

Fundamentalism is Nonsense

**Some Problems with Christian Fundamentalism,
Christianity, and Theism in General**

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
THE CLAIMS OF FUNDAMENTALISM	3
Separation of Church and State	3
The United States: A Christian Nation?	4
Biblical Errancy	4
The New Testament Canon	4
Problems in the Old Testament	5
Problems in the New Testament	13
The Bible and Science	23
Biblical Morality	23
THE CLAIMS OF CHRISTIANITY	28
First Century Extrabiblical References to Jesus	28
Later Extrabiblical References to Jesus	29
Jesus in the New Testament	30
Gospel Origins	34
The Shroud of Turin	35
Judeo-Christian Conception of God	37
THE CLAIMS OF THEISM	40
Natural Theology	40
Pascal's Wager	41
What is a god?	41
Reason and Faith	43
Atheism	44
CONCLUSION	45
BIBLIOGRAPHY	46
APPENDIX: THE FUNDAMENTALIST THREAT	52
APPENDIX: CHRISTIAN CRITICISM	56

INTRODUCTION

According to a recent Gallup poll (a sample of 1500 people), 95% of all Americans believe in some god, 66% in a god to which they are personally accountable. 46% believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, and 37% believe it should be interpreted literally, that the events depicted in it actually happened (or will happen) exactly as described.

Is there any basis for these beliefs? Are they based on evidence and reason, or on emotion and ignorance? The results of studies done between 1927 and 1982 seem to imply that the latter is the case, as all but four of forty-three studies analyzed found that intelligence varies inversely with degree of religious faith. These studies were composed of: (a) sixteen studies of the correlation between individual measures of student intelligence and religiosity (all but three showed an inverse correlation), (b) five studies reporting that student bodies with high average IQ and/or SAT scores are much less religious than inferior student bodies, (c) two studies reporting that geniuses (IQ 150+) are much less religious than the general public (IQ 100), (d) one study which did not find National Merit Scholars to be less religious than average, (e) seven studies showing that highly successful persons are much less religious than average, and (f) twelve Gallup polls showing that college alumni are much less religious than grade-school students [Beckwith 86, p. 52].

Such studies are, of course, subject to interpretation and may have been flawed. To truly answer the question one must examine claims about God and the Bible. This pamphlet is an attempt to analyze the claims of Christianity and theism in general.

Comments, corrections, and suggestions are welcomed and should be sent to the author at the address on the title page.

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Jim Lippard
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THE CLAIMS OF FUNDAMENTALISM

The fundamentalists are a group of Christians that has experienced a great deal of growth within the last few years under the influence of television evangelists such as Marion G. "Pat" Robertson, Jimmy Swaggart, Oral Roberts, and Jerry Falwell. The fundamentalists have also retained control over the Southern Baptist Convention.

The primary tenet of fundamentalist belief is that the entire Bible is the inerrant, literal Word of God--that events described within it such as the creation, flood, life of Jesus, crucifixion, and resurrection are all literally true. Along with this is a belief that the United States was founded as a Christian nation on Christian principles, and that it has experienced moral decay and needs to be returned to its original Christian standards of morality. They believe that to achieve this goal, churches should become involved in politics to pass legislation to ban abortion, pornography, homosexuality, and teaching of "secular humanism" (a term which is only vaguely, if at all defined, but seems to include sex education, evolutionary science, philosophy, and ethics) while instituting school prayer and teaching of creationism.

Separation of Church and State

A major obstacle to this effort is the United States Constitution. The Establishment Clause of the First Amendment states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Article Six of the Constitution says, in part: "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States." The fundamentalists either claim that "separation of church and state" is an entirely fictional doctrine, or that it was intended only to keep government out of religion and not vice-versa. This is contradicted, however, by the writings of the founding fathers.

The letter "Ratification of the Constitution, by the Convention of the State of Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations", signed by Daniel O'Connell, president of the Rhode Island delegation, on May 29, 1790, says as its fourth point: "That religion, or the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, and not by force or violence, and therefore all men have an equal, natural and unalienable right to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience, and that no particular religious sect or society ought to be favoured, or established by law in preference to others."

Thomas Jefferson wrote in a letter to the Danbury Baptist Association in 1802: "I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people...building a wall of separation between church and state." (This interpretation was repeated in two Supreme Court decisions, *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947) and *McCullum v. Board of Education* (1948). The former of these went so far as to say "Neither a state nor the Federal Government can, openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious organizations or groups and vice versa.") [Conway 82, p. 164], [Wiseman 86, pp. 7-8]

In 1832, James Madison wrote in a letter to Reverend Jasper Adams: "I must admit moreover that it may not be easy, in every possible case, to trace the line of separation between the rights of religion and the civil authority with such distinctness as to avoid collisions and doubts on unessential points. The tendency to a usurpation on one side or the other, or to a corrupting coalition or alliance between them, will be best guarded against by an *entire abstinence* of the Government from interference in any way whatever, beyond the necessity of preserving public order, and protecting each sect against trespass on its legal rights by others." [Wiseman 86, p. 7]

Contrast these quotes with the following: Danuta Soderman of Pat Robertson's "700 Club" television show: "There is no tradition of separation of church and state in this country. The whole idea of separation of church and state comes from the Soviet Constitution. Why would anyone want to tout communism as an ideal in this country? We are a Christian country, founded by Christians, not Muslims or anyone else, and it's time we acted like it." Jerry Falwell, in the September 1985 issue of Moral Majority Report: "So away with the ill-informed, anti-American, anti-Christ activists who tell us that the First Amendment was born of secular seed, designed to insure a secular America. They have twisted and perverted our precious Christian First Amendment heritage enough."

The United States: A Christian Nation?

What about the claim that the United States is a Christian nation, founded on Christian principles? Again, a look at the writings of the founding fathers shows that this is not the case.

Thomas Jefferson wrote to Peter Carr, his nephew, in 1785: "Question with boldness even the existence of a God, because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason than that of blind faith." [Seldes 85, p. 207] To John Adams in 1823 he wrote: "And the day will come, when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the Supreme Being as His Father, in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva, in the brain of Jupiter." [Seldes 85, p. 208]

James Madison wrote in the "Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments" (1785): "During almost fifteen centuries the legal establishment known as Christianity has been on trial, and what have been the fruits, more or less, in all places? These are the fruits: pride, indolence, ignorance and arrogance in the clergy. Ignorance, arrogance and servility in the laity, and in both the clergy and laity, superstition, bigotry and persecution." [Seldes 85, p. 261]

John Adams wrote: "The divinity of Jesus is made a convenient cover for absurdity. Nowhere in the Gospels do we find a precept for Creeds, Confessions, Oaths, Doctrines and whole carloads of other foolish trumpery that we find Christianity encumbered with." [Cardiff 72, p. 10], [Edelen 85, p. 8] In a letter to Jefferson in 1816, he wrote: "This would be the best of all possible worlds if there were no religion in it." [Cardiff 72, p. 10], [Seldes 85, p. 6]

Thomas Paine wrote in his Age of Reason (Part I): "Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon, than the word of God. It is a history of wickedness, that has served to corrupt and brutalize mankind; and, for my part, I sincerely detest it, as I detest everything that is cruel." [Paine 1795, pp. 18-19]

Article Eleven of the 1797 Treaty of Tripoli (9 Stat. 154, Treaty Series 358), as approved by the Senate on June 7, 1797 and ratified by President John Adams on June 10, 1797 and in force until superseded by a new treaty on April 17, 1806, reads: "As the government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion; as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Musselmen [Muslims]; and as the said States never have entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mahametan nation; it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries." [Edelen 85, p. 8]

Biblical Errancy

Finally, what about fundamentalism's primary tenet, biblical inerrancy? The Bible never makes this claim for itself, though 2 Timothy 3:16 claims that all "All Scripture is inspired by God". It's not clear, though, what this means, as the New Testament canon was not assembled until much later. 2 Peter 3:16 mentions the letters of Paul and "the rest of the Scriptures" but does not elaborate further.

Josh McDowell implies that God would have prevented anyone from modifying the Bible, citing the fact that "John even pronounced an anathema upon all who would add to or subtract from the 'words of the prophecy of this book' (Revelation 22:18, 19)", but fails to note that "this book" refers solely to the Book of Revelation [McDowell 81b, p. 23]. The Bible as a whole was not assembled until about 200 years later.

The New Testament Canon

How were the books of the New Testament, and the Bible as a whole, put together? According to Josh McDowell [McDowell 72, pp. 33-34], the following criteria were used to determine if a book was canonical:

1. Is it authoritative--did it come from the hand of God?
2. Is it prophetic--was it written by a man of God?
3. Is it authentic?
4. Is it dynamic--did it come with the life-transforming power of God?
5. Was it received, collected, read and used--was it accepted by the people of God?

This list illustrates that canonicity is not primarily a measurement of a work's historical accuracy, but rather its conformity to accepted dogma. Yet even with this list, the canonical set of biblical books is full of errors and discrepancies. A few additional items should have been added to the list, such as "Is it internally consistent?" and "Does it contradict known facts?"

McDowell repeatedly makes reference in his books to the painstaking efforts made in transcribing copies of New Testament scripture. The rules he describes for copying, however, applied to Jewish scribes, and the majority of Christians were gentiles before much of the New Testament had even been written. There are over 200,000 variations in extant New Testament manuscripts.

Accurate copying is also irrelevant to the fact that there were established doctrines about Jesus developed early in the first century to which the New Testament writers conformed. Those who did not conform (there were plenty of heretical writings by the time the New Testament canon was assembled) were suppressed as soon as the orthodox church had the power to do so.

Problems in the Old Testament

Authorship of the Pentateuch

The first five books of the Bible are traditionally attributed to Moses. This theory has some serious problems, and most biblical scholars do not accept it. Genesis 14:14 and Deuteronomy 34:1 mention the city of Dan, which did not exist until long after the death of Moses. It was originally called Laish and did not become Dan until the time of the Judges (see Judges 18:27-29) [Paine 1795, pp. 85-87].

Genesis 23:2 mentions that the city of Kiriath-arba is also known as Hebron. The name Hebron was not given to that city until the time of Joshua (see Joshua 14:13-15).

Genesis 36:31 says "Now these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the sons of Israel." This verse was obviously written after Israel had kings. Verses 31-43 are almost identical to 1 Chronicles 1:43-54; both probably came from the same source.

Exodus 16:35 says "And the sons of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan." Joshua 5:12 indicates that the manna did not cease until after Moses was dead and gone.

Numbers 12:3 says "Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth." If Moses wrote that, he was being rather hypocritical.

Deuteronomy 3:11 mentions an iron bedstead belonging to Og which was in the city of Rabbah of the sons of Ammon. The Hebrews did not arrive in Rabbah until the time of David (2 Samuel 12:26).

Deuteronomy 5:15 was apparently not written by the same person who wrote Exodus 20:11, as they give different reasons for observing the sabbath. Deuteronomy says God commanded observation of the sabbath for remembrance of the slavery in Egypt, while Exodus says it is because God created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh.

Moses dies in Deuteronomy 34:5, which seems to indicate that he didn't write that chapter. Verse 10 says "since then no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses", which implies some time had passed between Moses' death and the time of writing.

Creation

There are two accounts of Creation in the book of Genesis. The first is 1:1-2:3, the second from 2:4 to 2:25. In the first account, we have plants created on the third day (1:11-13), sea animals and birds on the fifth day (1:20-23), and man and woman on the sixth day (1:26-31). In the second account, on the other hand, man is created before there was any plant or animal life (man is created in verse 7, the garden in verse 8, animals in verse 19). An attempt to correct the inconsistent animals' creation date is given in [McDowell 81a, p. 138], in which it is stated that "In Genesis 2:19, there is no explicit warrant in the text for assuming that the creation of animals here happened immediately before their naming (i.e., after man's creation)". Yet Genesis 2:19 reads: "And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that

was its name." It is difficult to see how the claim in McDowell can be seriously made.

Another problem with the Creation account is that the six days cannot be literal days, as there was no sun or separation between night and day until the fourth day (1:14-19).

Tending the Garden

Why would a perfect garden require tending and cultivation (Genesis 3:15)?

Death of Adam

In Genesis 2:17, God says that if Adam or Eve eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he or she would die that day. Although Adam and Eve both ate the fruit in Genesis 3:6, Genesis 5:5 says that Adam did not die until he was 930 years old.

Problems of Creationism

The Creation Research Society requires all of its members to subscribe to the following beliefs:

1. The Bible is the written Word of God, and because we believe it to be inspired thruout, all of its assertions are historically and scientifically true in all of the original autographs. To the student of nature, this means that the account of origins in Genesis is a factual presentation of simple historical truths.
2. All basic types of living things, including man, were made by direct creative acts of God during Creation Week as described in Genesis. Whatever biological changes have occurred since Creation have accomplished only changes within the original created kinds.
3. The great Flood described in Genesis, commonly referred to as the Noachian Deluge, was an historical event, worldwide in its extent and effect.
4. Finally, we are an organization of Christian men of science, who accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. The account of the special creation of Adam and Eve as one man and one woman, and their subsequent Fall into sin, is the basis for our belief in the necessity of a Savior for all mankind. Therefore, salvation can come only thru accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior.

If the Genesis account of creation is complete, there are a few problems. First of all, whom did Cain marry? If God did not create further humans, then he effectively required sin. If he did create further humans, there is no reason for them to have been guilty of the Original Sin--they were not descendants of the guilty Adam and Eve.

If God did not create further humans, where did the multiple races of man come from? The above point #2 allows for "changes within the original created kinds", but multiple races are certainly significant changes and demonstrate some form of evolution.

If God did create further humans, then obviously the events of "Creation Week" are not the whole of all creation. This again requires abandoning the Genesis account as a complete summary of all creation.

An excellent refutation of creation pseudoscience may be found in zoologist Chris McGowan's *In the Beginning...A Scientist Shows Why the Creationists Are Wrong* (1984, Prometheus Books).

Fate of Cain

In Genesis 4:12, God tells Cain he will be a vagrant and a wanderer. Genesis 4:16-17 says that Cain settled down and founded a city.

The Flood

Aside from the fact that the flood account is almost exactly identical to the flood in the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh (which predates the Bible and replaces Yahweh with Ea and Noah with Utnapishtim), there is another problem. In Genesis 6:19-20 God commands Noah to take two of

every kind of animal and bird aboard the Ark. In Genesis 7:2-3, however, God apparently changes his mind and tells Noah to take seven of each clean animal, two of each unclean animal, and seven of each bird. In 7:14-15, two of each kind of animal go into the Ark. Genesis 7:1-5 was probably inserted to avoid the problem caused by Genesis 8:20 where Noah sacrifices one of each clean animal after the Ark lands (note how the account reads more smoothly if you go directly from Genesis 6:22 to Genesis 7:6) [Cobb 86, p. 6].

There are approximately 1.12 million species of animals and .5 million species of plants on the planet, which would have had to fit into the approximately 56,000 cubic meters of volume aboard the Ark (this is without taking into consideration the amount of space taken up by decks). Food and fresh water would also have to be stored, and salt water creatures would have to be kept in special storage tanks [McGowan 84, pp. 55-57].

A common creationist explanation for where the flood waters came from is the "vapor canopy" theory, originally proposed by turn-of-the-century Quaker Isaac Newton Vail. This theory states that the earth was surrounded by a canopy of water vapor before the flood. Unfortunately, there are no reasonable conditions under which such a canopy would be stable, the condensation of such a canopy would release as much energy in heat as the earth receives from the sun in two or three centuries, and the pressure at the base of such an atmosphere would be fatal to virtually all forms of life [Schadewald 83, p. 28].

Ages of the Patriarchs

In Genesis 17:1-17, Abraham doesn't believe God when he is told that his wife will bear a son, since she is 90 years old and he is 99. Yet he shouldn't have been at all surprised, since Seth begat Enosh at age 105 (Genesis 5:6), Methuselah was 187 when Lamech was born (Genesis 5:25), and Lamech begat Noah at age 182 (Genesis 5:28-29) [Cobb 86, p. 6]

According to Genesis 11:26, Abram's father, Terah, was 70 years old at Abram's birth. According to Acts 7:4, Abram left Haran after his father's death. According to Genesis 12:4, Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran. This means his father was no older than 145 when he died. But Genesis 11:32 says that Terah died at age 205, which would have made Abram 135 when he left Haran.

Abraham's Wives and Children

According to Genesis 25:1, Abraham took Keturah as a wife. According to 1 Chronicles 1:32, Keturah was only a concubine. According to Genesis 22:2 and Hebrews 11:17, Isaac was Abraham's only begotten son. According to Genesis 16:16 and Galatians 4:22, Abraham also had a son Ishmael.

God's Broken Promise

In Genesis 17:8, God promises Abraham all of the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession. According to Acts 7:5 and Hebrews 11:9-13, Abraham got nothing he was promised, even though he lived his life faithful to God.

Joseph Sold

According to Genesis 37:36, Joseph was sold to Potiphar by the Midianites. According to Genesis 39:1, he was sold to Potiphar by the Ishmaelites.

The Exodus

According to Exodus 9:1-7, the fifth plague killed all of the field livestock, horses, donkeys, camels, herds, and flocks of the Egyptians. In Exodus 14:6-9 (and verses 17-18, 23, 25-26, and 28), the Egyptians chase after the Hebrews with chariots and horsemen.

The 10 Commandments

The story of the 10 Commandments being given to Moses is another story that is not original with

the Bible, nor are the Commandments themselves original. The Babylonian Code of Hammurabi, which predates the Torah, says that the king received the Law from the god Shamash just as Moses received the Commandments from Yahweh. The Egyptian Book of the Dead's "Negative Confessions" are dated to the earliest dynastic period (circa 2700 B.C.E.), while the Torah is commonly dated at 450 B.C.E., though it may have existed in oral form as early as 1000 B.C.E. and some Christians put it between 1450 and 1410 B.C.E. It says, in part: "Hail to thee, great God, lord of right and truth...I have not plundered God...I have never cursed God...I have not committed murder...I have not committed adultery...I have not stolen...I have told no lies...I have not lusted." [Franczyk 85a, p. 43], [Wells 71, pp. 55-56]

The Commandments themselves have a problem. God says in Exodus 20:3-5 that the Israelites are to have no other gods before him and that he is a jealous god. Jealous of whom? Other gods? The answer to this is yes, other gods, for the early Hebrews were polytheists. This can be seen throughout the Old Testament, where the word "Elohim" (gods) is repeatedly used rather than "El" (god). The number is translated correctly in Genesis 1:26, which says "Let us make man in *our* image, according to *our* likeness" (emphasis added).

God also says in Exodus 20:5 that he will punish the children of violators of this Commandment down to the fourth generation (also see Leviticus 26:22, Numbers 14:18 (a self-contradictory verse), Deuteronomy 5:9, 23:2, and Isaiah 14:21-22). This contradicts Deuteronomy 24:16, 2 Kings 14:6, 2 Chronicles 25:4, Jeremiah 31:29-30, and Ezekiel 18:4, 18:19-20, 33:20, and Romans 2:5-6 which say that only the guilty party is punished for sin, not the children. But the fundamentalist belief that man is inherently evil is based on Adam and Eve's sin affecting all of humanity, even those who are otherwise without sin (Romans 5:12-19, 1 Corinthians 15:22).

All Have Sinned?

According to 1 Kings 8:46, 2 Chronicles 6:36, Proverbs 20:9, Ecclesiastes 7:20, Mark 10:18, Romans 3:10, 3:12, 3:23, Galatians 3:22, 1 John 1:8 and 1:10, all have sinned. According to Genesis 6:29 and 7:1, Noah was righteous and blameless. According to Job 1:1, 1:8, and 2:3, Job was blameless and upright. According to Luke 1:5-6, Zacharias and Elizabeth were righteous and blamelessly followed all the commandments.

God Commands Violation of a Commandment

Exodus 20:4 and Deuteronomy 5:8 prohibit the making of "any likeness of what is in heaven above". In Exodus 25:18, God commands Moses to make cherubim of gold.

Seeing God

Exodus 24:9-10, 33:21-23, Numbers 14:14, Job 42:5, Psalms 63:2, Isaiah 6:1, 6:5, Amos 7:7-8, 9:1, and John 14:9 describe people seeing God. John 1:18 and 1 John 4:12 say that "No man has seen God at any time".

God's Face

In Exodus 33:20, God says "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" Exodus 33:11 says "Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend." (Also see Genesis 32:30, Deuteronomy 5:4, 34:10, and Ezekiel 20:35.)

Aaron's Death

According to Numbers 33:37-39, Aaron died and was buried on Mount Hor. According to Deuteronomy 10:6, Aaron died in Moserah.

Michal's Children

2 Samuel 6:23 says that Michal, the daughter of Saul, died childless. 2 Samuel 21:8 says that Michal had five sons. (The New American Standard translation changes "Michal" to "Merab" in

the latter verse, a "correction" based on the assumption that Michal raised Merab's children. Nearly all Hebrew manuscripts say "Michal".)

Authorship of Joshua

The book of Joshua is traditionally attributed to Moses' successor, Joshua. As with the Pentateuch, this tradition is not generally accepted by biblical scholars. The style of Joshua is similar to that of Judges.

Joshua 6:27 says "so the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land." If Joshua wrote this, he must have had a considerable ego.

Joshua 8:28-29 and 15:63 both use the phrase "until this day"; 10:27 says "to this very day"; and 10:14 says "there was no day like that before it or after it"; all of which imply that the passages were written some considerable time after the events described.

Joshua dies in Joshua 24:31, which indicates that he did not write the last three verses.

Cities of South Judah

Joshua 15:21-32: "Now the cities at the extremity of the tribe of the sons of Judah toward the border of Edom in the south were Kabzell and Eder and Jagur, and Kinah and Dimonah and Adadah, and Kedesh and Hazor and Ithnan, Ziph and Telem and Bealoth, and Hazor-hadattah and Kerioth-hezron (that is, Hazor), Amam and Shema and Moladah, and Hazar-haddah and Heshmon and Beth-pelet, and Hazar-shual and Beersheba and Biziothiah, Baalah and Iim and Ezem, and Eltolad and Chesil and Hormah, and Ziklag and Madmannah and Sansannah, and Lebaoth and Shilhim and Ain and Rimmon; in all, twenty-nine cities with their villages." Thirty-six cities are listed, not twenty-nine. The usual Christian rationalization for this error is to claim that multiple names refer to the same city. This rationalization, however, does not work for the cases where the number given is larger than the number of items listed (see below for examples).

Cities of Lowland Judah

Joshua 15:33-36: "In the lowland: Eshtaol and Zorah and Ashnah, and Zanoah and Engannim, Tappuah and Enam, Jarmuth and Adullam, Socoh and Azekah, and Shaaraim and Adithaim and Gederah and Gederothaim; fourteen cities with their villages." Fifteen cities are listed, not fourteen.

Simeon's Inheritance

Joshua 19:2-6: "So they had as their inheritance Beersheba and Sheba and Moladah, and Hazar-shual and Balah and Ezem, and Eltolad and Bethul and Hormah, and Ziklag and Bethmarcaboth and Hazar-susah, and Beth-lebaoth and Sharuhem, thirteen cities with their villages." Fourteen, not thirteen, cities are listed.

Children of Zerubbabel

1 Chronicles 3:19-20: "And the sons of Zerubbabel were Meshullam and Hananiah, and Shelomith was their sister; and Hashubah, Ohel, Berechiah, Hasadiah, and Jushabhesed, five." There are seven males and one female listed, not five of anything.

Sons of Shemiah

1 Chronicles 3:22: "...and the sons of Shemaiah were Hattush, Igal, Bariah, Neariah, and Shaphat, six." There are five sons listed, not six.

Sons of Jeduthun

1 Chronicles 25:3: "Of Jeduthun: the sons of Jeduthun; Gedaliah, and Zeri, and Jeshaiiah, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six." There are five sons listed in this, the King James Version. The New American Standard translation inserts Shimei before Hashabiah.

Authorship of 1 & 2 Samuel

1 & 2 Samuel are traditionally attributed to Samuel, but again, this is rejected by biblical scholars. Samuel dies in 1 Samuel 28:3, leaving 3 whole chapters of 1 Samuel and all of 2 Samuel that he could not have written. In 1 Samuel 9:9, a comment indicates that the word "seer" was formerly used rather than "prophet", implying that an explanation was necessary for readers at the time it was written. In 1 Samuel 9:11, the old word, "seer", is used, indicating that the events took place some time before the passage was written.

The Prophets

Although all of the prophets to whom books of the Bible are attributed allegedly lived before 1 & 2 Kings and 1 & 2 Chronicles were written, only Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Jonah are mentioned in them--and no whale or preaching at Ninevah stories are associated with Jonah there [Paine 1795, pp. 106-108].

Jesse's Sons

1 Samuel 16:10-11 says Jesse had eight sons: seven plus David, the youngest. 1 Chronicles 2:13-15 says that Jesse had seven sons, David being the seventh and youngest.

Death of Goliath

According to 1 Samuel 17:4,7,50, Goliath was killed by David. According to 2 Samuel 21:19, Goliath was killed by Elhanan. (1 Chronicles 20:5 says that Elhanan killed Lahmi, the brother of Goliath.)

David's Horsemen

2 Samuel 8:4 says that David captured 700 horsemen (and 1,000 chariots); 1 Chronicles 18:4 says he captured 7,000 horsemen.

David and the Arameans

2 Samuel 10:18: "But the Arameans fled before Israel, and David killed 700 charioteers of the Arameans and 40,000 horsemen".

1 Chronicles 19:18: "And the Arameans fled before Israel, and David killed of the Arameans 7,000 charioteers and 40,000 foot soldiers".

David's "Sinful" Census

2 Samuel 24:1: "Now again the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and it incited David against them to say, 'Go, number Israel and Judah.'"

1 Chronicles 21:1: "Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel."

This confusion between God and Satan seems to be in part because the early Hebrews believed God to be the source of all good and evil. The tradition of Satan being the opponent of God did not appear until much later. (This topic is dealt with later in this pamphlet in the section entitled Biblical Morality.)

According to 2 Samuel 24:13, one of David's punishment options for his census was seven years of famine. According to 1 Chronicles 21:11-12, the option was three years of famine.

According to 2 Samuel 24:9, the result of the census was 800,000 fighting men in Israel and 500,000 fighting men in Judah. In 1 Chronicles 21:5-6, the result showed 1,100,000 fighting men in Israel and 470,000 in Judah.

Solomon's Horse Stalls

1 Kings 4:26 says that Solomon had 40,000 horse stalls. 2 Chronicles 9:25 says that Solomon had 4,000 horse stalls.

Temple Workers

According to 1 Kings 5:16, there were 3,300 overseers. According to 2 Chronicles 2:18, there were 3,600.

Solomon's Sea

According to 1 Kings 7:26, Solomon's sea of cast metal held 2,000 baths. According to 2 Chronicles 4:5, it held 3,000.

Solomon's Chief Officers

According to 1 Kings 9:23, Solomon had 550 chief officers. According to 2 Chronicles 8:10, he had 250.

Omri's Reign

1 Kings 16:23: "In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king over Israel, and reigned twelve years; he reigned six years at Tirzah."

1 Kings 16:28-29: "So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria; and Ahab his son became king in his place. Now Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel in the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years."

According to the first passage, Omri reigned over Israel for twelve years. But the two passages say that his reign began in the 31st year and ended in the 38th year of Asa, which makes his reign 7 years.

The World's Existence

1 Chronicles 16:30 says the world is firmly established, Ecclesiastes 1:4 says "the earth remains forever." But 1 John 2:17 says "the world is passing away".

Jehoiachin's Age

2 Chronicles 36:9: "Jehoiachin was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem, and he did evil in the sight of the Lord."

2 Kings 24:8: "Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem."

Ages of Jehoram and His Youngest Son

According to 2 Chronicles 21:20, Jehoram became king at age 32, reigned for 8 years and then died. His youngest son, Ahaziah, then became king, when Jehoram was 40 years old. But according to 2 Chronicles 22:2, in the King James Version of the Bible, Ahaziah was 42 years old when he became king--two years older than his father. The New American Standard translation changes Ahaziah's age to 22. According to 2 Kings 8:26, Ahaziah was 22.

Death of King Josiah

According to 2 Kings 23:29-30, King Josiah was slain at Megiddo. According to 2 Chronicles 35:23-27, King Josiah died in Jerusalem.

The Addition of Ezra and Nehemiah

Ezra 1:9-11 lists the gold and silver items which Cyrus took from the temple, claiming a total of 5,400. The total of the items listed is only 2,499.

Ezra 2:1-60 gives a census of the people, with a total given in verse 64 of 42,360. If the individual figures are added up, the total is 29,818--an error of 12,542. Nehemiah 7:5-62 gives the same census, again with a total (in verse 66) of 42,360. The actual total there is 31,089--an error of 11,271.

Lifetimes of the Wicked

Psalms 55:23 and Proverbs 10:27 say that the wicked will die young. Job 21:7-9 says that the wicked live long.

God and Liars

Proverbs 12:22 says that God hates lying. 1 Kings 22:21-23 says that God has made prophets lie. 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 says that God deceives unbelievers to make them believe falsehoods (contradicting 1 Timothy 2:3-4, which says God wants all to come to knowledge of the truth). (God also pushes evil in Exodus 4:21, 7:3, 9:12, 10:1,20,27, 11:10, 14:4,8,17, and Joshua 11:20.)

Prophecy of Destruction of Damascus

Isaiah 17:1 claims that Damascus "is about to be removed from being a city, and it will become a fallen ruin." The fact of the matter is that Damascus is one of the oldest cities in the world, has been continuously inhabited, and is the only city in Palestine that has never been completely destroyed.

Prophecy of Destruction of Edom

Isaiah 34:9-10 says that Edom's streams will be turned into pitch, its earth into brimstone, and its land burning pitch which will burn night and day with its smoke going up forever. It also says that no one shall ever pass through it. All of these predictions are false. Josh McDowell [McDowell 72, pp. 299-305] ignores verse 9 and the first part of verse 10 and he interprets "none shall pass through it forever and ever" to mean that Edom will no longer be a center for trade.

Prophecies of Jeremiah

In Jeremiah 18:7-10, the prophet hedges his bets so that none of his prophecies can possibly go wrong: "At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it."

Jeremiah prophesied a peaceful death for Zedekiah in Jeremiah 34:4-5. In Jeremiah 52:10-11 we see that Zedekiah's eyes are put out, his son is executed, and he dies in prison.

In Jeremiah 38, Zedekiah sends for Jeremiah (verse 14) and, after talking with him, instructs him to lie (verses 24-26). Jeremiah does so (verse 27).

Prophecy of Destruction of Tyre

According to Ezekiel 26:3-14, 26:21, and 27:36, Nebuchadnezzar would capture Tyre and destroy it forever, never even to be found again. Ezekiel 26:12 predicted that he would seize its riches. In fact, Nebuchadnezzar's siege lasted 13 years, but he never captured the city, only its outworks on the mainland. Ezekiel 29:18 admits that he never captured its riches. Tyre was destroyed 240 years later by Alexander the Great, and it was subsequently rebuilt (and referenced in the New

Testament in Matthew 11:21-22, Mark 3:8, Luke 10:13-14, Acts 12:20, and 21:3,7). It was destroyed again in 1291 C.E., again rebuilt, and continues to exist today.

Josh McDowell, amazingly enough, cites this as a prime example of a prophecy that has been fulfilled [McDowell 72, pp. 285-291]. He rationalizes away the rebuilding of Tyre by making a distinction between "Old Tyre" and "Tyre", an arbitrary distinction made only by Christian apologists. He removes the problem of the prediction that Tyre would "never be found again" by claiming that Ezekiel 26:21 really means only that Tyre would never regain its former power.

Prophecy of Desolation of Egypt

Ezekiel 29:9-12 says that Egypt will be an "utter waste and desolation" from Migdol to Syene and to the border of Ethiopia, and all of its cities will be uninhabited for forty years. It has never happened.

The Unchanging God

In Malachi 3:6, God says "I, the Lord, do not change" (also see Numbers 23:19, 1 Samuel 15:29, and James 1:17). Exodus 32:14 says "So the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people" (also see Genesis 6:6, 1 Samuel 15:11,35, and Jonah 3:10).

Problems in the New Testament

Home of Jesus' Parents

In Matthew, Joseph and Mary lived in Bethlehem when Jesus was born, after which Herod's persecution began and they were forced to flee to Egypt for a time, after which they settled in Nazareth. In Luke, they lived in Nazareth but had to go to Bethlehem for the purpose of a census. Note that Flavius Josephus, who carefully chronicled the atrocities of Herod, makes no mention of his alleged mass slaughter of children. In fact, no historian mentions any such massacre [Wells 71, p. 12].

An alleged prophecy of Jesus' being in Egypt is Hosea 11:1, which Matthew 2:14-15 claims has been fulfilled. What the Old Testament passage refers to, however, is the Exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt.

Roman Census

Luke 2:1-2 claims that Caesar Augustus (27 B.C.E. to 14 C.E.) decreed a census during the time that Quirinius was governor of Syria and while Herod was still king of Judea (Luke 1:5, also Matthew 2:1). Herod, however, died in 4 B.C.E., and Quirinius was never governor of Syria during his reign. The governors of Syria during the end of Herod's life were Titius (10 B.C.E.), Sentius Saturninus (9-6 B.C.E.), and Varus (6-4 B.C.E.). Varus had to suppress a revolt which broke out in Palestine after Herod's death so was in office beyond the end of Herod's reign. Quirinius was governor of Syria in 6 C.E., and possibly earlier, but not during Herod's reign.

Thus Tertullian attempts to correct the error by claiming Jesus was born during a Judean census conducted by Sentius Saturninus in 8 B.C.E. This still is not correct, as a Roman census in Palestine under Herod would have been very unpopular, as Herod still held title and authority of the land from Caesar and the Senate. Josephus also makes no mention of a census under Herod, but states that the first census of the area was taken in 6 C.E. under Quirinius shortly after Judea was converted into a Roman province, which resulted in a Jewish revolt under Judas, the Gaulonite of Gamala.

An inscription found by the archaeologist Sir William Ramsay in Antioch is often cited as proof that Quirinius was indeed governor of Syria during Herod's reign [Cheney 69, p. 224], [Habermas 84, p. 153], [McDowell 72, pp. 72-73]. The inscription in fact demonstrates no such thing, but reads as follows (Ramsay's own translation): "To Gaius Caristianus (son of Gaius of Sergian tribe) Fronto Caesianus Julius, chief of engineers, pontifex, priest, prefect of P. Sulpicius Quirinius duumvir, prefect of M. Servilius. To him first of all men at state expense by decree of the decuriones, a statue was erected." [Ramsay 15, p. 285] This inscription states only that Quirinius was elected "duumvir" of the Roman colony of the Pisidian Antioch in Galatia. Ramsay

argued that this honor could have been conferred for playing a prominent part in a certain war against the Homonadenses. He showed that this war occurred in Herod's lifetime, and argued that Quirinius must have been governor of Syria when it was fought, since the only nearby Roman legions were in Syria. This does not follow, however, as Augustus could quite easily have entrusted a Syrian legion to someone who was not the governor of that province. The Homonadenses territory was north of Syria but south of Galatia and Pamphylia. Ramsay himself admitted that the war was fought on both fronts. A.N. Sherwin-White [Sherwin-White 78, p. 165] points out that Galatia was a more likely base for a war with Homonadenses.

Another inscription is also cited as evidence that Quirinius was twice governor of Syria. This inscription (dated some time after 14 C.E.) found in Tivoli indicates that some anonymous consular conquered a kingdom or tribe, conquered or restored a king, was proconsul of the Asian province, and was legate (governor) of Syria. The use of the word "iterum" (meaning "again") in this inscription is controversial, it is uncertain whether it applies merely to "governor" or to "governor of Syria". In any case, Quirinius is not the most likely candidate. He is not known to have been proconsul of Asia, and the war with the Homonadenses did not involve a king (assuming that he did in fact fight in that war). More likely is that the inscription refers to someone such as L. Calpurnius Piso, who is known to have received the rewards mentioned in the inscription, or Varius Geminus, who is described in another inscription in similar language as being governor of an unnamed province [Sherwin-White 78, pp. 162-171].

Birth of Jesus

In Matthew, the angel visits Joseph; in Luke, he visits Mary. In Matthew, the divinity of Jesus is attested to by the appearance of a star in the east, which is not mentioned in Luke. In Luke, it is by the angel's words to the shepherds and the song of the heavenly host (not mentioned in Matthew) [Wells 71, p. 11].

In Matthew, Jesus is visited by the magi after his birth and there is no mention of any shepherds visiting. In Luke, he is visited by shepherds but there is no mention of the magi.

Although Jesus was allegedly born in Bethlehem (according to Matthew and Luke; Mark 6:1 implies he was born in Nazareth), he cannot be claimed to have fulfilled the prophecy of Micah 5:2, which specifically states that one will go forth from the clans of Judah (born in Bethlehem) to become ruler in Israel.

The doctrine of the "virgin birth" is allegedly based on the "prophecy" of Isaiah 7:14: "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel."

In this passage, the Hebrew word used for "virgin" is "almah", which means a young woman of marriageable age. There is no implication of virginity, and thus the alleged fulfillment adds an absurd condition which is not even necessary. Had this passage meant "virgin", it would have used the Hebrew word "bethulah". In addition, this prophecy has been taken out of context. In the full context (beginning with Isaiah 7:1), we see that the birth of this child is a sign to Ahaz, King of Judah, that he will not be defeated in battle by Pekah, King of Israel, and Resin, King of Syria (though in 2 Chronicles 28 we see that Ahaz was conquered anyway despite God's promise). Jesus was about 700 years too late to be a sign for Ahaz [Smith 79, pp. 207-208].

The fulfillment itself (Matthew 1:25) is questionable. The oldest of the four gospels, Mark, contains no account of Jesus' birth. An old manuscript of Matthew has for 1:16: "Jacob begat Joseph; Joseph to whom was espoused Mary the virgin, begat Jesus, who is called the Christ" [Wells 71, p. 13]. The whole of the doctrine of virgin birth in the book of Luke is based on two Greek words in Luke 3 and four in Luke 1, probably added by a scribe who did not fully understand the Jewish notion of dual paternity--it was believed that a child could only be created by the union of a man, a woman, and the spirit of God. In Luke 3:23, it is said, "Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being supposedly the son of Joseph". The "being supposedly" is a parenthetical comment which makes the following verses irrelevant--a tracing of Jesus' genealogy through Joseph [Phipps 70, pp. 39-46]. Paul makes no mention of the virgin birth.

Genealogies of Jesus

There are genealogies of Jesus through Joseph in Matthew 1:1-16 and Luke 3:23-38. The genealogy in Matthew says Jesus was the son of Joseph, son of Jacob, son of Matthan, son of Eleazar, son of Eliud, etc., while Luke says Jesus was the son of Joseph, son of Eli, son of Matthat, son of Levi, son of Melchi, etc. The lists continue to contradict each other from that point as well. Matthew concludes the genealogy list with the claim that it consists of three lists of fourteen generations, but this only works out if Jechoniah is counted twice (once at the end of the David-to-Babylon list, and once at the beginning of the Babylon-to-Jesus list). Also note that while Matthew says there are only two generations between Joram and Jotham, 1 Chronicles 3:11-12 says there are five. Matthew also omits Jehoiakim, whom Chronicles places between Josiah and Jechoniah [Wells 71, pp. 23-25, pp. 34-36]. Aside from these differences, Matthew's list is compatible with the Old Testament from Abraham to Zerubbabel. Luke's list is only compatible with the Old Testament from Adam to David (though it inserts Cainan between Arphaxad and Shelah, some manuscripts insert "Admin, the son of Arni" between Ram and Amminadab, and other manuscripts vary widely).

Some Christians explain this by claiming that the genealogy in Luke is really that of Mary, not Joseph, and when it says "Joseph, son of Eli", it really means "Joseph, son-in-law of Eli". But this doesn't hold water, because Mary was of the tribe of Levi, not Judah (see Luke 1:5) [Wells 71, pp. 19-20].

Another attempt to fix the contradiction between the Matthew and Luke genealogies is to claim that Heli was the first husband of Jacob's wife, but he died and Jacob married her. It then also has to be claimed that they were only half brothers, to explain the different genealogies above them. But then the lines described in Matthew and Luke converge again at Zerubbabel, and diverge at Shealtiel. Again, this can be solved with the same claims made for Heli/Jacob. But there is an additional problem that there are about twice as many ancestors on Luke's side--one must suppose that they married at half the age of those in Matthew's list [Wells 71, p. 36], [Zeitlin 47, pp. 106-107].

Young Jesus

Before Jesus was born, his parents were informed that he would be the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20, Luke 1:26-35). Yet, twelve years later, when Jesus is discussing religion with the rabbis in the temple, Mary and Joseph are amazed (Luke 2:41-50) [Johnson 81, pp. 119-120].

John the Baptist

Before John the Baptist was cast into prison (John 3:23-24), he says that without a doubt Jesus is the Son of God (John 1:25-34). After this explicit recognition, Jesus goes on to perform works and miracles (John 2:1-2, 2:14-16, 2:23) and then starts baptizing (John 3:22). But then, after John the Baptist is thrown into prison, he sends two of his disciples to Jesus to ask him if he is the Son of God (Matthew 11:2-3, Luke 7:18-22) [Johnson 81, p. 120].

In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9, Luke 3:16-21), but this does not take place in the book of John. The latter gospel also contains contradictory reports about whether or not Jesus ever baptized anyone (John 3:22 and 3:26 say he did, John 4:2 says he did not, but his disciples did) [Hoffman 85, p. 53].

Healing of the Centurion's Servant

In Matthew 8:5-13, Jesus meets face-to-face with the centurion. In Luke 7:1-10, he meets only the centurion's representatives, never the centurion himself.

Jesus' Disciples

Matthew 10:2-4 says the apostles are Simon Peter, Andrew, James the son of Zebedee, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot. Luke 6:14-16 and Acts 1:13 say the apostles are Simon Peter, Andrew, James,

John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot (i.e., Luke omits Thaddaeus and adds the other Judas).

Preaching of the Disciples

When Jesus sends the disciples out to preach, in Mark 6:8-9 he tells them not to take anything except a staff and sandals. In Matthew 10:9-10, he tells them to not even take a staff and sandals. In Matthew 10:5, Jesus tells them to go nowhere among the gentiles. In Matthew 28:16-20, he tells them to make disciples of all nations [Hoffman 85, p. 54].

Jesus' Divinity

In Mark 10:17-18 and Luke 18:18-19, Jesus says "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone", implying that he is not God (also see Matthew 26:39, 27:46, Mark 13:22, John 5:19, 7:16, 20:17, 1 Corinthians 11:3, and 1 Peter 3:22). And God wouldn't make mistakes, yet Jesus did.

In Matthew 23:35, Jesus mentions a Zechariah son of Berechiah who was murdered. This cannot be the prophet Zechariah (whose father was Berechiah), as he was not murdered. This leaves the Zechariah of 2 Chronicles 24:21-22 and 24:20, who was murdered, but both of these passages say that his father was Jehoiada, not Berechiah. Some Christians say that "son of" here means "descendant of". If we accept this, we can also accept that calling Jesus the "son of God" means "descendant of God" in the same way. Note that the genealogy in Luke calls Adam the "son of God". (Matthew 23:35 is explained in more detail below, in the section on the Gospel of Matthew of THE CLAIMS OF CHRISTIANITY.)

In Matthew 5:43, Jesus says that the Old Testament rule was to love your neighbor and "hate your enemy". He is quoting from Leviticus 19:18, which says to love your neighbor, but it says nothing about hating your enemy. Such a command occurs nowhere in the Old Testament. Christians may argue that because Matthew 5:43 says "You have heard" rather than "It is written" Jesus was not referring to scripture, but he also says "You have heard" referring to scripture four other times in the same chapter: 5:21, 5:27, 5:33, and 5:38. 5:31 also says "it was said" in referring to Old Testament scripture [Franczyk 85b, p. 26].

In Matthew 24:29-34, Jesus says that the tribulation and his return will occur before the current generation passes away. Christians answer this by claiming that the word translated "this generation" in Matthew 24:34 means "the Jewish race", but other references by Jesus and his disciples to his return being imminent may be found in Matthew 4:17, 10:7, 10:23, 16:28, 23:36, Mark 1:15, 9:1, 13:30, Luke 9:27, 21:32, 1 Corinthians 7:29, 1 Thessalonians 4:15, 1 Timothy 6:13-14, Hebrews 1:2, 9:26, 10:37, James 5:8, 1 Peter 1:20, 4:7, 2 Peter 3:12-14, 1 John 2:18, Revelation 1:1, 3:11, 22:7 [Smith 79, pp. 209-210].

In John 3:13, Jesus says that "no one has ascended into heaven", a direct contradiction of 2 Kings 2:11, which says Elijah did just that.

In John 5:31, Jesus says "If I alone bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true", but in John 8:14 he says "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true".

Jesus' Wife?

It was highly unusual during Jesus' time for an adult male Jew to be unmarried. To argue that because the gospels don't mention his marriage he was not married is fallacious. One could similarly argue that Jesus never smiled, never had a bowel movement, and was never ill [Phipps 70, pp. 34-38]. A Jewish father's obligation to his son was to circumcise him, redeem him, teach him the Torah, teach him a trade, and find a wife for him. It is apparent in the gospels that the first four obligations were fulfilled [Baigent 83, pp. 330-331], [Phipps 70, pp. 46-49].

The gnostic Gospel of Philip says, "And the companion of the Saviour is Mary Magdalen. But Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her often on her mouth." Some historians have stated that the word translated "companion" is more properly translated as "spouse". This same gospel also says, "There is the Son of man, and there is the son of the Son of man. The Lord is the Son of man, and the son of the Son of man is he who is created through the Son of man." [Robinson 81, p. 148]

Those claiming Jesus was married have also pointed to the canonical Gospel of John. The

wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11) would seem to be Jesus' own, as Jesus' mother tells him when the wine runs out, and both she and Jesus address the servants as though they were their own. In verses 9 and 10, the headwaiter speaks to the bridegroom about the quality of the wine which Jesus has provided. This has been taken as evidence that Jesus and the bridegroom were one and the same [Baigent 83, pp. 331-333].

Miracles of Jesus

In Mark 8:12, Jesus says, "Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign shall be given this generation." In John, Jesus gives many signs, beginning with the turning of water into wine (2:1-11), the last verse of which says, "This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him."

In Mark 8:1-9, the disciples can't figure out how 4000 people will possibly be fed with only seven loaves of bread, although only a short while earlier, in Mark 6:30-44, Jesus fed 5000 people with five loaves and two fish.

Teachings of Jesus

G.A. Wells summarizes [Wells 71, pp. 59-60] a list of Jesus' moral teachings from Matthew: From chapter 5: 1. Be meek and humble, 2. Be merciful, 3. Be pure, 4. Obey the Jewish Law, 5. Avoid anger, 6. Be forgiving and conciliatory, 7. Avoid adulterous thoughts, 8. Do not divorce your wife except for fornication, 9. Do not swear, 10. Do not resist evil, 11. Be charitable, 12. Love your enemies. From chapter 6: 13. Do not be ostentatious. From chapter 7: 14. Do not judge, 15. Do not give what is holy to the dogs, 16. Do to others what you would wish them to do to you, 17. Do not speak idle words. From chapter 19: 18. Be ready to neglect everything and everybody for the sake of Jesus.

Jesus' own actions are pretty poor with regard to numbers 4 and 5. For #1, although in Matthew 11:29 he claims to be meek and lowly in heart, in 12:42 he claims to be greater than Solomon. In Matthew 5:22, Jesus says "whoever shall say, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell", yet he did it himself (Luke 12:20). He then has the nerve to call the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites (Matthew 23:29,33). (Note that Paul also violates this teaching; see for example 1 Corinthians 15:36.)

In Mark 11:12-14, Jesus curses a fig tree, that no one may ever eat fruit from it again, simply because he was hungry and it had no figs on it. But Mark also states that it was not even the season for figs!

In Matthew 11:28, Jesus seems to indicate that salvation is for everyone, but in Mark 4:11-12 he says that he is deliberately unintelligible so that the people will not understand him and thus not have the opportunity of repenting and being saved ("To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but those who are outside get everything in parables, in order that while seeing, they may see and not perceive; and while hearing, they may hear and not understand lest they return and be forgiven.").

Although for the most part pro-Jewish, Matthew has Jesus say (in Matthew 8:10-12) that many, but not the Jews, will be saved. In Matthew 21:43, he says the kingdom of God will be taken from the Jews and given to another nation. More typical is for Matthew to be anti-gentile. In Matthew 15:24, Jesus refuses to heal the daughter of a Canaanite woman because he has been sent only for the Jews. In Matthew, Jesus tells his disciples not to give the Samaritans a chance to repent (Matthew 10:5), while Luke is pro-Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37, Luke 17:16). (See also "Preaching of the Disciples".)

In one parable, Jesus describes a king who sends his servants out into the streets to randomly invite people in for his feast. When the king looked over his guests, he found a man not dressed properly (not surprising, given the manner of invitation) and had him bound hand and foot and cast out (Matthew 22:1-14). Apparently this is meant to describe the way God deals with people. The same sort of ridiculous injustice is found in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30, Luke 19:11-27). Luke's version goes completely overboard, with the nobleman ordering his political "enemies" killed in his presence in the last verse.

In Matthew 7:11, Jesus talks about God giving "good things" to those who ask, in Luke 11:13, the materialistic view is changed and "good things" becomes "the Holy Spirit". In Matthew,

Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (5:3) and "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (5:6). Luke changes it to be anti-materialist: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (6:20) and "Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied". Luke also adds "Woe to you who are rich" (6:24).

In Luke 16:16 Jesus says that the Jewish law was important up until John the Baptist, but since then the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached. In verse 17, he says "it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail." In Matthew 5:17-18, Jesus says he did *not* come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it, and that the law shall not change until heaven and earth pass away. In verse 19, he says "whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven." He then turns around and does just that. The Mosaic law allows divorce (see Deuteronomy 24:1-4), but he forbids it, either altogether (Mark 10:11-12) or except in case of unchastity (Matthew 5:32, 19:9) [Hoffman 85, p. 54]. The law permits swearing of oaths, but Jesus forbids it (Matthew 5:34-36). The law says "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth", but Jesus forbids retribution (Matthew 5:38-39) [Wells 71, pp. 64-65]. (Paul claims that the law is meaningless for Christians in Romans 7:4 and Ephesians 2:15.)

In Matthew 11:25, Jesus says: "Nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone whom the Son wills to reveal Him", but Psalms 145:18 says: "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him."

Teachings of the Pharisees

In Matthew 23:2-3, Jesus tells his disciples to follow the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees, but Matthew 16:5-12 says: "He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

Resurrection of Lazarus

Part of the Gospel of Mark was intentionally suppressed at the instigation of Bishop Clement of Alexandria in order to stamp out a Gnostic sect known as the Carpocratians, who were using it to support some heresy near the end of the second century. In 1958 Professor Morton Smith of Columbia University discovered a letter in the Monastery of Mar Saba near Jerusalem from Clement to someone named Theodore. In this letter, Clement tells Theodore he "did well in silencing the unspeakable teachings of the Carpocratians" and goes on to quote the so-called "secret gospel of Mark" in the letter. It is an account of Jesus' raising of Lazarus from the dead. In this text, however, a cry is heard from within the tomb before the stone is rolled away. It has been theorized that the "death" and "resurrection" of Lazarus were part of some initiation rite. The initiation rite theory is supported by the Gospel of John. In John 11:16, after Jesus speaks in allegorical terms of Lazarus' death, Thomas says to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him". Under this interpretation, Thomas is saying that he wants to undergo initiation rather than join in a suicide pact with the rest of the disciples.

The "secret gospel" goes on to say the following, which may have been interpreted by the Carpocratians to be homosexual in nature: "And after six days, Jesus told him what to do and in the evening the youth comes to him, wearing a linen cloth over his naked body. And he remained with him that night, for Jesus taught him the mystery of the kingdom of God." The possibility of homosexual interpretation is revealed by this excerpt from Clement's letter, which immediately follows the quote from the secret gospel: "After these words follows the text, 'And James and John come to him', and all that section. But 'naked man with naked man', and the other things about which you wrote, are not found." [Baigent 83, pp. 318-322], [Barnstone 84, pp. 339-342]

Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

In Matthew 21:1-11, Jesus enters the city riding on both a donkey and a colt, probably due to a misunderstanding of the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. The other gospels do not make this error (Mark 10:11-19, Luke 19:28-38, John 12:12-19).

Jesus and the Moneychangers in the Temple

In the synoptics, Jesus drives the moneychangers out of the temple shortly before his death (Matthew 21:12, Mark 11:15-16, Luke 19:45). In John, the event occurs at the beginning of his preaching career (John 2:14-16).

Betrayed by a Friend

The betrayal story doesn't make sense. Jesus was a public teacher, why would the priests have needed Judas to identify him for them (Mark 14:44)?

These are some alleged prophecies and their fulfillments about Jesus' betrayal:

Prophecy: Psalms 41:9: "Even my close friend, in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me."

There is no indication whatsoever that this passage was intended to be prophetic or refers to the Messiah. In fact, it was written by David about something which happened to him (fulfillment: Matthew 10:4).

Prophecy: Zechariah 11:12-13: "And I said to them, 'If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!' So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. Then the Lord said to me, 'Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them.' So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord."

This passage shows thirty shekels being given to Zechariah as a slave's wages. There is no mention of any betrayal.

Fulfillment: Matthew 26:15: "and said, 'what are you willing to give me to deliver Him up to you?' And they weighed out to him thirty pieces of silver." and Matthew 27:7: "And they counseled together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers."

Note that Matthew 27:9-10 claims that Jeremiah prophesied "and they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price had been set by the sons of Israel; and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me." Such a prophecy occurs nowhere in Jeremiah. Jeremiah 32:6-9 cannot apply because the field is bought by Jeremiah alone, not "they"; for seventeen shekels, not thirty; and with God's approval.

Judas' Death

In Matthew 27:5-7, Judas throws the thirty pieces of silver in the sanctuary and then hangs himself. In Acts 1:18, Judas buys a field with the money and dies by falling and bursting open.

Jesus' Arrest

According to John 18:12, Jesus was arrested by a Roman cohort and officers of the Jewish priests, then taken to the Sanhedrin. The synoptics, on the other hand, claim that he was arrested by the "multitudes" sent by the priests, making no mention of any Roman involvement (Matthew 26:47, Mark 14:43, Luke 22:47) [Zeitlin 47, pp. 150-151].

The story of Jesus' trial also has problems. The Sanhedrin apparently had the power to condemn someone to death by stoning (though [Sherwin-White 78, pp. 32-47] argues that this power was only for special cases). If the Sanhedrin did have the option of capital punishment, they had no reason to turn Jesus over to Pilate. The Romans, on the other hand, reserved crucifixion for enemies of the empire. A charge of "blasphemy" was not sufficient ([Sherwin-White 78, p. 35] argues that a Roman governor asked to carry out an execution would do it in his own manner). If Jesus was crucified by the Romans, he had likely been stirring up political trouble--his claim to be the Messiah ("anointed one", a concept which did not necessarily imply divinity, but that he would be the new king). Another accusation of political crime is made in Luke 23:2; it is claimed Jesus forbade paying of tribute to Caesar.

Lots Cast for Jesus' Garments

Yet another alleged prophecy about Jesus is Psalms 22:18: "They divide my garments among them,

And for my clothing they cast lots." And yet again there is no indication that this passage was intended to be prophetic (fulfillment in John 19:23-24). The synoptics rightly realize that this alleged prophecy is just describing the same thing in two different ways (division of garments, casting of lots), but John has the soldiers divide his outer garments and cast lots for his tunic separately.

The Crucifixion

The Jewish Feast of Unleavened Bread is celebrated from the evening of the 14th of Nisan to the evening of the 21st of Nisan (Exodus 12:17-18). The 14th is the evening of Passover, during which the Paschal Meal (Seder) is eaten. John 19:31 says that the Sabbath was a high day, meaning that the Feast began on that day. Since Jewish days are counted from evening to evening, this means that the 15th of Nisan was the Sabbath. John puts the arrest and Last Supper on the 13th of Nisan (John 13:1) and the crucifixion on the 14th of Nisan (John 19:31), with Jesus dying just before the Sabbath (representing Jesus as the Paschal lamb). The synoptics, on the other hand, put the arrest on the evening of the 14th of Nisan, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Matthew 26:17, Mark 14:12, Luke 22:7) and the crucifixion at some later time, on the day of preparation for the Sabbath (Matthew 27:62, Mark 15:42, Luke 23:54) [Baigent 83, pp. 317-318], [Zeitlin 47, pp. 103-106].

Matthew, Mark, and Luke state that Jesus did not carry his own cross, but that it was carried by Simon the Cyrene (Matthew 27:32, Mark 15:21, Luke 23:26). John 19:17, however, says that Jesus carried his own cross. Christians explain this by saying that Jesus carried his cross for a while but then Simon took over when it looked like Jesus wouldn't make it. Interestingly, none of the gospels make the slightest mention of such an event [Hoffman 85, p. 55].

There are several alleged prophecies of the crucifixion (Psalms 22:16, Zechariah 12:10). They do not, however, give any indication that they are referring to crucifixion. The first, in fact, is a Psalm of David and contains no indication that it was intended to be prophetic at all. In addition, if looked at in context, it is obvious that the passage is referring to the speaker being hunted down ("For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and feet.").

Matthew and Mark have only women present at the crucifixion (Matthew 27:55-56, Mark 15:40). Luke adds "acquaintances" (Luke 23:49) and John adds "the beloved disciple" (John 19:25-26).

In Matthew 27:44 and Mark 15:32, both robbers crucified with Jesus hurl abuse at him along with the crowd. In Luke 23:39-43, the repentant thief story is introduced.

Jesus' final words are different in the four gospels. In Matthew and Mark he says, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34). In Luke 23:46 he says, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." In John 19:30 he says, "It is finished."

At the moment of his death, Matthew 27:51-53 says there was an earthquake, the veil in the temple was torn in half, and saints came back to life. These are extremely significant events, yet none of the other gospels make the slightest mention of them.

It doesn't make sense for Jesus to have died so quickly. Since his legs were not broken and his feet were affixed to the cross, his weight was being supported and he would not have died of a quick asphyxiation. Victims of crucifixion regularly took nearly a week to die of exhaustion, thirst, or, if nails were used, blood poisoning. Yet Jesus supposedly died after being on the cross for only a few hours. Even Pilate is surprised by his quick death (Mark 15:44). In John 19:28-30, Jesus says he is thirsty and is given a sponge soaked in vinegar, which should have had a stimulating effect--soured wine was often used during the time to resuscitate galley slaves. But instead, Jesus dies immediately thereafter--a reaction which could have been caused by a compound of opium and belladonna commonly employed at the time in the Middle East. Such a soporific drug could produce a semblance of death in a living victim.

According to Roman law, a victim of crucifixion was to be denied all burial, yet Pilate gives

up Jesus' body to Joseph of Arimathea readily. Interestingly, in the Greek version of the Gospel of Mark, Joseph asks Pilate for Jesus' body ("soma") while Pilate replies using the word for corpse ("ptoma"). Some have speculated that this meant Joseph did not think of Jesus as being dead [Baigent 83, p. 356], [Schonfield 65, pp. 167-168].

The Resurrection

There are several alleged prophecies of the resurrection (Psalms 16:10, 30:3, 41:10, 118:17, Hosea 6:2). There is no indication that any of these passages were intended to be referring to the Messiah, or even prophetic. The first three are by and about David, the fourth is vague (it merely says "I shall not die, but live"), and the fifth mentions not resurrection from death but rather reviving from wounds (see Hosea 6:1), and is obviously referring to the nation of Israel flourishing after a period of dejection.

The Gospel of Mark probably originally had no resurrection account, it is believed that verses 9-20 in chapter 16 were appended some time during the second century C.E.

The Empty Tomb

The description of Roman guards at the tomb (Matthew 27:63-66) was probably devised to counter the argument that the disciples stole the body. But if soldiers guarded the tomb, they must have witnessed the resurrection and stone being rolled away, but they apparently did not tell of their experiences. To counter this, the story of the Jewish authorities bribing them to lie and say the disciples stole the body while they were sleeping could have arisen [Wells 71, pp. 40-41]. It must have been a sizable amount of money to convince them to lie (and risk the death penalty for claiming to have been sleeping on duty!) after having witnessed a rather impressive miracle. (Note that Mark, Luke, and John do not mention any guards.)

In Mark 16:2, the tomb is visited after the sun had risen. In John 20:1, it is visited while it is still dark.

In Mark (16:4), Luke (24:2), and John (20:1), the stone is already rolled away. In Matthew (28:2), it is rolled away by an angel as the women watch.

In Matthew 28:1-10, Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" find the empty tomb and see a single angel sitting outside who tells them to go to Galilee to see Jesus. In Mark 16:1-7, the two Marys and Salome witness the empty tomb and are told by a young man sitting inside that they will see Jesus in Galilee. In Luke 23:55-24:10, it is implied that there was a group of women present and two angels standing inside do not tell them to go to Galilee, but just remind them of what Jesus said there. In John 20:1-4, Mary Magdalene alone sees the empty tomb, Peter and the "other disciple" race to the tomb, and then later Mary alone sees two angels sitting inside.

The "Life of Christ in Stereo" by Johnston Cheney (excerpted in Appendix B of [McDowell 81c, pp. 125-134]) attempts to resolve these contradictions by emphasizing certain words to give a specific interpretation, introducing multiple visits to the tomb, etc.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:5 that the resurrected Jesus appeared to Cephas and to "the twelve". Matthew 28:16-17 and Mark 16:14 specifically state that he appeared to the remaining eleven apostles. It is apparent that Paul was not aware of the story of Judas' betrayal.

Josh McDowell [McDowell 72, pp. 175-176] mentions that in a book *Science Speaks* by Peter Stoner, the probability that any man might have fulfilled eight of the 61 prophecies listed is one in 10^{17} . This figure is completely bogus. First of all, it is impossible to assign probabilities to such events. Second of all, of the eight prophecies supposedly fulfilled, most of them are not noted as prophecies or even referring to the coming Messiah at all. It appears that what was done was to take the gospels and go through the Old Testament looking for anything that could possibly be construed as being about Jesus. This method could come up with "prophecies" and their "fulfillments" for the life of any man.

If it is indeed assumed that the Old Testament references to the "son of man", the Messiah, and the Suffering Servant all apply to Jesus, then Christians should look at all of them. Psalms 146:3 says "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help" (King James Version, the New American Standard translation replaces "son of man" with "mortal man"). Job 25:6 says "How much less man, that maggot, and the son of man, that worm!" (Other

denigrations of the son of man may be found in Psalms 8:4 and 144:3.

Psalms 22 allegedly contains prophecies about Jesus (see "The Crucifixion", above), but verse 6 says "But I am a worm, and not a man, a reproach of men, and despised by the people". Isaiah 42:19 says of the Suffering Servant: "Who is blind but My servant, or so deaf as My messenger whom I send?"

Obedience to Authority of Men

In Acts 5:29, Peter and the apostles say "We must obey God rather than men". 1 Peter 2:13-14 says "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers and the praise of those who do right."

Paul

According to Acts 9:19-31, after Paul's conversion he went to Damascus, where he was introduced to the apostles by Barnabas and went to Tarsus when non-Christian Jews were planning to murder him. According to Paul, though, in Galatians 1:16-20, he "did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother."

Paul states in Galatians 3:10 that "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them", a reference to Deuteronomy 27:26. This is, however, a misrepresentation of what Deuteronomy says. The verse in question is referring only to the preceding eleven basic ethical obligations, not to the entire Torah (the Old Testament Hebrew uses the words "Torah" and "this Torah" in several places to refer to a specific group of laws, see Leviticus 6:2, 6:18, 7:37, 11:46, 13:59, 14:2, 15:32, Numbers 6:21, Deuteronomy 1:5, 4:8, 28:61, 31:9, 31:11).

Paul wrote the following paradoxical passage in Titus 1:12-13: "One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.' This testimony is true" (a reference to the Epimenides Paradox).

The Way of Salvation

If we believe Deuteronomy 10:12-13, Ecclesiastes 12:13, Ezekiel 18:4-9, Micah 6:8, Matthew 19:16-21, Mark 10:17-21, Luke 10:25-28, 18:18-22, 19:8-9, John 5:28-29, Acts 10:35, Romans 2:13, 1 Corinthians 7:19, James 1:25, 1:27, 2:21, and 2:25, salvation comes through works. If we believe Proverbs 16:9, 20:24, Matthew 24:24, 24:31, Acts 13:48, Ephesians 1:4-5, 2 Timothy 2:10, 1 Peter 1:2, 2:8, Revelation 13:8 and 17:8, God has already predetermined who will be saved (Psalms 65:4, 86:13, John 6:44, 6:65, 17:9, Acts 22:14, Romans 9:16 and 9:18 say that God chooses to save whoever he sees fit to save). If we believe John 3:15-16, 3:18, 3:36, 6:28-29, 6:47, 11:25-26, 14:6, Acts 4:12, 13:39, 16:30-31, Romans 1:16-17, Ephesians 2:8-9, and Hebrews 11:6, salvation is by faith.

The Powers of Believers

According to the New Testament, all believers can handle snakes and drink deadly poisons without harm (Mark 16:17-18), move mountains and trees with only the tiniest amount of faith (Matthew 17:20, 21:21, Mark 11:23-24, Luke 17:6), will receive anything they ask for (Matthew 7:7-8, 21:22, Luke 11:9-10, John 14:12-14, 16:23, 1 John 3:22), and heal the sick (Mark 16:18, James 5:15). The evidence is that believers in Christianity do not have these special powers. Christians rationalize this away with James 4:3 ("You ask and do not receive because you ask with the wrong motives") and 1 John 5:14 ("If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us").

Do As I Say, Not As I Do

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

1 John 2:15: "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him."

Clark Pinnock [Pinnock 67] tries to claim the inerrancy of the original manuscripts of the Bible by calling the errors "difficulties" which would all disappear if our knowledge were greater. But Pinnock can't even advance his argument without contradicting himself. He says that "it is false to employ an esoteric definition of 'purpose' to cover over errors in Scripture" but then says that citations in the New Testament drawn from the Old Testament "are made for a purpose and this purpose does not always require exact precision." He argues for literal truth, but claims that much of the Bible is figurative, symbolic, and mythological.

He engages in doublespeak to the point where he is saying nothing more than the Bible is inerrant, in spite of any evidence to the contrary. It is this stance which has resulted in fundamentalists being characterized as "Bible worshippers" rather than "God worshippers". If God himself were to appear before a fundamentalist and tell him that he was making a mistake--that the Bible has been altered and revised over the centuries--the fundamentalist would respond, "I rebuke thee, Satan".

Fundamentalists should take to heart Proverbs 14:15 ("The naive believes everything, but the prudent man considers his steps") and 1 Thessalonians 5:21 ("Prove all things" in the King James Version, "Examine everything carefully" in the New American Standard).

The Bible and Science

The Bible makes many claims which contradict modern science. Here is a list of a few of them: (a) the world's languages didn't evolve slowly but appeared suddenly (Genesis 11:6-9); (b) camels do not have cloven hooves (Leviticus 11:4); (c) rabbits chew cud (Leviticus 11:6); (d) the bat is not a flying mammal, but a bird (Leviticus 11:13-19, Deuteronomy 14:11-18); (e) some creeping insects have only four legs (Leviticus 11:23); (f) the earth rests on and was formed out of water (Exodus 20:4, Deuteronomy 4:18, 5:8, Psalms 136:6, 2 Peter 3:5), rests on pillars (1 Samuel 2:8), does not move (1 Chronicles 16:30), has edges and four corners (Deuteronomy 13:7, 28:64, 33:17, 1 Samuel 2:10, Job 28:24, 37:3, 38:4-6, 38:13, Psalms 46:9, 48:10, 59:13, 61:2, 65:5, Isaiah 11:12, Revelation 7:1, and many others); (g) the mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds (Matthew 13:31-32); (h) a fetus can understand speech (Luke 1:44).

In response to (g) a Christian may claim that the mustard seed was the smallest seed known at the time, but this is false. Some seeds which are smaller include the poppy, mint, and hyssop. Mint (smallest seed is peppermint, .7mm x .5mm x .4mm; largest is spearmint, .8mm x .5mm x .4mm) is mentioned in Matthew 23:23 and Luke 11:42. Hyssop (seed measures 2.1mm x 1.0mm x .7mm) is mentioned in Exodus 12:22, Leviticus 14:4,6,49,51,52, Numbers 19:6,18, 1 Kings 4:33, Psalms 51:7, John 19:29, and Hebrews 9:19. The mustard seed measures 1.2mm x 1.2mm x 1.2mm.

Biblical Morality

The following are some quotes illustrating the morality of the God of the Bible. Some of the Old Testament quotes describe laws which made sense at the time they were written, when the mortality rate was high, population was low, and modern sanitary conditions did not exist. Yet fundamentalists still use Old Testament laws for justification of such things as hatred of homosexuality. Selective use of such laws doesn't make sense if the Bible is the inerrant word of God. The fundamentalists should abide by the rest of these rules as well.

Old Testament Morality

Exodus 12:29: "Now it came about at midnight that the Lord struck all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the first-born of the captive who

- was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle."
- Exodus 21:7: "And if a man sells his daughter as a female slave, she is not to go free as the male slaves do."
- Exodus 21:17: "And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." (Also Leviticus 20:9.)
- Exodus 22:18: "You shall not allow a sorceress to live."
- Exodus 22:20: "He who sacrifices to any god, other than to the Lord alone, shall be utterly destroyed."
- Exodus 22:29: "You shall not delay the offering from your harvest and your vintage. The first-born of your sons you shall give to Me."
- Exodus 31:15: "For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the Lord; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death."
- Exodus 32:27: "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Every man of you put his sword upon his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp, and kill every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbor.'"
- Leviticus 19:19: "You are to keep My statutes. You shall not breed together two kinds of cattle; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor wear a garment upon you of two kinds of material mixed together."
- Leviticus 19:26: "You shall not eat anything with the blood, nor practice divination or soothsaying."
- Leviticus 19:27: "You shall not round off the side growth of your heads, nor harm the edges of your beard."
- Leviticus 19:28: "You shall not make any cuts in your body for the dead, nor make any tattoo marks on yourselves: I am the Lord."
- Leviticus 20:10: "If there is a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death."
- Leviticus 20:18: "If there is a man who lies with a menstrous woman and uncovers her nakedness, he has laid bare her flow, and she has exposed the flow of her blood; thus both of them shall be cut off from among their people."
- Leviticus 21:9: "Also the daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by harlotry, she profanes her father; she shall be burned with fire."
- Leviticus 24:16: "Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death."
- Leviticus 25:44: "As for your male and female slaves whom you may have--you may acquire male and female slaves from the nations that are around you."
- Numbers 31:7 "So they made war against Midian, just as the Lord had commanded Moses, and they killed every male."
- Numbers 31:17-18: "Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman

who has known man intimately. But all the girls who have not known man intimately, spare for yourselves."

Deuteronomy 13:6-9: "If your brother, your mother's son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as your own soul, entice you secretly, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' (whom neither you nor your fathers have known, of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you, or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end), you shall not yield to him or listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him. But you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people."

Deuteronomy 14:8: "And the pig, because it divides the hoof but does not chew the cud, it is unclean for you. You shall not eat any of their flesh nor touch their carcasses." (Also Leviticus 11:7.)

Deuteronomy 22:20-21: "But if this charge is true, that the girl was not found a virgin, then they shall bring out the girl to the doorway of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death."

Deuteronomy 23:1: "No one who is emasculated, or has his male organ cut off, shall enter the assembly of the Lord."

Deuteronomy 28:53: "Then you shall eat the offspring of your own body, the flesh of your sons and of your daughters whom the Lord your God has given you, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy shall oppress you." (Another friendly curse from the all-loving God. See also Deuteronomy 26:29, Jeremiah 19:9, Ezekiel 5:10.)

Joshua 6:21: "And they utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword."

Joshua 8:8: "Then it will be when you have seized the city, that you shall set the city on fire. You shall do it according to the word of the Lord. See, I have commanded you." (The Hebrews then killed all 12,000 inhabitants of Ai, as God commanded in Joshua 8:1-2.)

Joshua 10:40: "Thus Joshua struck all the land, the hill country and the Negev and the lowland and the slopes and all their kings. He left no survivor, but he utterly destroyed all who breathed, just as the Lord, the God of Israel, had commanded."

1 Samuel 15:3: "Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey."

2 Samuel 21:6,8-9: "Let seven men from his sons be given to us, and we will hang them before the Lord in Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of the Lord.' And the king said, 'I will give them.' So the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, Armoni and Mephibosheth whom she had born to Saul, and the five sons of Merab the daughter of Saul, whom she had born to Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite. Then he gave them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the mountain before the Lord, so that the seven of them fell together; and they were put to death in the first days of harvest at the beginning of barley harvest." (An example of human sacrifice.)

2 Samuel 24, 1 Chronicles 21: God causes a pestilence to kill seventy thousand people because David took a census.

2 Kings 2:23-24: God causes 42 little kids to be torn apart by bears merely because they make fun of his prophet Elisha's bald head.

Psalms 137:9: "How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones against the rock."

Isaiah 45:7: "The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these."

Lamentations 3:38: "Is it not from the mouth of the Most High That both good and ill go forth?"

Ezekiel 20:25: "And I also gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live."

Hosea 13:16: "Samaria will be held guilty, for she has rebelled against her God. They will fall by the sword, their little ones will be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women will be ripped open."

Amos 3:6: "If a calamity occurs in a city has not the Lord done it?"

New Testament Morality

Matthew 6:7: "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words."

Matthew 10:34-36: "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household." (A contradiction of John 14:27.)

Matthew 23:9: "And do not call anyone on earth your father, for One is your Father, He who is in heaven."

Luke 6:30: "Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back." (See how many Christians really believe this one. Also Matthew 5:40 and Matthew 5:42.)

Luke 12:33: "Sell your possessions and give to charity." (Also Matthew 19:21, Luke 18:22.)

Luke 14:26: "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple." (Those who obey this commandment should read 1 John 3:15, below.)

John 10:34: "Jesus answered them, 'Has it not been written in your Law, I SAID, YOU ARE GODS?'"

Acts 5:1-11: A Christian couple are struck dead when they don't give quite all of their money to Peter for the church.

1 Corinthians 6:1: "Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?"

1 Corinthians 9:20-23: "And to the Jews I became a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it." (It is OK to lie to win converts, an activity condemned in Romans 3:7-8.)

1 Corinthians 11:5: "But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved."

1 Corinthians 11:14: "Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?"

1 Corinthians 14:34: "Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says."

Galatians 5:2: "Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you." (This verse is in direct contradiction with the surrounding verses.)

1 Timothy 2:9: "Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments." (Also see 1 Peter 3:3.)

1 Timothy 2:12: "But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet."

1 John 3:15: "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."

THE CLAIMS OF CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is based on the belief that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, God who came to earth as man to die as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. The vast majority of information about this person Jesus (Greek for Joshua, or "salvation of Yahweh") comes from the New Testament.

Of the oldest New Testament manuscripts, there is one fragment from the second century (part of the Gospel of John), three codices from the third century, and many from the fourth to sixth centuries. The oldest complete gospel manuscripts date back to the fourth century [McDowell 72, pp. 48-50].

Nearly all of the biographical detail about Jesus comes from the four gospels. Unfortunately, they were written as *kerygma*, or preachings, rather than as historical documents [Dibelius 79, p. 35]. In fact, the references to Jesus follow a pattern more like those to William Tell than to an actual historical figure.

First century writings which mention Jesus are fairly sparse. None appeared until 30 years or so after his public ministry allegedly began, the gospels after about 50 years. The first Christian writings to appear, the letters of Paul, refer to Jesus, but give no indication of where or when he lived. It is only in later writings, when traditions about Jesus had already become established, that biographical details began to appear.

First Century Extrabiblical References to Jesus

Flavius Josephus, who wrote two major works on the history of Palestine, makes no mention of Jesus in The Jewish War (Christian interpolations may be found in some fifteenth century manuscripts of Russian and Rumanian translations), which covers the period from Antiochus Epiphanes to 73 C.E. His The Antiquities of the Jews, written in 93 C.E., contains only two references to Jesus. The first is a paragraph of ten lines, which is a glowing description of Jesus as "a wise man", "doer of marvelous acts", and "the Christ". It also states that he resurrected on the third day (Antiquities XVIII, iii, 3 [Josephus 85, p. 379]). This passage is certainly a Christian insertion, not something written by Josephus, a Pharisee. An Arabic translation of this passage may be found in the World History of tenth century Bishop Agapius of Hierapolis which is not quite so complimentary of Jesus, which has led some to believe it to be the original Josephus text. It, however, also states that Jesus was "perhaps the Messiah". Most damning of all, though, is the fact that the passage occurs in a context in which it has no place, and its removal results in a smooth continuous sequence [Hoffman 84, pp. 53-59], [Wells 71, pp. 190-195], [Wells 75, pp. 10-11]. Origen, writing in the third century, states that Josephus "did not believe in Jesus as Christ." (Contra Celsum, I, 47 [Origen 80, p. 43]) Origen was familiar with the second Josephus reference, but apparently not with this one. Eusebius, writing in the fourth century, makes the earliest reference to this passage.

The second mentions a "James, the brother of Jesus, him called Christ", who was one of a number of men brought before the Sanhedrin in 62 C.E. who were to be stoned (Antiquities XX, ix, 1 [Josephus 85, p. 423]). The "brother of Jesus, him called Christ" is almost certainly an interpolation, as it doesn't make sense for Josephus to mention Jesus only in passing and nowhere else (of particular significance is that Josephus does not mention Jesus in his coverage of John the Baptist) (Antiquities XVIII, v, 2 [Josephus 85, p. 382]). A second century Christian account of a "James the brother of the Lord" by Hegesippus (preserved as a quotation in Eusebius) represents him in some respects as a Jewish rather than Christian saint, suggesting that the James about whom Josephus wrote was within Judaism [Wells 75, p. 11].

Other first century historians are also silent about Jesus. The Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, who traveled in Palestine and speaks of the Essenes, makes no mention of Jesus. The historian Justus of Tiberias, who wrote about 80 C.E., also fails to mention his existence. (Although none of Justus' writings survive, Photius, a Christian patriarch of the ninth century, says that "This Jewish historian does not make the smallest mention of the appearance of Christ, and says nothing whatever of his deeds and miracles.") [Wells 71, p. 195] The first century writers Seneca, Petronius, Pliny the Elder, Juvenal, Martial, Quintilian, Epictetus, Plutarch, and Appian all fail to mention Jesus.

Julius Africanus, who wrote in the third century, mentions the History of Thallus, claiming that an eclipse Thallus describes was not an eclipse but a supernatural event. It is not certain that Thallus' writing predates the gospels or even that he was referring to the three-hour darkness which supposedly occurred during Jesus' crucifixion--he may well have only been chronicling the eclipse

of the sun in the reign of Tiberius which took place on 24 November, 29 C.E. [Wells 84, p. 18].

In the Baraithas and Tosephta, rabbinical collections of precepts from the end of the first century, there are references to "Jeshu ben Pandira", also known as "ben Stada" (in the Tosephta), assumed to be Jesus. This person, however, is described in the Tosephta as a magician who cut charms into his flesh (Shabbath XI, 15), who tempted Jews to apostasy, and was executed by stoning in Lud (or Lydda) (Sanhedrin X, 11). The Baraithas claim he learned magic in Egypt and was executed in Lud by hanging on the eve of Passover. Even if these are references to Jesus, it is remarkable that there are no earlier ones [Wells 71, pp. 197-200].

The only other first century references to Jesus are by Clement, in writings from 96 C.E.

Later Extrabiblical References to Jesus

Other pagan texts referred to as evidence for the historicity of Jesus are by Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger. The latter only writes to the Emperor Trajan (in 112 C.E.) asking for advice on dealing with Christians. His only mention of Jesus is to say that those who denied Christ were not punished (Letters, X, 96-97 [Pliny 63, pp. 293-295]).

Suetonius wrote of a Jewish revolt in Rome during the reign of Claudius which was instigated by "Chrestus" [Suetonius 57, p. 197]. Claudius reigned from 41-54 C.E.; it is unlikely that Christianity spread so far so fast and became so powerful so quickly. Chrestus was also a common name among slaves and freemen (the name appearing more than eighty times in Latin inscriptions of Rome) [Wells 71, pp. 185-186].

In the Annals of Tacitus (XV, 44 [Tacitus 42, vol. 1, pp. 380-381]), he mentions Christians and states that "Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus." Some regard this passage as a Christian interpolation on various grounds, but it is in any case not evidence of the historicity of Jesus simply because by the date of Annals (120 C.E.) Christians already associated the death of Jesus with Pilate, and Tacitus was most likely merely repeating what Christians themselves believed. It was not Tacitus' practice to consult original documents [Wells 71, pp. 186-188]. Its inaccuracy is also evident by its use of the title "Christ" as a proper name, and by its reference to Pilate as "procurator" rather than his correct title, "prefect" [Wells 82, p. 16].

Christians attempted to counteract the silence of pagan writers by writing forgeries and alleging that pagan documents about Christianity did exist. The best known forgery is a correspondence between Seneca and Paul, now universally admitted to be a forgery written in Rome in the late fourth century [Wells 71, pp. 189-190]. Another such forgery is a letter from Pilate to "his emperor Claudius" (dating from the third century) which insists that the disciples did not steal Jesus' body from the tomb. This letter's author overlooked the fact that Pilate was governor of Judea only until 36 C.E. while Claudius did not become emperor until 41 C.E. [Hoffman 84, pp. 65-66]

The second method is illustrated by Justin, who states in his first Apology (Chapter 35) that Roman records of the crucifixion exist; and by Tertullian, who claimed (in 197 C.E.) that Pilate wrote a report to Tiberius about the crucifixion and resurrection resulting in the senate convening to place Christ among the gods. These claims are rejected by historians [Wells 71, pp. 189-190] ([McDowell 72, pp. 86-87] gives these references as sources for the historicity of Jesus, but gives no disclaimer for the Justin passage and misleadingly says that only "Some historians doubt the historicity of this passage" for the Tertullian claim).

There are references taken to be of Jesus in the rabbinical literature later than the first century. These references are found in the Palestinian (or Jerusalem) and Babylonian Talmuds. The Mishnah, a codification of the law with explanatory reminiscences completed in 220 C.E., itself became the subject of commentary known as the Gemara. The Talmuds are composed of the Mishnah plus a Gemara. While there is only one Mishnah, it was studied in both Palestine and Babylonia.

There is no mention of Jesus in the Mishnah though some believe a passage (Jeb. IV, 13) which tells that Rabbi Shim'on ben 'Azai (active near the beginning of the second century) found a roll of pedigrees in Jerusalem which told that "a certain person" was of illegitimate birth refers to Jesus. In the Gemara, which consists of even later material, it is claimed that Pappos ben Jehuda, who lived in the second century, was the husband of the mother of Jesus (Shabbath 104b). Jesus is also said to have been persecuted by King Alexander Jannaeus (Sanhedrin 107b), who reigned from 103 to 76 B.C.E. It describes Jesus' activities by saying that he "practiced magic and led astray Israel" (Sanhedrin 43a). The Gemara also contains references to "Minim", fairly widely

agreed to be Jewish Christians ("Petrine" Christians) who still upheld the Jewish law. The first mention of the Minim can be dated to about 80 C.E. by its mention of Rabbi Gamaliel II [Hoffman 84, pp. 36-53], [Wells 71, pp. 200-202].

Later Christian writings include the books of the Apocrypha and the Gnostic Gospels. The latter were fairly recently discovered--in December of 1945 by Muhammad 'Ali al-Samman Muhammad Khalifah--and were translated and published (as the Nag Hammadi Library) by the Coptic Gnostic Library Project of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity at the Claremont Graduate School in Claremont, California. These books present a very different picture of Jesus and the early church than the common Christian view [Pagels 81, pp. xi-xxxix]. They are as old or older than most of the oldest New Testament manuscripts, dating back to the fourth century. These Christian writings were not accepted as canonical because they did not conform to the dogma established by the time of the Council of Nicea.

Jesus in the New Testament

Paul's Epistles

The earliest writings mentioning Jesus are the epistles of Paul, which were probably written between 55-60 C.E. These writings describe a mystical Jesus, giving little biographical detail. None give any indication of when Jesus lived, with the exception of 1 Timothy, which mentions Pilate. This letter, however, along with 2 Timothy and Titus, are widely agreed to have been written early in the second century to refute certain gnostic views (among other reasons, this later date for the pastoral epistles is given because the church structure described in them is that of the second century). The fact that others wrote using Paul's name is evident from 2 Thessalonians 2:2, which warns against "a letter as if from us" [Dibelius 79, p. 141, pp. 150-151, pp. 230-234], [Wells 75, pp. 17-18].

Paul fails to mention major gospel "facts" such as Jesus' birth place, any association with Nazareth, his miracles, his encounters with the Pharisees, John the Baptist, the Lord's Prayer, and the empty tomb (Chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians is an attempt to convince Christians of the reality of the resurrection, but Paul fails to mention the appearances of Jesus to the women or the empty tomb). He actually seems to deny that Jesus did perform any miracles in 1 Corinthians 1:22-23 ("For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness.") He is also ignorant of Jesus commandment in Matthew 28:19 to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" when he says "for Christ did not send me to baptize" (1 Corinthians 1:17). In his ethical teachings, when he happens to give precepts common to the gospels, he gives them on his own authority or that of the Old Testament, as if he was not aware of Jesus saying the same thing (such as Romans 12:14: "bless those who persecute you"). Paul seems to be completely unacquainted with any historical Jesus.

There are several places in Paul's writings which are interpreted as evidence that Jesus recently lived. These are the single mention of "the twelve" in 1 Corinthians 15:5, his references to "Cephas", and his mention of "James, the Lord's brother" in Galatians 1:19.

"The twelve" is probably an early Christian tradition, but Paul demonstrates no acquaintance with them, as he mentions them only once and does not give their names. He also demonstrates his ignorance of the gospel accounts by the fact that he claims Jesus appeared to twelve and not eleven. Although Acts claims the twelve (after Judas was replaced) to be the leaders of the Jerusalem church, Paul says the leaders of the Jerusalem church are Cephas, James, and John.

The Cephas (Aramaic for "rock", as "Peter" is Greek for "rock") mentioned by Paul may not be the same as the apostle Simon Peter in the gospels. Although Paul refers to Cephas as an apostle, he also refers to himself as one (Galatians 1:1, for example). He also mentions Cephas and Peter as though they are different people in Galatians 2:7-9. Cephas was obviously a rival teacher, whom Paul mentions opposing in Galatians 2:11-13. Yet Paul does not make mention of such gospel details as Peter's denial of Jesus (Mark 14:71), Jesus calling Peter "Satan" (Mark 8:33), or Peter falling asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:40-41) to put Cephas in his place. If Cephas and Peter are one and the same, then it is likely that these are later embellishments to the story of his career. Other evidence against Cephas being an associate of Jesus is the fact that Paul didn't bother going to meet him until after being a Christian for three years (Galatians 1:18) and even after this meeting was still ignorant of any details of Jesus' life.

The mention of "James, the Lord's brother" is most likely merely a reference to a member of a Christian group, not an actual brother of Jesus. Paul regularly refers to Christians as "brethren". Mark 6:3 does name a James as the brother of Jesus, and the same reference also appears in Matthew 13:55. The author of Luke and Acts, though he omits this particular reference, was also familiar with Mark, yet fails to indicate that the James who Paul met in Jerusalem was the brother of Jesus (Acts 21:18). In fact, the author of Luke and Acts never mentions any James the brother of Jesus, though Acts 12:17 mentions "James and the brethren" (this James, by the way, is not James the apostle, who is killed in Acts 12:2).

Other Letters

Most of the other letters of the New Testament were pseudonymously written in opposition to heretical ideas. Like Paul's letters, their references to Jesus lack biographical detail. They are usually dated by their references to persecutions. Such persecutions have been held to have occurred under Nero (in Rome in 64 C.E.), Domitian (81-96 C.E.), and Trajan (98-117 C.E.). The earliest (and rather slight) evidence of persecutions under Domitian is in the writing of Melito, bishop of Sardis, around 170 C.E. From about 90 C.E., though, there were increasing practices to which Christians could not submit, such as taking oaths by the Emperor's genius, offering incense before his statue, and addressing him as Dominus.

Use of this information results in dating the earliest of these letters between 80 and 90 C.E. (Ephesians and Hebrews), most of the rest between 90 and 110 C.E. (1 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, and James), with 2 Peter around 130 C.E.

Gospel of Mark

Scholars agree that Mark is the earliest of the four gospels, and that Matthew and Luke made use of it in writing their gospels. Neither Ignatius (110 C.E.) nor Polycarp (120-135 C.E.) show any knowledge of this gospel, but both probably used Matthew, which presupposes the existence of Mark. A more specific date may be obtained by examination of the gospel itself. Mark 12:9 and chapter 13 demonstrate knowledge of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 C.E., as does the reference in Mark 15:38 to the tearing of the temple veil (which Josephus says was displayed in a procession through Rome after the Roman victory). Most scholars date Mark between 70 and 75 C.E. because of verses such as 1:15, 9:1, and 13:30, which seem to indicate that he believed the end of the world and return of Jesus were imminent, but Mark 13:7-10 seem to be trying to explain away why the end has not yet come ("when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end", "the gospel must first be preached to all the nations"). The references to persecution of Christians in Mark (8:35, 13:13) could indicate a later date (around 90 C.E.), at which time such persecutions were taking place (such as under the reign of Trajan or Domitian) [Wells 75, pp. 82-84], [Wells 82, pp. 107-113].

The early Christian view (as shown in Paul's writings) was that Jesus had lived an obscure life on earth, was rejected and crucified, and did not give signs to demonstrate that he was the Messiah. So where did the gospel view of Jesus as miracle-worker come from? Paul's second letter to the Corinthians chastises them for being boastful and arrogant, and he mentions those who preach "another Jesus" (2 Corinthians 11:4). The pagan philosopher Celsus wrote (around 178 C.E.) of Jewish prophets known as "divine man" who gave unintelligible utterances introduced by "I am God" or "a Son of God" or "a divine spirit". It is likely that Paul's rivals had adopted such a Jesus.

In Mark, these conflicting traditions are brought together. The beginning of the gospel has Jesus as miracle worker, at the end he is abandoned by his followers and crucified in a humiliating death. Mark attempts to resolve the conflict by introducing the "Messianic secret"--Jesus tells people (and demons) to keep silent about his miracles (1:24-25, 1:34, 1:43-44, 3:11-12, 5:43, 7:36, 8:26, 8:30, 9:9) and not even his closest followers recognize his Messianic status [Tuckett 83, pp. 3-4].

According to Albert Schweitzer [Schweitzer 64, p. 421], Mark wrote when "Jesus was a mere name", in order to prevent the gnostics from linking the message of salvation "with Hermes or Attis or any other savior". This misfeature of Paul's Jesus is also recognized in 2 Peter 3:16, which states: "as also in all his [Paul's] letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction." [Käsemann 79, p. 239]

That Mark was not an eyewitness of the accounts he describes is evident from his ignorance of Palestine of the time. He has Jesus give a teaching regarding women divorcing their husbands (Mark 10:12), when women of that time and place had no such right. His knowledge of Palestinian geography is also weak. According to Mark 7:31, Jesus traveled "from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee", even though Sidon is north of Tyre and the Sea of Galilee to the south. In Mark 8:10, he mentions a district called Dalmanutha which is unknown. In Mark 5:1, he mentions the "country of the Gerasenes" on the edge of the sea of Galilee, when in fact Gerasa is more than 30 miles southeast of the lake. Matthew 8:28 changes the location to Gadara, a spa only eight miles from the lake [Wells 82, p. 230].

Gospels of Matthew and Luke

These two gospels incorporate most of Mark (Matthew has 600 and Luke has 350 verses of Mark's 661) and contain additional material. Of the additional material, they have much in common with each other (over 200 verses), which indicates that they both had access to a second source which is no longer extant, usually referred to as Q (short for "Quelle", the German for "source") [Dibelius 79, pp. 53-56], [Murphy 86, p. 42]. The interpolated Q document consists mainly of sayings of Jesus, associates him with John the Baptist, but does not mention Pilate or the crucifixion.

The Jesus of Q falls somewhere between that of Mark and that of Paul. It depicts Jesus as an obscure and rejected preacher. Q contains only two miracle stories, in which the faith of the person who requests the cure is emphasized (see Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 7:1-10). Jesus is depicted as being similar to John the Baptist, on earth to warn of impending judgment. These elements are probably based on the Old Testament "Wisdom" traditions, which also influenced Paul's writings (see, for example, Proverbs 1:20-30).

Q may have been either earlier or later than Mark, but could not have been very early, as it does not refer to Jesus' second coming as imminent (see below). The variations of Q material in Matthew and Luke provide clues for the dating of those gospels. For example, Matthew 22:7 marks the introduction of an allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem.

In Matthew 23:34-36, he makes another such reference, when he says that the scribes and Pharisees will be punished for the murders of all the righteous, from Abel to "Zechariah, the son of Berechiah". This latter reference cannot mean Zechariah the prophet, son of Berechiah, as he was not murdered. It also cannot mean Zechariah of 2 Chronicles 24:20-21, as his father was Jehoiada. Also, since the list of murders is intended to be from the first to the last, it doesn't make sense to end with one about 800 years before Jesus, particularly since Matthew 23:34 indicates that some of those killed are Christians. This passage most likely refers to Zecharias the son of Baruch who (as Josephus says) was put to death by the Jews in the temple in 68 C.E.

That Matthew wrote significantly later than 70 C.E. is evident by his attempts to separate the destruction of the temple from the end of the world in 24:1-3 where, unlike Mark, he has the disciples ask two questions: when "these things" will be (the destruction of the temple) and "what will be the sign of your coming?" Matthew 23:38-39 gives a setting in which the temple and city of Jerusalem have been destroyed, and yet in which Jesus' return is not imminent. Matthew also removes the identification of persecution by Jews with the end times, placing them in an earlier age (10:17).

In Matthew, Jesus becomes more political. Matthew introduces quotations from the Old Testament to support the representation of Jesus as the Messianic king of Israel, a descendant of David (including inventing some fictional prophecies, such as that in Matthew 2:23, which appears nowhere in the Old Testament). This gospel has many elements which indicate it was written for a Jewish audience (Matthew 5:17, 10:5-6, 15:24, 18:17). It also tries to show, however, that because the Jews had rejected Jesus, salvation was also for gentiles as well (Matthew 21:43, 24:14, 28:19).

Luke was certainly written considerably later than 70 C.E. There is good evidence that Luke made use of material from Josephus' *Antiquities*, which was not available before 93 C.E. [Wells 75, p. 88] Luke, like Matthew, separates the destruction of the temple from the end of the world.

Although some (such as [McDowell 81c, pp. 33-35]) claim that Luke has been proven historically reliable, there is evidence to the contrary. In Acts 5:34-36, which supposedly takes place in Jerusalem in the mid-30's, Gamaliel mentions a past claimed Messiah named Theudas, but Josephus says that Theudas made his claims when Fadus was procurator (44-46 C.E.). Gamaliel goes on to mention another uprising under Judas the Galilean at the time of "the census", after

Theudas, yet the only census Josephus refers to is the one in 6 C.E. under Quirinius (which brings in the additional problem of Luke's placing the census during the reign of Herod the Great, see the section above titled "Roman Census" in CLAIMS OF FUNDAMENTALISM) [Wells 82, pp. 118-119]. Acts 7:58, 8:1, 9:21, and 26:10-12 claim that Paul persecuted Christians in Jerusalem and Acts 9:26-28 claims that he went immediately to Jerusalem after his conversion, but Paul states in Galatians 1:17-23 that he did not go to Jerusalem until three years after becoming a Christian and that even then he was "still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea" [Käsemann 79, pp. 240-241].

In Luke and Acts, the power and glory of Jesus and the apostles are emphasized (for example, Acts 6:8, 8:6, 13:9-11). Luke also abandons the idea of a pre-existent redeemer, following Q's lead. He describes Jesus' suffering and death as a necessary part of God's plan for man's salvation, but not as affecting forgiveness of sins (note how Luke deletes the statement of Mark 10:45 that Jesus came to "give his life a ransom for many", instead saying that he is "among you as the one who serves" in Luke 22:27).

That the synoptic gospels were written in the order: Mark, Matthew, Luke can also be demonstrated by the evolution of legends they describe. For example, an account of Jesus' healing becomes more impressive in the later gospels. In Mark 1:32-34, all the sick are brought to him and he heals many. In Matthew 8:16 many of the sick are brought to him and he heals them all. In Luke 4:40, all of the sick are brought to him and he heals them all.

In Mark 14:62, Jesus says to the Sanhedrin, in answer to the question "Are you the Christ?": "I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven", an event which obviously didn't happen. In Matthew 26:64, the passage has been slightly altered to say: "hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power". In Luke 22:67, it is completely changed so that Jesus no longer even claims those trying him will witness any such event: "But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God".

Gospel of John

John, the latest of the gospels, is marked by fully developed legends. He provides details such as names where the synoptics do not: the harlot who anoints Jesus' feet is Mary and the disciple who protests is Judas, the slave whose ear was cut off is Malchus and the disciple who cut it off is Simon Peter. John also reinterprets traditions about the second coming into a coming of the Holy Spirit into the hearts of believers. He also introduces several passages where Jesus gives an intentionally ambiguous teaching and his audience misunderstands (John 2:19-21, 3:3, 4:10-14, 4:31-34) not present in the synoptics. Jesus is again described as a pre-existent redeemer (John 1:1-5), but one who makes no secret of being the Messiah (John 4:25-26). John also removes the element of suffering from the crucifixion.

It cannot have been written much later than the synoptics, however, since a fragment of it dated around 125 C.E. has been found. A lower bound can be obtained from John 9:22 and 16:2, which indicate a knowledge of Rabbi Gamaliel II's prayer cursing heretical Jews which was authorized around 90 C.E. [Wells 75, p. 92] It is generally believed to have been written around 100 C.E.

So the latest of the gospels was written no later than 125 C.E. and the earliest no earlier than 70 C.E., and probably somewhat later. That the span between the first and last is fairly small is indicated by the fact that John did not seem to be aware of the synoptics and that Clement (writing around 96 C.E.) was apparently ignorant of all four gospels. The strong divergence between the Christologies of Paul, Q, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is a problem for those who claim the historicity of Jesus. On the other hand, if the Jesus stories were mythical, there would be no eyewitnesses to ensure a single accurate depiction. Most scholars who believe in a historical Jesus solve this problem by assuming that Paul's Jesus is the most correct--that Jesus was an obscure historical figure about which little information is available, that the gospel biographies are primarily legend.

Gospel Origins

Most biblical scholars believe that the gospels were assembled from oral and written traditions which were circulated independently of each other in the form of "pericopes" (a theory which is supported by recently discovered writings such as the Nag Hammadi documents and three papyri at Oxyrhynchus in the Nile valley which consist of sayings of Jesus in Greek). Pericopes are classed into various "forms". Some example forms are a Sabbath healing (Matthew 12:10-14, Mark 3:1-6, Luke 6:7-11, 13:10-17, 14:1-6) [Bultmann 76, pp. 12-13] and Jesus questioned by opponents (Matthew 19:3-12, 22:15-22, 22:23-33, 22:34-40, Mark 10:2-12, 12:13-17, 12:18-27, 12:28-34, Luke 20:20-26, 20:27-40) [Bultmann 76, pp. 26-27]. Thus the authors of the gospels were more editors than writers, each putting the pieces into a sequence with transitional text between them, adding geographical information, etc. [Dibelius 79, p. 28, pp. 66-67] Still, this at times led to awkward constructions, such as in Mark 13:1-4, where the scenario suddenly jumps from Jesus with his disciples at the temple to Jesus alone with Peter, James, John, and Andrew. This is reworked by Matthew and Luke for a smoother flow. Another example is the healing of the blind beggar in Mark 10:46, which begins clumsily: "And they came to Jericho. And as he was going out from Jericho..." Matthew and Luke simplify by having the miracle take place on the way to, rather than out of, Jericho (while changing other details, such as adding an additional blind beggar) [Bultmann 76, pp. 213-214].

More evidence for independent traditions is given by Jesus' ethical discourses, which appear to be just lists of teachings strung together. The Sermon on the Mount (or Great Sermon), described by both Matthew and Luke, is an example. Matthew's version is much longer and is delivered from a mountain (Matthew 5:1), while Luke's is delivered from a plain (Luke 6:17). Both begin with a series of virtually identical blessings (Matthew 5:3-11, Luke 6:20-22), both end with "each tree is known by its own fruit" and the parable of the house built on sand (Matthew 7:16-29, Luke 6:43-49) [Bultmann 76, pp. 333-334]. The individual teachings of this sermon are widely paralleled in both early and late Jewish literature, independently of Christianity [Bultmann 76, pp. 111-112], [Wells 71, pp. 70-71]. Many of them strongly resemble parts of The Book of the Secrets of Enoch, which was probably written by a Hellenistic Jew from Alexandria in the first century [Barnstone 84, p. 3].

The Dead Sea Scrolls give additional parallels. These scrolls and fragments, which range in date from 100 B.C.E. to 68 C.E., were used by the Jewish sect of Essenes. The Essenes believed that they had established a "New Covenant" with God and that their leader, the "Teacher of Righteousness" (who is believed to have lived sometime between 175 B.C.E. and 65 B.C.E.), was a Messianic figure who would return from the dead at the end of days [Barnstone 84, pp. 223-224], [Vermes 85, pp. 35-38, pp. 53-68], [Wells 71, p. 253].

There are also parallels in the pagan mystery religions. Such religions had gods born of virgins, crucified, and resurrected. The Egyptians had a virgin mother goddess Neith; Horus was born of Isis by magical conception; Attis, another crucified savior, was born of Nana, a virgin. Philo of Alexandria, born about 20 B.C.E., suggests that many people of the Old Testament were born of virgins, including Isaac and Samuel [Wells 71, p. 32]. Until the fourth century, the birth of Jesus was celebrated on January 6th. For the cult of Sol Invictus, the festival of Natalis Invictus was December 25th, which also happened to be the birthday of Egyptian, Persian, Phoenician, Grecian, and Teutonic sun gods. Dionysus, Adonis, Marduk, Osiris, Isis, Mithra, Saturn, Sol, Serapis, Huitzilopochli and Horus were all born on the winter solstice [Carter 85, pp. 45-46], [Wells 71, pp. 32-33]. (Another paganism introduced into Christianity by Emperor Constantine was his proclamation in 321 C.E. that Sunday be the day of rest. Up until that time the Christian Sabbath had been the same as the Jewish--Saturday.)

In northern Europe there was a god named Odin (or Woden, or Wotan), a warrior god who later became a god of wisdom and creator of man. To learn the secrets of the universe, he had to suffer, die, and be resurrected. To do this, he had himself crucified on a tree, where he hung for nine days until he was finished off by having a spear stuck into his side. After his sacrificial death, he was resurrected.

The Mediterranean Cybelene cultists had a procession through the city during which they carried the sacred pine tree on which the god Attis had been crucified. This tree was then taken to the temple, where it was decorated. Attis was another sun god, who was born of a virgin, crucified, and then resurrected each spring [Carter 85], [Wells 71, p. 235].

The introduction of crucifixion into myth probably came about in the first two centuries B.C.E., when it began being used in the region of Palestine. Josephus reports that Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.E.) and Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 B.C.E.) crucified Jews. Jannaeus,

in fact, crucified 800 Pharisees. A Jewish tradition around the second or third centuries claimed Jesus was a heretic put to death around 100 B.C.E. by Jannaeus for misleading the people [Wells 82, pp. 40-41]. This is supported by the Dead Sea Scrolls, which have been interpreted as saying that the Essene "Teacher of Righteousness", called Joshua (the Greek form is Jesus), was crucified by Jannaeus in 88 B.C.E. The Essenes also had baptism, a ritual supper, and called themselves the "men of the New Covenant" [Allegro 84, p. 12, pp. 31-43, p. 49, pp. 82-93, pp. 190-191], [Vermes 85, pp. 44-47].

Other savior gods who were sacrificed and resurrected include Tammuz, Adonis, and Osiris. Some traditions have Osiris and Attis rising on the third day [Wells 71, p. 47].

The betrayal of Jesus by Judas is paralleled in the Old Testament by the sale of Joseph for twenty shekels of silver by one of his eleven brothers, Judah (Genesis 37:26-28). It has been suggested that "Iscaiot" represents the Aramaic word for "deceit" or "falsehood". Some have also claimed that Judas is close to "Judaeus", implying that Judas is a mythical character representing the Jews. In Mark 14:17-21 (and Luke 22:21-23), at the Last Supper, Jesus indicates that one of the disciples will betray him, but not which one. Judas is specifically identified, however, in Matthew 26:25, yet the other disciples do not make any attempt to stop him.

In short, the events in the gospels do not require the existence of a historical Jesus to explain their origin. Stories of "god-men" or "immortals" were already common in Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Jewish myth [Talbert 77, pp. 26-31]. Other similar stories about fictional characters are known to exist, such as the Swiss legend of William Tell. Some Roman historians regarded Hercules as a historical figure. Herodotus believed Attis was the son of a king of Lydia and that the god Horus was once a ruler of Egypt. Some early Christians believed the pagan savior gods were historical (Clement of Alexandria (second century) called them "mere men", Firmicus Maternus (fourth century) believed that Osiris and Typhon were kings of Egypt) [Wells 75, p. 177].

The Shroud of Turin

The Shroud of Turin is a fourteen-foot-long linen cloth which has been claimed to be the burial cloth of Jesus. Unfortunately, it is only known to have appeared in the 1350's, in a church in Lirey in northern France, exhibited for a fee to large crowds of pilgrims, having been given to the Dean of the Lirey abbey by Geoffroy de Charny. In 1357, it was investigated by a French bishop named Henri de Poitiers, who--as claimed in a letter from Pierre d'Arcis, Henri's successor, to Clement VII, the Avignon Pope--"discovered the fraud and how the said cloth had been cunningly painted, the truth being attested by the artist who had painted it" [Mueller 82, p. 18], [Nickell 83, pp. 12-13]. Clement issued a Papal Bull which allowed exhibition of the cloth, but required that it be advertised as a "copy or representation". At this point there had been investigations by two bishops, who both found the shroud to be a forgery, and the de Charny family failed to explain how they had come to possess the cloth (Geoffroy's son said it was "a gift"; Margaret, his granddaughter, said it was a spoil of war) [Nickell 83, pp. 16-17].

In 1418, when the Hundred Years' War threatened Lirey, Humbert de Villersexel, Margaret de Charny's second husband, issued a receipt for the cloth and other relics and took them to St. Hippolyte sur Doubs for safety with the permission of the Lirey canons. In 1443, the canons served notice on Margaret and asked that the relics be returned. Margaret claimed that since Humbert was now dead, the receipt was not binding. She refused to return the shroud, but instead made annual exhibitions of the cloth. In 1449, she exhibited it in Belgium, which prompted the Bishop of Liège to investigate it. The only evidence Margaret was able to supply the investigators was her claim that it was a spoil of war and the documents allowing her to exhibit the "representation". In 1453, she sold the cloth to Duke Louis I of Savoy in return for the castle of Varambon and the manor house and town of Mirabel, near Lyon. In 1455, Margaret was excommunicated for failure to return the shroud to Lirey. Finally, in 1460, she died, without ever having returned the shroud or given promised compensation. The canons of Lirey had no more success with the House of Savoy, which has retained possession of the shroud until the present [Nickell 83, pp. 17-29].

In 1502, the shroud was moved to a chapel in Chambéry, the Sainte Chapelle of the Holy Shroud, where it was damaged in a fire in 1532. In 1578 it was moved to Turin, where it has remained until the present except for seven years during World War II when it was kept in a Benedictine monastery in the mountains of southern Italy [Nickell 83, pp. 25-27].

In 1898, the first photograph of the shroud was taken by Secondo Pia, which found that the

negative image was far sharper than the positive. This resulted in a slow increase in interest in the shroud, with a small group of scientists conducting tests in 1969 and 1973, releasing a report in 1976 with mixed results: the image was not that of ordinary painting, but they did not get a positive test for blood in the "bloodstain" areas. Max Frei, a Swiss criminologist, found pollens on the shroud which indicated that it had been in Palestine, but his conclusions have been disputed, even by the Shroud of Turin Research Project (STURP) [Nickell 85, p. 10], [Schafersman 82, pp. 39-40].

In 1976, John Jackson and Eric Jumper of the Air Force Weapons Laboratory in Albuquerque, New Mexico, discovered that the shroud image could be interpreted as containing three-dimensional information about the corpse they assumed it had been wrapped around. In March of 1977, Jackson and Jumper organized STURP. STURP came up with the hypothesis that the shroud image was caused by a "short burst of radiant energy".

In 1978, Joe Nickell published "The Shroud of Turin--Solved" in *The Humanist*, which included a description of a medieval rubbing technique which Nickell had used to produce images very much like that on the shroud. STURP claimed that Nickell's image produced in this manner does not have the same "3-D" effect as the shroud, but their test was from a magazine photograph. This "3-D" effect, however, has some methodological problems and produces the curious result that if the face is adjusted to show normal relief, the body appears to be in bas-relief [Mueller 82, pp. 24-25], [Nickell 83, pp. 89-91].

In 1981, Kenneth Stevenson of STURP and Gary Habermas of Falwell's Liberty Baptist College published Verdict on the Shroud, which claimed that the shroud was that of Jesus and was proof of the resurrection. This book was disclaimed by STURP, and Stevenson was asked to resign from the project. Legal proceedings were initiated by STURP to require the publisher to print a disclaimer in the book [Schafersman 82, pp. 52-54]. An example of the sort of argument Habermas gives is his claim that "Some researchers have asserted that sophisticated methods such as photographic enhancement and computer analysis are able to identify one of the coins placed over the eyes of the man in the shroud as a lepton of Pontius Pilate, minted between 29-32 A.D." [Habermas 84, pp. 156-157] "Some researchers" means Father Francis Filas, S.J., of the Holy Shroud Guild. STURP has disclaimed this, as it is not even possible to tell for sure if there are coins at all on the eyes, let alone what markings would be on them [Mueller 82, p. 24], [Nickell 83, pp. 38-39], [Schafersman 82, p. 51].

Microanalyst Walter McCrone found significant amounts of red iron oxide on image areas of the cloth, along with collagen tempera, vermilion, and rose madder, and has concluded that the shroud is the work of an artist [McCrone 82, pp. 35-36], [Mueller 82, pp. 26-27, pp. 29-31], [Nickell 85, p. 10], [Wells 82, pp. 186-187]. After these findings, McCrone was "drummed out" of STURP [Nickell 85, p. 10] and his samples given to John Heller and Alan Adler, who concluded the "blood" was genuine. Their methods, however, have been found faulty. Specifically, the tests they conducted were not specific for blood, and tempera paint can produce results consistent with theirs [Nickell 83, pp. 127-132, pp. 149-152].

The iron oxide accounts for only about 10% of the shroud's image, the rest being accounted for by the fact that the cloth fibers themselves in image areas are yellowed. STURP's hypothesis is that the image was caused by a "radiation scorch", but physicist Dr. Marvin Mueller has shown that this theory is untenable [Nickell 83, pp. 85-94]. It has since been found that an iron oxide pigment used as long ago as the twelfth century results in a degradation of linen resulting in yellow fibers similar to those that make up the shroud image [Nickell 83, pp. 137-140].

The cloth's weave is a three-to-one herringbone twill, which is suspect as most linens of the first century were plain weave. All extant Palestinian linen from the time is plain weave. Sewn along one side of the shroud is an 8-9 cm wide strip of material of identical weave, without which the image would be off-center [Nickell 83, pp. 35-36].

The weight of the medical evidence appears to be against the shroud. Dr. Michael M. Baden, deputy chief medical examiner of New York for Suffolk County, was sought out by *Medical World News* as a distinguished pathologist for an objective evaluation of photographs of the shroud. Unlike earlier doctors, such as Dr. Pierre Barbet and Dr. Robert Bucklin, who come up with elaborate rationalizations of problems with the shroud as well as definitive diagnoses, Baden says: "If I had to go into a courtroom, I could not say there was rigor, whether the man was alive or dead, or that this picture was a true reflection of injuries on the body. In no way do I hold myself out as an expert on the shroud, but I do know dead bodies. Human beings don't produce this kind of pattern." [Nickell 83, p. 75] The blood markings are inaccurate, for example. Blood from scalp wounds mats on the hair and does not stream in rivulets as on the shroud (some of the

"puncture wounds" actually appear to lie outside the outline of the scalp). In addition, dried blood blackens, while the shroud "blood" is red. Scourge marks would not be visible on a cloth imprint. Shroud proponents have also claimed that the image shows signs of rigor mortis, but Baden says that "one cannot look at pictures of a body and detect rigor mortis". They also claim that the shroud is anatomically accurate, which means that they have rationalized away the facts that the right forearm is longer than the left, the right pectoral muscle is broader than the left, the right elbow is displaced outward, the front leg measurement is excessive, the fingers are excessively long, the arm span is greater than the height, and the face is asymmetrical [Mueller 82, pp. 25-26], [Nickell 83, pp. 57-75], [Schafersman 82, p. 45], [Wells 82, pp. 183-184].

The shroud image also does not correlate with the gospel accounts and with Jewish burial practices [McDowell 81c, pp. 50-53], [Nickell 83, pp. 31-39], [Schafersman 82, pp. 45-47], [Wells 82, pp. 187-194]. In a Jewish burial, as mandated by the Mishnah, the head is shaved and the body is wrapped up with spices and a separate covering used for the head. The hands are also crossed on the chest, not over the genitals [Nickell 83, p. 55]. Those promoting the shroud's authenticity claim that Jesus' burial was hurried, and that these practices were not followed.

In all, the facts seem to fit the work of a medieval artist much better than the burial cloth of Jesus. This has not, however, stopped reference to it as evidence for the historicity of Jesus ([Edwards 86], [Habermas 84]).

Judeo-Christian Conception of God

We have seen that there are problems with the orthodox Christian view of Jesus. Now what about the Judeo-Christian conception of God as an omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent creator? Again we find some problems.

Problem of Evil

The problem of evil is that it is contradictory for an all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving (or wholly good) god to exist given the world as we know it. For it is undeniable that there is evil in this world. An all-loving god surely would not allow such things as natural disasters and Hitler's genocide to occur if he were capable of preventing them. If he were not capable of preventing them, he would not be all-powerful. If he were unaware of them, he would not be all-knowing [Mackie 55, pp. 64-65], [Johnson 81, pp. 99-100], [Smith 79, p. 62].

It is sometimes argued that there could be no good without evil. This is highly implausible. It might be that if everything was good that no one would notice it and there would be no word for "good" in the language, but it does not follow that the property "good" would not exist. Even if we allow this argument, all that would be necessary for good to exist would be the slightest possible amount of evil. Theists do not view the evil in the world as minute, necessary, and welcome [Mackie 82, pp. 151-152].

Similarly, it has been argued that the world as a whole is better with some evil in it than it would be without any evil. This argument says that evil things such as pain, suffering, and disease make possible courage, kindness, heroism, etc. This is made clearer by defining pain, suffering, and disease as "first-order evils", pleasure and happiness as "first-order goods", and courage, kindness, and heroism as "second-order goods". By this argument, second-order goods outweigh the first-order evils which make them possible. It says that a wholly-good god would not eliminate all evil, because a world with these first-order evils is really the best of all possible worlds. The problem with this argument is that there are surplus first-order evils which do not produce second-order goods and that there are second-order evils which also result from first-order evils: such traits as cowardice and callousness [Mackie 82, pp. 153-155].

It can also be argued that evil is necessary as a means to good. But using means to an end implies the use of causal laws which have no meaning to an omnipotent god. An omnipotent being has no need for means to achieve any particular ends [Mackie 82, pp. 152-153].

The usual Christian argument is that God does not prevent evil things because he allows us our free will. But would it be impinging upon our free will to prevent an earthquake, or to have Hitler die of a heart attack? Why not allow men to continue making good free choices, but stop them when they choose evil? [Mackie 55, p. 69] If God cannot or is not willing to do things which conflict with our free will, then prayer is useless. God cannot answer prayer when it conflicts with anyone's free will. Yet John Wesley said, "God does nothing but in answer to prayer."

And if God is omnipotent, why did he not create men who had free will but yet would

always freely choose good? If it is claimed that the making of wrong choices is necessary for free will, then "free will" must mean randomness with regard to choosing between good and evil. But if this is so, man cannot be held responsible for his actions [Mackie 55, p. 69], [Mackie 82, pp. 162-176], [Feinberg 85, pp. 338-342]. In other words, if Adam and Eve really were created perfect, they should not have made wrong decisions, regardless of how much "free will" they had. If "free will" is incompatible with perfection, which quality does God have?

It is also the case that every excuse to make the real world consistent with the existence of a good god could be used in reverse. We could say that God allows free will so that men could freely do evil things--an evil freely chosen is more evil than a coerced evil [Johnson 81, p. 107].

If God creates the rules by which good and evil are judged, yet is not bound by these rules, then anything he does is automatically right--even if that is to send all atheists to heaven and all Christians to hell. But clearly he is bound by these rules, or else when Christians call him "good" they are using a meaningless expression. If he is above the rules of good and evil, it makes no sense to call him either [Johnson 81, p. 91].

Problem of Hell

The idea of eternal punishment for the sins of a single lifetime is also contradictory with the idea of a benevolent and just god. The following quote from Arthur Schopenhauer's "The Christian System" illustrates this well:

We are told that this God, who prescribes forbearance and forgiveness of every fault, exercises none himself, but does the exact opposite; for a punishment which comes at the end of all things, when the world is over and done with, cannot have for its object either to improve or deter, and is therefore pure vengeance.

Christians may say that God doesn't send people to hell, they send themselves to hell by not freely choosing to accept his forgiveness. By "sending themselves to hell" they must mean that there are some natural rules outside of God over which he has no control. An omnibenevolent god would not condemn anyone to infinite punishment for finite sins. If this same god were omnipotent, he would not allow such a thing to happen even if it was ordained by some natural rules not created by him.

An omniscient god is aware that many people in the past have been condemned to hell and no longer have any hope for salvation. He must also know that if the human race continues reproducing itself there will be many more victims. If he were all-loving and all-powerful, he could and would easily stop the deliberate production of victims for eternal punishment [Johnson 81, pp. 112-113].

Some Christians say that hell is merely being separated from God, and that God separates himself from those who do not accept salvation because he does not want sin around him. Ignoring the claim of God's omnipresence, this works out a little bit better for the Christian, but the Bible explicitly states that those who are not saved will be "thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15). This is clearly not just "separation from God"!

Problem of Abortion and Missionaries

If God sends aborted babies to hell, he is incredibly unjust--those babies never even had a chance for salvation. Such a god could not possibly be omnipotent, omnibenevolent, and omniscient.

If he does not condemn aborted babies to hell, the Christian is taking an exceedingly evil position by being against abortion. Since most people who are born do not become Christians, the prohibition of abortion causes more souls to be created which will be tortured for all eternity in hell.

If aborted babies go to neither heaven nor hell, then the soul must not be created until some later time and Christians still have no reason to be against abortion except among themselves, as their own children have a much greater chance of achieving salvation.

(Note that the common Christian doctrine of an "age of accountability"--an age before which children are not damned to hell--has no biblical basis whatsoever.)

A similar problem is posed by missionaries. If God sends those who have never had a chance for salvation to hell, such as those in remote parts of the world, those who lived far from the Holy Land during the time of Jesus, and those who lived before Jesus, he is again guilty of terrible injustice. But if he only sends to hell those who hear the gospel and reject it, then missionaries are guilty of damning many people.

Some Christians say that Jesus descended into hell to free the patriarchs and that he will similarly give those who never heard of him during their lives a chance at heaven. Jesus' descent into hell is not described in the Bible, only in such works as the apocryphal gospels of Bartholomew and Nicodemus [Barnstone 84, pp. 350-358, pp. 359-380] (though alluded to in Matthew 12:40 and Ephesians 4:8-10), however, and the latter theory is not supported by any scripture. Even if it were correct it would give those who were offered salvation during their lives an unfair disadvantage.

Problem of God's Moral Superiority

If God is truly omniscient, he must know what it is like to feel jealousy, hatred, and lust. But there is a difference between knowledge about something and actually experiencing it. If God has direct experiential knowledge of these things, he is guilty of sin (Matthew 5:28) and is not morally superior to humans. If he does not have experiential knowledge of these things, he is not truly omniscient and has no basis on which to judge human beings [Johnson 81, pp. 113-114].

Paradox of Omnipotence

This paradox is commonly seen in the form of the question, "Can God make a rock so heavy he can't lift it?" If a being is omnipotent, he should be able to predict his own future actions. But he should also be able to act other than as he predicted, which means that he cannot predict his own future actions. Because of these examples, omnipotence is usually viewed as not including the ability to do things which are logically impossible (i.e., self-contradictory). But there are logically possible scenarios in which the paradox remains: can an omnipotent being make things he cannot control, or make rules which bind himself?

A parallel to this paradox is the Paradox of Sovereignty, described by the question, "Can a legal sovereign make a law restricting its own future legislative power?" This can be solved by distinguishing between first-order laws (ordinary laws) and second-order laws (laws governing the legislature, or making of laws). There are then two corresponding orders of sovereignty, each with unlimited authority to make laws of the same order. A legislature with second-order sovereignty can take away the first-order sovereignty of later legislatures.

What this means with respect to the concept of omnipotence may be seen by distinguishing between first- and second-order omnipotence, where first-order omnipotence is the unlimited power to determine actions and second-order omnipotence is the unlimited power to determine what powers things may have. It may be consistently claimed that god always has first-order omnipotence, but this means that no other things have powers to act independently of god (uncontrollably). If god has second-order omnipotence, however, he can use it to limit himself--to take away his own first-order omnipotence, which would also take away his second-order omnipotence (for if he were to take away his power to determine actions he would be unable to act to make use of second-order omnipotence to unbind himself) [Mackie 55, pp. 69-70].

That the paradox remains can be seen by examining the question "can an omnipotent being make things he cannot control?" It can be argued that the answer is no, because "things an omnipotent being cannot control" is a contradiction. But it can equally well be argued that the answer is yes. A being with second-order omnipotence could create a thing with the capacity of making uncontrolled choices. To control its choices would be to control a thing omnipotently made uncontrollable--*this* would be the contradiction. In distinguishing orders of omnipotence, it is completely consistent for a being with all orders of omnipotence to bind himself [Mackie 82, pp. 160-161].

THE CLAIMS OF THEISM

Theism is the belief in some god or gods. It based on the assumption that there is a supernatural realm, an existence outside of existence. By its very nature it appears to be incomprehensible, but that has not stopped theologians from attempting to explain such beliefs. The following are some examinations of such attempts.

Natural Theology

Natural theology is the attempt to provide rational arguments for the existence of God, as opposed to using emotion, "faith", or mysticism. The following are the most common "logical" arguments for the existence of God.

The ontological argument (invented by Saint Anselm) says that man has an idea of a most perfect being, God, and that existence is an attribute of this God, since an otherwise perfect being which did not have the attribute of existence would not be as perfect as a perfect being who did exist. Therefore, since the idea of existence is contained in the idea of a most perfect being, God must exist. The conclusion does not follow from the premises. From the argument made, one can merely conclude that the *idea* of an existing perfect God must exist, not that a perfect God must himself exist.

Anselm's response is that a person (a fool, he says) with an idea of "a being than which nothing greater can be conceived" is contradicting himself. For to say that such a conception exists only in the mind is to admit that something greater *can* be conceived, a being which has actual existence. But under this interpretation Anselm himself is guilty of contradiction, claiming both that the fool can have an idea of "a being than which nothing greater can be conceived" and that there is indeed a greater being which can be conceived. In effect, Anselm is claiming that the fool's conception includes the notion of nonexistence (i.e., a "not-really-existing being than which nothing greater can be conceived"). But there is no reason to suppose this is so. One can have a concept of such a being *without* the assumption of its being or not being instantiated in reality.

One can go on to revise Anselm's concept to "a being than which nothing greater can be conceived and which cannot be conceived not to exist". But it is just a higher-level question whether this concept is in fact instantiated or not. There is no contradiction in saying that "there is no being than which nothing greater can be conceived and which cannot be conceived not to exist." As Immanuel Kant said, "Whatever, and however much, our concept of an object may contain, we must go outside it, if we are to ascribe existence to the object." [Mackie 82, pp. 42-63], [Rowe 74, pp. 8-17]

The cosmological argument (which may take several forms, most common of which is the "first cause" argument) says that every effect requires adequate cause, everything that exists must have an explanation for its existence (the Principle of Sufficient Reason). Since the universe exists, it must have been caused--by God.

This has an obvious flaw: what was the cause of God? This is answered by the claim that God is a self-existent being. But this really doesn't solve anything because the universe (all that exists) can likewise be viewed as self-existent. This theory is a simpler explanation fitting known facts, and therefore better by Occam's Razor. To claim that God is a necessarily existing being who terminates the regress is to fall back upon the ontological argument [Mackie 82, p. 251].

Another problem with using this argument as support for the reasonableness of belief in God is that it can only demonstrate the existence of some uncaused first cause (or uncaused first causes) in the past. It does not demonstrate that this uncaused first cause should be identified with God or that the first cause still exists in the present [Mackie 82, pp. 81-101], [Rowe 78, pp. 20-27], [Russell 57, pp. 6-7], [Smith 79, pp. 235-256].

The argument from design (teleological argument) says that the universe is ordered and could not have arisen by chance, but must have been designed by God.

"Order", however does not imply design (an example of undesigned order is in economics--the laws of supply and demand). The alternative supplied in the argument--"chance"--is bogus. It does not follow that if the universe was not planned that it occurred by chance. Rather, things that exist behave in certain ways due to the nature of their existence (things have specific, determinate characteristics). Thus the real alternative to

supernatural planning is natural necessity. It is interesting that both the existence of natural law and any events which appear to violate natural law are claimed as evidence for the existence of God.

The claim is also made that the universe exhibits design in the same way humanly-designed artifacts (such as a watch) exhibit design, and that we can identify objects of God's design in much the same way we identify objects as products of human design. This doesn't work, though, because the very way we identify objects of human design is by identifying how they differ from objects which occur in nature. We do not mistake trees for objects of human construction because we do not view them as designed.

The fact that the eye is composed of many parts which all work together interacting closely is no proof of God, either. A random whirl of dust particles also must work together interacting closely to give one particular result over another. If the interaction of the parts of the eye is referred to as an "intended result", this assumes the very thing it is trying to prove. It may also be referred to as a "useful result", but this does not prove that it was intended. Indeed, uranium is useful in making atomic bombs, does this mean that God intended them to be built?

Finally, the argument from design has a problem similar to the cosmological argument. If the exhibition of order is demonstration of design, than surely a complex being such as a supernatural designer must also have been designed [Paley 1802, pp. 28-32], [Hume 1777, pp. 137-149], [Hume 1779, pp. 33-64], [Johnson 81, pp. 37-59], [Mackie 82, pp. 133-149], [Russell 57, pp. 7-11], [Smith 79, pp. 257-272].

Pascal's Wager

Blaise Pascal said that God's existence could be looked upon as a fifty-fifty betting proposition. If you assume God exists and he does not, you have lost nothing. But if you assume he does not exist and he does, you lose your soul [Pascal 10, pp. 89-91].

The problem with this is that it assumes that all that is necessary for salvation is a belief in God's existence which may be based purely on self-interest. In other words, it assumed that God is vain and persuaded by flattery. A god may exist but damn anyone who bets on his existence merely for reasons of prudence. A god may value independence, skepticism, and reason and offer salvation only to those who do not believe in his existence. It could also be (and is in fact believed by most religions) that more than simply believing in a god's existence is necessary for salvation.

Another problem is that forcing oneself to believe in God simply on the basis of the Wager requires the subversion of one's critical faculties and loss of the worldly happiness one could have if free from religious commitment [Johnson 81, p. 97] [Mackie 82, pp. 200-203], [Smith 79, pp. 182-184].

What is a god?

Is a claim such as "there is a god" really a meaningful assertion? If so, then it is equivalent to denying the proposition "there is not a god". But what exactly is the theist denying when he says it is not the case that "there is not a god"? If nothing is denied by denying this assertion, then nothing is asserted with the claim "there is a god" [Flew 55, p. 72].

The theist who simply makes the assertion that "there is a god" needs to define what "god" means. Without defining "god", he is saying nothing more than if he had said "borks exist" without defining the word "bork". This "belief" does not differ from having no belief whatsoever. If god is completely unknowable, then the concept of "god" is without content. To claim that something is unknowable is to state a contradiction--for one cannot know that something is unknowable without knowing what that something is. There is no possible evidence to support such a claim, for the existence of any evidence would disprove it [Russell 35, pp. 85-88], [Smith 79, pp. 29-39, p. 44].

For this reason most theists assert that god is, in some sense, knowable. They claim that god is a supernatural (or transcendent) being. This, however, tells us nothing about god, it merely tells us what god is not. It says that god is not part of the universe and has no natural existence. But to exist is to be something rather than nothing, to have specific attributes and features. But assigning definite characteristics to god is to limit his capacities. For this reason theists introduce attributes such as eternal, immortal, immutable, infinite, invisible, all-loving, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, perfect, and supreme [Smith 79, p. 47].

But again many of these terms do not tell us anything of what god is, only what he is not--he

does not change, he is not visible, etc. But to characterize something only in terms of negative attributes means it cannot be distinguished from nothing at all. To distinguish belief in god from belief in nothing, positive attributes must be used. In addition, one cannot state negative attributes about god without having some positive knowledge of what he is. It is not possible to know what qualities are incompatible with something which is unknowable [Smith 79, pp. 52-53].

If we apply ordinary terms such as "wise" or "loving" to god, we have reduced god to an anthropomorphic level and limited him. If god has knowledge and this knowledge is the same sort as that with which we are familiar, it must have been learned and verified. If not, the word "knowledge" is being used in a completely different manner and incomprehensible manner. It may be offered that we may analogically predicate these terms to god in the same way we do to other species, such as intelligence to a dog. We do this, however, by having first-hand, non-analogical knowledge of what we mean by "dog". We do not have such knowledge of god. To say that "divine goodness is to god as human goodness is to man" tells us nothing unless we have direct knowledge of god's nature. If we claim that a "blork" possesses wisdom in proportion to its nature, and that its wisdom is different in kind from man's and that a "blork"'s nature is unknowable, we have contributed nothing to our understanding of what a "blork" is [Smith 79, pp. 57-60].

Thus the theist introduces the "unlimited attribute", terms such as "omnipotent", "omniscient", and "omnibenevolent". But these terms are somewhat negative in form as well. "Omnipotent" means without limits to power, "omniscient" means without limits to knowledge, "omnibenevolent" means without limits to love. These terms still do not give us any comprehensible knowledge of what god is [Smith 79, pp. 51-54].

George H. Smith [Smith 79, pp. 60-62] gives a set of criteria for evaluating attributes of god and their intelligibility:

1. Is the attribute internally consistent?
2. Is the attribute consistent with the other proposed attributes of God?
3. Is the attribute applied within the proper context?
4. Does the attribute give us positive knowledge of God's nature?
5. Is the attribute knowable?
6. Is the attribute compatible with known facts?

As is demonstrated elsewhere in this pamphlet, the qualities "wholly good", "omniscient", "omnipotent", and "omnibenevolent" all fail to meet these criteria. With no characteristics which may be meaningfully applied to god without limiting his nature, the concept is completely unsupportable on the basis of reason.

Reason and Faith

With reason incapable of supporting the concept of god (let alone a belief in god), most theists will attack reason as insufficient as a method of obtaining knowledge and argue that faith is required in addition to or in place of it.

Reason says that for a belief to be knowledge, it must be justified: based on good evidence, internally consistent, and not in contradiction to previously validated knowledge. The theist, however, wants to be able to claim as knowledge beliefs which have not been rationally demonstrated. To do this, he claims the beliefs as knowledge on the basis of faith, arguing that there are some aspects of existence which cannot be rationally demonstrated. This is the case because faith is only possible in the absence of reason. If something can be demonstrated by reason, faith is superfluous. And so faith must entail irrational belief. As George Smith states [Smith 79, p. 110]:

Reason is the faculty by which man acquires knowledge; rational demonstration is the process by which man verifies his knowledge claims. A belief based on reason is a belief that has been examined for evidence, internal coherence, and consistency with previously established knowledge. There can be no propositions beyond the "limits of reason". To advocate that a belief be accepted without reason is to advocate that a belief be accepted without thought and without verification.

Theists argue that faith and reason are completely compatible, that the propositions of reason do not contradict the propositions of faith. This is only because they refuse to allow such contradictions--when contradictions occur, they claim that it is either a result of a defect in our reasoning capacity or that the proposition of faith was not really true, but rather the result of a misinterpretation of a divine source. An example of the latter is how the Catholic Church insisted that the geocentric theory of the solar system was correct and forced Galileo to renounce his heliocentric belief, yet now it is claimed that the geocentric belief was based on incorrect dogma. Another example is the conflict between the Christian theory of creation and the theory of evolution. Many Christians have resorted to the second method of resolving the contradiction between reason and faith, interpreting the Genesis accounts as allegorical. But there are still those who are using the first method, insisting that the reasons supporting evolution are in some way flawed. Where the Bible and truth are found to conflict, the atheist says the Bible should be discarded, the liberal theist says the interpretation must be revised, and the fundamentalist says reason is wrong.

Universal (or radical) skepticism says that there is no such thing as knowledge, that there is no way for man to determine truth. But by stating that there is no knowledge, the universal skeptic is making a knowledge claim and undermining his argument--he wishes to claim truth for the theory that denies the ability to arrive at truth. The main problem here is that the skeptic is equating knowledge and certainty with infallibility. When the skeptic says that because man is capable of error he is possible in any given instance to have committed an error, he is implicitly affirming several logical principles: the Law of Contradiction (no proposition can be both true and false at the same time in the same respect), the Law of Identity (any thing is itself), and the Law of the Excluded Middle (something is either A or not-A). These all follow directly from there being such a thing as an "error".

It is man's very fallibility which requires reason--a way to discriminate between justified and unjustified beliefs. The position of universal skepticism, even if it were coherent, would be irrelevant, for all it establishes is that man is fallible and therefore any concepts of knowledge or certainty which require infallibility are inapplicable to man.

But it does not follow from the fact that man is inherently fallible to claim that he is always wrong. If the skeptic is to attack a knowledge claim he must attack the evidence, not just appeal to fallibility.

The theist says that we reject universal skepticism because we have "faith" in reason, that we cannot prove that our alleged knowledge of reality is accurate. We accept the existence of knowledge, however, on the basis of necessity, not faith. The only alternative is universal skepticism, which is indefensible. The question "Can man acquire knowledge?" presupposes the existence of knowledge--knowledge of language, man, and consciousness with a capacity to understand the question.

The theist may also attack logic. The three laws mentioned above (Laws of Identity, Excluded Middle, and Contradiction) have no premises from which they can be derived, and therefore cannot be proved without circular reasoning. For this reason, the theist claims we must accept them on faith. This is, however, false. They are accepted as truths on the basis of self-evidence and on pragmatic grounds (i.e., the deducible consequences result in a complete and consistent system which works) [Quine 78, pp. 35-49].

It is also claimed that faith is required in order to believe an external universe exists. Solipsism, or lack of belief in an external universe, suffers from the same problems as universal skepticism. As a truth identifies a fact of reality, if there is no reality to be identified, there can be no truth. To argue against the existence of an external universe is to remove oneself from the sphere of rational discourse.

Finally, it is claimed that faith is required for belief in science. Because the claims of science are constantly undergoing revision, the theist says we cannot have any certainty. This is false. For a proposition to be "certain" means that within the context of one's knowledge, evidence for that proposition is overwhelming. Such a claim of certainty does not require infallibility or omniscience, and such a claim is not to claim the impossibility of error (though this is indeed the case with some mathematical and logical truths). Depending on the degree of evidence available, any given scientific law is possible, probable, or certain. Science is no more accepted on faith than any other branch of knowledge. To deny certainty in science is to deny certainty in the other branches, which leads back to universal skepticism [Smith 79, pp. 130-162].

Atheism

Atheism, contrary to popular belief, does not mean disbelief in god, but rather without a belief in god. The common notion of atheism is a subset of the actual meaning. This means that the term "agnostic" is not on the same level as "theist" or "atheist". The theism/atheism dichotomy distinguishes between belief and lack of belief in god, agnostics are those who believe that reason cannot be used to determine whether or not there is a god. Agnosticism is not a halfway point between theism and atheism, but rather a variation of either.

Theists often argue against atheism by claiming that without god, life has no meaning. But what meaning does life have *with* god? If there is an eternal afterlife, life on earth is just a drop in the bucket. If man is totally dependent on god, what kind of significance can his life have? If one must obey god's will in order to avoid damnation, then existence is eternal bondage rather than independent freedom. Without god, life is all we have, and it becomes therefore more significant. The purpose of life is whatever you wish to make of it. To ask "why is there life?" is pointless, with or without god. If there is a god, then why does god exist? What is the reason for his existence?

But, the theist says, man cannot be happy if he knows he will die and that there is no larger purpose to the universe and existence. But theistic "happiness" requires dependence on another being, faith, devotion, and credulity. Is this really a reasonable definition of what it is to be happy? To the humanist, life is to be lived to its fullest. Not merely through hedonistic pleasure, but through the satisfaction of basic human needs, interaction with others, being a part of the community, living creatively and freely [Kurtz 83, pp. 153-168].

Theists also claim that without god there can be no morality. But this is in direct contradiction to thousands of years of ethics based on critical intelligence. Socrates, Democritus, Aristotle, Epicurus, Epictetus, Spinoza, Erasmus, Hume, Voltaire, Kant, Bentham, Mill, G.E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, John Dewey, and many others have contributed to the field of ethics independent of revealed religion. Theistic morality is based on arbitrary doctrines that are not to be questioned, while atheistic morality is based on ethical principles derived by reason and subject to critical evaluation [Kurtz 83, pp. 17-18, pp. 155-156].

CONCLUSION

The examination of the claims of Christian fundamentalism, of orthodox Christianity, and of theism has found them all to be wanting. As stated in "A Secular Humanist Declaration" ([Kurtz 83, pp. 18-19]):

We are doubtful of traditional views of God and divinity. Symbolic and mythological interpretations of religion often serve as rationalizations for a sophisticated minority, leaving the bulk of mankind to flounder in theological confusion. We consider the universe to be a dynamic scene of natural forces that are most effectively understood by scientific inquiry. We are always open to the discovery of new possibilities and phenomena in nature. However, we find that traditional views of the existence of God are either meaningless, have not yet been demonstrated to be true, or are tyrannically exploitative. Secular humanists may be agnostics, atheists, rationalists, or skeptics, but they find insufficient evidence for the claim that some divine purpose exists for the universe. They reject the idea that God has intervened miraculously in history or revealed himself to a chosen few, or that he can save or redeem sinners. They believe men and women are free and are responsible for their own destinies and that they cannot look toward some transcendent Being for salvation.

I do not expect this pamphlet, however, to be convincing to Christians. The reason for this is simple: the Christian builds his belief upon unfalsifiable claims and then asserts that the burden of proof rests upon the nonbeliever to disprove the claims. Within the "reality" of the Christian, all possible evidence supports his claims and there is nothing he will accept as evidence against them. For example, if the claim is that prayer can cure illness, a patient's death "proves" that he lacked faith [Watzlawick 76, p. 50].

Another example is the very definition of "Christian". When the evils performed in the name of Christianity over history are pointed out to a Christian, a common response is that the people responsible for such activities were not "true Christians". Similarly, it also seems to be an assumption that any "true Christian" cannot cease to be a Christian. A pastor at a local church wrote a letter to me in which he said "I understand that you once *claimed* to be a Christian." (Emphasis added.) Thus Christian apostasy is defined out of existence. The absurdity of such maneuvering is shown by Antony Flew [Flew 75, p. 47]:

An equally simple, but actual, example of this No-true-Scotsman Move was provided by Black Power leader Stokely Carmichael during a visit to London some years ago. He was arguing the thesis that the world is now divided between exploiting white men and exploited coloured people: "What about Castro?" asked one member of his audience, "What about Che Guevara?" "I don't," retorted Mr. Carmichael, "consider them white."

The Christian black & white view of reality is succinctly described by Friedrich Nietzsche [Nietzsche 68, p. 125]:

In Christianity neither morality nor religion come into contact with reality at any point. Nothing but imaginary *causes* ("God", "soul", "ego", "spirit", "free will"--or "unfree will"); nothing but imaginary *effects* ("sin", "redemption", "grace", "punishment", "forgiveness of sins"). A traffic between imaginary *beings* ("God", "spirits", "souls"); an imaginary *natural science* (anthropocentric; complete lack of the concept of natural causes); an imaginary *psychology* (nothing but self-misunderstandings, interpretations of pleasant or unpleasant general feelings, for example the condition of the *nervus sympathicus*, with the aid of the sign-language of religio-moral idiosyncrasy--"repentance", "sting of conscience", "temptation by the Devil", "the proximity of God"); an imaginary *teleology* ("the kingdom of God", "the Last Judgment", "eternal life"). This purely fictitious world is distinguished from the world of dreams, very much to its disadvantage, by the fact that the latter *mirrors* actuality, while the former falsifies, disvalues, and denies actuality.

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An article on the separation of church and state by a U.S. District Judge.
- [Zeitlin 47] Zeitlin, Solomon 1947. Who Crucified Jesus?, New York: Harper and Brothers.
An analysis of the crucifixion and trial stories of the gospels.

For more information on these topics, write to:

Prometheus Books
700 E. Amherst St.
Buffalo, NY 14215
Free catalog.

Free Inquiry
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Buffalo, NY 14215-0005
Published quarterly, subscriptions are \$16.50 a year.

Freethought Today
Freedom From Religion Foundation
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Biblical Errancy
3158 Sherwood Park Drive
Springfield, OH 45505
(513) 323-6146
Published monthly, subscriptions are \$9 a year.

Dates in this pamphlet do not use the conventional B.C. (Before Christ) and A.D. (Anno Domini, or year of the Lord) notations for dates. Instead, B.C.E. (Before Common Era) and C.E. (Common Era) are used. After all, Dionysius Exiguus screwed up when revising the calendar--he calculated the birth of Jesus based on the year in which Herod the Great died, which is now known to have been 4 B.C.E.

Additional copies of this pamphlet may be obtained for \$3 from Jim Lippard, P.O. Box 37052, Phoenix, AZ 85069.

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APPENDIX: THE FUNDAMENTALIST THREAT

Fundamentalist Christianity has had a significant influence on American society within the last few years, as a result of media blitzes and political action. The following are some examples of what the fundamentalist leaders are saying and doing.

Richard Viguerie

Richard A. Viguerie, of the Richard A. Viguerie Company of Falls Church, Virginia, runs one of the largest direct mail fundraising companies in the country. He has raised money for such organizations and individuals as the Panama Canal Truth Squad, Gun Owners of America, the American Security Council, Citizens for Decency Through Law, Terry Dolan's National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC), the Conservative Caucus, and the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, Senators Jesse Helms (NC), Jim McClure (ID), Orrin Hatch (UT), William Armstrong (CO), John Warner (VA), and Representatives Philip Crane (IL), Mickey Edwards (OK), Larry McDonald (GA), and Phil Gramm (TX). Viguerie also publishes the magazine *Conservative Digest* [Conway 82, pp. 83-84, 87].

Paul Weyrich

Paul Weyrich, the director of the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress (CSFC), a political action committee founded in 1974 with help from Joseph Coors and Richard Viguerie, is also heavily involved with fundamentalist groups. In 1973, Weyrich and Coors founded the Heritage Foundation, a new right think tank. In 1978, he set up the Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, a tax-free subsidiary of CSFC. In 1979 he helped convene the Library Court group, a coalition of over 20 PACs and special interest lobbies, many on fundamentalist issues such as abortion.

In September 1979, Weyrich formed the Religious Roundtable with Howard Phillips (a founding member of Young Americans for Freedom and founder of the Conservative Caucus with Viguerie), Viguerie, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson (who later resigned), and James Robison [Conway 82, pp. 90-93].

In the same year, Falwell started the Moral Majority after meeting with Weyrich and Howard Phillips. In fact, it was Weyrich who came up with the name.

Also in 1979, he formed Christian Voice, a fundamentalist political organization. On its congressional advisory committee were Senators Gordon Humphrey (NH), Roger Jepsen (IA), James McClure (ID), and Orrin Hatch (UT). The statement of purpose of Christian Voice says, in part: "We believe that America, the last stronghold of faith on this planet, has come under increasing attack from Satan's forces in recent years....The standards of Christian morality (long the protection and strength of the nation), the sanctity of our families, the innocence of our young, are now under the onslaught launched by the 'rulers of darkness of this world' and insidiously sustained under the ever more liberal ethic." [Conway 82, pp. 31-32] In its first year, Christian Voice tried to pass legislation to proclaim the United States a "Christian nation". In 1980 it issued "moral report cards" on U.S. Senators and Congressmen, and formed a subsidiary group called Christians for Reagan. These report cards were authored by Gary Jarmin of Christian Voice, a former Moonie who is still on good terms with the Unification Church. Along with Tim LaHaye and other fundamentalists, he operates the Moon-financed Coalition for Religious Freedom.

In 1981, the Council for National Policy was formed. Among its founding members were Paul Weyrich, Richard Viguerie, Howard Phillips, Phyllis Schlafly, Tim LaHaye, Joseph Coors, and Bunker Hunt.

Howard Phillips

In addition to the organizations already mentioned (Young Americans for Freedom, Conservative Caucus, Moral Majority, Council for National Policy), Phillips is on the national advisory board of an organization formed in 1986 in Chandler, Arizona called the Committee for American Freedom & Enterprise (CAFE). Also listed on this board are Roy Cohn, who was the chief counsel for Senator Joseph McCarthy during the McCarthy hearings and was disbarred in New York State in a dispute over fees shortly before his death in August 1986 (allegedly of AIDS); Brigadier General Andrew Gatsis, also on the national council of the John Birch Society; former Congressman Daniel

Crane (IL), who was censured by the House for his affair with a 17-year-old female page; former Congressman George Hansen (ID), who was recently sentenced to prison for filing false financial statements with Congress; Bob Jones III, president of fundamentalist Bob Jones University; Major General George S. Patton III, son of the famous WWII general; and Major General John K. Singlaub, chairman of the Phoenix-based U.S. Council for World Freedom, a group associated with the World Anti-Communist League. (As reported in an article by Laurie Roberts in the Arizona Republic on September 25, 1986.)

Terry Dolan

John Terry Dolan founded NCPAC in 1975 with Roger Stone and Charles Black (who both later left). NCPAC got off to an effective start with endorsements by Ronald Reagan and Jesse Helms. Helms signed a fundraising letter for NCPAC which requested contributions "because your tax dollars are being used to pay for grade school courses that teach our children that cannibalism, wife swapping and the murder of infants and the elderly are acceptable behavior". In 1978 NCPAC targeted and kept from reelection Senators Dick Clark (IA), Floyd Haskell (CO), and Thomas McIntyre (NH) (beaten by Gordon Humphrey, who later joined Christian Voice), often resorting to distortion and mudslinging. In 1980 NCPAC had its "Target '80" program of assault on liberal Democrats, and kept out of office Senators Frank Church (ID), John Culver (IA), Birch Bayh (IN), and George McGovern (SD). As the May 27, 1981 New York Times quoted Dolan: "A group like ours could lie through its teeth, and the candidate it helps stays clean." [Conway 82, pp. 95-99]

In 1984, NCPAC received a \$500,000 donation from CAUSA, Rev. Sun Myung Moon's anti-communist organization [Weaver 86, p. 16].

Tim LaHaye

Tim LaHaye is probably the person most responsible for defining "secular humanism" as the root of all evil. He claims that the tenets of humanism are atheism, evolution, amorality, and concepts of "autonomous, self-centered man" and a "socialist one-world view" [Conway 82, p. 131]. In addition to his position with the Moon-financed Coalition for Religious Freedom, he is one of the leaders of the Moral Majority and head of the American Coalition for Traditional Values (ACTV). The Institute for Creation Research was originally started as a part of his Christian Heritage College, but later became independent under Henry Morris. LaHaye's wife, Beverly, is founder of Concerned Women for America and was appointed to Reagan's Family Policy Advisory Board.

Bill Bright

Bill Bright is the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, International, formed in 1951 at UCLA, and author of the fundamentalist tract The Four Spiritual Laws. In 1976, he joined the Christian Freedom Foundation (CFF), a political organization which was started in 1975 by Amway Corporation president Richard DeVos, board chairman of the National Liberty Corporation Art De Moss, Arizona Congressman John Conlan, and Ed McAteer.

Campus Crusade is perhaps the best-funded fundamentalist evangelical organization in the world. In 1976, it ran an evangelism campaign called "Here's Life, America" (known for its "I found it!" bumper stickers) which was launched in 246 major cities and thousands of small towns. The technique used was to saturate a community with media messages, then break down target areas into neighborhood blocks of fifty homes, each assigned to a Crusade volunteer who would try to get the occupants to accept Jesus and join the nearest participating church. Bright's goal was to convert 25 million, but his own final count was only 532,000 [Conway 82, pp. 140-141].

In 1977, "Here's Life, America" became "Here's Life, World". Nelson Bunker Hunt, son of H.L. Hunt, contributed \$10 million for starters, then sent letters to other millionaires asking for funds. By 1981 he had raised \$220 million of the \$1 billion goal, from such people as Sen. William Armstrong (CO), Gerald Ford, Watergate prosecutor Leon Jaworski, astronaut James Irwin, Roy Rogers, and quarterbacks Roger Staubach and Terry Bradshaw [Conway 82, p. 144].

Campus Crusade has many "subministries", such as Athletes in Action, a Military Ministry, an Executive Ministry, a High School Ministry, a Camping Ministry, a Prison Ministry, Drama and Music Ministries, Agape Ministries (a "Christian Peace Corps"), and a "Christian Embassy" in Washington, D.C. which has a \$900,000 annual budget. One of Campus Crusade's traveling

lecturers is Josh McDowell, who mainly speaks to teenagers about sex.

Campus Crusade is known for its aggressive and deceptive conversion tactics. Crusaders have been known to lure students to evangelistic meetings referred to only as "leadership rallies", and to approach people with "opinion surveys" that begin with questions about the state of the world and end with "Have you heard about the Four Spiritual Laws?". Campus Crusade training manuals teach people how to start seemingly innocuous conversations with victims and turn them into conversations about Jesus. The objective is to get the victim to surrender his mind and will to Jesus. As Bill Bright says in his booklet Jesus and the Intellectual (1968, pp. 20-21): "Commitment to Christ involves the surrender of the intellect, the emotions and the will--the total person." Once this is done, the new Christian is encouraged to read the Bible regularly and to let Jesus control his life. [Conway 82, p. 149, pp. 204-211]

Jerry Falwell

Jerry Falwell, TV preacher on "The Old-Time Gospel Hour", runs the infamous Moral Majority (which recently changed its name to the ironic "Liberty Foundation"). Most recently, he has announced a new organization called the Christian Anti-Discrimination Committee. The purpose of the organization, Falwell says, "is to get Bible-believing Christians of this country angry at those persons who have no respect for their faith." Falwell claims the American news media "hate the Christ we stand for" and that his organization will "put the media on their guard and put the fear of God in their hearts", as reported in a Chicago Tribune article by Bruce Buursma.

Although in 1984 Falwell disavowed connection with Moon's Coalition for Religious Freedom, in 1985 he cut short a trip to South Africa in order to attend a Washington press conference in which he and Coalition for Religious Freedom leaders urged Reagan to pardon Moon (who served time for tax falsification and obstruction of justice). His top aide, Moral Majority vice president Ron Godwin, left the Moral Majority to take a job with Moon's media company [Weaver 86, p. 46].

The following are some assorted quotes from Falwell:

"As far as the relationship of the church to the world, it can be expressed as simply as the three words which Paul gave to Timothy--'Preach the Word.' ...Nowhere are we commissioned to reform the externals. We are not told to wage wars against bootleggers, liquor stores, gamblers, murderers, prostitutes, racketeers, prejudiced persons or institutions, or any other existing evil as such...our only purpose on earth is to know Christ and to make him known. Believing the Bible as I do, I would find it impossible to stop preaching the pure, saving gospel of Jesus Christ, and begin doing anything else--including fighting communism, or practicing in civil rights reforms...Preachers are not called to be politicians but soul-winners..."

-- sermon "Ministers and Marches" given March 21, 1965 [Conway 82, p. 71]

"As a matter of fact, while I believe in the separation of church and state, there are many constitutional attorneys who do not" and "Now, some feminists--I was reading, coming over--are advocating censorship in the pornography field. I think it's a mistake."

-- at the Copacabana in New York City, February 5, 1981 [Conway 82, p. 74]

"A few of you here today don't like the Jews. And I know why. He can make more money accidentally than you can on purpose."

-- as reported in *The New Yorker*, May 18, 1981, p. 115, an article titled "A Reporter at Large: A Disciplined, Changing Army" by Frances FitzGerald. [Conway 82, p. 168]

"I hope I will live to see the day when...we won't have any public schools. The churches will have taken them over again and Christians will be running them. What a happy day that will be!"

-- in his book America Can Be Saved

Pat Robertson

Pat Robertson, who obviously intends to run for president in 1988 but has not yet officially announced his candidacy, runs the Christian Broadcasting Network and is the host of the 700 Club. The following are some things he has said:

"Above all else, we need a national resolution--a constitutional amendment if necessary--reaffirming our Judeo-Christian heritage. We must take back the religious freedom that

the Supreme Court has taken from us..."

--Pat Robertson's Perspective, December 1980 [Conway 82, p. 59]

"We have enough votes to run the country. And when people say, 'We've had enough,' we are going to take over."

-- reported in *U.S. News & World Report*, September 24, 1979 [Conway 82, p. 59]

"Our form of government came directly from the Bible" and "The early laws of the country reflected the teachings of Jesus Christ and the teachings of Paul, as recorded in the Bible."

-- a booklet called "Pat Robertson: Extremist with a Baby Face" published by People for the American Way

Donald Wildmon

Wildmon runs the National Federation for Decency, which is an organization primarily devoted to censoring television and magazines by boycotting advertisers and picketing convenience stores.

Mel and Norma Gabler

Mel and Norma Gabler run Educational Research Analysts, which reviews textbooks. The Gablers warn parents in national mailings that textbook content "Appears so natural, reasonable and convincing" that they should not risk reading the textbooks themselves. Instead, they can read the Gablers' "detailed reviews [that] can save countless hours of painstaking work."

Their Handbook No. 1 says such things as: "The teaching of Humanism in public schools not only defies Christian values and authority of parents, but borders on treason and violates the U.S. Constitution by teaching a religion" and "As long as the schools continue to teach ABNORMAL ATTITUDES and ALIEN THOUGHTS, we caution parents NOT to urge their children to pursue high grades and class discussion, because the harder students work, the greater their chances of brainwashing."

Some of the things the Gablers object to, as reported in The First Freedom Today by Robert B. Downs and Ralph E. McCoy, are discussion of the civil rights movement and the slogan "Freedom!" (because everyone in this country has always been free unless they were in jail), discussion of whether computers are capable of creative thinking (because it "infers [sic] that there can be more than one answer"), description of America as a nation of immigrants (because it presents a derogatory view of America that does not foster patriotism), and discussion of "women's contribution to history" (because it undermines the traditional role of women).

Peter Popoff

This faith healer was caught in fraudulent activity and exposed through investigations conducted by the Faith-Healing Investigation Project of the Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion. Popoff uses a small radio device in his ear to listen to transmissions from his wife about people in his audience. His wife collects the information before the shows through casual conversation, records the information and broadcasts it back to Popoff during the show. Popoff claims to receive this information directly from God [Randi 86, pp. 6-7].

APPENDIX: CHRISTIAN CRITICISM

The following are comments about previous versions of this material. These comments originally appeared on Phoenix electronic bulletin board systems (a Christian BBS known as "The Ark" and Apollo BBS) and in letters sent through conventional mail. They have been edited to correct spelling errors.

"I got hold of a copy of Lippard's Bible stuff. It is supposed to disprove the validity of the Bible. First of all, it is taken from some atheist journal (no kidding!) and secondly, it is ignorant all the way through, proving that whoever wrote the atheist crap is absolutely ignorant of the Bible. Lippard has been advertising this on several BBS's. I would write him back and refute it except as someone pointed out, he wants to believe that garbage and none so blind... It is really sad how these fools think they are so smart and really Satan is playing them for a fool! PTL.....Sue"
-- Sue Joan Widemark, 28 January 1986 4:38 A.M. (The Ark)

"I have argued, discussed or whatever you choose to call it with Lippard on several BBSes over the last few years, and have come to a couple of conclusions as a result of those discussions. For one thing, Jim Lippard insists on what he calls 'logic', or at least his version of logic, in spite of the fact that much of Scripture MUST, by its very nature, be accepted on faith, as it transcends logic, and cannot be argued logically. I, and several others, have pointed this out to him time and time again, but he still insists on setting the parameters within which he will discuss anything, including the Word of God.

He is also the complete 'know-it-all', and refuses to admit error even when he is glaringly in the middle of it.

As a result, I have consistently refused to pursue any further discussion with him on any subject, especially when it concerns God's Word, or Christian principles. The fact that I will not respond to his baseless charges DOES NOT make him right! It simply makes him impossible to argue with!"

-- Paul Savage, 29 January 1986 4:47 P.M. (The Ark)

"We don't have to refute his silly arguments. They are IGNORANT. They are taken from some atheist journal. Anyone who has studied the BIBLE at all can see the foolishness of it."

-- Sue Joan Widemark, 31 January 1986 1:58 P.M. (The Ark)

"I'm sorry Jim, but the fact remains the same and always will. Infidels will always refute what they don't comprehend. Faith to you is just a word to place on a sheet or a word to speak when referring to something. As such, your so-called facts can only be images of of your own shallowness."

-- Mike Carter, 24 February 1986 11:58 P.M. (Apollo BBS)

"Isn't it strange that the atheists, agnostics and other detractors always say something like 'don't give me that Bible crap for an answer', when the truth they are looking for and so desperately need in their lives is contained in the very answers they don't want to hear? What pathetic little creatures! Their problem lies, not with the existence of God, but with their pitiful refusal to recognize the fact that there is a force and an intelligence greater than theirs in the universe! Their inability to accept the greater concept of the totality of God is nowhere more evident than in the imagined, nit-picking little so-called inconsistencies that they waste so much of their time and energy dreaming up."

-- Paul Savage 26 February 1986 5:17 A.M. (Apollo BBS)

"Sometimes Rev, you should not tempt God. And you certainly never should challenge God in anything. So... you challenge God? Well you have your met your match. Go ahead, call on all your power, call on all your skill, call on all your ability, see if you can deliver yourself out of God's hand. See if you can deliver yourself from the affliction coming your way VERY SOON!"

-- Kirby Wallace, 7 April 1986 9:07 A.M. (Apollo BBS)

"Look guy, you need to come out of it. I don't care really what you have to say, I have checked out your philosophy. It matches word for word in some places with Anton L's Satanic Bible. Don't tell me it does not, I have both Bibles. I can't really describe the terror in store for you. I

wish it were not going to be so. But you, like Rev Nuke, have had your warnings. But because of your refusal to accept you will be judged by your own words, and by your own standards. Hell is real! But the lake of fire worse than it. I can't help you, Jim. Only God can help you now."

-- Kirby Wallace, 28 April 1986 6:33 A.M. (Apollo BBS)

"I received your little article entitled FUNDAMENTALISM IS NONSENSE today and I must admit you have worked hard.

Now, before I make a few comments about the content of your work let me say that I'm convinced of your intelligence. But as your friend, let me say that I'm not impressed with your wisdom...

Jim, you're just one in a long line of men throughout history that Satan has used to attack the Bible...

Now, you can keep pecking away, but long after your hammer is worn out, the anvil will still endure."

-- Pastor Pat Shaughnessy, Northwest Community Church, 6 May 1986 (U.S. mail)

"Of course you cannot prove to yourself that Jesus Christ exists. You don't have to as you have not been called...your pamphlet contains so much self-esteeming garbage I threw it away after reading past the third page. It's amazing to see people put so much energy into disclaiming Christ or the creator. It's self destructive in the extreme. Oh well, different strokes for different folks. The point is, there is no argument you can provide that I nor any Christian cannot refute accurately. But in your blind hysteria you still don't see the point. Arguing is futile."

-- Mike Carter, 16 May 1986 3:36 A.M. (Apollo BBS)

"The foolish things God uses to confound the wise and man's feeble logic and philosophies (ordained by hell) will not and cannot refute God. HE IS, and always will be. Whether you believe it or not, and unless the Spirit of God teaches you, all your reading won't learn you anything. Just enough to try and (I laugh!) disprove God. Foolish heathens!!! Do you think that you can logic away your sins by denying the truths of God? Listen, Philistine!!! God loves you, but I'm fairly certain that He won't read your stupid pamphlet."

-- Slick Jones, 26 September 1986 11:54 P.M. (Stormbringer BBS)

"Thank you! Yes, thank you. Why? For renewing my faith in our lord and saviour, the Christ, Jesus.

The attack made by you was not about Fundamentalism but the Lord and Holy Scripture. As many have, I have many questions. As many had, I had come up with many objections in my youth.

Thanks to seeing all the garbage in one place, the most one can come up with, of one who says he does not believe, and any who do are...?

Thanks to the part where you say here are some 'Silly Bible Quotes' I have looked at what I had once questioned and have now been shown just how silly your use of the scripture is. I now revere the very words you use to try and prove it wrong, revere the very words you think prove your view. Indeed it does prove to any child of God he is real and shows some are not wanting to be a child of God.

I don't blame God for you! Do you?

Thank you for showing me how really mixed up I was. Thank you for showing me the best a doubter can do is prove the very existence of the Lord by a bad example.

Praise God for letting the enemy of him use words of truth to show not God in error but, the one who attacks to be foolish to think themselves wise, they prove by their own hand, prove how little they know of heavenly things.

Pray some day, as myself, you beg forgiveness for mocking the sacred words of God.

The question of any search for truth? Done out of human pride, or evil tide.

The words which you have no knowledge of, you used in a way to bring shame to you, & the majesty of God! My fearless Jim, you have more guts, than brains, for if there is not one why do you have to try and destroy him? (Are you trying to be a God?)

If you think your words carry more ring of truth than mine I dare you to reprint this letter in your next issue.

At any time you feel a spark in your heart to seek the heavenly truths please do call on me."

-- Martin Eskenasy, 24 October 1986 (U.S. mail)

