

Challenge



"...but try the spirits whether they are of God..." (1 Jno. 4:1)

Volume 9

Summer 2010

Number 3

EDITORIAL...

More than a year has passed without publication, and for that I am truly sorry. This issue should have been published in July of last year with issue number four being published in the fall, sometime around October of 2009. I have been taking care of my mother, who has been very ill, plus having to purchase a house. I spent six months trying to go through the VA and finally gave up and went through the Bank. Although I will be behind in publication, I will have more time to work since I have retired from local preaching, now that mom is better and we have the house.

If you notice the face of *Challenge* has changed. Rather than having two people discussing I have a picture of a gauntlet being thrown. The idea of having two people discussing is **too** passive. 1 John 4:1 says "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but **try** the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*" The word "try" comes from the word δοκιμάζω which is defined as follows:

“δοκιμάζω

dokimazō

Thayer Definition:

- 1) to test, examine, prove, scrutinize (to see whether a thing is genuine or not), as metals
- 2) to recognize as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy

Part of Speech: verb

A Related Word by Thayer's/Strong's

Number: from [G1384](#)

Citing in TDNT: 2:255, 181” (*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon, e-Sword*).

Christians have moved away from the idea of examining and scrutinizing to see whether a thing is true or not. All they seem to want now is just friendly conversation or discussion. *Challenge* started out to be an aggressive quarterly attacking atheism, and it will not move away from that original purpose.

In the days of old, Knights would throw down a gauntlet in front of their enemies to let them know that they were being challenged to a fight. The enemy would, then, pick up the gauntlet to accept the challenge. The new picture on the face of *Challenge* is a reminder of what *Challenge* stands for. Thus we throw down the gauntlet to let the enemy know that we are challenging them to a fight. We are not interested in friendly discussion, we are here to fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life (1 Tim. 6:12). Now the question is will the enemy pick up the gauntlet that has been thrown and accept the challenge to fight?

IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial.....	Jerry McDonald
Do We Need Anything More Than The Bible?....	Thomas McDonald
Philip And His Cures.....	Fred Acquistpace
Philip And His Cures: A Response.....	Jerry McDonald
Authentic Gospel.....	Alvin Petty
Those Biased Bible Critics.....	Jerry McDonald
Dawkins' Indirect Scientific Inference.....	Kyle Butt
Aristotle's Dictum.....	Jerry McDonald
How Well Do You Know Your Bible?.....	Jerry McDonald
News & Notes.....	Jerry McDonald

DO WE NEED ANYTHING MORE THAN THE BIBLE?

Thomas H. McDonald

Most people believe that we need something more than just the Bible in order to become Christians and to remain faithful to Christ. Most religious people believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God, and it is inerrant, but they don't believe that the Bible is all we need. This article will deal with the issue of whether or not we need anything more than God's word to become Christians and/or anything more than God's word to remain Christians. The Bible says "according as his divine power hath given us all things which pertain to life and Godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3). The divine power refers to the word of God, the gospel of Christ which is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). With this being the case we need nothing more than God's word.

If the Bible is God's power unto salvation then that is all that is going to bring man to the blood of Christ. This is why Paul was so adamant about preaching the gospel of Christ. He told the church in Corinth "I determine not to know anything

among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). Why was that? Simply because preaching Jesus Christ and him crucified was the only thing that would bring people to God. Paul also wrote "for the preaching of the cross is unto them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). Please read this article and think about this matter. I believe that anyone who reads this article, with an open mind, will come to the conclusion that the Bible teaches that all we need is the Bible to help us get to heaven. Miracles won't help us, and we will not receive a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, but God's word can and will help us get to heaven. P.O. Box 237, Belle, MO 63013, thmcdonald10@hotmail.com.



PHILIP AND HIS CURES

Fred Acquistapace

And at the time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.... Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them; and many taken with palsies, and that they were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city. ❖ Acts 8

Philip was one of the Seven selected with Stephen to minister to the Grecians, but now Stephen was dead and the rest had to leave town. Notice carefully that while the church at Jerusalem was persecuted and scattered, the Apostles were not bothered by the Jews. This was important because the teaching of the Apostles was different from teaching of the Greeks. While the Apostles taught

that Jesus was the Messiah, the Grecians, and later Paul, taught that Jesus was the Son of God. The Jews would not have allowed the Apostles to teach in the temple if they taught that Jesus was the Son of God. Jews could not accept such an idea, but it was easy for Gentiles to accept, for it was common in their myths. When Philip went to Samaria, he worked miracles, and cured those with "unclean spirits" and "many taken with palsies, and that were lame." Philip had been taught how to calm such people and to suggest that they accept a cure. The power of suggestion could set them free from their hysteric ailments. Symptoms such as multiple personalities and paralysis are common among hysterics, and Philip did his job well and cured many. Certainly there was "great joy in that city" when Philip set people free from their hysteria and other psychological problems. Even Simon the Sorcerer was impressed by Philip and his cures, and he wanted to learn this magic. What Philip did was neither magic nor miracle, but only natural means were used to accomplish his cures (*Miracles That Never Were*, pp. 223,224).

PHILIP AND HIS CURES: A RESPONSE

Jerry McDonald

A number of years ago Fred Acquistapace sent me a copy of his book *Miracles That Never Were* asking me to critique it and let him know what I thought of it. This was in the mid-90's and I was unable to get around to his request at that point. I did read parts of his work and found his "natural" explanations to the "supernatural" claims of the Bible to be, at the very least, lacking in substance.

Philip and His Cures
Fred Acquistapace

❖ Acts 8

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Philip was one of the Seven selected with Stephen to minister to the Grecians, but now Stephen was dead and the rest had to leave town. Notice carefully that while the church at Jerusalem was persecuted and scattered, the Apostles were not bothered by the Jews. This was important because the teaching of the Apostles was different from teaching of the Greeks. While the Apostles taught that Jesus was the Messiah, the Grecians, and later Paul, taught that Jesus was the Son of God. The Jews would not have allowed the Apostles to teach in the temple if they taught that Jesus was the Son of God. Jews could not accept such an idea, but it was easy for Gentiles to accept, for it was common in their myths.

The apostles had already suffered great loss before the stoning of Stephen. For example Peter and John were threatened in Acts chapter 4 and were put in prison in Acts chapter 5, and they were released by the angels and sent to the temple to teach and were brought back before the counsel and were threatened and beaten. However after Stephen's death the apostle Peter was apprehended and put in prison and the apostle James, the

brother of John, was killed by Herod because it pleased the Jews (Acts 12:1-6). Mr. Acquistapace does not know his scripture if he thinks the 12 apostles had it easy after the church was scattered. How could anyone honestly think that they were left alone by the Jews? I don't call being killed and imprisoned being left alone, but that's just me some might like that kind of lifestyle. In my 11 years of law enforcement experience I found people who actually preferred imprisonment to living life on the outside. Myself I like freedom so much that I didn't even like staying in the Navy any longer than I signed up for; not that there's anything wrong with a lifetime of military service, I just couldn't handle the confinement. I am sure the apostles felt that they were not being treated very nicely by the Jews when they were cast into prisons and killed. After all John was the only one of the Lord's apostles that is said to have died a natural death. All the rest died unnatural ones at the hands of executors because of what they preached and what they stood for. For Fred to make such a statement shows either his gross ignorance of Biblical knowledge and history or his lack of concern for the scholarship of his own work. Either way, it doesn't look good for Fred.

Mr. Acquistapace seems to think that the apostles didn't think that Jesus was the Son of God, but notice the apostle Peter's confession: "*thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Mt. 16:18). In a sermon Peter stated: "*The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go*" (Act 3:13). The apostle John wrote: "*But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name*" (Joh 20:31).

The apostles did teach that Christ was the Messiah, but the word Messiah means "anointed one." Christ was more than just the Son of God; he was the long awaited Messiah, the promised Savior. To call Christ the Messiah, the anointed one, the promised Savior was no different than calling him the Son of God. Why? Because the long awaited Messiah was supposed to be the Son of God (Psa. 2:7).

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lame.” Philip had been taught how to calm such people and to suggest that they accept a cure. The power of suggestion could set them free from their hysteric ailments. Symptoms such as multiple personalities and paralysis are common among hysterics, and Philip did his job well and cured many. Certainly there was “great joy in that city” when Philip set people free from their hysteria and other psychological problems. Even Simon the Sorcerer was impressed by Philip and his cures, and he wanted to learn this magic. What Philip did was neither magic nor miracle, but only natural

means were used to accomplish his cures (*Miracles That Never Were*, pp. 223,224).

It seems that every disease in the Bible can be naturally explained by Fred as “hysteria.” What I find interesting is that Acquistapace wants us to believe that a relatively uneducated man like Philip could cure people of multiple personality disorders, by simply talking them into accepting the idea that they just need to calm down and quit being hysterical and they were cured, while our most educated doctors are unable to do this today. And we call those people “ignorant”!

AUTHENTIC GOSPELS

Alvin Petty

How does a historian determine what sayings and doings of Jesus are authentic? He has to use his historical sources which in the case of Jesus is a significant number. They are Paul, the gospels, Thomas and other non-canonical gospels, the Jewish historian, Josephus, the Roman historian Tacitus and a Roman governor, Pliny the Younger.

All of these sources were written within a 100 years of Jesus’ death and resurrection-ascension. Historians have a set of deductive criterion that they use to determine what is authentic reporting of Jesus and what is not. These criterion are helpful but not absolutely foolproof.

One thing the historian and every Bible student must do is become aware of the biases that are in the historical sources. For example the New Testament gospels and writings of Paul are not disinterested accounts by impartial observers. They are biased accounts by people of faith in Jesus as Lord, Saviour, Messiah and they write to convince others of the validity of this bias.

Now, I participate in this bias and consider it positive, good and life enhancing. But there are biases in scripture that are not positive or life enhancing.

Take, for example, the bias against the Jews found in the non-canonical gospel of Peter and the gospel of John. It is totally unhistorical and very unChristlike. Peter says it was the Jews of Herod’s court that crucified Jesus, and he is hatefully harsh on the Jews throughout his gospel. All the other sources except John make it very clear that it was

Pontius Pilate who crucified Jesus. This later view is by far the most historically credible.

John blames all the Jews for killing Jesus and has Jesus saying the Jews have the devil for their father. This of course is not considered to be an authentic saying of Jesus at all. John halfway exonerates Pilate from blame in Jesus’ crucifixion. This is very unhistorical. And he seems to forget all the Jews that the synoptic gospels report heard Jesus gladly.

John is harshly and wrongly biased against the Jews. His harsh polemic is really directed against the Jews of his own day rather than being historical reporting of the story of Jesus.

Historically, it was a handful of the Jewish elite collaborators with Rome who conspired against Jesus and turned him over to Pilate who alone had the power to kill Jesus. Many Jews did not believe on Jesus but they did not actively try to crucify him.

How sad that the church from the second century on took the angry bias in John against the Jews and used it time and time again to justify hatred, persecution and murder of the Jewish people. Even the Protestant reformer, Martin Luther, felt justified in his senile old age to write vile, hateful things against the Jews. The Nazis used Luther’s writings in justifying their mass murder of Jews. Whatever happened to the historical Jesus whose main emphasis was to love one’s fellow as oneself even to the loving and blessing of one’s enemies?

In such cases one must remember the principle of sublation taught by the Bible in interpreting

contradictory biases or other problems found in the scriptures. Sublation means that you take the clear principle of love taught by Jesus and use it to negate John's bias against the Jews or anything else that contradicts God's clear way of love. This is what Jesus did with some Old Testament teachings and some of the Oral Law traditions in the Sermon on the Mount. The Bible claims to be divinely inspired but that inspiration is filtered through faulty human beings. So everything in the Bible is not to be considered the Word of God.

The interpretive principle of sublation and good historical research helps one to filter out the contradictory teachings to the way of Jesus in scripture. This is why I say that studying the historical Jesus liberates and increases my faith in Jesus as Leader and Lord. Using the principle of

sublation on John's bias against the Jews helps us come to Paul's mature attitude in Romans 11 where he concludes that ultimately "all Israel shall be saved."

I find the gospel of John very helpful in many ways but one should realize that he is the most unhistorical of all the gospels in his reporting of Jesus. And one can not follow the way of Jesus by taking his angry bias against the Jews as literal truth good for guidance. Hey, good historical research of the Bible is a great aid in producing good spirituality

January 25, 2008, 12:05 p.m.

<http://historyandspirituality.freedomblogging.com/2008/01/>

THOSE BIASED BIBLE CRITICS

Jerry McDonald

I couldn't help but wonder, after reading Mr. Petty's article on *Authentic Gospels* how he could consider himself a follower of Jesus Christ and a minister at that. But this seems to be the growing trend in the religious world. One person, years ago, claimed to be a Christian, but he just didn't believe in the Bible. I have often wondered how one could claim to be a Christian and not believe in the only book on earth that teaches one how to become and remain a Christian. The very concept is mind boggling, but some how people today have thrown consistency out the window and have learned to live with it. It doesn't bother them to live in inconsistency. It doesn't bother them to live in a world filled with doubt and skepticism. George Santana once wrote that "*skepticism is the chastity of the intellect, and it is a shame to surrender it too soon or to the first caller.*" In other words, I should take pride in the fact that I doubt everything and don't claim to know anything. Who among us would go to a surgeon who tells us just before he puts us out, "**I doubt everything I am doing, I am not sure about what I am doing, but I will do my best, but I do not even know for sure that you even need surgery.**" I don't know about you, but I think I would some how find a way to fight through the effects of the "versed" or whatever drug I had been given and get out of that OR as fast as I could. I don't want him to have any doubts about his ability or knowledge when he puts me out and begins to work on me.

No, this foolishness of living in doubt only applies to religious life. Someone who is applying for a job as a computer analyst doesn't put on his resume that he doubts and is unsure. No, he puts down that he knows his job. No employer is going to hire a person for a job like this if he puts on his resume that he doubts his knowledge about the job for which he is applying. Why, then, is it that when it comes to the Bible man is encouraged to live in doubt and uncertainty?

Mr. Petty begins his article with:

How does a historian determine what sayings and doings of Jesus are authentic? He has to use his historical sources which in the case of Jesus is a significant number. They are Paul, the gospels, Thomas and other non-canonical gospels, the Jewish historian, Josephus, the Roman historian Tacitus and a Roman governor, Pliny the Younger.

All of these sources were written within a 100 years of Jesus' death and resurrection-ascension. Historians have a set of deductive criterion that they use to determine what is authentic reporting of Jesus and what is not. These criterion are helpful but not absolutely foolproof.

Well, I am not worried about what historians do or how they go about doing it. What does concern me is how the common man goes about determining

what sayings and doings of Jesus are authentic and which are not. The common man can take the word of the apostles Paul and Peter, James and John and the four accounts of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Those accounts are absolutely foolproof. Those writers were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Mr. Petty casts doubt upon verbal, plenary inspiration when he says that the writings of Josephus, et. al, are as valid as the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul and Peter.

While extrabiblical writings often shed light on such subjects as the resurrection (for example), the Bible is the sole authority on the matter. Anything that disagrees with God's word is flat wrong.

He claims that the Bible student is biased in his beliefs that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. He claims to participate in this bias, and considers it positive, good and life enhancing. When someone is biased he/she already has his/her mind made up, and regardless of the evidence to the contrary. His statement goes against everything that the Bible teaches people to do.

1. The Bible teaches us to seek the truth regardless of preconceived ideas:

*"Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; **That they should seek the Lord**, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto*

gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Act 17:22-31).

2. The Bible teaches us to avoid and mark those who are biased and teach doctrines different from the truth: *"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom 16:17).*

If Mr. Petty claims to be biased in his beliefs, then he has no part of the truth. He tried to argue that John was the one writer that made it look like that the Jews were the ones who put Christ on the Cross because of his hatred for the Jews.

1. It was neither the Jews nor the Romans who put Christ on the Cross, but it was the love of God that put Christ on the cross: *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8).* If Christ had not wanted to die on the cross for man's sins, and if God had not wished it; there would have been no crucifixion. Notice what Jesus said to Peter: *"Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Mat 26:52-53).* Christ was delivered by the determination and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:22-24).

Peter told the Jews on the day of Pentecost:

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have

crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it” (Act 2:22-24)

These men knew that they were guilty because they asked: *“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Act 2:37).* They knew it was their fault and those who received the truth were willing to repent of that sin and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins (v:38). Therefore the idea that John was baised against the Jews and the other writers did not blame the Jews is absurd. It makes me wonder if Mr. Petty has ever read the crucifixion accounts and the book of Acts. John didn't write Acts; Luke did.

2. John didn't have any hatred for the Jews. Just because his account was not just for the Jews doesn't mean that he hated the Jews. Matthew was the one who recorded the Jews famous saying that they wanted Christ's blood upon their heads and upon the heads of their children:

“But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified” (Mat 27:20-26). John didn't mention the multitude because his focus

was on the chief priests and elders who stirred up the crowd.

3. Mr. Petty says that John has Jesus saying that all Jews had Satan as their father, but this isn't true. All one has to do is to look at the context of John 8:44 to see that Jesus was addressing the Pharisees who were trying to trap him so they could find fault with him. Jesus rightly identified them as the children of Satan.
4. Mr. Petty argues that the Bible claims divine inspiration, but it was filtered down by men so not everything is the word of God. Well, Mr. Petty, if not everything in it is the word of God, just tell us what part is the word of God and what part isn't? I have asked people who take Petty's position on this for 20 years and all they can say is that you have to accept it by faith. Well Paul said that *“faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17)*, so if everything in the Bible is not the word of God how on earth, since faith is based upon God's word, can we know what is and what isn't correct? The truth is, we can't! Once we open the door we have to accept all of it. This is what the new atheists want us to do. They want us to accept the Apocryphal writings, the Gnostic writings, and the Psuedopigrapha writings to be equal to the 66 books of the Bible.

Once you start, you can't quit. People lose faith in God's word because they start believing as Mr. Petty says we should believe. The only way to stand fast is to follow the Psalmist's words:

*“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. **But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.** The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the*

righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish” (Psa 1:1-6).

This is the only way to stand fast. Paul wrote: *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye **stedfast, unmoveable**, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1Co 15:58).* We cannot be steadfast and unmoveable in the work of the Lord unless we accept the Bible (and all of the Bible) as divinely inspired (2 Tim. 3:16,17) because it makes

us perfect, completely furnished unto all good works, and it gives us all things that pertain to life and Godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

How Mr. Petty ever expects to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and savior when he doesn't accept all of the book that tells him about Jesus Christ and what Jesus wants him to do in order to be saved? All he has is his own subjective ideas which are no better than the atheist's.

DAWKINS' INDIRECT SCIENTIFIC INFERENCE

Kyle Butt, M.A.

In his latest book, *The Greatest Show on Earth*, Richard Dawkins declares that “the ‘theory’ of evolution is actually a fact—as incontrovertible a fact as any in science” (2009, p. vii). He wrote the books because he noted that in his previous book he “realized that the evidence for evolution itself was nowhere explicitly set out, and that this was a serious gap” that he “needed to close” (p. vii). In his failed attempt to close that gap, Dawkins delineated the kind of “evidence” that he would be relying upon. He noted that much of the “evidence” for evolution is necessarily not direct, eyewitness evidence. He stated:

“Obviously, the vast majority of evolutionary change is invisible to direct eye-witness observation. Most of it happened before we were born, and in any case it is usually too slow to be seen during an individual’s lifetime.... With evolution, as with continental drift, inference after the event is all that is available to us, for the obvious reason that we don’t exist until after the event. But do not for one nanosecond underestimate the power of such inference” (p. 16).

Along those same lines, Dawkins wrote: “I shall never again be tempted to give eyewitness testimony an automatic preference over indirect scientific inference” (p. 15).

The important point to notice in this regard is that often the creationist is criticized by the evolutionary community for suggesting that creation at the hand of a supernatural Creator is a scientific idea. We are told that since scientists cannot touch, see, taste, hear, or smell the Creator directly, here and now, then that “hypothesis”

simply cannot be considered scientific. Yet such an assessment of Creation is inaccurate. Creation is simply, in the words of Richard Dawkins, “inference after the event” that deserves as much or more credit, according to Dawkins, as “eyewitness testimony” (cf. [Butt](#), 2007).

In fact, the biblical explanation of Creation clearly defines the concept almost exactly as Dawkins has defined acceptable evidence. Romans 1:20 states: “For since the creation of the world His [God’s] invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.” A cursory look at the verse shows that (1) people in Paul’s time (as well as our own) were not around to directly observe the act of Creation, (2) the evidence available to Paul’s readers (and modern people) is enough to positively infer the concept of Creation and the existence of a Creator, (3) improper scientific inference from the available evidence would result in a complete misunderstanding of the origin of the Universe.

Dawkins is exactly right that real scientific inference based on indirect observation is an excellent way to arrive at facts and knowledge. Sadly, he is woefully incorrect in his assessment that such inferences substantiate evolution. The fact of the matter is, all properly formulated scientific inferences based on factual scientific evidence establish the conclusion that a supernatural Creator designed our amazing Universe.

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ARISTOTLE'S DICTUM

Jerry McDonald

John Montgomery, in his book *History and Christianity* wrote the following words: "the benefit of the doubt is to be given to the document itself, not arrogated by the critic to himself" (p. 29). This is what he, and others have called Aristotle's dictum. McDowell wrote: "On this test John Warwick Montgomery writes that literary critics still follow Aristotle's dictum" (*Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, pp. 60, 61).

Now for the most part Montgomery's statement has gone unchallenged and has been taken, by faith, as a matter of fact. I have used it in every debate that I have ever had on the inspiration of the Bible. In 1990 Farrell Till and I began a written debate that took six years to complete. I used it in that debate and during the debate he didn't challenge it. However, about three years ago, he did challenge it and demanded proof that Aristotle ever made such a statement. I got my copy of *History of Christianity* down and looked at the bibliography to see where Montgomery got it. His quotation came from Aristotle on Poetics. So I downloaded Aristotle's article on poetics. I also purchased two books on Aristotle, *Aristotle I* and *Aristotle II*. There was so much to read in and Aristotle is not an easy person to understand anyway. I did find where Plato had mentioned something about this teaching of Aristotle and I wrote to Mr. Till informing him that although I had not found what Aristotle actually said, I did find what Plato said. However, I have always felt if you are going to quote what someone says you need to get it straight from the horse's mouth. Since that time I have cautioned Christians about using Montgomery's statement, but I have continued my study, and my continued study finally paid off. Below is word for word, from Aristotle himself:

"(3) The contradictions found in the poet's language one should first test as one does an opponent's confutation in a dialectal argument, so as to see whether he means the same thing, in the same relation, and in the same sense, before admitting that he

has contradicted either something he has said himself or what a man of sound sense assumes as true. But there is no possible apology for improbability of Plot or depravity of character, [20] when they are not necessary, and no use is made of them, like the improbability of Aegeus in *Medea*² and the baseness of Menelaus in *Orestes*.

The objections, then, of critics start with faults of five kinds: the allegation is always that something is either (1) impossible, (2) improbable, (3) corrupting, (4) contradictory, (5) against technical correctness. The answers to these objections must be sought under one or other of the above-mentioned heads [25] which are twelve in number" (*Aristotle II on Poetics*, pp 698,699).

Now it is clear that Aristotle, though he was talking about criticizing poetry, stated that unless a document under consideration could be found to be either impossible, improbable, corrupting, contradictory, or against technical correctness, that it was to be given the benefit of the doubt and that the critic was not to arrogate this to himself. Montgomery wasn't saying that Aristotle said this about the Bible, but he said that "literary critics still follow Aristotle's dictum" which was to give the benefit of the doubt to the document unless there is clear evidence that it is not what it claims to be.

The problem with the evangelical atheists today is that they don't follow this dictum, they claim that the Bible is faulty and that they are correct. Though they brag about having the latest data to prove that the Bible isn't inspired, they really have no data at all. What they do have are warmed over arguments that have been answered and re-answered dozens of times. All the while they automatically claim that the Bible is not the word of God, and that they, the critics, are the ones who are telling the truth.

I have had people tell me that the Bible treats the woman as a second class citizen and that it never

allows her to teach or do anything. When I guide them to Paul's letter to the church in Philippi, "*and I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life*" (Php 4:3). Now Paul doesn't specify what these women did, but he did specify that they were laborers with him in the gospel. Usually when I bring that up to some atheist, I usually get one of two responses: (1) "I didn't know that was there," and (2) "But in the Old Testament if a woman was falsely accused of committing adultery by her husband nothing happened to the husband after she was made to drink the concoction made by the priests from the dirt on the floor. Again, they don't know their Bible because the husband doesn't go free by any means, he has to take her back. Notice: "*And if the woman be not defiled, but be clean; then she shall be free, and shall conceive seed*" (Num 5:28). He can't divorce her, he must take her back and have relations with her until she conceives. Now, some say God doesn't have a sense of humor. Not me! Can you imagine a man falsely accusing his wife of committing adultery and then having to take her back and treating her as though nothing had happened. I don't know, but it seems to me that women have a way of making life very difficult for men at times.

I have said all of that to say this: The Bible should be allowed to be considered innocent until proven guilty. I have been debating the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible for 20 years, and I have had them throw their best at me. I have a bold challenge on my *Challenge2* website: "Find "ONE"

bona fide, actual, absolute or objective contradiction (in the logical sense of the word "contradiction") in the Bible and I (Jerry D. McDonald) will lay my Bible down and never preach from it again. I will in fact become an atheist and defend the atheistic view. Just find ONE!" (http://www.challenge2.org/standing_challenge).

Now I have had some ask me what I mean by objective, absolute and actual, and I gave them the dictionary definition of the words. I never heard from them again. One person told me that I was safe in making that challenge because such things didn't exist in the Bible (to which I heartily agreed), but he said that such things didn't exist anywhere. I then asked why we even had the definitions of them if they didn't, and I never heard from him again. Others have taken up the gauntlet and have tried to show me, but it wasn't long until they decided it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than to find one of those things in the Bible.

In our criminal courts we consider the defendant innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. However, when it comes to the Bible evangelical atheists hold it guilty until proven innocent beyond all doubt. They do not want to, and will not follow Aristotle's Dictum when it comes to dealing with God's word.

However, now after finding out what Aristotle did say I feel that it is essential to encourage all Bible believers to continue to quote John Warwick Montgomery's *History of Christianity*.

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR BIBLE (11)?

Jerry McDonald

After answering the first 10 questions in Dan Barker's Bible quiz, it is time respond to number 11. In this one he asks the question about who created evil wanting to lay the blame off onto God. It seems that sinful man wants to put the blame of his sinful deeds on someone else rather than stand up and take responsibility for what he has done. Now let us look at what Dan says:

"11. According to the bible, who created evil? a.Adam. b.Eve. c.God. d.Satan." Then we look at his answer: "Answer: C a.Adam. b.Eve.

c.God. --Now we know who is to blame. 'I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things' (Isaiah 45:7). The word 'create' above is bara, the same word used in Genesis 1:1. The word "evil" is ra, such as in Genesis 2:9, 'the tree of knowledge of good and evil.' Some versions, such as the NIV, have unjustifiably softened the implications of this verse by translating ra as 'disaster' or 'calamity,' although ra is used repeatedly throughout scripture to refer to moral evil. (See Isaiah 7:14-15: 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil [ra], and choose the good.) But even if the 'disaster' interpretation were allowable, the verse still depicts God as a troublemaker.

d.Satan" (<http://www.ffrf.org/legacy/quiz/bquiz.php>).

Commentator John Gill wrote the following words:

"I make peace, and create evil; peace between God and men is made by Christ, who is God over all; spiritual peace of conscience comes from God, through Christ, by the Spirit; eternal glory and happiness is of God, which saints enter into at death; peace among the saints themselves here, and with the men of the world; peace in churches, and in the world, God is the author of, even of all prosperity of every kind, which this word includes: "evil" is also from him; **not the evil of sin; this is not to be found among the creatures God made; this is of men, though suffered by the Lord, and overruled by him for good: but the evil of punishment for sin, God's sore judgments, famine, pestilence, evil beasts, and the sword, or war, which latter may more especially be intended, as it is opposed to peace; this usually is the effect of sin;** may be sometimes lawfully engaged in; whether on a good or bad foundation is permitted by God; moreover, all afflictions, adversities, and calamities, come under this name, and are of God; see Job 2:10" (*Gill's Commentaries on the Old Testament, e-Sword*).

Dan says that the NIV has unjustifiably translated "ra" as "disaster" or "calamity," and while the NIV does have serious translational problems this is not one of them. The New Testament tells us that God will send strong delusions to those who want to believe a lie

'And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2Th 2:11-13).

Those who want to follow Christ will have a way of escape provided to them (1 Cor. 10:12,13), however,

those who choose not to follow God will not have that way of escape provided. God will allow them to believe their lies. We must choose to follow God, which means we must choose to walk away from evil.

Satan was cast out of heaven for the sin of pride, and he came to earth and tempted Adam and Eve. Thus we have sin in the world. God did not create that evil, but what he did create is the punishment for the evil that men commit.

Isaiah 7:14,15 has nothing to do with moral evil. Notice that Strong's defines the word "evil" in the following manner:

H7451

רַעַה רַעַ

ra' râ'âh

rah, raw-aw'

From H7489; *bad* or (as noun) *evil* (naturally or morally). This includes the second (feminine) form; as adjective or noun: - adversity, affliction, bad, calamity, + displeasure (-ure), distress, evil ([-favouredness], man, thing), + exceedingly, X great, grief (-vous), harm, heavy, hurt (-ful), ill (favoured), + mark, mischief, (-vous), misery, naught (-ty), noisome, + not please, sad (-ly), sore, sorrow, trouble, vex, wicked (-ly, -ness, one), worse (-st) wretchedness, wrong. [Including feminine ra'âh; as adjective or noun.] (*Strong's Hebrew Dictionary, e-Sword*).

Then Keil & Delitzsch wrote:

"This kind of food would coincide in time with his understanding, that is to say, would run parallel to it. Incapacity to distinguish between good and bad is characteristic of early childhood (Deu 1:39, etc.), and also of old age when it relapses into childish ways (2Sa 19:36). The commencement of the capacity to understand is equivalent to entering into the so-called years of discretion - the riper age of free and conscious self-determination. By the time that Immanuel reached this age, all the blessings of the land would have been so far reduced, that from a land full of luxuriant corn-fields and vineyards, it would have become a large wooded pasture-ground, supplying milk and honey, and nothing more. A thorough devastation of the land is therefore the reason for this limitation to the simplest, and, when compared with the fat of wheat and the

cheering influence of wine, most meagre and miserable food” (*Commentary on the Old Testament, e-Sword*).

This word is a word that you have to follow the context on. You cannot make it have the same meaning every time it is used. Surely Barker knows this. If he doesn't he doesn't know his Bible very well.

NEWS & NOTES

As was stated in the editorial it has been several months since the last publication. With this issue we will start the paper version back up, so if you want your name on the mailing list send an email to jerry@challenge2.org and I'll be sure to get you on it. Technomage backed out in our written debate on the Canaanite Conquest that we had going on the Theology Web. The moderator has now closed the debate out, but I have it saved and published at <http://www.challenge2biblicalexamination.org/titlepage.pdf>. I also have two written debates on the resurrection with an atheist by the name of Spencer Lo. They can be found at the following two links: <http://www.challenge2.org/coverres.pdf>, and <http://www.challenge2.org/coverpage2.pdf>. Other than this, I have no other news at this point.

Challenge is a quarterly apologetic journal that is used mainly to debate the evangelical atheistic/skeptical movement that permeates our country today. There is no charge for the electronic journal and you can either view it on the challenge website or request it and it will be sent to you free of charge. With this issue we are starting the paper version back up. For the electronic version please send an email to jerry@challenge2.org. If you want the paper version you can send a request to that address or the following regular address: Challenge, P.O. 237, Belle, MO 65013. Phone is (573) 578-5931. Jerry McDonald is the editor and owner of Challenge. Thomas Hardeman McDonald is the co-editor. We are going to try to send the paper version free of charge. We will have to wait and see how it goes.

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