For an expanded treatment of the philosophical background of historical criticism see F. David Farnell, "The Philosophical and Theological Bent of Historical Criticism," in *The Jesus Crisis*, 37-84.
17. See Colin Brown, "Historical Jesus, Quest of." *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Eds. Joel B. Green Scot McKnight, I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IVP, 1992) 326.
18. Hagner, "An Analysis of Recent 'Historical Jesus' Studies," 83.

19. Bernard Orchard and Harold Riley, *The Order of the Synoptics, Why Three Synoptic Gospels?* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1987), 111.
20. See Travis L. Frampton, *Spinoza and the Rise of Historical Criticism of the Bible* (New York and London: T & T Clark, 2006), 199-234.
21. For an excellent overview of Spinoza's ideology, as well as other factors that gave rise to historical criticism, especially in terms of the synoptic "problem," see David Laird Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem* (New York: Doubleday, 1999) 171-176; 198-260; see also Norman L. Geisler, "Philosophical Presuppositions of Biblical Errancy," in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 316-320; F. David Farnell, "Philosophical and Theological Bent of Historical Criticism," in *The Jesus Crisis*, 89-92.
22. For an excellent review of Spinoza's life, consult Matthew Stewart, *The Courtier and the Heretic Leibniz, Spinoza, and the Fate of God in the Modern World* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006).
23. For more information on Spinoza's work, see Benedict De Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise and A Political Treatise*, in *The Chief Works of Benedict De Spinoza.* Translated from the Latin with an Introduction by R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1951); *The Collected Works of Spinoza.* 2 vols. Edited and Translated by Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University, 1985).
24. Roy A. Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture, Theology and the Historical Critical Method from Spinoza to Käsemann* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 39.
25. Dungan, 199, italics in original.
26. Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem*, 172.
27. Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem*, 174 cf. 171. Dungan goes so far as to say that "modern biblical hermeneutics [i.e. historical criticism] was an essential part of the main attack on the traditional institutions of Throne and Altar."
28. Norman L. Geisler, "Inductivism, Materialism, and Rationalism: Bacon, Hobbes, and Spinoza," Norman L. Geisler Ed. *Biblical Errancy: An Analysis of Its Philosophical Roots* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1981) 19.
29. For the tremendous influence of Spinoza on subsequent philosophers in Germany, see Heinrich Heine, *On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany and Other Writings.* Ed. Terry Pinkard (Cambridge: University Press, 2007) xx, 50-54, 59, 99, 108, 110 (quote from p. 187).
30. Colin Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 47; idem. *Christianity and Western Thought* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 199) 203; idem. *Jesus in European Protestant Thought 1778-1860 (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1985)* 29, 50.
31. Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought*, 212.

32. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Lessing's Theological Writings*. Selection in translation with an Introductory Essay by Henry Chadwick (Stanford: Stanford University, 1957) 55.
33. For more detailed information, see Colin Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought*, 173-330; Farnell, "The Theological and Philosophical Bent of Historical Criticism," in *The Jesus Crisis*, 92-117.
34. Gerhard Hasel, *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 26. Baird notes that Spinoza's views in *Tractatus* and elsewhere "made significant contributions to biblical study." See William Baird, *History of New Testament Research*, vol. 1: From Deism to Tübingen (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1992), 6. See also Sylvain Zac, *Spinoza et l'interprétation de l'écriture* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965); Leo Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*. Translated by E. M. Sinclair (New York: Schocken, 1965).
35. For the impact of Romanticism on views of gospel inspiration, see Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem*, 308-326; F. David Farnell, "How Views of Inspiration Have Impacted Synoptic Problem Discussions," *MSJ* 13/1 (Spring 2002) 33-64.
36. Due to space limitations, the author has been selective. For a detailed elaboration of this summation, see F. David Farnell, "The Philosophical and Theological Basis of Historical Criticism," 106-117; Eta Linnemann, *The Historical Critical Method: Methodology or Ideology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 83-159; Norman Geisler, "Philosophical Presuppositions of Biblical Errancy," in *Inerrancy*. Ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980) 307-334.
37. Strauss himself espoused the philosophy of Hegel. For further information on Hegel's influence upon Strauss and others, consult such works as Cornelio Fabro, *God in Exile*. Translated and Edited by Arthur Gibson (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1968); Bruno Bauer, *The Trumpet of the Last Judgement Against Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist*. Translated by Lawrence Stepelevich (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1989).
38. See David Friedrich Strauss, "Hermann Samuel Reimarus and His Apology," in Hermann Samuel Remairus, *Reimarus: Fragments*. Edited by Charles H. Talbert. Translated by Ralph S. Fraser (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 44.
39. See Strauss, "Hermann Samuel Reimarus and His Apology," in *Reimarus: Fragments*, 44-57.
40. For further information, see David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*. Edited by Peter C. Hodgson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 52-92.
41. See Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861-1986*. Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University, 1988), 14.
42. For a critical analysis of Wrede's assertions, see William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*. Translated by J. C. Greig (Cambridge and London: James Clarke & Co., 1971); James D. G. Dunn, "The Messianic Secret in Mark," in *The*

Messianic Secret. Edited by Christopher Tuckett (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 116-131.
43. Norman Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 7.
44. Ernst Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1927), vol. 3, 131.
45. For further information on these points, see Ernst Troeltsch, "Historical and Dogmatic Method in Theology (1898)," in Ernst Troeltsch, *Religion in History*. Essays translated by James Luther Adams and Walter F. Bense with an introduction by James Luther Adams (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 13-15.
46. Troeltsch, "Historical and Dogmatic Method in Theology," 24.
47. Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method*, 55.
48. Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method*, 55-72.
49. See George M. Marsden, Fundamentalism *and American Culture, The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1980).
50. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Histoircal Jesus. A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*. Translated by W. Montgomery from the first German Edition, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*, 1906. Introduction by James M. Robinson (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 2, 398-403.
51. Martin Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ*. Forward by Paul J. Tillich. Translated, edited, and with an Introduction by Carl E. Braaten (Philadelphia: Fortress1964), 46.
52. *Jesus and the Word*. Translated by Louise Pettibone Smith and Erminie Huntress Lantero (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958 [1934; German Edition 1926].
53. Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, 289.
54. See Ernst Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," in *Essays on New Testament Themes*. Translated by W. J. Montague (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982 [1964 SCM], 15-47. This was first published *ZTK* 51 (1954) 125-153.
55. Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," 46.
56. Marcus Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*, 5.
57. James I. H. MacDonald, "New Quest—Dead End? So What about the Historical Jesus?," *Studia Biblica* 1978: II Papers on the Gospels. Ed. E. A. Livingstone. Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 2 (Sheffield: Sheffileld University 1980), 152.
58. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977).
59. Marcus Borg, "A Renaissance in Jesus Studies," *Theology Today* XLV/3 (October 1988) 280-292.
60. J. P. Meier, "The Present State of the 'Third Quest' for the Historical Jesus: Loss and Gain," Biblica LXXX (1999) 459-487.
61. Michael Bird, "Shouldn't Evangelicals Participate in the 'Third Quest for the Historical Jesus'?," *Themelios* 29/2 (1994): 8.

62. Craig Evans, "Life of Jesus-Research and the Eclipse of Mythology," *Theological Studies* 54/1 (March 1993): 19, 36.
63. Darrell L. Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005) 148, 152.
64. Darrell L. Bock, "The Historical Jesus, An Evangelical View," in *The Historical Jesus: Five Views*, 25-251.
65. Ibid., 249-281.
66. Dunn, "Response to Darrell Bock," *The Historical Jesus: Five Views*, 298-299.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid., 299.
69. Funk, Hoover and The Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels*, 5.

Philosophical Note

The Faith of Unbelief

Dallas Willard

I.

Some preliminary observations:[1]

This is not to be a *tu quoque* session. That is: I shall not reproach the unbeliever for having faith as a way of trying to justify religious belief.

Faith here is understood, not as a *profession* of something you do not believe, but as belief, trust, reliance upon something. You believe in *A*, or that *P*, if and to the degree that you are ready to act with reliance upon *A* or as if *P* were the case. We *always* "live up to" (or "down to"; really, *right at*) our beliefs.

Unbelief in the context of the present discussion is not simply a *lack* of belief, in the sense that I now have no beliefs at all about most individual things that exist, for example. Rather "unbelief" here will refer to what is more properly called *disbelief*: a readiness to act as if certain facts were not so. Thus unbelief is a species of belief involving negation.

More precisely still, by unbelief in the present context we are referring to belief that a certain set of claims made by traditional Christianity—roughly, what C. S. Lewis referred to as "Mere Christianity"—are false. We are thinking of the person who is set to act as if they were false, and this personality set is what we mean here in speaking of the faith of unbelief.

II.

The idea that there is an *ethics* of belief and unbelief is founded on the assumptions that:

1. We ought to do what is beneficial for human life.

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2. Our beliefs can cause great good or harm, especially with regard to their truth or falsity; and truth may be regarded as good in itself, regardless of consequences.
3. We have, indirectly, some degree of control over the beliefs that we have, and hence some responsibility to see to it that they are true or at least rational.

III.

W. K. Clifford claimed that it is always wrong to believe anything on insufficient evidence (in his essay, "The Ethics of Belief"). William James effectively replied (in his "The Will to Believe") that this claim is too stringent. There are many issues that cannot be decided on the basis of 'sufficient' evidence, where much of value is at stake, where we must decide (to take the plane or not, for example, or to believe in God or not), and where we have a preference. Here James says, "Our passional nature not only lawfully may, but must, decide, . . . for to say, under such circumstances, 'do not decide, but leave the question open', is itself a passional decision—just like deciding yes or no—and is attended with the same risks of losing truth."[2] James saw that you could "lose the truth" by not believing as well as by believing, and that it is irrational to think it is better not to believe than to believe, given only that you lack sufficient evidence on the positive side.

Clifford actually expresses the contemporary prejudice that the one who doubts is automatically smarter. James saw that *one has to earn the right to disbelieve as much as the right to believe.* Basically, disbelief is a form of belief. Blaise Pascal made essentially the same point much earlier with his famous "Wager."[3]

IV.

Let us give this much to Clifford: that we should make a sincere effort to ensure that our beliefs are true, that we are *morally obliged to do so*, and that to do anything less, to be careless about the truth of significant beliefs, is to be legitimately subject to *moral* censure. The

believer or disbeliever who is careless about truth and evidence is less than they should be, for they are careless of human good.

V.

Since truth is not *always* manifestly attainable, we do not have an obligation to have true beliefs. *But we **always** have a moral obligation to do what is possible to ensure that our beliefs are true.* That is, to be irrational is to be morally irresponsible, and to be morally admirable we must be rational—because of the fundamental importance of true beliefs to human welfare.

VI.

But who is the rational person? Persons are *reasonable* to the degree in which they conform their thinking, talk and action to the order of truth and understanding *or* are effectively committed to doing that so far as is possible. They will characteristically endeavor to *reason soundly* (validly, from true premises), and be *open-minded* and *inquiring* about the issues which require a response from them. They will *seek the best concepts, classifications and theories*, testing those concepts, classifications and theories by relating them to each other and to the world given by their experience and the experience of others. They will respect facts more than theories, and take pains to determine the facts relevant to their beliefs.[4]

By contrast, the *un*reasonable person characteristically does not thoroughly inquire into the basis for his beliefs, contradicts himself, rejects known means to his chosen goals or ends, demands the impossible, refuses to test or consider criticisms of his beliefs, and fails to seek better means of ascertaining the truth.

Now, to turn back to the 'Faith of Unbelief' as explained above.

VII.

Currently, 'unbelief' rarely holds itself responsible to be rational as described above:

A. *About the nature of ultimate reality or about which reality is ultimate.* Specifically, the Christian view that reality is ultimately personal and subject to personal will that is intelligent and loving. By contrast, a rather typical statement: "Christianity lost its credibility by and large in the course of the eighteenth century. . . . Such Christianity as did survive was no longer secure even within the Christian churches. . . . The leading thinkers and artists of Christendom were virtually all de-Christianized even before Darwin in 1859 provided a credible alternative to Creation."[5] Darwin provided *what*?

B. *About the historical claims of the 'biblical' tradition.* For example, that there was a person whom we call Jesus Christ; that he was human and more; that he was killed and continued to exist, resuming personal contacts—though admittedly of a rather unusual character—with those who knew him before his death.

C. *About the current experience of human beings in the life of belief.* For example, 'miracles' of various kinds, as acts of God in response to prayer or action. You rarely ever find anyone who rejects such 'miracles' who has made a point of examining a single one that thoughtful Christian reflection has marked as such. As the bishop said to Galileo, "I don't need to look. I already know."

D. *About the ethical superiority of Christ's teachings and of life conforming thereto.* Generally speaking it is assumed that you can safely omit serious thought about this matter and stick to John Stuart Mill or John Rawls. Jesus is at best an irrelevant idealist—at worst the sponsor of the ethical disaster that is Western Civilization.

VIII.

There really is no reason in the general nature of reality why "Mere Christianity" or any other view should or should not be true.

This constitutes what older thinkers used to refer to as the "antecedent credibility" of Christianity (or other views).

IX.

Thesis: Most of 'the faith of unbelief' that exists today in the concrete form of individual personalities is morally irresponsible—because *not* rationally sustained—and would be recognized as the superstition it most often is, but for the fact that it is vaguely endorsed by the socially prevailing intellectual system. One *might* be rational, as above defined, and not believe, in my opinion. But I think this is highly unlikely, and I am sure it rarely ever actually occurs. (This opens up another set of issues about belief in relation to evidence.)

X.

If, now, one says that current belief is just as morally irresponsible as current unbelief, or even more so, we can only ask: "And how does that help?" Do we not, whoever we are, owe it to ourselves and those around us to be serious about questions of major importance to human well-being?

Notes

1. This philosophical note was originally prepared as observations for a lecture on the 'faith of unbelief' by Professor Willard and were re-crafted by him for this journal.
2. James, "The Will to Believe," in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* and *Human Immortality: Two Supposed Objections to the Doctrine* (New York: Dover, 1956), 11.
3. See his *Pensees*, subsections 233-241.
4. This is only an attempt to characterize the rational person, not to give necessary and sufficient conditions of being a rational person.
5. Rudolph Binion, *After Christianity* (Durango, CO: Logbridge-Rhodes, 1986), 9-10.

Book Reviews

Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew

Bart D. Ehrman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
ISBN: 0-19518-249-9; 320 PAGES; PAPERBACK, $19.99.

In a day when diversity is prized as a virtue, Ehrman offers a rereading of early Christian origins and literature through the metaphor of conflict from the perspectives of the "losers." His study is marked by a suspicion for what he calls the proto-orthodox (PO hereafter) version of Christianity that came out the "winner" in its quest for "dominance" through "strategies" and "weapons" in an "arsenal." His three goals are to examine some non-canonical writings, extract from these texts variant forms of Christianity, and consider how one early form of Christianity established "itself as dominant in religion, determining for ages to come what Christians would believe, practice, and read as sacred Scripture" (ix). If for M. Foucualt, "politics is the continuation of war by other means,"[1] then for Ehrman religion is war by *any* means. "All is fair in love and war, and religious domination is nothing if not love and war" (47).

Ehrman opens his book with four vignettes of discoveries and forgeries, ancient and modern. He rightly stresses the variation in early Christian belief, so as to speak historically of Christianit*ies*, which produced diverse texts. The first is a discussion of the (so-called) *Gospel of Peter,* which is a passion narrative suspect of docetic tendencies. Next, he discusses various apocryphal acts, including *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, recounting the stories of the ancient cult hero who devoted her life to pursuing the model of Paul and a life of chastity; *The Acts of Thomas*, about Jesus' twin brother preaching salvation via chastity; *The Acts of John*, betraying docetic tendencies and depicting the apostle in dramatic and amusing incidents. Chapter three covers the (in)famous *Gospel of Thomas*, for which Ehrman interprets in its Gnostic milieu, explaining some of the more difficult facets of the book. Finally, he recounts the story of *The Secret Gospel of Mark* and its discordant controversies about being a modern forgery.

The second section of the book examines various versions of Christian belief from the Ebionites to the Marcionites, the Gnostics and the defenders against heresies in the PO camp. He describes with imaginative detail the conflicts between the PO and those on the opposite polar spectrum: the Ebionites (Jewish Christians denying the virgin birth and adhering to an "adoptionist" Christology) and the Marcionites (who rejected the Jewish Scriptures and posited a dualism between the God of the Jews and the God of Jesus). Next, Ehrman examines the Gnosticisms that challenged the PO doctrines by denigrating the created world, attributing salvific efficacy to secret knowledge—*gnōsis*, and hoping for salvation *from*, not *in*, this world. Finally he examines the "broad swath" of PO Christianity, including the rise of apostolic succession, the elevation of Christian martyrs, and the anticipation of the canon. It seems as if many of the PO figures are not but "talking heads," who are the foil of the "losers" whom Ehrman is championing the cause of their recovered voices.[2]

The final section of the book charts a tumultuous course of how one group established itself as dominant and virtually annihilated the memory of all other groups. Ehrman begins this section by problematizing the "classical" definitions of "orthodoxy" and "heresy." Three questions arose in Enlightenment scholarship to disrupt the consensus: (1) Did Jesus and his disciples teach an orthodoxy that was transmitted to the churches of the second and third centuries (à la Reimarus)? (2) Does the canonical Acts provide a reliable account of the internal conflicts of the earliest Christian church (à la F.C. Bauer)? (3) Does Eusebius give a trustworthy sketch of the disputes raging in post-apostolic Christian communities (à la W. Bauer)? Ehrman zeroes in on the strategies used by each group to assault the other, including polemical treatises, personal slurs, forgeries, falsifications of sacred texts, and finally the "big guns" of the emergent canon as a formal list of Scripture. He recounts the Ebionite attack on Paul as an opponent to God's Law and the Gnostics' challenge to the PO views as inadequate. But the main focus is on the arsenal of the PO, who fire accusations of division, nonsense, and reprobation to the heretics. They fortify their positions with claims to unity, the Rule of Faith and the creeds, and examples of genuine faith through martyrdom. Both sides forged texts in the names of apostles to bolster their respective claims to truth. Each

side falsified sacred texts to "clarify" them in support of the group's traditions.[3] Finally, Ehrman analyzes the negotiation of the canon as the final flag staked in the PO dominance of the religious territory.

Erhman concludes his work with surveillance of the gains and losses of the battle. It is here that Ehrman's agenda becomes most clear. Indeed, Ehrman is no neutral chronicler of early church history, but rather demonstrates a hostile rhetoric to any institutional domination or censorship. This text is evidence that history writing is a discourse (not merely a discipline), which inscribes power relations into the signification of recovering muted voices. Ehrman offers an exciting and adventurous picture of the early history of Christianity emerging through the intense pressure of self-identification and theological expression, while informing his readers of a perspective all but forgotten until many recent discoveries. His story is an illuminating read that familiarizes non-specialists with both texts and movements that emerged in the revolutionary period of early Christian origins. His discussion is enlightening and entertaining throughout. The contemporary Christian will do well to know the stories of their heritage presented in this text, and use it as a catalyst to consult the primary texts, many of which are provided in other volumes edited by Ehrman.[4]

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Notes

1. Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought* (ed. Paul Rabinow; London: Penguin, 1986), 64. This was a reversal of Von Clausewitz's formula that "war is the continuation of politics by other means." In like manner, I suppose we could say that war is (a certain type of) theology by other means.
2. I take notice, for example, the personalizing biographical information given to Marcion (104–9) versus the pithy ascriptions offered for Tertullian ("apologist," "heresiologist," and "moralist," 21) and Epiphanius ("a vitriolic opponent of all things heretical," 102; "doughty defender of orthodoxy," 129).
3. The section on "The Falsification of Sacred Texts," 215-27, offers a succinct and basic summary of Ehrman's more technical work, *The Orthodox*

Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament (New York: Oxford, 1993).

4. See the companion volume, *Lost Scriptures: Books that Did Not Make It into the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and *After the New Testament: A Reader in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford, 1999).

The God Delusion

Richard Dawkins. Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006. ISBN: 0618918248; 406 PAGES. PAPERBACK, $15.95.

Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* now has sold over 1.5 million copies, has been translated into over 30 languages, and recently has been re-issued in paperback. In the book's crucial fourth chapter, "Why there almost certainly is no God," Dawkins argues that the objection/question—Who designed the designer?—blocks any inference to a designer. In this brief review I will argue that this important objection is a philosophical failure.

First I will clarify the objection. Then I will set out my critique.

According to Dawkins' who-designed-the-designer objection, appealing to an intelligent designer to explain nature's complexity (a.k.a. apparent design) is to pass the explanatory buck. The intelligent designer hypothesis merely transfers the mystery of nature's complexity, which is the puzzle to be explained, to the mystery of the designer's complexity, which is a *new puzzle* to be explained.

More specifically, Dawkins argues that because the complexity of the natural world is highly improbable, and because the intelligent designer must be at least as complex as the complexity of the natural world that's being explained by the intelligent design hypothesis, it follows that the intelligent design hypothesis must be at least as improbable as the natural world (113-114). But, Dawkins argues, this is to explain one improbability by another improbability as great as, or greater than, the first improbability (114). What is worse, this also raises the question of the origin of the designer, thereby adding *yet another layer of improbability* to explain the additional complexity of

the designer's designer (120). And what about the complexity of the designer of the designer's designer? And so on, *ad infinitum* (120).

Because of this unending regress of additional improbabilities, Dawkins thinks that the God hypothesis cannot be a rational explanation for the apparent design found in nature. Thus, according to Dawkins, God is illusory. In addition, Dawkins would have us believe, we are all stuck with the logical implication that some atheistic form of evolution, Darwinian and/or other, must have created the apparent design (158).

Clearly, as Dawkins himself seems to realize (157-158), the who-designed-the-designer argument is the crucial philosophical foundation of *The God Delusion.* If the who-designed-the-designer argument fails, then so do Dawkins' hopes for an atheistic explanation. So the question arises: Is Dawkins' who-designed-the-designer argument logically sound?

I think not, for two reasons.

First, intelligent designer explanations are accepted in science even if the designer is complex—e.g., in archeology (to explain cave paintings and arrowheads), in cryptography (to explain codes), and in forensic science (to explain "who dunnit"). In fact, in these sciences the designer is even *more complex* than the objects or phenomena explained, yet the designer hypothesis is scientifically legitimate. If we were to accept Dawkins' who-designed-the-designer objection, then—to be logically consistent—the aforementioned explanations would not be legitimate. But they *are* legitimate. Thus, it is false that the complexity of a designer makes a design hypothesis improbable.

Second, the issue of the complexity and origin of a designer simply has no bearing on the process of determining whether something is designed. Consider the science known as SETI (Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence). In SETI the intelligent design hypothesis is allowed to explain ET's communications (if they were to occur); moreover—and significantly—whether the alleged message is truly a message from ET depends not at all on our knowledge of ET's complexity or origin, but solely on whether the message displays design.

How do we discern design? Think about some long words in a Scrabble game, or consider some sophisticated computer software. Or imagine, say, the discovery of strange complex machinery on Mars.

Or recall the messages from outer space in the movie *Contact*. The way to discern whether something is designed is to determine whether the thing is (1) highly improbable via non-intelligent causes *and* (2) strongly analogous to things we know from empirical experience to be designed by intelligent causes.

Who designed the designer? Perhaps the designer just is (and always has been). Or not. Perhaps the designer is complex. Or not. The point here is that we need not understand the nature of a designer (i.e., whether it's complex or not) or even the origin of a designer (whether it has a designer or not) to determine that something has been designed. Therefore, as an alleged block to discerning a designer from its designed effects, the who-designed-the-designer objection is beside the point—*it is not relevant.*

To recap, Dawkins' who-designed-the-designer objection has two major flaws: it is based on a falsehood, and it is basically irrelevant. In other words, the objection that constitutes the philosophical foundation of *The God Delusion* is (to put it mildly) a philosophical blunder.

Significantly, nature's apparent design remains—and continues to suggest an Intelligent Designer.[1,2]

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Notes

1. One might be tempted to argue that God is simple and so the God hypothesis does not fall prey to Dawkins' objection. I think that the issue of God's simplicity is an important (and difficult) philosophical issue, and should be studied for the sake of achieving greater philosophical knowledge of God. However, I think that such a project would be lost on the likes of Dawkins and so would have little apologetical value. I thus think that the point defended above should be the focus of a reply to Dawkins' objection: i.e., whether God is simple or complex is irrelevant to the question of discerning whether something is designed by God—i.e., the issue is merely whether the object or phenomenon in question displays the marks of intelligent design.
2. For further discussion of the concept of intelligent design and its discernment, see Hendrik van der Breggen, "Miracle Reports, Moral Philosophy, and

Contemporary Science" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Waterloo, 2004), pp. 214-226. See too Del Ratzsch, *Nature, Design, and Science: The Status of Design in Natural Science* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001). And, of course, see William A. Dembski's many works, but especially *The Design Revolution: Answering the Toughest Questions about Intelligent Design* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004). Also, see Robert B. Stewart, ed., *Intelligent Design: William A. Dembski & Michael Ruse in Dialogue* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2007). For online discussions of Dawkins' objections, see: Alvin Plantinga, "The Dawkins Confusion," http://www.christianitytoday.com/bc/2007/002/1.21.html [accessed February 29, 2008]; and William Lane Craig, "What do you think of Richard Dawkins' argument for atheism in *The God Delusion*?" http://www.reasonablefaith.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5493 [accessed February 29, 2008]. Finally, for a response to a recent philosophical defence of Dawkin's who-designed-the-designer objection, see Hendrik van der Breggen, "Dawkins' Logico-Philosophical Blunder: A Reply to a Dawkins Apologist," *JISCA* 2 no. 1 (2009): 41-48.