

THE CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS ALLIANCE QUARTERLY

*Overthrowing reasonings and every high thing that lifts itself up against the knowledge of God,
and leading captive every thought into the obedience of the Christ.*

ADVOCATE • LAMB OF GOD • THE RESURRECTION &
THE LIFE • SHEPHERD & BISHOP OF SOULS • JUDGE •
LORD OF LORDS • MAN OF SORROWS • HEAD OF
THE CHURCH • MASTER • FAITHFUL & TRUE WITNESS
• ROCK • HIGH PRIEST • THE DOOR • LIVING
WATER • BREAD OF LIFE • ROSE OF SHARON •
ALPHA & OMEGA • TRUE VINE • MESSIAH •
TEACHER • HOLY ONE • MEDIATOR • THE BELOVED
• BRANCH • CARPENTER • GOOD SHEPHERD •
LIGHT OF THE WORLD • IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD
• THE WORD • CHIEF CORNERSTONE • SAVIOR •
SERVANT • AUTHOR & FINISHER OF OUR FAITH •
THE ALMIGHTY • EVERLASTING FATHER • SHILOH •
LION OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH • I AM • KING OF
KINGS • PRINCE OF PEACE • BRIDEGROOM • ONLY
BEGOTTEN SON • WONDERFUL COUNSELOR •
IMMANUEL • SON OF MAN • DAYSPRING • THE
AMEN • KING OF THE JEWS • PROPHET •
REDEEMER • ANCHOR • BRIGHT MORNING STAR •
THE WAY, THE TRUTH & THE LIFE

The Word Became Flesh and Dwelt Among Us

Evidence for the Existence of Jesus

*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the
door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*

CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS ALLIANCE

answering seekers, equipping Christians, & demonstrating the truth of the Christian worldview

Statement of Faith



We affirm that there is only one, Triune God, existing eternally in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We affirm that God is the all-powerful Creator.

We affirm that Jesus Christ, our Lord, is the only Son of God, fully God and fully man, yet one person.

He became incarnate by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the virgin Mary, lived a perfect and sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, suffered death for the forgiveness of our sins, and was buried.

On the third day he bodily rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

We look forward to the resurrection of the dead.

There is no other name by which we may be saved.¹

We affirm that the Holy Spirit is the Lord and giver of life, who is to be worshiped and glorified with the Father and the Son.

We believe the Scriptures are inspired by the Holy Spirit, and we affirm that they are historically trustworthy and doctrinally authoritative.²

We affirm that there is one, holy, universal, and apostolic church.³

We affirm the Christian worldview encourages a holy and joyful renewal of each individual and the whole universe. We therefore promote the biblical convictions:

*that the love of our neighbors and the alleviation of human suffering in all its forms is integral to Christian discipleship,

*that marriage is a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman, and that marriage is the only legitimate context for sexual activity,

*that all human beings have a right to life, including those not yet born,⁴

*that we are called to participate in the restoration of all things, and

*that the Christian Apologetics Alliance is ultimately meant to serve the church and our family in Christ, as one part of God's mission to evangelize and disciple all people to maturity in Christ.⁵

Bedrock

[bed-rok]: any firm foundation or basis; the fundamental principles

"State of the Alliance"

A special announcement: We have received a generous, anonymous donation that will enable us to move forward with seeking 501(c)3, non-profit status. We would like to thank the cheerful giver and ask for your continued prayers moving forward. We will keep you updated throughout the process.

As we near the end of 2014 and look ahead to 2015, we want to pause and reflect on the blessings God has lavished upon this Alliance and assess our priorities to make sure we devote our time, talent, and treasure to that which brings him glory. Here is a brief update from each member of the admin team on all the great things going on in the Alliance recently, and a taste of the upcoming. For those who appreciate them, stats can be found at the end.

Glen Richmond - EQUIPPED

In late June 2014, the idea of a newsletter for the Christian Apologetics Alliance was proposed; the [first issue of EQUIPPED](#) was released within three and a half months on October 19. Within the first four weeks of release, the CAA website recorded 1,300 views.

Initially, EQUIPPED was conceived as a monthly "newsletter" but at 65 pages, it had grown to become a quarterly publication. The CAA Quarterly group started with 12 members, and grew to 22 before the release of the first issue. There are currently 41 members.

Similar to all new projects, EQUIPPED required the dedication and input of a group of visionaries to determine the publication title (which was decided by popular vote in the CAA main group), the scope and content, and the template.

The scope of EQUIPPED is derived from the CAA Statement of Faith, a document which all members have read and agreed in order to join the Christian Apologetics Alliance Facebook group. EQUIPPED, therefore, publishes content in defense of topics from the Statement of Faith. The content (or theme) is presently seasonal. The first issue began with "In the Beginning: Evidence for the Existence of God." Issue 3 will focus on the Resurrection. Issue 4 is presently being planned to focus on the historical evidence for the manuscript documents - the Bible.

Developing the template was the most difficult and time consuming task, but the team held together and provided valuable input on two concept templates which combined to become the frame of the present and, for the foreseeable future,



forthcoming releases of EQUIPPED.

Many members obliged when asked to post a link to their blog(s). My motivation was two-fold: to get to know them, and to determine which member, if any, might have interests similar to an un-developed section. There are several "sections" which could be developed and spearheaded by other group members, if some would like to take on the creative responsibility.

In all, I have great peace and joy being involved with EQUIPPED, and I am content to listen and move as the Lord leads.

Chris Reese - Partnerships, Twitter

Regarding partnerships, we continue to maintain good relations with a number of ministries, companies, and institutions, which you can view on the [Friends and Partners page](#) on our website. One of our newest partners is the NRB television network, which broadcasts apologetics programming around the world.

Our Twitter account continues to gain followers, and we now have more than 3,600. We encourage you to follow us to discover some of the best current resources in apologetics. We also have the occasional opportunity to interact with skeptics there.



Carson Weitnauer - Treasurer

The admin team is united in pursuing official non-profit and tax-exempt status for the CAA. As the business manager for the CAA, I am excited to work on this project for the group. If you have expertise in this area, please send me a message with your background and availability to work on this. The primary need is for expert legal review of our documents. I believe that gaining these standard and widely known recognitions will increase our legitimacy, broaden our funding, and open new opportunities for the group.

Linwood Kemp - New Membership

Due to changes in Facebook's policies, the New Members Team had to revamp its procedures for approving new applicants in 2014. The new process has proven to be a time improvement over the old method. On the side, I have been working on assembling a full Contact List spreadsheet of the members of both the CAA and the ABA (Apologetics Bloggers Alliance), as well as a list of the apologetics blogs of CAA and ABA members.

Natasha Crain - Apologetics for Parents

The Apologetics for Parents group has grown rapidly since its inception earlier this year. The group now has 671 members and actively shares links and engages in discussion about apologetics as it applies to parenting. We encourage all CAA members who are parents to join!



Matt Fig - Moderators

The mod team looks forward to continuing to serve the CAA community. In the last year we have had some team member changes and dealt with many other challenges. Going forward we are continuing to evaluate and implement a consistent and useful policy on the use of memes within the group. We also want to focus on helping to improve the quality of the discussions in the group while maintaining a light-handed feel. The mod team appreciates the direct help and support received from members on several issues over the last year, and we always want to have an ear open to suggestions for improvement.

Charles Huneycutt - Team Member

I'm looking forward to continue working with a great group of Christian men and women who serve God with their minds and talents in promoting the truth of the Christian worldview. Meeting [several of the Admins](#) over the last couple of months at the EPS conference (among others) solidified digital friendships. I'm thankful for being part of such a great team. Over the next few weeks I will be pulling back from my myriad of intellectual pursuits (too many books, too many discussions) to refine my focus and goals for 2015 (It's very easy to get bogged down in all that can be studied). I'm hoping that doing so will allow me to better serve the body of Christ, as well as unbelievers.

Δόξα Πατρί και Υιώ και Αγίω Πνεύματι

Christian Apologetic Alliance members meet for lunch during the Evangelical Philosophical Society annual meeting.

11/19/2014



"Our very first CAA Meetup at ETS was well-attended with about 25 of us and our friends packing out the length of the Fashion Valley Mall's California Pizza Kitchen. Although we already have a close-knit group, meeting everyone in person increased our camaraderie and led to great discussions, from apologetics and ministry topics, to academic and career advice, sports and everything in between. In attendance were: Mikel Del Rosario, Sean McDowell, Mary Jo Sharp, Carson Weitnauer, Tyler Taber, Glen Richmond, Patrick Nolan Brown, Chris Reese, Shawn White, Lewis Waha, Shandon Guthrie and others."

—Mikel Del Rosario
apologeticsguy.com



Tim McGrew - Advisor

On my recent trip to Texas, I had the great privilege of meeting many CAA members in person whom I had known only electronically before, including Allen Hainline, Matthew, Turner, Blake Giunta, Lee and Rebekah Valerius, John and Hillary Ferrer, Haley Henderson, Grace Dunlap, ... the list just goes on and on! The kindness so many of them showed to me left me greatly in their debt. We really do have a tremendous team on the ground all over the world.

John DePoe - Advisor

This past year I haven't been directly involved in any of the specific ministries of the CAA, but I have been active in discussions with the rest of the leadership throughout the year. Occasionally I have been able to contribute to discussions in the CAA Facebook group. In the beginning of 2014, *_True Reason_* was published as a physical book, which I wrote a chapter for. As many will recall, this book was brought together by Tom Gilson and Carson Weitnauer in response to the atheist "Reason Rally," and resulted in an e-book filled largely with contributions from members of the CAA. This summer I was asked to speak at an apologetics conference sponsored by Ratio Christi (organized largely by CAA members Joe Gulsvig and Richard Porter), "Jesus Explained," at Victory Christian Church, June 6-7. Earlier this year, I was asked

to be a part of the board of trustees for a Christian study center that is starting in Scranton, called "Addison's Walk." The director of Addison's Walk is Andy Giessman (CAA member), and this ministry is the only organized evangelical presence on my school's campus. I believe that these events are a promising sign that the CAA has been instrumental in creating apologetics ministries, events, and resources. As the CAA grows and becomes more connected, I see these sorts of creations becoming more common, which is a good thing in my view.

Mark McGee - Social Media

Google+ is doing well. We have 4,441 members and a pretty active group of posters and commentators. We need more moderators. Travis and I are handling all of the moderation right now, so it keeps us pretty busy. The Seeker Discussion group is pretty active with atheists, agnostics, Muslims and other non-Christians posting and commenting.

The CAA's blog posts are auto-updated to the social media accounts, which appear to be in good shape.

Apologetics Bloggers Alliance (ABA) is also doing well. I read through as many of the shared blogs as I can, but time doesn't permit me to comment as much as I would like. I appreciate the good efforts of apologists who are defending the Faith with mind and heart.



YouTube/Hangouts is still in the development phase. We have seen one demo Hangout that is currently under review. This has a lot of potential to reach a large group of Christian and non-Christian people.

Our admin team is building stronger relationships with one another.

We have the people and the tools, and most importantly, we have the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is nothing we cannot do in the power of God's Spirit.

Maryann Spikes - Blog, Defenders 3, Catechism, Speaking Team, Neighboring

Blog. We have added a few authors to the blog, but have not made an effort to recruit. There is a steady flow of posts from regular authors, with an average of about 450 views a day from all over the world. We are in the process of considering the importance of winsome graciousness in our blogposts. We could really use a few more volunteers who can help with recruiting, collaboration, and other areas of development, and are in talks to bring on a new blog admin to strengthen our editing team.

Defenders 3. We are excited about [Dr. Craig's third Defenders class](#) and want everyone to benefit from it. If you have never gone through the first or second series, I encourage you to jump into the third, which just started not too long ago. I watch with my boys and sometimes my husband on Sundays after

church, but it is also excellent for a Sunday School class. Doctrinal issues come up every so often in the CAA, and it would be very helpful for our growth and maturity as a group if those asking the questions set apart some time every week for learning from Dr. Craig.

This is not an official ministry of the CAA, but it is great that we are able to benefit from it. There are many other ways CAA members can get involved in the growth of the Alliance, like stepping up to organize a prayer team, or a daily Bible study team that leads us through the Apologetics Study Bible in a year. Visit the Facebook group and see where you can get involved and be part of what makes a great CAA.

Speaking team. We currently have 33 members on our speaking team. We received our first feedback via the Evaluation Form, and it was about Jeremy Smith and very positive. I would like to see us develop the gifts of the team so that the CAA can host conferences and courses, both on-line and off-line, including those geared to Apologetics for Parents. We are in talks to bring on an admin who will help develop our speaking team.





Catechism. We are making head-way and need all the volunteers we can get. I have been very encouraged by the congenial, collaborative spirit of the Catechism team. These are the Catechism topics we have been working on in the past month or so:

David Marshall, Frederick Choo:

1. [The New Atheism](#), 2. [How to Examine Worldviews](#)

Sergio Flores, Frederick Choo, Peter Grice, Jonathan Hanna, D. Preacher, Zack Kendall:
[On Hell](#)

Jonathan Hanna, Frederick Choo:
[Transmission and Canonization of Scripture](#)

Max Mills:
[On Burden of Proof](#)

Marcia Montenegro:
[Evaluating Panentheism](#)

Benjamin Nasmith:
[Pneumatic Evidence](#)

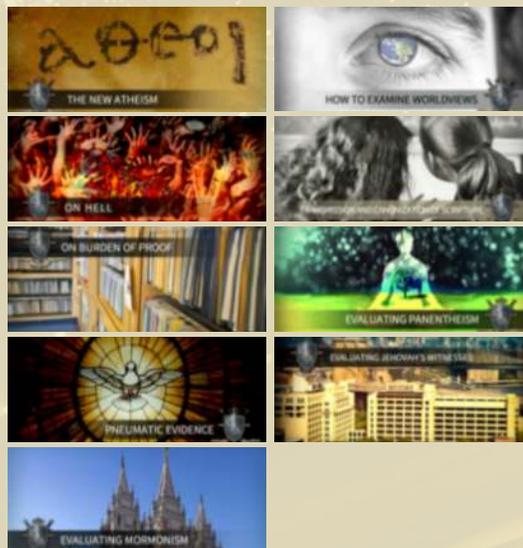
Cynthia Hampton:
[Evaluating Jehovah's Witnesses](#)

Jonathan Hanna and Mike Alexander Perry:
[Evaluating Mormonism](#)

On the Horizon

We are looking at becoming a publisher, developing our speaking team for conferences and courses, completing the Catechism, initiating and deepening connections on the local level, reaching further via Google Hangouts and targeted YouTube shorts, and more.

All of us on the admin team thank each of you for all your contributions to the CAA, and we encourage you to plug in to one of our ministries if you are not yet involved. We praise God for His kindness to us!



New Year's Resolution: Neighboring

This is hugely on my heart. As we move into 2015, I want you to pray with me about our greatest apologetic: loving our neighbors. What is holding us back from connecting and deepening connections? Please meditate on relevant Scripture and set all excuses aside. Make this our New Year's Resolution. I am praying that some of you will be provoked to use your gifts and wisdom in this area to encourage us in our neighboring. We need you. The world needs you. One great neighboring idea: Nextdoor.com's [Holiday Cheer Map](#)—go Holiday Hopping and be friendly with the neighbors you meet. Nextdoor is a great way to utilize the Internet and phone apps to wade in to the neighborhood, and help the neighborhood wade in likewise. Nextdoor will allow you to send out free postcard invitations to your neighbors—utilize that! Work also with your city's police department to build a strong Neighborhood Watch that is connected on Nextdoor. You can even start a Facebook page for your neighborhood. Has your city started a neighboring movement yet? Get ready, and be part of igniting it locally, if it isn't yet where you live. Lord-willing, it will be there soon! Pray over it.

Love in Christ,

The CAA Admin Team

STATISTICS *for those who appreciate them:*

- 4,600+ fans of the [Facebook page](#)
- 1,700+ members of the [Facebook group](#)
- Dozens of contributors to the [CAA blog](#), with 187,000+ views in 2014
- 670+ members in [Apologetics for Parents](#)
- 4,500+ members in the CAA on [Google+](#)
- 1,300+ views of [EQUIPPED](#) within first four weeks
- 33 members on our new [speaking team](#)
- 65 registered and 15 purchased archives to the [Women Equipping Women conference](#)
- 3,600+ followers on [Twitter](#)
- Dozens of volunteers who moderate, approve new members, run the website, publish [EQUIPPED](#), lead [Apologetics for Parents](#), contribute to the [Catechism](#), get old Facebook group docs published on the CAA blog (Roland Frank Tignor heading that up!), focus and organize our leadership, and so on.

Thanks to Mark McGee for these flow charts:

- [Ministries](#)
- [Leadership](#)

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IN NECESSARIIS UNITAS, IN DUBIIS LIBERTAS, IN OMNIBUS CARITAS. In essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty, in all things charity. The Christian Apologetics Alliance (CAA) is united in our Statement of Faith. The CAA does not, as an organization, have positions on many of the doctrinal or theological debates that take place within the church. Our primary concern is to promote the gracious, rational defense of the central claims of Christianity and the critique of opposing systems of thought. The CAA community is a diverse one of many denominations. Blog entries made by individual authors reflect the views of the author and not necessarily the view of other CAA authors, or the official position of the Christian Apologetics Alliance group at large.

Vestibule

[ves-tuh-byool]: a passage, hall, or antechamber between the outer door and the interior

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Matthew 16:13-15

When I was in college, dating was contingent upon having a few conversation starters; I did not have the gift of gab. I often found myself scouring books and magazines searching for questions I could ask to start conversations (notice I did not say "meaningful" conversations.) The question didn't matter, my need was to avoid the awkwardness of silence. I learned however, people are very willing to engage in conversation. For example, when I asked, "Where did you grow up?" and, "Who is [or was] the most influential person in your life?" conversation ensued for hours. As I've grown older, I am more interested in getting to know people. This, however, necessitates asking questions, and for various reasons, I have missed a lot of opportunities to ask the most important questions.

Many years ago, my wife and I attended a Fourth of July party. We were far away from the city and the night sky was exceptionally dark. After dinner, we went outside to look at the stars. While we were identifying asterisms, I spotted a satellite traversing the sky and pointed it out to my wife.

Still watching and waiting for it to fade, I heard a man say to his wife, as they walked away, "You can't see satellites." My wife and I gave each other a quizzical look and laughed. I never found out who he was, but I have thought about that incident over the years. I wish I had taken the time to ask him, "Why do you say that?"

Sometimes I don't ask questions because I'm apprehensive about the ensuing conversation. Instead, I tell myself it's safer to keep quiet. Well, I can't afford to act this way anymore, too much is at stake. A casual search of the internet reveals there is a plethora of contradictory claims, and outright lies, about the person of Jesus Christ despite all the evidence to the contrary. A **poll** conducted of Americans last year revealed: 74% believe in God, 72% believe in miracles, 68% believe that Jesus is God or the Son of God, 65% believe in the resurrection of Jesus, and 57% believe in the Virgin birth. These percentages are down over the previous 10 years.

If you're looking for a good conversation starter, try asking, "Who is the most important person in history?" and follow it up with, "Why do you say that?" After reading this issue, you will be EQUIPPED to discuss these questions and answer the most important question:

"Who do you say I am?"

Glen Richmond
Editor, EQUIPPED



SEARCHING FOR JESUS

Mark McGee • faithandselfdefense.com

Archaeology is the “scientific study of material remains (as fossil relics, artifacts, and monuments) of past human life and activities” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). An archaeologist is the scientist who studies those material remains by conducting what are called archaeological “digs” or “excavations” around the world and investigating the findings from those digs.

I once believed strongly that no evidence existed to support the Bible as a credible book of ancient history. **None.** I also believed there was no evidence to support the existence of Jesus of Nazareth during the 1st Century AD or any other time for that matter. **None.** That was until I began my own investigation into archaeological discoveries in the Middle East. I was a journalist and atheist, so the process of investigating truth claims in the Bible was to question every historical mention with a skeptic’s eye. That included people, family groups, tribes, villages, city-states, nations and events.

THE SEARCH FOR JESUS OF NAZARETH

I looked into the archaeological evidence for Jesus of Nazareth after finding convincing archaeological evidence for many of the truth claims in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). The claims of the Christian New Testament centered on someone known as Jesus of Nazareth. Had archaeologists discovered any

evidence that might support the existence of someone by that name?

Investigative journalism is the process of original searching into a topic or issue of public interest. Investigative journalists use multiple sources to uncover truth that may be hidden or challenged as being truthful. Archaeology is one of the sources that an investigator can use during an original search for truth. It is one of the primary resources available to atheists, agnostics and others who don’t believe what the Bible claims about Jesus of Nazareth.

GATHERING THE EVIDENCE

The first step in an original investigation is to gather all of the evidence available to the topic. The New Testament Gospels are part of the evidence because they are the primary information about the life and times of the person known as Jesus of Nazareth. Archaeologists have uncovered multiple copies of New Testament writings that date to the 2nd century AD and point to originals that date to the 1st century AD. Here are some examples from scores of early copies.

- [John Rylands fragment \(P52\)](#) - John 18:31-33, 37-38
- [Chester Beatty II/P.Mich.Inv.6238 \(P46\)](#) – Hebrews and most Pauline epistles
- [P.Bodmer II/Inv. Nr. 4274/4298 \(P66\)](#) – Much of John’s Gospel

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- [Inv. Nr. 12 \(P87\)](#) – Philemon 13-15, 24-25

Archaeologists have discovered thousands of early Greek manuscripts and translations of the New Testament into Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Georgian, Arabic, Armenian, Ethiopic, Gothic, Nestorian and Slavonic - about 25,000 manuscripts in all. Also discovered was the use of [New Testament writings](#) by leaders of the early Christian church from the latter part of the 1st century AD to the early part of the 2nd century (e.g. Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp). Justin Martyr (100-165 AD) quoted heavily from the Gospels by the middle of the 2nd century. Irenaeus (130-202 AD), Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD), Tertullian (160-225 AD), and Origen (184-253 AD) all quoted heavily from the Gospels in their writings. These and other archaeological discoveries demonstrate that copies of the Gospel accounts concerning the life of Jesus of Nazareth were widely published and used from the latter part of the 1st century AD.

INVESTIGATING THE EVIDENCE

Each of the Gospel accounts (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) includes many historical references to people and places that can be confirmed or rejected using archaeology. Concerning the name “Jesus of Nazareth,” the New Testament manuscripts refer to the name Jesus more than a thousand times and Nazareth almost 30 times, often referring to “Jesus of Nazareth.” The name “Jesus” was

also used together with the name “Christ” in the New Testament. Christ is mentioned more than 540 times in the New Testament.

Have archaeologists discovered any artifacts that might confirm a person named Jesus who lived in Israel during the 1st century AD? What about archaeological discoveries concerning the ancient town of Nazareth?

In addition to the name of Jesus being mentioned more than a thousand times in ancient documents dating from the 1st century AD and the name Christ being used more than 540 times in the New Testament, several ancient non-Christian historians also mentioned Jesus Christ as a real person who lived in Israel during the 1st century AD. They include the famous Roman senator and historian [Publius Cornelius Tacitus](#) (56-117 AD), well-known Roman administrator [Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus](#) (61-113 AD – Pliny the Younger) and famous Jewish historian [Titus Flavius Josephus](#) (37-100 AD).

The recent discovery of the “[James Ossuary](#)” has also brought new archaeological light to the name of Jesus. Ossuary boxes were used in ancient times to hold the bones of the dead after they were removed from burial sites. The only time Jews used the stone ossuary box in Israel was from about 20 BC to 70 AD when the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem. It was common for the name of the deceased to be cut into one side of the box, but experts



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said it was very unusual for the brother of the deceased to also be cut into the box. The inscription reads in Aramaic -- Ya'akov bar-Yosef akhui diYeshua -- translated into English as “James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus.”

There is no question about the authenticity of the ossuary dating to the 1st century AD, but the Israeli Antiquities Authority (IAA) charged that the name of Jesus on the box was a forgery, added at a later time. The owner of the ossuary was charged and tried, but was [acquitted of the forgery charges](#) after a seven-year trial. Experts in a variety of scientific fields have investigated the James Ossuary and many have determined that both the ossuary and the inscriptions are authentic to the 1st century AD.

The New Testament claims Jesus grew up in [the village of Nazareth](#). Though it is mentioned more than 25 times, the earliest mention of the town outside of the New Testament is about 200 AD. Rene Salm in his book, *The Myth of Nazareth: The Invented Town of Jesus* (American Atheist Press, 2008), claims that Nazareth was not inhabited during the 1st century AD so the New Testament story about Jesus growing up there is false. However, archaeologists (e.g. James Strange, John McRay, Ken Dark, Yardena Alexandre, Jack Finegan, Bellarmino Bagatti) have made discoveries that show [Nazareth was an active community](#) during the 1st century AD.

Ancient Nazareth is believed to have been a small agricultural village with a population of less than 500 people when Jesus lived there. Small villages often disappeared entirely through the centuries leaving little or no archaeological footprint, so the fact that Nazareth continues to this day and has archaeological evidence to the 1st century AD is certainly important in an investigation about the

person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Archaeologists have also made discoveries about many of the people mentioned in the New Testament who were involved in Jesus' life in different ways, including King Herod, Pontius Pilate and Caiaphas.

Archaeologist and professor [Ehud Netzer](#) excavated the Herodium palace structure for many years and discovered [the tomb of Herod the Great](#) in 2007. The Herodium dates to the 1st century BC.

Archaeologist Antonio Frova and his team discovered [an inscription](#) in 1962 that reads – “Tiberieum Pontius Pilate Prefect of Judea.” The inscription was discovered at [Caesarea Maritima](#) and has been dated to the early part of the 1st century AD (26-37 AD) during which time the New Testament claims Pilate judged Jesus in Jerusalem.

Construction workers discovered an ancient burial chamber in 1990 in southeast Jerusalem as they were building a new park. [Archaeologist Zvi Greenhut](#) with the Israeli Antiquities Authority determined that the tomb was typical of the Second Temple period in Jerusalem. One of the bone boxes (ossuary) Greenhut and his team found was inscribed “Joseph, son of Caiaphas” and held the bones of several individuals, including a man of about 60 years of age. Because of the name on the ossuary, the ornateness of the ossuary and the location of the tomb, many experts believe it to be that of the high priest who questioned Jesus prior to His trial before Pilate.

In 1968, [archaeologist Vassilios Tzaferis](#) discovered the ancient ossuary of a young man named Yehohanan in a Second Temple tomb northeast of Jerusalem. It was determined the man had been crucified during the 1st

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century AD. The examination of the man's bones demonstrated the Roman method of crucifixion to be similar to the New Testament's description of Jesus' crucifixion at the hands of the Romans.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EVIDENCE

This is a brief list of archaeological findings as pertains to the New Testament and the person known as Jesus of Nazareth. The findings present a strong evidential case for the historical existence of Jesus Christ during the 1st century AD.

I was once proud to call myself a 'Freethinker,' rejecting the belief systems of Christianity and other religions as myth and legend. However, as a journalist I knew that the ultimate goal of 'free thinking' was discovering truth. The scientific process of modern archaeology and findings from the Middle East helped greatly during my investigation into the truth claims of the Bible. If Jesus never existed, He could not have died and been raised from the dead. In the words of the Apostle Paul, "if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile" (1 Corinthians 15:17 NKJV). Discovering the ample evidence from the hard work of archaeologists and historians concerning the reliability of the New Testament and its claims concerning Jesus of Nazareth kept me searching for God ... until He found me. 

**THE REAL
JESUS:
NEW EVIDENCE
FROM HISTORY
AND
ARCHAEOLOGY
—JOHN MAIER**

**CONVINCE ME
THERE'S A GOD:
ARCHAEOLOGY
—MARK MCGEE**

**A TSUNAMI OF
HISTORICAL
MANUSCRIPT
EVIDENCE
—JOSH
MCDOWELL**

**BART EHRLMAN
TALKS ABOUT
THE HISTORICAL
RELIABILITY
THAT JESUS
EXISTS**

**WHY THE
HISTORICITY OF
JESUS MATTERS
—J. WARNER
WALLACE**

**50 PEOPLE IN
THE BIBLE
CONFIRMED BY
ARCHAEOLOGY
—PETER
WIELHOUWER**

**EXCITING
DISCOVERIES IN
BIBLICAL
ARCHAEOLOGY
—GOTQUESTIONS**

**IS LUKE'S
DESCRIPTION
OF QUIRINIUS
HISTORICALLY
INACCURATE?
—J. WARNER
WALLACE**

**HOW DOES
ARCHAEOLOGY
SUPPORT THE
BIBLE
—GOTQUESTIONS**

**THE HISTORICAL
JESUS
—DR. CRAIG**



A Sonnet for Mary, Mother of God - The Annunciation – Dr. Holly Ordway

It seems so simple: tell God yes, and then
Be faithful; listen, trust, obey. So far
So good, but what's the shape of faith within
An ordinary day? We must be sure
Enough to step out in the dark, to act
(not knowing) just as if we knew the way.
But knowing that we do not know, we wait
With empty hands for gifts whose shape and name
Are still unknown. Now Sanctus bells ring clear
To call us to the presence of the Word
Made flesh. That one most blessed 'yes' is here
Renewed, that we might bear into the world
His life and light. We take the bread and cup,
The gift of joy that breaks and blesses us.

Here we celebrate a moment in history: a young woman named Mary received the news from the Archangel Gabriel that she was to be the mother of the Son of God, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary said "Yes," accepting her role in the outworking of God's plan of salvation, and thus our Lord became incarnate, lived as one of us, died for us, and was raised from the dead.

Dr. Holly Ordway is the director of the MA in Cultural Apologetics at Houston Baptist University, a poet, and the author of [Not God's Type: An Atheist Academic Lays Down Her Arms](#) (Ignatius Press, 2014). Her work focuses on imaginative apologetics and Inklings studies, with special attention to C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams.

Undesigned Coincidences – Dr. Timothy McGrew

*Library of
Historical
Apologetics*

But there is a third kind of evidence that lies within Scripture itself, a kind that requires only attention to one's own Bible and a willingness to read thoughtfully. This is the evidence of undesigned coincidences.

The term itself, coined over two centuries ago, is perhaps not the best description for modern readers, since we rarely use the word "undesigned" today. But the meaning is not terribly difficult to grasp. Take two texts (for the sake of the argument one need assume nothing about them except that they both purport to recount some historical events) and compare them. Of course, they might have nothing in common; in that case, there is no material for this sort of argument. But they might touch on some of the same characters and events. If so, we may examine them to see whether the manner in which they discuss these things fits together obliquely, in ways not likely to have been deliberately chosen for that effect—undesignedly.

**UNDESIGNED
COINCIDENCES**
Part 1

**UNDESIGNED
COINCIDENCES**
Part 2

**UNDESIGNED
COINCIDENCES**
Part 3

**UNDESIGNED
COINCIDENCES**
Part 4

**UNDESIGNED
COINCIDENCES**
Part 5

**UNDESIGNED
COINCIDENCES**
Part 6



A LOOK AT MESSIANIC PROPHECY

Eric Chabot • chab123.wordpress.com

A Look at the Timing of the Messiah's Coming: Genesis 49:8-12: The Universal Rule of the Messiah.

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who has studied evidential apologetics will see that many apologists have laid a great emphasis on messianic prophecy as one of the keys to demonstrating Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. One thing that is left out of these discussions is that when it comes to prophecy, it is not always predictive. The Greek word for fulfill is πληρώ (pleroo) – which has a much broader usage than “the prediction of an event.”

For example, in Matthew 5:17- Jesus says he came to “fulfill” the Law and the Prophets. In this passage “fulfillment” has a sense of embodying, bringing to completion, or perfecting. Fulfillment is one of the main themes of the New Testament, which sees Jesus and his work bringing to fruition the significance of the Hebrew Bible. However, let's look at a case of predictive prophecy. For a prophecy to be predictive it must meet the following criteria.

1. A biblical text clearly envisions the sort of event alleged to be the fulfillment.
2. The prophecy was made well in advance of the event that was predicted.
3. The prediction actually came true.

4. The event predicted could not have been staged by anyone but God.
5. Clear Prediction: Is the prophecy publicly available with a reliable text and evident interpretation?
6. Documented Outcome: Is the prophecy documented by publicly available facts?
7. Is there evidence for it in world history?
8. Proper Chronology: Is there empirical evidence that is available presently and publicly to document that indeed the prophecy does predate its fulfillment?¹

It must be remembered that the strength of this evidence is greatly enhanced if the event is so unusual that the apparent fulfillment cannot plausibly be explained as a good guess.

One of the most pivotal texts that speak to a time frame about the first coming of the Messiah is Genesis 49:8-12:

“Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. (Gen. 49:8-12) KJV.



A LOOK AT MESSIANIC PROPHECY

NOTE: I chose the KJV here because most other translations replace “Shiloh” with “until he comes to whom [obedience] belongs.”

IN THE PREVIOUS CONTEXT (GEN. 49:1-7) WE SEE THE FOLLOWING ISSUES

1. Jacob prophesied various details as to the fortunes and fates of the descendants of these men.
2. God is revealing to Jacob the future history of his descendants.
3. The older brothers are disqualified from the birth-right (i.e., Reuben, Simon, Levi).
4. Jacob foretold a future for the tribe of Judah that pictures him as the preeminent son – the prominent tribe.
5. Judah: is the name of the son of Jacob/or the name of the southern kingdom of the divided nation of Israel.²

WE SEE THE FOLLOWING ABOUT THIS PASSAGE

1. The Messiah has already been declared to be a man, descended from Abraham (Gen. 22:18).
2. His descent is now limited to being a son of Judah.
3. He is going to be a King.
4. The rule of Judah is envisioned by Jacob as extending beyond the borders of Israel to include the entire world.
5. The nations of the earth shall benefit (i.e., on the idea of a beneficial rule see comments on v. 11, 12) is in keeping with

the author’s view of God’s covenant promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:3: “in you all the nations of the earth will be blessed.”

Let’s take Genesis 49:8-12 and see what outside Jewish literature says (i.e., The Apocrypha, The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Philo, The Talmud, Josephus, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, Rashi, and the Targumim).

FIRST OF ALL, LET ME INTRODUCE WHAT IS CALLED A TARGUM

1. Targums are the Aramaic Translations of the Jewish Scriptures (The Tanakh), that were read in the synagogues on the Sabbath and on feast or fast days.
2. Scholars usually assume the Targums were needed because of the loss of Hebrew fluency by Jewish people growing up during the exile.
3. Targums are supposed to represent rabbinic Judaism after C.E. 70. Targums originated in Palestinian Judaism but later editions were done in Babylon.
4. All of the extant Targums seem to date from 2nd century C.E. and later, yet a number of the translations would preserve readings that were current in the first century.³

Let’s see how a couple of Targums read Genesis 49:8-12.



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TARGUM ONKELOS

The transmission of dominion shall not cease from the house of Judah, nor the scribe from the children's children, forever, until the Messiah comes, to whom the Kingdom belongs, and whom the nations obey. He binds the foal to the vine, his colt to the choice vine; he washes his garment in wine, and his robe in the blood of grapes. He shall enclose Israel in his city, the people shall build his Temple, the righteous shall surround him, and those who serve the Torah shall be with him. His raiment shall be of goodly purple, and his garment of the finest brightly -dyed wool. His fountains shall be red with his vineyards, his vats shall drip with wine; his valleys shall be white with corn and with flocks of sheep.⁴

TARGUM PSUEDO JONATHAN

Kings and rulers shall not cease from the house of Judah, not scribes teaching the Torah from his seed, until the time when the youngest of this sons, the Messiah, shall come and because of him the peoples shall flow together. How lovely is the king Messiah, who is to rise from the house of Judah.⁵

Also, Midrash Rabbah 97 says the following about the prophecy:

Furthermore, the royal Messiah will be descended from the tribe of Judah as it says [quoting Isaiah 11:10]. Thus the tribe of Judah were descended from Solomon who built the first Temple Zerubbabel who built the second Temple and from him will be descended the royal Messiah who will rebuild the Temple. Now of the Messiah it is written [quoting Psalm 89:37].⁶

Even Rashi who was a leading Tanakh and Talmudic exegete

of the Middle Ages says about Genesis 49:10:

The Scepter shall not depart from Judah from David and thereafter. These (who bear the scepter after the termination of the kingdom) are the exilarchs (princes) in Babylon, who ruled over the people with a scepter, who were appointed by royal mandate...nor the student of the law between his feet. Students: these are the princes of the land of Israel...until Shilo comes the king Messiah, to whom the Kingdom belongs.⁷

David Baron (1857 – 1926) a Jewish believer and scholar was author of “The Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah,” “Types Psalms and Prophecies,” and “The Servant of Jehovah” says the following about Gen. 49:8-12:

With regard to this prophecy, the first thing I want to point out is that all antiquity agrees in interpreting it of a personal Messiah. This is the view of the LXX Version [Septuagint—KB]; the Targumim of Onkelos, Yonathan, and Jerusalem; the Talmud; the Sohar; the ancient book of “Bereshith Rabba;” and among modern Jewish commentators, even Rashi, who says, “Until Shiloh comes, that is King Messiah, Whose is the kingdom.”⁸

It is also worth noting that The Dead Sea Scrolls help shed some light on this text as well: In 4Q Patriarchal Blessings, the interpretation of the Genesis text reads:

A ruler shall not depart from the tribe of Judah while Israel has dominion. There will not be cut off a king in it belonging to David. For the staff is the covenant of the kingship; the thousands of Israel are the feet, until the coming of the Messiah of Righteousness, the branch of David, for to him and his seed has been given the covenant of kingship over his people for everlasting generations.”⁹

A LOOK AT MESSIANIC PROPHECY

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE WORD “SCEPTER” AND “SHILOH”

The precise meaning of “Shiloh” is challenging. It is either a reference to a place, as it is elsewhere in the Old Testament (e.g. Joshua 18:1,8,9; 19:51; I Samuel 1:13, etc.), or, it may refer to a proper name for the Messiah. This is seen in the Talmud in Sanhedrin 98b which answers the question of what the Messiah’s name is by saying, “Shiloh is his name, as it is said, “Until Shiloh Come.”¹⁰ In Judaism, names describe the nature of the Messiah’s mission.

The NIV may have the best translation which says, “until he comes to whom it belongs.” In this case, “Shiloh” is taken as a possessive pronoun. This translation favors the LXX (Greek Septuagint) reading. Furthermore, in Ezekiel 21:25-27, Ezekiel uses the Shiloh text as part of a judgment oracle directed against Zedekiah to declare the Lord’s intention not to put a ruler on David’s throne ‘until he comes to whom it belongs.’ Since both Genesis 49:10 and Ezekiel 21:27 deal with Judah and the government or ownership of that tribe, the argument becomes quite compelling.¹¹

We see in the prophecy that “Scepter” is a “symbol of kingly authority” and will remain in Judah’s hand until “Shiloh comes.” In the minds of the Jewish people, “Scepter” was linked with their right to apply and enforce the law of Moses upon the people, including the right to adjudicate capital cases and administer capital punishment. The prophecy declares that Judah will finally lose his tribal independence, and promises a supremacy over at least some of the other tribes until the advent of the Messiah.

WHEN DID JUDAH LOSE THEIR TRIBAL INDEPENDENCE?

Judah did have possession of the scepter and staff until Herod obtained kingship over Israel in 38 B.C. While Judah

ceased to be an independent tribe, they still continued to be a self-governing nation within the Roman Empire. They did lose the right to administer capital punishment. This is seen at the trial of Jesus in that it was the Romans who enforced the death sentence. This transfer of power is even mentioned in the Talmud: “A little more than forty years before the destruction of the Temple, the power of pronouncing capital sentences was taken away from the Jews.”—Jerusalem Talmud, Sanhedrin, folio 24.¹²

WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS OF PROPHECY?

1. This verse indicates that He (The Messiah) will have to come before the Tribe of Judah loses its identity.
2. The rabbis passed laws which would preserve the identity of the tribe of Levi, but Jews from other tribes lost their identity.
3. Therefore, the Messiah will have to come before 70 A.D.
4. The “Scepter” did depart in the sense that at the coming of Jesus we see the Jewish people lost their power to adjudicate capital cases and administer capital punishment.¹³

LET’S LOOK AT ANOTHER ASPECT OF THE PROPHECY

Judah, your brothers shall praise you; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father’s sons shall bow down to you. “Judah is a lion’s whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up? “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.” (Gen 49:8-12) NASB

We have been discussing the temporal element of this



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prophecy. Remember, “Until” in vs 10 is inclusive in the sense that the dominion of the tribe of Judah would not end with Shiloh’s coming, but would continue on after the arrival of this divine world ruler. In other words, Shiloh himself must belong to the tribe of Judah.

But there is another aspect of this prophecy that remains partially unfulfilled. Apparently, an individual from Judah’s seed came who will rule over both his own nation Israel and the “peoples” of not just Israel but the rest of the world (also see Gen 17:6; Exod. 15:16; Deut. 32:8). While there are many Gentiles who have submitted to the rule of Messiah (Jesus) in their lives, all the nations are not under the universal rule of the Messiah. But after reading Genesis 49:8-10, Psalm 2 and Daniel 7:13-14, we need to remember what is called “prophetic telescoping.” These texts are part of several texts in the Hebrew Bible where part of the text is fulfilled in the first appearance of Jesus. But there is another part that will be fulfilled in the future. In this sense, Jesus will return and establish the earthly aspect of the kingdom of God (Is. 9:6; Amos 9:11; Dan. 2:44; 7:13-14; 27; Is. 11:11-12; 24:23; Mic. 4:1-4; Zech.14:1-9; Matt. 26:63-64; Acts 1:6-11; 3:19-26). In other words, one day the Messiah will be King over His people (Matt. 19:28).



THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF JESUS
—THEOPEDIA

**CAN WE TRUST
BIBLICAL
PROPHECY?**
—GOTQUESTIONS

**THE TRINITY IN
THE OLD
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—INSPIRING
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**WHY THE ANCIENT
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**THE INCARNATION OF
THE SON OF GOD**
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**A LOOK AT PAUL’S
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—ERIC CHABOT

WHO IS JESUS?

**MICHAEL BROWN
VS.
RABBI SHMULEY
BOTEACH**

**IS JESUS THE
MESSIAH?**

**MICHAEL BROWN
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**A LOOK AT
MESSIANIC
PROPHECY AND
THE SON OF MAN
SAYING IN THE
MINISTRY OF
JESUS**
—ERIC CHABOT

**ARE THERE OVER 300
MESSIANIC
PROPHECIES?**
—ERIC CHABOT

THE JEWISH TRINITY
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NON-CHRISTIAN SOURCES: DID JESUS EXIST?

Johnny Wilson • fairmindednotions.wordpress.com

Did Jesus really exist? Some readers may be surprised or shocked that many books and essays — by my count, over one hundred — in the past two hundred years have fervently denied the very existence of Jesus. Contemporary New Testament scholars have typically viewed their arguments as so weak or bizarre that they relegate them to footnotes, or often ignore them completely. — Robert Van Voorst.¹

Did Jesus Exist? This is a question that is seldom asked by New Testament scholars today. Even Bart Ehrman, probably the most skeptical New Testament scholar in the field, has published an entire work arguing for the existence of Jesus.² With these two facts in mind, it is completely astounding to witness Jesus mythicism, i.e., the view that there was no historical Jesus of Nazareth at all, flourish on the internet. What is the Bayesian probability that virtually all of the New Testament scholars, ranging from the hardest skeptics to the conservative Christians, are simply flat out wrong?

“By no means are we at the mercy of those who doubt or deny that Jesus ever lived.” — Rudolf Bultmann.³

And indeed, as Voorst says, many of the brief mentions that are related to Jesus mythicism are relegated to footnotes.. Here are some quotes given by Michael Licona that can,

ironically, be found in his footnotes.⁴

1. Bultmann (1958): “Of course the doubt as to whether Jesus really existed is unfounded and not worth refutation. No sane person can doubt that Jesus stands as founder behind the historical movement whose first distinct stage is represented by the oldest Palestinian community.” (p. 13)
2. Bornkamm (1960): “to doubt the historical existence of Jesus at all . . . was reserved for an unrestrained, tendentious criticism of modern times into which it is not worth while to enter here.”
3. Marxsen (1970): “I am of the opinion (and it is an opinion shared by every serious historian) that the theory [“that Jesus never lived, that he was a purely mythical figure”] is historically untenable.” (p. 119)
4. Grant (1977): “To sum up, modern critical methods fail to support the Christ-Myth theory. it has ‘again and again been answered and annihilated by first-rank scholars.’ In recent years, ‘no serious scholar has ventured to postulate the non-historicity of Jesus’— or at any rate very few, and they have not succeeded in disposing of the much stronger, indeed very abundant, evidence to the contrary.” (p. 200)
5. M. Martin (1991): “Well’s thesis [that Jesus never existed] is so controversial and not widely accepted.” (p. 67)

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6. Burrige and Gould (2004): "There are those who argue that Jesus is a figment of the Church's imagination, that there never was a Jesus at all. I have to say that I do not know any respectable critical scholar who says that any more." (p. 34)
7. Allison ("Explaining," 2005): "No responsible scholar can find any truth in it." (p. 121)
8. Maier (2005): "the total evidence is so overpowering, so absolute that only the shallowest of intellects would dare to deny Jesus' existence." (para. 1)
9. R.J Miller in Scott, ed. (Finding, 2008): "We can be certain that Jesus really existed (despite a few hyper-historical skeptics who refuse to be convinced." (p. 10)
10. Vermes (2008): "Let me state plainly that I accept that Jesus was a real historical person. In my opinion, the difficulties arising from the denial of his existence, still vociferously maintained in small circles of rationalist 'dogmatists,' far exceed those deriving from its acceptance." (lx)
11. C.A. Evans in Evans and Wright (2009): "No serious historian of any religious or nonreligious stripe doubts that Jesus of Nazareth really lived in the first century and was executed under the authority of Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea and Samaria." (p. 3)

The reality is that there are very few scholars, if any at all, who have credible degrees and think Jesus never existed. Bart Ehrman says:

*"Few of these mythicists are actually scholars trained in ancient history, religion, biblical studies or any cognate field, let alone in the ancient languages generally thought to matter for those who want to say something with any degree of authority about a Jewish teacher who (allegedly) lived in first-century Palestine . . . But even taking these into account, there is not a single mythicist who teaches New Testament or Early Christianity or even Classics at any accredited institution of higher learning in the Western world. And it is no wonder why. These views are so extreme and so unconvincing to 99.99 percent of the real experts that anyone holding them is as likely to get a teaching job in an established department of religion as a six-day creationist is likely to land in a bona fide department of biology."*⁵

I'm not taking this fact to the conclusion that therefore Jesus existed. However, just from the fact that some 99% of all scholars with credible degrees in the field do not doubt that Jesus existed, we can conclude with a high degree of probability from this alone that He most likely did exist. Indeed, consensus in the field of history is a key indicator that we've discovered something factual. What I am asking, again, is "what is the Bayesian probability that they are all wrong"?



NON-CHRISTIAN SOURCES: DID JESUS EXIST?

My intent in writing this article is to present some, but not all, of the non-Christian sources that mention Jesus and show what we can learn from them. Of course, an argument up front from the “Jesus mythers” will be that these sources I present are just too late to qualify as evidence. They’ll say that we should have some contemporary mention of Jesus and then make an argument from silence that since we don’t, Jesus most likely didn’t exist. They’ll proclaim that “extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence,” and say that if Jesus was divine and actually performed miracles, many would have recorded it while he was living. Again, this is an argument from silence. Anyone who is familiar with ancient history will know that these sources I am about to present are well within a reasonable time frame to qualify as reliable sources. Indeed, if these sources are too late, then there is a lot about ancient history that would have to be done away with! Much of our knowledge of the ancient world comes from historians who were not contemporary of those figures and/or events they recorded. Take for instance the fact that our best extant sources for Alexander the Great (356 – 323 BC) are from Plutarch (AD 45 – 120) and Arrian (AD 92 – 175). Our best sources for Emperor Tiberius (AD 14 – 37) are from Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio Cassius (none of these are contemporary to Tiberius). Livy’s History of Rome records events far before Livy was even born. Are we to think that the figures who don’t have contemporary mentions therefore didn’t exist and are mythological characters? That seems wholly absurd. We also have to take into consideration that a large majority of works from antiquity are simply not in existence and so contemporary mentions aren’t even really expected and even when we have them, they aren’t significant. Most of what was available to the ancient world is simply not available to us today. Furthermore, the printing press wasn’t

invented until near mid-15th century. Therefore, the communities in the ancient world were oral-dominant. Many times, the oral history would only be written down when the witnesses and authoritative sources were passing away. The Gospels are extremely similar to ancient Graeco-Roman biography. They are just what we’d expect to see if a history was being penned down because the authoritative sources on the matter were wanting to preserve the information. Of course, this makes the Gospels the best source for Jesus’ life, even if you hold that there are “mythological additions.” Nonetheless, since those who deny that Jesus existed typically deny the usefulness of the Gospels, which says much more about their biases and/or ignorance than it does anything about the Gospels themselves, this is why I’m taking a different route and discussing the non-Christian sources.

Thallus (Thallos): Around AD 52 – 55, a historian named Thallos wrote a three-volume account of the Eastern Mediterranean world from the fall of Troy up to around 50 AD. The large portion of Thallos’ works are gone. However, a piece was quoted by Sextus Julius Africanus (AD 160 – 240) in his work called History of the World. This work is also gone, but it too was cited and we have that citation in an extant manuscript. Julius Africanus cited Thallos and Byzantine historian Georgius Syncellus cited Julius Africanus’ citation of Thallos in his Chronicle sometime around 800 AD. To phrase this transmission another way: Thallos (50s AD) → Julius Africanus (220s AD) → Georgius Syncellus (early 800s AD).

In a portion mentioning Jesus’ crucifixion, Julius Africanus says this: “Thallus, in the third book of his histories, explains away this darkness as an eclipse of the sun — unreasonably, as it seems to me.”

NON-CHRISTIAN SOURCES: DID JESUS EXIST?

Apparently Julius was addressing Thallos' claim that the darkness that took place at the time of Jesus' death was merely a solar eclipse. Julius' argument was that this couldn't be so, because Jesus died during the season of the Paschal full moon. This would make a natural solar eclipse implausible, argued Julius Africanus.

It is clear that Thallos was writing a polemic against the alleged darkness that fell over the land at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. Robert Van Voorst quotes Maurice Goguel as saying, "If Thallos had been writing simply as a chronographer who mentions an eclipse which occurred in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, Julius Africanus would not have said that he was mistaken, but he would have used his evidence to confirm the Christian tradition."⁶ Interestingly enough, a very similar polemic was used in a fourth century document called the Acts of Pilate. (xi.2)

We can know from Julius' response that Thallos was giving a sort of polemic against the alleged miraculous darkness that took place at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. It's not likely that the alleged darkness would be the only Christian tradition that Thallos was familiar with. It would be quite odd to think that he was only aware of this one very particular aspect of the Christian tradition and not any other more important aspects. Nonetheless this is not to demonstrate that there certainly was a darkness that fell over the land at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, but it does show that non-Christians believed it to be so and felt obligated to refute the claim that the darkness was miraculous. Thallos didn't deny the darkness, but rather argued against it being a divine occurrence. Another neat fact is that Thallos mentions the darkness before any of the canonical Gospels were published. The Gospel of Mark, the earliest Gospel, dates to around AD 65 – 70 while Thallos

wrote in the 50s AD.

We do not know whether Thallos got his information from oral tradition or a written source. It is possible that Thallos may have gotten his information from an early Aramaic version of Matthew that is mentioned in Papias' writings. "Matthew compiled the Logia in the "Hebrew" speech [Aramaic], and every one translated them as best he could." We also have another passage of Papias preserved by Eusebius: "Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote down accurately, but not in order, all that he remembered of the things said and done by the Lord. For he had not heard the Lord and been one of his followers, but later, as I said, a follower of Peter. Peter used to teach as the occasion demanded, without giving systematic arrangement to the Lord's sayings, so that Mark did not err in writing down some things just as he recalled them. For he had one overriding purpose: to omit nothing that he had heard and to make no false statements in his account."⁷

The idea that Thallos got his information from an earlier writing of Matthew is certainly possible. However, he could have very well gotten this information from oral tradition.

Josephus (AD 37 – 100): Flavius Josephus was a Jewish historian who published several important works. He wrote Jewish Wars around AD 75 – 80. His second work is Jewish Antiquities which was written sometime in the early 90s AD. The latter work of Josephus is of relevance here. There are two important passages. One is more controversial than the other, so I'll start with the least controversial first.

In Ant. 20.9.1, Josephus writes that "He [Ananus the high priest] assembled the sanhedrin of the judges, and brought



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before it the brother of Jesus called Christ, whose name was James, and some others. When he had accused them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned.”

From this we learn that Jesus was a real historical who was called Christ, and that he had a brother by the name of James. We shall call this the James passage. There is no reason to suspect this passage to be inauthentic. It fits the context of the passage and it fits the language of Josephus. There is no apparent interpolations here. If a Christian were to have interpolated this passage, it would have theological and apologetic motifs (such as the next passage we discuss). However, we don't see that here.

In the more controversial passage called the Testimonium Flavianum, Ant. 18.3.3, the present text reads: “Around this time lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed it is right to call him a man. For he was a worker of amazing deeds and was a teacher of people who accept the truth with pleasure. He won over both many Jews and many Greeks. He was the Messiah. Pilate, when he heard him accused by the leading men among us, condemned him to the cross, [but] those who had first loved him did not cease [doing so]. For on the third day he appeared to them alive again, because the divine prophets had prophesied these and myriad other things about him. To this day, the tribe of Christians named after him has not disappeared.”

For those interested in the Greek, it reads:

Γίνεται δέ κατά τούτον τον χρόνον Ἰησοῦς σοφός ἀνὴρ, εἶπε ἀνδρα αὐτόν λέγειν χρή. ἢ ν γάρ παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητής, διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων των ἡδονη τάληθή δεχομένων, και πολλούς μεν Ἰουδαίους, πολλούς δέ και του Ἑλληνικου ἐπηγάγετο. ὁ Χριστός οὗτος ἦν. και αὐτόν

ἐνδείξει των πρώτων ἀνδῶν παρ' ἡμῖν σταυρῶ ἐπιτετιμηκότος Πιλάτου οὐκ ἐπαύσαντο οἱ τό πρώτον ἀγαπήσαντες. ἐφάνη γάρ αὐτοῖς τρίτην ἔχων ἡμέραν πάλιν ζῶν των θείων προ-φητῶν ταυτά τε και ἄλλα μυρία περί αὐτοῦ θαυμάσια εἰρηκότων. εἰς ἐτι τε νυν τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἀπό τούδε ὠνομασμένον οὐκ ἐπέλιπε τό φύλον

By reading this, one would conclude that Josephus must have converted to Christianity. Unlike the James passage which states Jesus was merely called Christ, here it says that Jesus was the Christ. Being called “The Christ” would have a much different meaning than simply being called “Christ.” However, we learn from Origen that Josephus was not a Christian.⁸ It becomes blatantly obvious that this passage has been interpolated by a Christian scribe. Between the two poles, one being that the passage is all authentic and the other being that the passage is all forged, the huge majority of all scholars fall somewhere in between the two poles. For further reading on this, I recommend the reader to the works of Louis Feldman, a leading, if not the leading, Josephan scholar.

There is a tenth century Arabic translation of the Testimonium Flavianum that can be found in Agapius's Universal History which reads differently than the above translation. It reads as follows: “Similarly [writes] Josephus the Hebrew. For he says that in the treatises that he has written on the governance of the Jews: “At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good, and [he] was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had

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appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive. Accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders.”

Apparently, there was a different manuscript of Josephus’ works around that Agapius had access to. Scholars have used these translations to reconstruct the passage and remove the apparent interpolations.

There have been several neutral reconstructions of the Testimonium Flavianum. The one presented by Voorst reads: “Around this time lived Jesus, a wise man. For he was a worker of amazing deeds and was a teacher of people who gladly accept the truth. He won over both many Jews and many Greeks. Pilate, when he heard him accused by the leading men among us, condemned him to the cross, [but] those who had first loved him did not cease [doing so]. To this day the tribe of Christians named after him has not disappeared.” (p. 93)

F.F. Bruce has made a negative reconstruction:

“Now there arose about this time a source of further trouble in one Jesus, a wise man who performed surprising works, a teacher of men who gladly welcome strange things. He led away many Jews, and many Gentiles. He was the so-called Christ. When Pilate, acting on information supplied by the chief men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had attached themselves to him at first did not cease to cause trouble. The tribe of Christians, which has taken its name from him, is not extinct even today.”⁹

I think there are better reasons for favoring the neutral reconstruction, but for the sake of this discussion, I’ll use the negative reconstruction, which is more than fair for the goal of this article.

From this, we can learn that Jesus was considered a wise man, who allegedly performed “surprising works,” who was called the Christ by the Christians, and who was crucified under Pontius Pilate. Most importantly for the goal of this article, we definitely learn that Josephus took Jesus to be an actual historical figure.

Celsus (Around 175 AD): Celsus was a 2nd century Greek philosopher – a Neo-Platonist thinker. He published a work called True Doctrine. Unfortunately, this work is no longer extant. This was the first thoroughly devised polemic against Christianity. However, we are fortunate to have had a Christian scholar by the name of Origen respond to Celsus in a work titled Against Celsus. (Contra Celsum in Latin) around the year 250 AD. Origen quotes Celsus so many times that we have some 60%-90% of True Doctrine in Origen’s response. I want to focus specifically on Celsus’ polemic against Jesus’ miracles.

At one point, Celsus accused Jesus of sorcery. Origen says, “And he next proceeds to bring a charge against the Saviour Himself, alleging that it was by means of sorcery that He was able to accomplish the wonders which He performed.”¹¹

At another point, Celsus argued that Jesus learned magic in Egypt. Origen says, “For he [Celsus] represents him disputing with Jesus, and confuting Him, as he thinks, on many points; and in the first place, he accuses Him of having ‘invented his birth from a virgin,’ and upbraids Him with being “born in a certain Jewish village, of a poor woman of the country, who gained her subsistence by spinning, and who was turned out of doors by her husband, a carpenter by trade, because she was convicted of adultery; that after being driven away by her husband, and wandering about for a time, she disgracefully gave birth to Jesus, an illegitimate



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child, who having hired himself out as a servant in Egypt on account of his poverty, and having there acquired some miraculous powers, on which the Egyptians greatly pride themselves, returned to his own country, highly elated on account of them, and by means of these proclaimed himself a God.' "(Contra Celsus 1.28) The lines in italics are most likely the words of Celsus.

"Celsus, moreover, unable to resist the miracles which Jesus is recorded to have performed, has already on several occasions spoken of them slanderously as works of sorcery." (Contra Celsus 2.48)

It's interesting that Celsus doesn't deny that Jesus did alleged miraculous acts, but rather he attempts to explain them away. We can also see his polemic against the virgin birth. It seems as though anyone who is writing a thorough polemic against the Christian belief would, up-front, expose the falsehoods of the worldview. Certainly if anyone were in a position to do this, it would have been Celsus. This isn't what we observe in Celsus' polemic. The polemic presupposed that not only was Jesus of Nazareth an actual historical figure but also that he really did do things that appeared to be miraculous. Celsus didn't deny Jesus' actions per se, but rather tried to explain them away.

Just like the alleged darkness that fell over the land, this doesn't show that these things certainly happened, but it shows that the earliest writers who made polemics against Christianity believed that the events did occur and therefore attempted to give an alternative to the occurrences being divine.

Tacitus (around AD 56 – 120): Cornelius Tacitus may be the greatest historian from all of antiquity. We learn a great

deal about the ancient world from his works Histories and his unfinished work Annals. Tacitus mentions Christians in both works, but only the latter work is relevant. When writing about the great fire in Rome during the reign of Nero, Tacitus records:

"Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called christians by the populace. 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, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for a moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skin of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.

Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed." (Annals 15.44)

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Christus is the Latin for Christ. Tacitus sees Christians as lawbreakers and must draw a comparison between them and the one which founded the name – the one who was crucified by Rome. Tacitus was one of the greatest, if not the greatest, historian from antiquity. It isn't likely that he would record hearsay. At some points in his writings, he makes this clear. It is plausible that he got his information on Jesus's crucifixion from the Roman records, but we can only speculate. Nonetheless, we can learn from this passage that Jesus existed and was crucified under Pilate during the reign of Tiberius.

Lucian of Samosata (AD 115 – 200): Lucian was a Greek satirist who has over 80 works bearing his name. In his work *The Death of Peregrinus*, he says:

“During this period [Peregrinus] associated himself with the priests and scribes of the Christians in Palestine, and learned their astonishing wisdom. Of course, in a short time he made them look like children; he was their prophet, leader, head of the synagogue, and everything all by himself. He explained and commented on some of their scared writings, and even wrote some himself. They looked up to him as a god, made him their lawgiver, and chose him as the official patron of their group, or at least the vice-patron. He was second only to that one whom they will worship today, the man in Palestine who was crucified because he brought this new form of initiation into the world.”

Christians came to the aid of Peregrinus when he was jailed. Lucian says:

“Having convinced themselves that they are immortal and will live forever, the poor wretched despise death and most willingly give themselves to it. Moreover, that first lawgiver of theirs persuaded them that they are all brothers the

moment they transgress and deny the Greek gods and begin worshipping that crucified sophist and living by his laws.”

For our purposes here, we learn that Jesus was an actual historical figure from Palestine and was crucified.

Mara Bar-Serapion (sometime after 73 AD, otherwise unknown): From prison, this Syrian wrote a letter to his son that reads:

“What advantage did the Athenians gain from putting Socrates to death? Famine and plague came upon them as a judgment for their crime. What advantage did the men of Samos gain from burning Pythagoras? In a moment their land was covered with sand. What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise King? It was just after that that their kingdom was abolished. God justly avenged these three wise men: the Athenians died of hunger; the Samians were overwhelmed by the sea; the Jews, ruined and driven from their land, live in complete dispersion. But Socrates did not die for good; he lived on in the teaching of Plato. Pythagoras did not die for good; he lived on in the statue of Hera. Nor did the wise King die for good; He lived on in the teaching which He had given.”

According to F.F. Bruce, Mara Bar-Serapion was most likely a gentile philosopher. In this letter, he is speaking of the unjust deaths of highly influential historical characters. This “wise King” he mentions can be none other than the Jesus of the Gospels. We know this by his words “He lived on in the teaching which he had given.” This would be mentioning Jesus' founding of Christianity. It would be hard to find some other figure who was unjustly executed by the Jews, who was also called “the wise King,” and who was apparently a famous teacher whose teachings still live on.



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CONCLUSION: I've given numerous non-Christian sources that mention Jesus. We've seen it multiply and individually attested that Jesus was an actual historical figure who founded Christianity, allegedly did miraculous acts, and who was crucified. We can be as certain as we can ever be that Jesus of Nazareth existed. It has even been said that Jesus is one of the most mentioned persons from all of antiquity. Indeed, it would seem as though Jesus of Nazareth's existence is practically undeniable. These are only the extant non-Christian sources. Of course, the best source for Jesus of Nazareth is the Gospels, but with just this little shred of evidences in front of us, we see that there is no good reason to support the Christ-myth theory at all. As F.F. Bruce has said, "Whatever else may be thought of the evidence from early Jewish and Gentile writers . . . it does at least establish, for those who refuse the witness of Christian writings, the historical character of Jesus Himself. Some writers may toy with the fancy of a 'Christ-myth', but they do not do so on the ground of historical evidence. The historicity of Christ is as axiomatic for an unbiased historian as the historicity of Julius Caesar. It is not historians who propagate the 'Christ-myth' theories."¹⁰



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THAT JESUS
EXISTED?
—MATT SLICK*

*WHAT THE
EARLIEST NON-
BIBLICAL AUTHORS
SAY ABOUT JESUS
—J. WARNER
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*TERMINOLOGY
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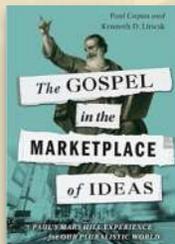
Book Review

[ri-vyoo]: a general survey, especially in words; a report or account of something

THE GOSPEL IN THE MARKETPLACE OF IDEAS

Maryann Spikes • ichthus77.blogspot.com

The CAA read [The Gospel in the Marketplace of Ideas: Paul's Mars Hill Experience for Our Pluralistic World](#) by Paul Copan and Kenneth D. Litwak, as part of Apologetics 315's weekly Read Along program. This took place August through October. Each week, an audio introduction from Paul Copan was provided for that week's chapter, along with a brief synopsis and study questions. We were also able to connect with other readers in the comments on Apologetics 315, or on the Christian Apologetics Alliance Facebook page/group.



After having given it some time to blend flavors, I am now prepared to give my thoughts on the book. These were [my initial thoughts](#) before starting the Read Along. Note that this review does not go through the book by walking through it from beginning to end, due to its reuse of or expansion on the same material at different parts of the text, rather than keeping similar topics together. We will let the reader decide if that is a format they prefer to read. For me, it felt kind of scattered.

[Read Along Index: The Gospel in the Marketplace of Ideas.](#)

Copan and Litwak begin with a nice sketch of our current cultural landscape as being multicultural, relativistic, secularized, and post-Christian. They define a worldview as a philosophy of life that reflects a deeper heart commitment and answers questions like Why am I here? Why does anything exist at all? What am I to do or think? How can my life have any meaning? Later they define worldview as “an articulation of the basic beliefs embedded in a shared grand story that are rooted in a faith commitment and that give shape and direction to the whole of our individual and corporate lives.” They lay out the problem: Most people today, even those calling themselves Christians, only know a caricature of Christianity, so that if ever they come into conversation with a knowledgeable Christian, a lot of what the Christian communicates is filtered through a faulty worldview and so is lost in translation. The first hurdle to overcome is to make sure we know what their worldview is, including their view of Christianity, so that we speak their language and nothing is lost in translation. We are the ones with a message to deliver,



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and so we are the ones who need to learn how to speak their language—not the other way around.

Paul's Mars Hill address in Acts 17 is suggested as an excellent New Testament example of doing just that. In order to see what a great example it is, we need to learn about the world in which Paul evangelized. First, the Athenians took Paul to Mars Hill (Areopagus) because that was where they took people teaching a new deity, in order for the council to legally approve it. Copan and Litwak give the history behind the meaning of Areopagus (Mars Hill), the juicy details I will leave for them to tell.

They answer what may be to many a surprising objection (it was certainly news to me), that some scholars (like F.F. Bruce, William Ramsay, Ralph P Martin) think Paul's speech on Mars Hill was meant to be presented by Luke (the author of Acts) as a failure in terms of response and strategy. They felt Paul experimented with contextualization, but it failed to get much of a response, so he switched tactics with the Corinthians and rejected philosophy (but note his mention of evidence and eyewitnesses in 1 Corinthians 2), sticking from then on to the bare gospel. However, Copan and Litwak say that is an argument from silence and refer to Paul's Areopagus speech as a Christ-centered strategy for cross-cultural, cross-worldview communication (one Christian philosopher's phrase for apologetics—the defense of the Christian faith in the marketplace of ideas). Paul confronted the Corinthian church's arrogance and spiritual one-upmanship—his confrontation was not meant to be against rational argument or the use of the mind. Paul also built bridges the same way before and after Athens, reasoning and persuading (dialoguing, not just preaching) in the synagogues and the marketplace, and referring to the witness of God in creation. Paul's approach in Athens illustrates 1 Corinthians 9:19-27.

Copan and Litwak note that 1) Luke shows Paul masterfully navigated the protocols of introducing a new deity in Athens, 2) the genre of Acts is Hellenistic historiography (a blend of facts, good literary style, and rhetorical skill), 3) the speeches in Acts were summaries because they only take a couple minutes to read (Paul put Eutychus to sleep with his well-known lengthy preaching, and Mars Hill was no occasion to avoid extrapolation), 4) speeches quoting Scripture were reserved for Jews, whereas speeches to Gentiles quoted their own poets (though reflecting biblical themes), 5) Luke's mentioning that Paul's message received a mixed response is not an announcement of failure but of success to be imitated. Note that the Jews also gave Paul a mixed response. "He received a mixed response at Corinth and a mixed response when preaching to prominent Jews in Rome" (Acts 28:24-31). A very small number was converted in Philippi (thwarted by businessmen). Thessalonica and Berea responded okay, but they resulted in no mega churches. The Macedonian reception was small, and Athens was no different. Paul notices that only a minority of converts are intellectual elites, but a) never says to ignore them, and b) does not ignore them himself. Consider the reception Jesus endured on the cross, and most of the disciples endured at the end of their lives. Luke offers two speeches in Acts that provide two different approaches for non-Christian audiences with no biblical frame of reference: Lystra (argues from nature), and Mars Hill (quotes poets). The apostles didn't give the identical message every time they spoke, because a different audience/situation calls for adaptation.

Paul's education equipped him to adapt to the audiences of his day. He was from Tarsus and so could dialogue with cultural elites. He was a well-educated Jew who learned under Gamaliel, and so could converse with Jews. And he

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was a Roman citizen, and so could relate with Gentiles. Athens was such a religious city that it even had altars dedicated to unknown gods, to avoid offending a god they failed to recognize. Athens was also a major center of intellectual and cultural achievement, giving us Zeno, Epictetus, Epicurus, Aristotle, and Plato (etc.). Platonists considered physical resurrection to be a negative thing because they viewed the body (all things physical, really) as a corrupt prison from which death released them, so they only sought spiritual immortality through the pursuit of wisdom. Part of the Athenian culture was the Epicurean goal of pleasure through wisdom and absence of pain or soulful trouble; they did not believe the spirit survives the body. Stoicism asserted God is a pantheistic Logos (or cosmic reason), deprived the body, and prized the divine spark which returns to the Logos at the body's death. In Athens there were Jews, polytheists, and philosophers. Copan and Litwak include lots of juicy details about how each of these groups would have received Paul's words.

Copan and Litwak set out to demonstrate #1 from above: Paul's rhetorical prowess at the Areopagus. He was no "foolish babbling." (By extension, we can conclude the same about Luke, since he authored Paul's Mars Hill retelling!!) He begins with a traditional compliment, by praising them for being very religious, using a word the philosophers would take to mean superstitious. He rhetorically appeals with one worm to birds of different feathers. Through Acts, Luke is providing instruction on how to dialogue with the intellectual and social elite. Though Paul is grieved by the idolatry surrounding him, he doesn't let it show. We then go on a lengthy sidebar discussion about monotheism, natural theology, and correcting caricatures. Paul corrects Athenian misconceptions by pointing out God has no need for temples, and he is near. He uses natural theology, relying

on facts of creation and human existence to point to God. He uses Greek philosophical terms [like theion (divine nature) rather than theos (God)], but all to convey biblical truths, not affirm Stoic ideology. Copan and Litwak note that some in our day are "apatheists" who just don't care one way or the other, and then they highlight how Paul appeals to their poets who call us God's offspring. This is a demonstration of Paul's knowledge of their culture's appreciation of quoting authorities—the older the better—as a form of proof. (Aside: The poetry bit is why the field of Imaginative Apologetics is so promising.) He also refers to eyewitnesses of the resurrection in 17:31. In that culture, more weight was given to eyewitness testimony than written historical accounts. He begins where his audience is, using their concepts and terminology, but delivering the whole Gospel. However, it is at this point that I stopped and asked... Why doesn't Paul tell the Athenians Jesus died to atone for our sins?

At various parts of chapters 7 through 9, there are several opportunities to explain why Paul does not explicitly mention that Jesus died on the cross to atone for our sins. Copan and Litwak could have explained [the Greeks' view of wrongdoing as ignorance](#). So Paul does mention that Jesus died on the cross to atone for our sins when he says, "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead." (vv. 30-31)

In other words, God overlooked past sin (ignorance), but now that he has made himself known, it is time to turn to him. There is judgment for those who reject his overlooking. This overlooking, and this judge, are both proved by God resurrecting the judge from the dead.



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This also helps make sense of every other instance of a call to repentance before and after Jesus died and rose again. It used to confuse me why John the Baptist was essentially carrying out the Great Commission before Jesus even died for our sins. It also used to confuse me that there was such a heavy emphasis on repentance before and after the work Jesus did on the cross—aren't we saved by grace through faith? First: God is unchanging, and so is his love. He did not start loving us the instant Jesus said, "It is finished." Jesus came to us because God so loved the world (John 3:16), not the other way around. Jesus' sacrificing himself for us on the cross was God's love incarnate. There is no knowing that incarnate love without repentance, without turning back to the God that saves, who sets free from the slavery of sin to the knowledge of his unconditional love.

So repentance into freedom is important, and it isn't just something we do once when we recite the sinner's prayer. He cannot die for our freedom again if we turn away from him back into slavery—once was enough to demonstrate his unchanging, unconditional love (Hebrews 10:26). We either accept him and live as loved sons and daughters, or we don't, and live as judged slaves. Paul is saying that the one thing we cannot do, now that God has demonstrated his over-looking love, is live as ignorant. I think Copan and Litwak are right that the Athenians took pride in their heritage of being lovers of wisdom. But I think, just as with the "compliment" about being religious/superstitious, Paul's use of "ignorance" had two meanings. On the one hand, he is saying their altars to the unknown gods betray that they are not as wise as they esteem themselves. On the other hand, he is saying that God has revealed himself enough now so that they know what they need to know in order to repent from their ignorance/wrongdoing—ignorance is no longer an excuse. Copan and Litwak say that

Paul is not saying Paul's God is the "Unknown God" they worshipped with that altar, but I think that is a matter for debate. In "Eternity in Their Hearts," Don Richardson suggests Paul is actually saying that very thing, and that there is good reason to believe Paul knew the story of Epiminides and his "agnosto theo"—he quotes Epiminides' poetry!

Copan and Litwak do highlight that the speech is likely a summary, but also that Paul is proclaiming the full Gospel to the Athenians, "the good news about Jesus and the Resurrection" (Acts 17:18). It is why the Athenians think he is teaching strange deities (plural) and take him to Mars Hill to justify it to the council. They mistake the Resurrection (Anastasis) for a deity. In his speech on Mars Hill, he made it very clear that he was speaking of Jesus' resurrection. I very much enjoyed chapter 6's emphasis on Greco-Roman views of the afterlife and how different audiences present at Mars Hill would have received Paul's talk of the resurrection. I also enjoyed how Copan and Litwak show that Luke presents Paul similarly to how Plato presents Socrates in *The Apology* (see page 38). One question I am left with: Did Paul only refer to Jesus as a man, and avoid calling him a god, in order to get as much of the Gospel into their ears as they could handle ([he did believe Jesus is God](#))?

In the middle of the book, Copan and Litwak take a break from focusing on Paul's environment, and switch emphasis to our own environment and the bridges we can build philosophically, scientifically, historically, and culturally. Though some eschew philosophy, C.S. Lewis rightly pointed out that "we need good philosophy, if for no other reason than that bad philosophy should be answered." Scientifically, we can affirm the Big Bang as the beginning, we can talk about the Goldilocks effect of the universe's fine tuning for life, consciousness from nonconscious

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matter, design language in biology, and purposiveness. Copan and Litwak’s suggested bridge-building definition of science is “attempted objective study of the natural world/natural phenomena whose theories and explanations do not normally depart from the natural realm.” They distinguish between naturalism (how the world is only matter) and scientism (how we know the world only through the scientific method). I love their bit on Augustine on pages 44-45. Historically, we can talk about facts accepted by even skeptical scholars, including Jesus’ crucifixion under Pilate, burial in Joseph’s tomb, the tomb being found empty, there being several witnesses claiming he appeared to them after his death, the resurrection-proclaiming church emerging suddenly even in Jerusalem, and the conversions of skeptics James and Paul. Copan and Litwak go into relativism (true for you but not for me), postmodernism (no oppressive meta-narratives), emotivism (emotions over truth), pluralism (many paths to salvation/enlightenment), and syncretism (buffet style). They end the book by praising Paul for distinguishing between persons and beliefs, and complimenting the persons and addressing their false beliefs in the language of their own worldviews. They make some helpful suggestions towards evangelism and challenging the idolatries in our current cultural climate, hinting again at the promise of Imaginative Apologetics. Scattered throughout the book there are helpful tables that distinguish between worldviews, and there are thinker bios and pictures. I’ll leave all that to your imagination and recommend you read the book!

My takeaway quotes: “We must be aware of the leading, influential ideas that shape culture so that we can insightfully and winsomely engage them with the power, beauty and truth of the gospel. Paul was not ignorant of those dominant ideas in his day, and we shouldn’t be either.

Paul also promoted robust, mature thinking—as opposed to being mentally infantile and doctrinally mushy (1 Cor 14:20; Eph 4:13; cf. Heb 5:14; 1 Pet 1:13).” “Paul’s experience in Athens would show Luke’s audience that, yes, Christians should indeed seek to reach the intellectual and social elite, and, while it might be hard to win converts from among them, it was nevertheless doable (by God’s grace) and crucial.”



REASON

C.S. Lewis, Poems, page 81

Set on the soul’s acropolis the reason stands
 A virgin, arm’d, commercing with celestial light,
 And he who sins against her has defiled his own
 Virginitv: no cleansing makes his garment white;
 So clear is reason. But how dark, imagining,
 Warm, dark, obscure and infinite, daughter of Night:
 Dark is her brow, the beauty of her eyes with sleep
 Is loaded, and her pains are long, and her delight.
 Tempt not Athene. Wound not in her fertile pains
 Demeter, nor rebel against her mother-right.
 Oh who will reconcile in me both maid and mother,
 Who make in me a concord of the depth and
 height?
 Who make imagination’s dim exploring touch
 Ever report the same as intellectual sight?
 Then could I truly say, and not deceive,
 Then wholly say, that I BELIEVE.

**3 WAYS THE BIBLICAL BLOCKBUSTER
 CAN GET ITS GROOVE BACK
 —THE FEDERALIST**



The Family Room

[fam-uh-lee room]: a center for family activities

THE ULTIMATE GIFT

Bonita Jewel • positiveparentingblog.wordpress.com

I asked my five-year-old son, “What’s your favorite time of year?”

“Christmas,” he answered without a hesitation.

“Why?” I asked him.

“Because we give out presents.”

Now I knew he enjoyed giving things, but I had a feeling there was more to his eagerness. Just an inkling ... considering that he’s been asking for an 18-wheeler for months now.

“Why else?” I urged.

“We decorate ...” he paused for a moment, “... and we get presents.”

There it was. “We get presents.” Every child loves presents. Everyone loves presents, whether they’re a child or not, whether it’s their “love language” or not.

For some reason, however, it’s easier for a child to receive a gift than it is for an adult. By the time we “grow up,” we get used to the fact that we work for the things we want and need. As such, it’s sometimes difficult to accept a gift.

A gift comes without a price tag ... it is not something we can easily repay. It tells you,

without words, that someone was thinking of you, noticed you needed or desired something, and cared enough about you to purchase it for you.

That’s the thing about a gift. You can’t pay it back ... and the more expensive the gift, the more humbling it is to accept it. Because the more deeply you know that you can’t pay it back.

I asked my five-year-old, “What’s the best present you ever had?”

“Jesus,” he answered after thinking a moment.

He’s right. But I don’t know if, at five years old, he understands just how right he is in saying that. I don’t know if we, at 30 or 50 or 90, understand it fully.

From time to time, glimpses of that truth illuminate our hearts, but even at our deepest understanding, we fail to grasp the full extent of the gift we have been freely given in salvation through Jesus Christ. It’s something like the concept of light.

Light can travel through space for hundreds, thousands, millions of miles and illuminate nothing but the rare speck of rock hurtling through the endless expanse of space. Yet

Join:
**Apologetics for
Parents**

*14 Ways I
Teach
Apologetics
to My 5-Year-
Olds
—Natasha
Crain*

THE ULTIMATE GIFT

when it reaches earth and glances off the surfaces around us, we see. We see brilliant sunrises of gold and pink. Majestic sunsets of rose and mauve. And we see everything that the sun illuminates between sunrise and sunset. Light filtering through the leaves on a tree. Light reflecting off droplets of water in the atmosphere.

The sunlight glances off a hundred, a thousand, a million things and we see. We see light and color and beauty – impossible if not for sun shining on images, bringing them to life. Even if we do not fully understand light, because of it, we see. It is one of the incomprehensible gifts of a finely tuned universe, from an unfathomable Designer.

This month, we celebrate the giving and receiving of gifts because of the Ultimate Gift. It is something we do not fully understand, and never will. But it is a perfect time to show your child the link between gifts under the tree, and the Ultimate Gift of a baby in a manger. Even a young child can understand that.

And if your child is older, you can use the illustration of light. God, as the Light, as a Spirit, was something intangible; invisible unless He had an object to illuminate. That object entered the world one Christmas morning. Jesus, the image of the invisible God, became flesh and blood and bone so we could see.

And the image we are shown is a portrait of compassion and comfort. Of friendship and forgiveness. Of love and light. He is both the Light of the world, and the image that brings the light to life. We bask in the warmth, we revel in the color and beauty ... and we see.

C. S. Lewis stated, “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”

May you and your children enjoy a blessed season of Light and love, gifts and gladness, and celebrate together the greatest Gift of all – the Light of the world. 

Instead of addressing teens' questions, most church youth groups focus on fun and food. The goal seems to be to create emotional attachment using loud music, silly skits, slapstick games -- and pizza. But the force of sheer emotional experience will not equip teens to address the ideas they will encounter when they leave home and face the world on their own. A study in Britain found that non-religious parents have a near 100 percent chance of passing on their views to their children, whereas religious parents have only about a 50/50 chance of passing on their views. Clearly, teaching young people to engage critically with secular worldviews is no longer an option. It is a necessary survival skill. —Nancy Pearcey

65
Apologetics
Questions
Every
Christian
Parent Needs
to Learn to
Answer
—Natasha
Crain



ALL THINGS WERE MADE THROUGH HIM: WHY DID GOD CHOOSE TO CREATE?

Joel Furches • examiner.com/christianity-in-baltimore/joel-furches

The story so far:

In the beginning the Universe was created. This has made a lot of people very angry and been widely regarded as a bad move.”
— Douglas Adams, *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*

The question of “Why did God create?” is possibly the most basic question in all of philosophy; its less theological form being “why is there something rather than nothing?” or “what is life all about?”

Answering such questions in all of their complexity may not be possible, however one Atheist thinker, Justin Schieber, recently posed the somewhat unique question, “If God exists, why would he choose to create?” Or as he puts it:

“For God’s initial creation act to be an intentional one, He needed to desire a world composed of God and non-God objects more than a possible world where it’s just God. But if there is a world more perfect than pure divinity; a state more perfect than divine, Trinitarian solecism, then surely this initial state can be improved, or wasn’t perfect in the first place.”¹

Benedict de Spinoza posed a similar argument in Part 1 of his Ethics:

“...this doctrine does away with the perfection of God: for, if God acts for an object, he

necessarily desires something which he lacks. Certainly, theologians and metaphysicians draw a distinction between the object of want and the object of assimilation; still they confess that God made all things for the sake of himself, not for the sake of creation. They are unable to point to anything prior to creation, except God himself, as an object for which God should act, and are therefore driven to admit (as they clearly must), that God lacked those things for whose attainment he created means, and further that he desired them.”²

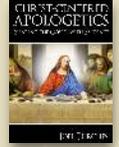
The basic argument, as summed up in the Iron Chariots wiki goes like this:

- P1 If the Christian God exists, then GodWorld [a universe composed of God alone] is the unique best possible world.
- P2 If GodWorld is the unique best possible world, then the Christian God would maintain GodWorld.
- P3 GodWorld is false because the Universe (or any non-God object) exists.

Conclusion: Therefore, the Christian God, as so defined, does not exist.

Put more simply, a universe composed of God alone is already the perfect universe. Why create anything that might upset that?

What are the Properties of a God who does not Create?



ALL THINGS WERE MADE THROUGH HIM: WHY DID GOD CHOOSE TO CREATE?

One of the primary points of Schieber's argument is that God has all of the "great-making properties" – that is, every property that the greatest possible being could have. This is borrowing from the Ontological Argument for God that begins with the premise that he is the greatest possible being.

Of course, when defining God, Christian theology does so in the context of the world that currently exists.

To examine his argument, one must first attempt to envision the properties of what Schieber calls "GodWorld."

In the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology philosopher William Lane Craig defines God as:

*"...beginningless, changeless, immaterial, timeless, spaceless, and enormously powerful."*³

Craig arrives at this conclusion about God's properties because of the existence of a finite universe via the Kalam Cosmological Argument. So already a problem arises, that problem being that nothing can be known about the nature of God without the existence of the universe.

However since the universe is composed of time and space, and these are finite things, one could at least suppose that God is timeless and spaceless.

Be that as it may, suppose that God is defined by these properties. The universe is now composed of a timeless, spaceless, dimensionless, immaterial being who has the potential to create, but has chosen not to. This being the case, God has one additional property: He is static.

Since this God does not occupy space, does not exist in time, and does not act, he is abstract in the extreme.

ABSTRACT OBJECTS

Imagine for a moment a Godless universe. The universe expands from a point in space and time, the universe cools, energy condenses into matter, matter begins to take form, galaxies, stars, and finally planets begin to form, planets attract atmospheres, chemical reactions occur and life arises from non-life. Organisms grow, develop, evolve, and eventually achieve sentience. Sentient beings begin to achieve abstract thought, and suddenly they are able to imagine things that don't, in the strictest sense, exist.

So a sentient human imagines an abstract shape, like a sphere. In their mind, the sphere is perfect, with no surface features and absolutely spherical. No such object exists in actuality, simply in their mind. The question becomes, did the abstract object exist prior to a mind that could imagine such an object?

Plato, the father of philosophy, would say



ALL THINGS WERE MADE THROUGH HIM: WHY DID GOD CHOOSE TO CREATE?

“yes.” In platonic thought, abstract objects, such as perfect spheres, exist as concepts whether or not there is a mind available to access them.

There are, however, some problems with this idea. William Lane Craig explains:

“...the school of thought known as Platonism holds that in addition to concrete objects, which are things that can stand in cause-effect relations, there are also abstract objects, or things that cannot stand in such relations, things like numbers, sets, propositions, and properties. ... there are two typical objections posed to Platonism: (i) the epistemological objection, which says that in view of their causal isolation, knowledge of mathematical objects ought to be impossible on Platonism, which would leave us bereft of any mathematical knowledge; and (ii) the uniqueness objection, which states that virtually anything can fill the role of a mathematical object, so long as it stands in the right relations with other objects, since that's all that's needed for mathematical truth.”³

Consider the parable of John Wisdom:

"Two people return to their long neglected garden and find, among the weeds, that a few of the old plants are surprisingly vigorous. One says to the other, 'It must be that a gardener has been coming and doing something about these weeds.' The other disagrees and an argument ensues. They pitch their tents and set a watch. No gardener is ever seen. The believer wonders if there is an invisible gardener, so they patrol with bloodhounds but the bloodhounds never give a cry. Yet the believer remains unconvinced, and insists that the gardener is invisible, has no scent and gives no sound. The skeptic doesn't agree, and asks how a so-called invisible, intangible, elusive gardener differs from an imaginary gardener, or even no gardener at all.”⁴

While Wisdom leaves the question hanging (for obvious reasons) one might well answer that the difference between an invisible, intangible, and elusive gardener and no gardener at all is: the garden.

An invisible and intangible gardener who does not plant or tend a garden begins to look suspiciously similar to nothing.

One could simply propose that “God has a mind, and that is all that is required for him to exist.” (i.e. “I think, therefore I am.”)

But does he? A mind requires information, and thinking requires action. The only information that exists in GodWorld is that God has no properties. He has potential properties but no actual properties.

In order for the “mind” argument to work, the psychology of God, if you will, would need to be explored.

If God is, indeed, a timeless, spaceless entity, he cannot “think” in any sense that humans would recognize. Human beings are restricted to linear thought meaning that they operate off of information from the past in order to make decisions in the present, actualizing consequences in the future. Human thoughts (and actions) must necessarily operate within the context of time.

God, being timeless, would not think in such a manner. In fact, if God is all-knowing (presumably a great-making property: he has knowledge to the maximal degree) he has knowledge of everything that is and that could be, and acts (or doesn't act) according to that knowledge.

This presents a paradox by Schieber's line of reasoning. Schieber argues that it is impossible that the Christian God so-defined would create since to do so would degrade the

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status of the universe – indeed, his own nature. If this is an impossibility then it is not within the purview of God’s knowledge since God’s knowledge is restricted to those things which are possible. God’s knowledge, then, is restricted to a timeless, spaceless, immaterial, static state which is now devoid of anything potentially outside of God. Since God has no other properties, his knowledge would now contain no information whatsoever, rendering him mindless.

There is a possible misconception that needs to be addressed at this point. One may well imagine this “beginningless, changeless, immaterial, timeless, spaceless, and enormously powerful” God sitting around before time and space debating on whether or not to create. This would be a mischaracterization. There was never a “time” that God did not create. To say that God decided, then created, is to think linearly. However linear thought requires time. So long as anything has existed, creation happened. This is why the Bible begins with “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

Time, as a created thing, is not something to which God is subject. While it may not be possible to imagine God’s perspective, it may be similar to a film editor sitting at his desk with an entire reel of film stretched out in front of him. The film has always been there and the editor has always been there. The film editor is able to see every frame in the reel simultaneously and to interact with each cell in the film simultaneously.

God exists outside of time and space, and time and space derive their very being from God. God interacts with all points in time simultaneously such that the interaction is that which actualizes God’s existence.

It is this difference that makes free will and the sovereignty of God simultaneous possibilities. Humans, being subject to temporality, are capable of making decisions because of the flow of time. Acting on information from the past, a person decides in the present, and that choice affects their future. There is information, action, and consequence. God exists in eternity outside of time, and interacts with time from this eternal standpoint. As a result of his unique position, God is able to act on every point in time simultaneously. God is able to make a single decision that encompasses time from beginning to end. In other words, God acts not from limited information from the past, but rather from omniscient knowledge informed by his perfect nature. He acts not in the moment but on time as a whole. His action has a single consequence, that his nature is ultimately manifest across the entire fluid of time.

As mentioned before, Schieber leans heavily on the concept of “great-making properties” in his argument. He states that if, as Christians would have it, God is the greatest possible being, then any “non-God object” is going to possess less than maximal greatness. Schieber does not provide specific examples of these “great-making properties” leaving open the question as to what these properties might be.

Presumably, Schieber does not address this question because it is irrelevant to his argument: whatever happen to be the greatest possible attributes, God has them to their maximal degree, non-God objects do not.

GREAT, BUT PARADOXICAL

When you read scripture, you will see a constant cycle of condemnation and forgiveness.

Take, for example, the book of Isaiah. You read through



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Isaiah, and you will see one chapter prophesying the destruction and misery of Israel because of their rebellion; and in the very next chapter, you will see God pleading with the people to come back to him and be forgiven, and promising future blessing and reconciliation.

This apparent paradox can be seen throughout the Old Testament.

The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.

Numbers 14:18 (ESV)

How can the same God forgive iniquity and transgression, and “by no means clear the guilty”?

For those people who lived within the period of the Old Testament this was a profound mystery. How could a Loving God condemn, and how could a Holy God forgive?

In fact, we know that this was a mystery to the people prior to Christ because the Bible tells us so.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

1 Peter 1:10-12 (ESV)

Think of it like an algebraic equation. In order to solve the

equations, both sides need to be balanced and reconciled. The puzzle lies in finding how do we balance the one against the other?

This puzzle begins in the beginning pages of the Bible, in what Christians call “The Fall”. And herein lies a hint to the solution.

When humans rebelled against God, it created a seeming paradox in God’s nature: on the one hand, God is loving, merciful and kind. On the other, He is entirely pure, holy, and just. His purity, holiness, and justice cannot allow any rebellion, wickedness, or evil to go unpunished. But his love and mercy demands that he be gracious and forgiving.

So how may this conflict be resolved?

The Ontological Argument is a philosophical argument for the existence of God which goes something like this: Imagine God. Imagine a being of absolutes. A person who has every virtue to its maximum degree. Imagine the greatest possible being.

Once one has imagined this being, a problem arises: this being cannot be maximally great unless this being also exists. Since God is, by definition, the greatest possible being, then by that same definition he must exist.

By this logic, to have great-making properties is to exercise those properties. These properties are not truly great unless they are also exercised.

There is a passage in the book of Revelation wherein vast numbers of celestial beings fall down before Jesus’s feet and proclaim:

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,

to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might

ALL THINGS WERE MADE THROUGH HIM: WHY DID GOD CHOOSE TO CREATE?

and honor and glory and blessing!

The interesting thing about this verse is that it appears to link Christ's worth, indeed, his very nature, to the fact that he is "The Lamb who was slain." Jesus is defined by what he did. And what Jesus did was to die.

These characteristics that the celestial beings credit to Christ (power, wisdom, might, honor, etc.) are what Schieber, in his argument, would call "great-making properties." That is, they are properties that a maximally great being would have to contain to the highest degree in order to be considered great. But Jesus is credited these things because of what he did. His self-sacrifice to redeem a fallen creation, thus satisfying both God's holiness and God's love is a manifestation of his power, wisdom, might, and honor.

By creating a universe, allowing free will which ultimately led to rebellion, taking upon himself the necessary judgment for that rebellion and extending legitimate and undeserved forgiveness to the rebellious creatures, then righteously judging those creatures who willfully refused this forgiveness, God has exercised - indeed, revealed - all of his great-making properties, all of them tied up and manifest in the person of Christ.

The fact that Christ is a glorified man and an eternal member of the Godhead forms an essential bond between God and his creation such that creation becomes an inevitable and eternal act of God.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and

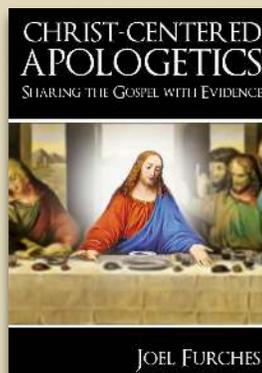
the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

John 1:1-18 (ESV)



**CHRIST
CENTERED
APOLOGETICS**

—Joel Furches



Satire

[sat-ahyuh-r]: irony, sarcasm, in exposing, or deriding vice...

You might be an apologist if . . . by Tyson James

- ... you see the name "Lennox" and think of an Oxford mathematician rather than a world-famous boxer.
- ... you see the word "logos" and think of John 1:1 rather than the plural of "logo."
- ... you know that "ontology" and "epistemology" are not medical terms.
- ... your "pleasure reading" was written by someone with a PhD.
- ... people at your church look at you like you're a martian.
- ... your bookshelf has an "infidel literature" section.
- ... you know how to prove a negative.
- ... you actually look forward to having certain bike-riding people knock on your door.
- ... you've had to explain to someone what the word "nothing" means.
- ... you facepalm when a professional philosopher brings up the Euthyphro Dilemma.
- ... you begin watching video of a Dr. Craig debate at around the 40:00 mark.
- ... you've gone to a Christian bookstore and left feeling angry.
- ... you think of household chores as a perfect time to catch up on apologetics podcasts.
- ... your workout music includes lectures.
- ... you say "Amen!" when your pastor gives arguments and evidence during a sermon.
- ... your fantasy tabloid is headlined by "Richard Dawkins Agrees to Debate William Lane Craig"
- ... you're live-streaming a Dr. Craig debate and say, "I hope it's closer than the last one."
- ... you get offended when someone says, "It's just semantics."
- ... you know how to pronounce "Groothuis."
- ... you've had to resort to using business cards, note cards, strips of newspaper, magazine order forms, or other miscellaneous pieces of paper because you ran out of bookmarks.
- ... you think your church library is empty, even though it's full of books.
- ... you think evangelism and apologetics go together like peas and carrots.
- ... you're worried that "Ham vs. Nye" might be the only debate most of your congregation ever sees.
- ... the word "materialism" means something different to you than most people.
- ... you hear "abject failure" and think "Hume's."

**HORUS
RUINS
CHRISTMAS**

You might be an apologist if . . . by Other CAA Contributors

- ... **Sarah Ankenman**: You go all "fangirl" for well-known apologists rather than for actors and musicians....
- ... **Andy Zeigler**: ...you take your wife to see Frank Turek on date night.
- ... **Aaron Hanson**: ...you know where the conflict really lies.
- ... **Larry Owens**: The streaming videos you watch usually have someone standing behind a lectern and in front of a power point.
- ... **Larry Owens**: Your iPod is full, but there is no music on it
- ... **Shannon Eugene Byrd**: You might be an apologist if you point out to others all the special pleading, ad hoc, ad homonyms, and red herrings in a political debate.
- ... **Chris Van Allsburg**: If the thought of having a "job" causes DEEP DISTRESS at the realization that one's study time would be near zilch.
- ... **Carrie De Vault**: You have to explain that being an "apologist" is not just saying you're sorry.....to your friends at church.
- ... **Jay Mats Medenwaldt**: ... you don't think of C.S. Lewis as a fiction writer
- ... **W Russell Crawford**: If you commonly identify (and point out) self-defeating statements made within song lyrics on the radio.
- ... **Daniel Vecchio**: ...you run through arguments and debates about God's existence in your head while you are taking a shower (I can't be the only one).
- ... **Mike Bost**: You "lack belief" in the proposition that God does not exist.
- ... **Billy Dyer**: U know someone's belief system better than they do
- ... **Aaron Hanson**: ...you have to correct someone's objection to make it stronger.
- ... **Mike Bost**: You know that Biola is not a genetic mutation of Ebola.
- ... **Steve Meyer**: If you see the names JP Morgan or Tim McGraw and you think it's a typo.
- ... **Billy Dyer**: U order apologetic books off Amazon and get happier than Christmas morning when UPS shows up
- ... **Tim McGrew**: The word "undersigned" just looks ... wrong ...
- ... **Mark Anthony C. Rufon**: ...When your professor told you to make a devotional outline and you chose the 1 Peter 3:15 passage. #Guilty 



MERE MORAL ARGUMENT: PART 2

Samuel Ronicker • samuelronicker.com

This is a continuation of a review of the book *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis. Of course it is recommended that you read along in the text as we move on to book two: “What Christians Believe.” Without further introduction let us examine the next section of this great text.

CHAPTER SIX: THE RIVAL CONCEPTIONS OF GOD

Lewis continues his masterwork with a somewhat puzzling comment, “If you are a Christian you do not have to believe that all the other religions are simply wrong all through.” Unfortunately, this is not a commonly held belief among many Christians. Though it can be said of other religions as well, many seem to believe that they have a monopoly on the truth. However, it is important that a Christian views other religions as wrong and that they are different from Christianity. Here Lewis goes on to divide worldviews along the lines that are important in this ongoing discussion of the moral argument for God: the materialist vice theist. Then among theist views he divides those that believe god is somehow “beyond good and evil.” One might call a cancer evil because it kills a man, but that person could just as easily say that a surgeon is evil because the surgeon kills the cancer. In both the atheistic view and the pantheistic view, there really is no such thing as evil. In the Christian view God is separate from creation and there

are things in creation that work against God’s will. Lewis finishes this chapter with a knock-down argument against any naturalist answer to the so-called “problem of evil.”

“My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust? If the whole show was bad and senseless from A to Z, so to speak, why did I, who was supposed to be part of the show, find myself in such violent reaction against it? A man feels wet when he falls into water, because man is not a water animal: a fish would not feel wet. Of course I could have given up my idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of my own. But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too—for the argument depended on saying that the world was really unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my fancies.”

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE INVASION

Lewis takes this chapter to discuss two types of invasion, one of over-simplified Christianity. Just as atheism is too simple in leaving so much out and having no explanation for too many things so too is watered-down Christianity. This is a type of Christianity that “simply says there is a good God in Heaven and everything is all right—leaving out all the difficult and terrible



MERE MORAL ARGUMENT: PART 2

doctrines about sin and hell and the devil, and the redemption. Both these are boys' philosophies." The goal is not simplicity; religion is never simple. The world is not simple, why would we expect relationship to God to be simple? Even a "simple" child's prayer is not truly simple. It's enemies of Christianity that often set up this simple version in order to tear it down. Just look at any of the books written by the so-called "new atheists," they are full of oversimplifications of Christianity--straw men that they can easily knock down. This can seem like a contradiction at times, but as Ravi Zacharias says God/Christianity has a way of bring about a "coalescence of contrarities." It is simple in that a child can understand the basics of Christianity but as Tolkien's character, Gandalf says of Hobbits, "... Hobbits really are amazing creatures. You can learn all that there is to know about their ways in a month and yet, after a hundred years, they can still surprise you at a pinch." Not only is Christianity complicated it's not obvious, but then neither is reality. Just look at our solar system, not one of the planets is the same as another, they have very little in common. Let us put aside these over-simplified attempts to answer why the universe is the way it is and look at two potential answers. One (the one Lewis ascribes to) is Christianity and the second Lewis calls "dualism." *Not the dualism of philosophy of the mind. In dualism there is

LEIBNIZIAN MORAL ARGUMENT

—MARYANN SPIKES

not one God that orders the world; there are two one good and one evil. The problem with this view is that it is based on false premises, as Lewis writes:

"In order to be bad he must have good things to want and then to pursue in the wrong way: he must have impulses which were originally good in order to be able to pervert them. But if he is bad he cannot supply himself either with good things to desire or with good impulses to pervert. He must be getting both from the Good Power. And if so, then he is not independent. He is part of the Good Power's world. He was made either by the Good Power or by some power above them both."

"Put it more simply still. To be bad, he must exist and have intelligence and will. But existence, intelligence, and will are in themselves good. Therefore he must be getting them from the Good Power: even to be bad he must borrow or steal from his opponent. And do you now beg to see why Christianity has always said that the devil is a fallen angel? That is not a mere story for the children. It is a real recognition of the fact that evil is a parasite, not an original thing. The powers which enable evil to carry on are powers given it by goodness."

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE SHOCKING ALTERNATIVE

As the past couple chapters have been dealing with the "problem of evil," this chapter goes into a discussion of the "free will" defense to



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the problem of evil. Just as anyone in authority knows, there are different levels of something being according to, or against one's will. As an example, Lewis uses a mother with her children. She might say, "I'm not going to go and make you tidy the schoolroom every night. You've got to learn to keep it tidy on your, own" (Lewis' words). It is her will that the children be tidy, but it's also in her will that they be free to tidy it themselves. Though some may question why God would create free creatures that could, to an extent, violate God's will or if God could somehow create free creatures that would always choose to do right (the latter being somewhat contradictory in terms). It seems somewhat intuitive that love, joy, and other good things require freedom to be actually those good things. Without freedom we're nothing but mindless automatons. One key point in the argument from free will is that "... God knew what would happen if they used their freedom the wrong way: apparently He thought it worth the risk." And, as Professor Kreeft says, "[God] does not sin, but He creates beings with free will who can sin if they choose. So He's off the hook for doing evil, but He's still on the hook for allowing it. He could disallow evil. Instead, He makes evil work for a greater good." At the end of this chapter Lewis brings up one of his most powerful arguments, commonly called the "liar-lunatic-Lord 'trilemma.'" To put it simply, the Gospels leave no doubt, Christ claims to be God, and yet He is called humble, how can He be the epitome of humility if He's merely a man and claiming to be God? They cannot both be true. He must be one of three options: a liar, a madman, or whom He says He is.

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man

who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic-on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg-or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

CHAPTER NINE: THE PERFECT PENITENT

It may seem obvious to a long-time Christian that, "The perfect surrender and humiliation were undergone by Christ: perfect because He was God, surrender and humiliation because He was man." However, Lewis has not and will not try to prove the theology behind kenosis, but he presents it at the beginning of this chapter as a premise. There's an odd contradiction that Lewis brings up here when talking of Christ's life and work on earth. Unbelievers will often focus on Christ's teaching, but most Christian writing, including the New Testament, is mostly about His death and resurrection. Lewis does not go into the different theories of salvation, that's not the point of this text; this is not a theology text so there's no reason to go into the different theories here. One thing that is common among the different theories is that they all agree that salvation works. The different theories of salvation are not what Christians are called to accept for salvation. As Lewis says, "Theories about [salvation] are not Christianity: they are explanations about how it works. Christians would not all agree as to how important these theories are." Lewis gives some explanation of his basic theory behind atonement and he qualifies his

MERE MORAL ARGUMENT: PART 2

view with this caveat, “Such is my own way of looking at what Christians call the Atonement. But remember this is only one more picture. Do not mistake it for the thing itself: and if it does not help you, drop it.”

CHAPTER TEN: THE PRACTICAL CONCLUSION

In the beginning of the final chapter in this section of the text, Lewis draws an interesting analogy. He compares the “new kind of life” received through salvation to the next evolutionary step for humankind. And, how does this new life come about? It is not of ourselves. Just as our natural life came from our parents in an odd manner (if you don’t find conception odd, you’ve been an adult far too long and don’t remember the first time you heard how this works), this new life is brought about in an odd way and not of our own doing. The three ordinances (ordinary ways) that bring about this new life are simple: baptism, belief, and communion. Different denominations will focus on one or another more, but all agree that these are the basic three. It is on Christ’s authority that these somewhat odd ordinances are to be trusted. Jesus Christ, who as we’ve seen two chapters ago, must be the One True God incarnate, says on His own authority that these are the basics of the new life. We must remember that these three ordinances do not somehow let us off on our responsibility to imitate Christ in our lives. These three basics are important, and they are not of our own doing, but it takes more than just being born to live. So, it takes more than just being “born again” to be a “little Christ.” Lewis makes three final points as part of this conclusion. First, the new life of a Christian is different than the unbelievers’, not that the Christian is more moral. Rather, the Christian is moral for a different reason. The Christian is moral because it is God that is living in the Christian, working in and through him or her to do

His will. Second, and this is important to apologetics, Lewis addresses the issue of the people that have and never will have the chance to know about Christ. Many skeptics balk at that and say that God is a monster because millions who can never and will never hear about Jesus would, presumably, be sent to hell. Lewis doesn’t offer an argument that says one way or the other about how God deals with people like this. He simply responds, “We do know that no man can be saved except through Christ; we do not know that only those who know Him can be saved through Him. But in the meantime, if you are worried about the people outside, the most unreasonable thing you can do is to remain outside yourself.” The last point is also in response to a common objection, which is commonly called “divine hiddenness.” The objection can be summed up in the question, “Why doesn’t God show Himself to everyone clearly so that everyone believes?” The answer is summed up here:

“... Christians think He is going to land in force; we do not know when. But we can guess why He is delaying. He wants to give us the chance of joining His side freely. I do not suppose you and I would have thought much of a Frenchman who waited till the Allies were marching into Germany and then announced he was on our side. God will invade. But I wonder whether people who ask God to interfere openly and directly in our world quite realize what it will be like when He does. When that happens, it is the end of the world. When the author walks on to the stage the play is over. God is going to invade, all right: but what is the good of saying you are on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else—something it never entered your head to conceive — comes crashing in; something so beautiful to some of us and so terrible to others that none of us will have any choice left?”



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For this time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side.... That will not be the time for choosing: it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realized it before or not. Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It will not last for ever. We must take it or leave it."

One final note about Lewis' genius liar-lunatic-Lord idea. Some (most famously Bart Ehrman) have critiqued this argument by adding the option "legend," saying that with that fourth option, one does not have to come to the conclusion that Jesus Christ is Lord. There are so many good ways to counter this, but one of the best is from textual criticism. With a solid foundation of textual criticism, one can see that the New Testament was not written hundreds of years after Christ lived. The whole New Testament was most likely completed before 70 AD (none of the New Testament writers mention the fall of Jerusalem). Legends take time to build up, and in the early days of Christianity, critics could easily dispute any claims of Christianity with evidence, but quite noticeably they do not. In fact first century Jewish writings agree that the tomb was indeed empty and offer up other arguments. If the resurrection were merely a myth why do extra-biblical writings talk about an empty tomb? Lastly, calling this a legend is tantamount to calling the original Apostles liars. The original authors were definitely eyewitnesses and contemporaries with eyewitnesses, to say that this is a legend is saying that they made the whole story up. Why would they make up a legend/lie that would get themselves sent to prison facing torture and death? Lies will out. Under pressure even

devoted liars will confess their lies. The belief that the New Testament is all lies is an extreme conspiracy theory spanning thousands of years. So, again we find that it is highly unlikely that the New Testament writers would make up a legend, Jesus Himself is clearly not lying and His bearing the burden of the cross attests to His claim, and reading the words of Christ we clearly see that He is not a lunatic. We are left with no other option but to conclude that Jesus Christ is Lord. Amen.



"The great difficulty is to get modern audiences to realize that you are preaching Christianity solely and simply because you happen to think it true; they always suppose you are preaching it because you like it or think it good for society or something of that sort. Now a clearly maintained distinction between what the Faith actually says and what you would like it to have said or what you understand or what you personally find helpful or think probable, forces your audience to realize that you are tied to your data just as the scientist is tied by the results of the experiments; that you are not just saying what you like. This immediately helps them realize that what is being discussed is a question about objective fact — not gas about ideals and points of view."

— C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Still Looking for C.S. Lewis
—Christopher Mitchell,
Biola Magazine

WHERE THE JESUS MYTH GOES WRONG

Stephen J. Bedard • stephenjbedard.com

The Jesus Myth Theory (JMT) is one most bizarre theories within biblical studies. It is not new. Albert Schweitzer, in his *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, mentions its appearance among German scholars in the nineteenth century. Karl Barth, in his *Church Dogmatics*, actually admits to having considered the JMT as a legitimate option. Today, the JMT is primarily nurtured and spread through the internet.

There are three areas where the JMT goes wrong. They are, 1) starting with the conclusion before the evidence, 2) doing bad history and 3) building bad arguments on small kernels of truth.

Why do I say that the JMT starts with the conclusion? No reputable historian would start with the evidence and then conclude with Jesus having not existed. Rather, the JMT starts with the assumption that Jesus never existed and then asks, is it possible to argue against the evidence that exists? That is bad scholarship.

Related to this is the bad history that they do. Rarely are the proponents of the JMT trained historians. One of the biggest problems with the JMT is not what they say about Jesus but how they use historical evidence in general. If their methodology was used across the board, we would have to erase most of the ancient history that we currently have confidence in.

Perhaps the JMT gains followers because their claims are not invented out of thin air but are based on kernels of truth.

For example, they claim that the *Testamonium Flavianum* (Josephus' record of Jesus Christ) is a Christian fabrication. It is true that some well-meaning Christian attempted to enhance Josephus' statement by adding details closer to

5 Things to Remember When Talking About the Historical Jesus
—Stephen Bedard

Christian doctrine. Scholars openly admit that fact. But that does not mean that there was nothing there originally which could have been changed. What happened with Josephus is similar to what happened with the Johannine Comma, where a Christian scribe added a statement to 1 John to make it a clearer witness to the Trinity.

Another example is the comparison of Mary and baby Jesus to Isis and baby Horus. It is true that early Christian artists used statues of Isis and Horus in their attempts to depict Mary and Jesus. The statues of Isis and Horus were close enough to what they wanted that they made a reasonable model. However, that does not mean that the Gospel writers created Mary and Jesus based on earlier myths about Isis and Horus. The similarities that we have are all post-New Testament and are therefore irrelevant for reconstructing the origins of the Gospels. The most that they can tell us is how Christian art began.

There is a place to compare the story of Jesus with that of Horus, Dionysus, Mithras and so on. Apologists can and should demonstrate that the details between the various traditions are not as close as the JMT suggests.

But even before that exercise, Christians should be aware that the JMT has already made numerous mistakes. Putting the conclusion before the evidence, doing bad history and misrepresenting kernels of truth are some serious errors in methodology.



Jesus Myth Theory: A Christian Response
—Stephen Bedard

Why Should We Care About the Jesus Myth?
—Stephen Bedard

So You Want to be a Jesus Mythicist?
—Stephen Bedard



Book Review

[ri-vyoo]: a general survey, especially in words; a report or account of something

UNMASKING THE PAGAN CHRIST

Nick Peters • deeperwaters.wordpress.com

Unmasking The Pagan Christ is a response to the book of Tom Harpur's called "The Pagan Christ." It's important to note that the reason authors like Stephen J. Bedard and Stanley E. Porter are spending time on this topic is not because the idea of Harpur's is a serious debate in the academic community. It's not. They wrote it for the same reason I had my recent debate with Ken Humphreys. It is because this is affecting the rank and file of the church and instilling doubt in them. This is also because we as the church have been doing an abysmal job at equipping Christians to answer challenges so much so that even the craziest of theories has an impact.

Such is the case with Harpur's book. Harpur's idea is that Jesus wasn't a historical figure. Instead, he's a sort of mishmash of various pagan deities, though especially Horus and Osiris. He wants to go instead with a sort of Cosmic Christ. A universal Christ as it were. Yet to do this, the historical figure must simply be banished.

Thankfully, there are people out there like Bedard and Porter who are doing the work to make sure that this kind of material is dealt with. A large number of scholars have had the right attitude towards mythicism (This is

nonsense) but had the wrong response. (Therefore if we ignore it, it will just go away.) This is especially so for Christian scholars who ignore this not at their peril, but at the peril of their fellow Christians who aren't as equipped.

Of course, atheistic scholars and others have a role to play in this as well. There are atheistic scholars out there who are frankly quite embarrassed by how many atheists are jumping on the mythicist bandwagon, as they should be. For atheists who complain about Christians arguing against them on evolution without studying science (And they are certainly right to do so!), it looks like too many atheists are jumping on this idea without really studying history.

Bedard and Porter take us through a course in what Egyptologists really say about Horus and Osiris and how what Harpur says just doesn't match up. They also demonstrate that Harpur relies on outdated scholarship like Massey and Kuhn, that quite frankly wasn't even taken seriously in its own day. One aspect I think quite helpful in the look at Egyptology is to point out that the word KRST that shows up in Egypt does not mean Christ, but rather refers to burial. This is commonly cited by mythicists.

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The authors use the work of actual Egyptologists who reference what the original works about Horus and Osiris themselves say. They then demonstrate that the parallels that Harpur claims to see are more forced and read into the text instead of being read out of the text. They do demonstrate that there are some parallels, but these are parallels we can expect from all religions. (It's not much of a shock if many religions use water as a means of cleansing, have people share food together in a meal, etc.)

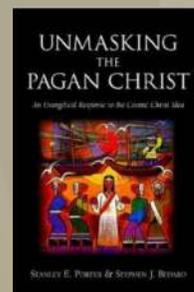
Along the way, the authors also give us a look at Mithras, another favorite of the pagan copycat crowd. They point out that if anyone dies and comes back in the story of Mithras, it is not Mithras, but rather it is the bull that he kills. Those who claim Christ is a copy of Mithras have likely never read any real scholarship on Mithras.

After that, we get to a more positive case. What is the evidence that Jesus existed? Here I think the authors do a fine job, though the arguments will not be new to people in this field. The authors point out how Harpur misunderstands sayings of the church fathers and does not deal adequately with the extra-biblical evidence.

I am thankful that books like this one exist and I hope more do come. Mythicism cannot be ignored at this point. It is not because it is a powerful theory. It is not. It is because it is a theory that leads away people from doing sound and real history. It results in a conspiracy theory thinking that is extremely

anti-intellectual and anti-historical. It is my hope that scholars of all worldviews and positions will start to deal with this and give it the deathblow and humiliation that it deserves.

In Christ,
Nick Peters



Rabbi or Messiah? Prophet or the Son of God? People have debated the identity of Jesus of Nazareth since the first century. But what if there was no Jesus? What if there was no Mary or Joseph, no twelve apostles? What if the story of Jesus was no more than a myth to convey spiritual truth? These claims have been around for hundreds of years and have become more prominent with well-known religion columnist Tom Harpur's recent book, *The Pagan Christ*. Harpur claims that Jesus was not a historical figure, but was one version of an ancient myth that can be traced from ancient Egyptian religion to the Roman mystery cults. Stanley Porter and Stephen Bedard tackle this radical claim by looking at the roots of the "pagan Christ idea," examining the supposed pagan parallels and presenting the evidence for the historical Jesus.



THE TRINITY

Tony Arsenal • reformedarsenal.com

“No sooner do I conceive of the One than I am illumined by the Splendour of the Three; no sooner do I distinguish Them than I am carried back to the One.”¹ This poetic and beautiful reflection aptly describes the narrow road that every Christian must navigate when contemplating the Trinity. With the trench of Modalism on one side, and Tritheism on the other, we must intentionally allow the reality of the singular divine nature to stand in tension with the truth of the genuine distinction between the three divine Persons. This is hardly a simple task, and as RC Sproul writes “there remains much confusion about [the doctrine of the Trinity] to this day, with many people misunderstanding it in very serious ways.”²

In this brief essay I hope to provide the reader with the tools they require in order to maintain a proper balance between these two errors, and to rest safely in the orthodox protection of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.³ I intend to do this by exploring two important aspects of Trinitarian theology. First I will explore the biblical data which compels us to affirm the various component parts of the Trinitarian formulations. Following that I will briefly explain the development of various heresies and the Church’s response, culminating in the promulgation of the Nicene Creed in 381.

HOW WE GOT HERE

Although hinted at in the Old Testament, the advent of Jesus Christ and the truth of his divine status forced Christians to reevaluate their understanding of monotheism. Although the idea of plurality within the monotheistic deity of God was not entirely foreign to 2nd Temple Judaism,⁴ the early Church began an arduous process of articulating how it could be possible that there were three persons who were God, yet there was only one God.

BIBLICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A prima facie reading of the Bible will reveal five important assertions that any Christian affirming the authority, inerrancy, and inspiration of the Old and New Testaments must reconcile in order to reach a consistent interpretation. Although the doctrine of the Trinity is not explicit in the Bible, one simply cannot square all the biblical data regarding the nature of God and the identities of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit without it. Stephen R. Holmes notes: “[The doctrine of the Trinity] is a set of things that need to be believed if we are able to do exegesis adequately as we hold the truth of every text of Scripture [...] without discovering contradictions between them.”⁵

The first of these assertions is rather uncontroversial, although it bears some



The Simplicity of the Divine
Nature and the Triune Persons
—Tony Arsenal

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exposition. Overwhelmingly in the New Testament, the Father is identified as the one God. He is said to have sent his unique Son to provide eternal salvation, (Jn 3:16) to work together all things for the good of those whom he foreknew and predestined for conformity to the image of his Son,⁶ (Rom 8:28-29), is the “Father of mercies and God of all comfort,” (2 Cor 1:3, ESV) and that it is according to his mercy that we are brought to new life. (1 Pe 1:3) This point flows rather naturally from the Old Testament, which commonly views Yahweh in parental and paternal terms. (Is 63:16, 66:13, Ho 11:1–3) No major heresy has questioned the divinity of the Father, and I trust that this small sampling of Scriptural citations is sufficient to establish the point.

Another core assertion which we must grapple with is that Jesus Christ himself is also God. While critics will dismiss the idea that the New Testament identifies Jesus as God and insist that that is a later claim,⁷ this simply does not bear the weight of the Biblical data.⁸ Jesus exercised divine prerogatives such as the forgiving sins, exercising dominion over the Sabbath, ruling over the storm and waves,⁹ and performing various creative miracles. (Mt 9:6, 12:8, Mk 4:39, Jn 6:11–13) Later Biblical reflection would state that Jesus was an active participant in creation, (Jn 1:3, Col 1:16, Heb 1:2) that it was through the Son that the very existence of creation is

maintained (Col 1:17, Heb 1:3), and that Jesus Christ bears the very same divine nature as the Father (Jn 1:1, Col 2:9, Heb 1:3). Perhaps most pertinent, and a fact that was not lost on his original audience, Jesus himself claimed the divine name of Yahweh (Jn 8:58-59). Beyond Jesus’ explicit appropriation of the divine name, James White has argued that the New Testament application of the title Lord (kurios) is in many cases a reference to the divine name, which the apostolic authors intentionally used to identify Jesus as God.¹⁰

A third assertion is, as one might expect, that the Holy Spirit is also God along with the Father and the Son. The primary text is the account of the judicial deaths of Ananias and Sapphira found in the early chapters of the book of Acts. In this narrative, the unfortunate couple conspire to lie to the Church and suffer the consequences of their deceit. Pertinent to our discussion is chapter 5, verses 3-4:

But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.” (Ac 5:3–4, ESV)

In the course of a few short sentences we see



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that Peter states that Ananias has lied to the Holy Spirit, and that upon further explanation that this lie was to God. This text does not indicate that Peter is conceiving of the Holy Spirit as a different person from God (mentioned at the end of verse 4), but that instead the Holy Spirit himself is one and the same God to whom Ananias lied. Further exegetical cases can be made throughout the epistolary corpus indicating the divinity of the Holy Spirit. We find “indirect assertions of the deity of the Holy Spirit” in 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19,¹¹ and under divine inspiration the author of Hebrews argues that the Holy Spirit is the divine speaker in Psalm 95:9. (Heb 3:7-9)¹²

In consideration of space, I shall briefly address the final two assertions. Any biblical conception of God must remain thoroughly monotheistic. The central dogma of the Hebraic religion in the Old Testament is the absolutely unique and solitary nature of God. This is most explicitly stated in the Shema, which states that “The LORD our God, the LORD is one.” (Dt 6:4, ESV) Additionally, the perennial sin of the Hebrew people throughout the Old Testament is the failure to properly acknowledge and worship the one God and the one God alone. This is especially clear in the prophetic indictments which vividly portray God as a jealous husband, and Israel as his adulterous wife (Je 9:2; Eze 6:9; 16:32, Hos 1:1-2). In addition to the firm affirmation of a single unique God, the New Testament also clearly portrays that the Father, Son, and Spirit are indeed distinct and discrete persons.¹³ This is most clearly seen in the interpersonal interactions between the Father, Son, and Spirit prominent in the baptismal accounts (Mt 3:13–17; Mk 1:9–11; Lk 3:21–23), in which the Father, Son, and Spirit are all seen to be present and active, the intercessory roles of Jesus (Rom 8:34, Heb 7:25), and the Spirit (Rom 8:26), to the

Father on behalf of their people, and the interpersonal love displayed between the Father and Son (Mt 17:5, Jn 17:24). Although both of these assertions would sustain further exposition, I must at this point proceed.

POST BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENTS

As the Bible began to be viewed as a cohesive whole, rather than a group of related documents, the tension between the aforementioned assertions began to grow. With the assault of Gnostic Christology pressing in with challenges to the nature of Christ, the early Church began to reflect on how to resolve the apparent contradictions. As early as Tertullian, writing in the late 2nd century, we see the classic formulation of “One in essence, three in persons” begin to appear.¹⁴ As various writers began to formulate their own way to talk about the one God as the three divine persons, various insufficient definitions began to arise. In the early part of the 4th century, a presbyter from Alexandria began to stir up controversy. This presbyter was Arius, and his controversial claims regarding the nature of the Son would usher in a new era of conciliar definition and theology which would have ramifications for the Church to this day.

Arius was primarily interested in maintaining the unique status of the one God above all other considerations. Following after Origen, he preserved the unique status of the one God by asserting that the Son was not an eternal being, and in fact was a created entity who was entirely distinct from the Father. For Arius the Son was not the eternal, uncreated Son of the Father, rather he came into being as the first Creature through which all other creatures came. The ensuing controversy facilitated the first ecumenical council held at Nicaea in 325. The primary affirmation of this council was that the Father and Son share

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in a common nature. The term *ousia* was used to describe this common nature, and was borrowed from the Greek philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. At the time, the terms *ousia* referred to “the essence and to individual bearers of it.”¹⁵ Unfortunately, the term *hypostasis* overlapped in meaning such that the definition promulgated at Nicaea was not sufficiently clear to settle the controversy. Primarily through the work of the Cappadocian Fathers, the term *hypostasis* came to be used to describe an individual instance of one bearing an *ousia* and in 381 the Creed of Nicaea was expanded and ratified into the form we now know as the Nicene Creed. In addition to clarifications regarding the unity and distinction between the Father and Son, the sparse statement “and in the Holy Spirit” which was present in the Creed of Nicaea was expanded to identify the Spirit as one who is to be worshiped and glorified alongside the Father and Son as a coeternal and consubstantial person. This expansion was a direct response to the aptly named Pneumatomachian¹⁶ sect which opposed the divinity of the Spirit in ways similar to the Arian challenge to the divinity of Christ. Additionally, some iterations of the Pneumatomachian error also denied the personhood of the Spirit in ways similar to modern day Jehovah’s Witnesses. Thus the gold standard for Christian Faith in relation to the nature and interpersonal relationship between the Father and Son was settled, and that standard has remained relatively unchallenged in Christianity as a whole for nearly 1600 years. The Creed was originally formulated as a response to heresy and intended to protect the faithful from error by setting clear boundaries of acceptable belief. Fortunately, the Creed still serves that purpose, and through proper understanding of its role as a summary of Scripture and a protective boundary it can serve the faithful now as it has since its inception.



HEAVEN-SPUN TREASURE

—BONITA JEWEL

Only begotten Son
Holy and righteous one
Earth with Heaven is spun
My heart sings glory, glory

King laid in a manger
God exposed to danger
To His earth a stranger
A sad twist to the story

Hungry and tempted to kneel
Fate a harbinger so real
An heir Satan sought to steal
His Father’s Word was His meat

Alone, by friends betrayed
Forgiveness and love displayed
In a borrowed tomb was laid
Rose the Father to greet

Father and Son reunite
Never such depth of delight
Light collides with Light
It filters through the earth

Only begotten Son
Holy and righteous one
My soul with glory is spun
And the heart rejoices in mirth



MY JOURNEY TO FAITH

Chris Reese • Co-founder, [Christian Apologetics Alliance](#)

Growing up, I only attended church occasionally, though everyone in my family identified with Christianity. In my elementary school years, everything church related seemed dry and boring, and I had no interest in it. It felt like something designed to prevent me from having fun, and much ado about nothing important.

At the same time, I had a strong interest in the supernatural and the occult, and read lots of books on magic and mythology, and gravitated strongly toward horror movies. Stories about demon possession that I read and movies like *The Exorcist* convinced me that good and evil spiritual forces existed, along with some scary experiences I had with demonic activity. But I was fascinated with what powers might be available through occult means.

Around 11 or 12, my mom started going to church, and became concerned about some of the dark things I was attracted to. She tried to tell me those things were harmful, but I didn't listen. But I believe she was praying, and I remember feeling strongly around that time that I should read the Bible. It was almost a compulsion, and I found it odd, since it seemed like one of the last things I'd want to do.

When I was 14, during the summer when I stayed with my grandmother, my mom told

me about a class she was taking at church that had something to do with "witnessing." She asked if she could share the material with me, and I agreed. She went through the presentation, and at the end asked if I wanted to accept Jesus Christ as my Savior. I can't recall much of what she shared, but it seemed to make sense, and sounded promising, so I prayed with her there in my grandmother's living room.

Fast forwarding a couple of years when I was a freshman in high school, living in Germany where my dad was stationed in the military, my pastor (an Army chaplain), out of the blue, gave me two books—*Reasons* and *Answers* by Josh McDowell and Don Stewart (both long out of print). Having grown up in a home where my dad extolled reason and logic, and now attending honors classes in high school where I was being challenged to think critically, I realized there were tough questions about the Christian faith. But I was also seeing that there were solid answers.

As I continued through high school, my interest in apologetics grew, and by the time I was a senior I was writing papers in my AP English class defending belief in God. I began to see that much of academia harbored an anti-theistic bias, and that I had few allies among my classmates when it came to faith. I was inspired to defend Christianity against intellectual attacks, and sought to ground myself in knowledge of the Bible, theology,

MY JOURNEY TO FAITH

and apologetics.

I was sometimes overzealous, and learned over time that there was much more behind a person's beliefs than propositions and evidence. Past experiences, current circumstances, morality, personal desires, and many other issues all contributed to a person's religious outlook. And apart from the work of the Spirit, no one would embrace the Christian faith.

In 2011, a friend approached me with the idea of creating a Facebook group for Christian apologists. We knew there was a need, and that many people interested in these topics felt alone in their local communities, without like-minded people to interact with. We invited lots of friends who were interested in apologetics, and decided to call it the Christian Apologetics Alliance. I believe the Lord has blessed the group, and I'm grateful to be able to share my journey of faith in this second issue of EQUIPPED, surrounded by a cloud of witnesses reading it, whom I'm honored to serve beside.

--Chris Reese is co-founder of the CAA and marketing manager at B&H Academic publishing.



*WHY I AM A CHRISTIAN
--DAVID WOOD*

When you become a Christian you do not become immune to life. You will have questions, you will have bad days, you will lose hope and you will need answers. Enter apologetics. To outsiders this discipline answers objections, to insiders it builds faith and promotes intellectual inquiry. If you are a Christian and feel guilty about having questions, please don't. Ask away, build your faith, learn whatever you can. First from Scripture, then from the teachers whom God gifted his church with. If you have lost sight of hope, do not get discouraged.

*—Glenn Hendrickson
Apologetics for Christians: Hope for Believers*

*Why We Must
Teach
Apologetics
Unapologetically
—Dan Kimball*

*Why the
Pre-Jesus
Mythologies
Fail to Prove
Jesus is a
Myth
—J. Warner
Wallace*



THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY

Nadine Salim • gotesrus.blogspot.com

I. INTRODUCTION

Periodically, the apologist will be asked something about or have to “deal with” some assertion concerning the Council of Nicea. It may be a surprise to some who are less-than-well-versed in Church History to know that the Council of Nicea had nothing to do with the formation of the biblical canon. It had to do with the Trinitarian nature of God – a bedrock of orthodox Christian doctrine. Apologists may be asked about the doctrine of the trinity and how it came to be especially in the context of discussions with persons who follow other faiths. Is Christianity polytheistic? How does a triune God fit into the Christian idea of salvation? A discussion of the Arian Controversy may help answer some of these questions.¹

A major question facing the early church involved the nature of Jesus, i.e., was He created or divine? One side of the conflict, championed by Arius believed that a “plain language” reading of the Bible inevitably led to the conclusion that God the Father had created Jesus. The other side fiercely defended by Athanasius firmly argued that Jesus was God the Son, uncreated, co-eternal and consubstantial with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. The outcome of the conflict would set in stone the Church’s understanding of the Trinity. This article will examine the argument, the protagonist and

antagonist (the reader will have to decide which is which), the result, and the result’s effects on theology. The Council of Nicea resolved the controversy surrounding the “Arian heresy” by articulating the doctrine of the Trinity which remains the orthodox position concerning the unified nature of the Godhead.

This article will conduct its inquiry through examination and explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity describing the two divergent theological opinions as discussed by the bishops at Nicea, the primary parties involved, the Council of Nicea itself, and how the controversy has been felt through the present time. It should be noted while two Councils, Nicea and Constantinople, discussed Arian writings, this writing will focus on the Council of Nicea as this council specifically “directed itself against Arius.”² It will conclude with an examination of the current state of the debate in its modern manifestations such as “Eternal Subordination of the Son” and as it is found in some unorthodox “Christian-like” belief systems.

II. THE PLACE AND THE PLAYERS

A. THE CHURCH IN ALEXANDRIA

The story of the Arian controversy begins in Alexandria, Egypt. A large, prosperous city, Alexandria served as a major cultural center

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and the center of trade in that part of the world.³ Alexandria served as a gateway for goods and people between Rome and India, China, and Arabia.⁴ As well, Alexandria was famous for building ships and manufacturing papyrus, a very long lasting paper-like product. A large and diverse population called the city home. Alexandria was a center of learning housing including medicine, arts, sciences, and philosophy.⁵ The importance of the city may be seen in the fact that the city did not have a procurator or governor as did Judea, but was ruled by a vice-regal i.e., a direct representative from the Roman Emperor.⁶

It should come as no surprise then given this background and the proximity of Judea, that Alexandria was also a center in the early church.⁷ Alexandria was home to a diversity of followers of different religions including Jews, Gnostics, Manicheans, etc. The Bishop of Alexandria served as the head of the Egyptian Church.⁸ The Alexandrian church had included figures like Eusebius and Origen, both prolific and influential fathers in the early church. In addition, many of issues of doctrine and dogma remained unsettled causing ideological conflagrations. Both Arius and Athanasius were part of this maelstrom of ecclesiastical activity.

The Trinity is Not a Problem, It's a Solution
—J. Warner Wallace

B. ARIUS

Arius seems to have been born in Libya. In fact, as the controversy unfolded Arius would have unanimous support from the Libyan clergy.⁹ The details of Arius' early life and education are uncertain, although he is later described as a person skilled in dialectics.¹⁰ He may have been a student of the early martyr Lucian. The record of his public life begins with Arius in the fourth century as a presbyter and popular preacher in Alexandria who wore a philosopher's tunic.¹¹ Some traditions place Arius in the middle of several church controversies and as a candidate for bishop. However, none of these are certain — although neither are they uncertain.¹² What is generally agreed upon and lends some support to the idea that Arius was involved in some way in Alexander's election to the bishopric is Arius remarkable popularity.¹³

The Alexandrian church, headed by Alexander, was characterized by pluralities and differences. In this climate, Arius and Alexander “publicly repudiated each other's philosophies” although Arius did not fail to recognize the bishop's authority.¹⁴ These philosophies discussed the nature of God, of Jesus, and the relation between the two. Alexander believed that his church was weakened as the result of the division when Colluthus, a local presbyter, began to ordain in his own name.¹⁵ Rowan Williams has opined that the beginnings of Arianism lie in this



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tempestuous period.¹⁶ Later, the Church would rally to defeat the common enemy, Arius and those like him.¹⁷

Arius wrote the most well-known version of his views, the *Thalia* after 321 or 322.¹⁸ Following a synod where Alexander was able to get the support of the attendees in 317 C.E. Alexander condemned Arius' position.¹⁹ Emperor Constantine sent Hosius of Cordova, his ecclesiastical advisor, to look into the matter at a synod to be convened in 325 C.E.²⁰ At the synod, Eusebius the bishop of Caesarea who had had his own Christology repudiated, was to recant his views. He had found in Proverbs 8:22 a second pre-existent divine being.²¹ Seeing opportunity as the Council would coincide with his twentieth anniversary as emperor, Constantine invited all of the bishops to Nicaea. Two hundred and fifty attended what was called the Council of Nicaea. Athanasius opposed Arius at the council as he had done in his polemics. Following excommunication at the council, Arius would eventually be rehabilitated through the efforts of Constantine who wanted to see fewer divisions in the church. In what was probably an effort to make peace, Arius, at a synod in 336, read a statement that he had written agreeing with the statements of the Council of Nicaea. It appears he may also have had on his person a fuller confession that retained his old beliefs so that he could swear honestly that he had sworn on what he had written.²² Arius died in 340 apparently still in communion with the church.²³

C. ATHANASIUS

Athanasius was born in Alexandria around 295-299 C.E.²⁴ Athanasius' mother seems to have been a wealthy pagan who arranged to have him educated by Alexander.²⁵ Athanasius does not seem to have received a formal

education but his writings betray someone well-versed in the Scriptures and theology as well as having familiarity with the philosophical schools of the time.²⁶ Athanasius became a deacon before he was 30 and bishop at 30 in 328 following the Council of Nicea in 325.²⁷ Athanasius' fortunes changed with the political winds of the church. An apparently polarizing figure, he was exiled no less than five times over the course of his life.²⁸ Athanasius' parishioners always welcomed their bishop back from exile enthusiastically.²⁹ Where Arius appears to have been an impassioned but peaceful ascetic, Athanasius was accused by his detractors of being tyrannical and violent.³⁰ At least some of this was manufactured by his opponents including one notable event where Arius had been accused of murder and sent to defend himself to the Emperor when the alleged dead man was found entirely alive.³¹ Arius died in 373 C.E.³²

Polemics against Arius and "the Arians" make up most of Athanasius' works.³³ It should be noted that the term "Arians" was a term concocted and used by Athanasius in these polemics. For instance, one of Athanasius' works is called *Against the Arians*.³⁴ Athanasius diametrically opposed Arius' theology about the nature of God and his relationship to Jesus. Alexander appointed Athanasius secretary to the Council of Nicea where Arius' viewpoint was condemned. At the Council, Athanasius' positions prevailed.

III. THE CONTROVERSY

The Arian Controversy as it came to be called embodied a very basic question: How Divine is Jesus?³⁵ What relationship does Jesus have to God the father? Modernly, the orthodox Christian answer is that Jesus is of one substance, co-eternal, and co-equal with God the Father.

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How this answer came to be was decided as a result of this controversy.

A. ARIANISM

According to Arius, texts concerning Jesus' nature like John 14:28 which says, "You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I." (NASB) They also examined Proverbs 8:22 which says, "The Lord created me at the beginning of his work the first of his acts of long ago." From these two things, they said, a plain language reading of the texts indicates that the Father created Jesus. No one disagreed that these two verses spoke about Jesus.³⁶ At face value then, in its "straightforward, theological meaning," these scriptures meant that the Son had been created by God as a divine being.³⁷ The God remained superior to the Son who was created before other things. Thus, where scriptures such as Colossians 1:15-20 or Romans 8:29 mention Jesus as "the firstborn" Arians concluded that a plain language reading suggested that this meant Jesus was the first being created by God. God had created Jesus for a purpose giving him a measure of glory and "participation in the divine intellect."³⁸ According to Rowan Williams in his book *Arius, Heresy and Tradition*, Arius reasoned that God had created Jesus to be a living human being existing as humans do.³⁹ This was not "a gratuitous derogation from the Son's dignity, but an explanation of the fact that he stands in need of grace if he is to perform the function for which God has brought him into being."⁴⁰ Arius sought to make three things clear: 1) The Son is created as the result of the Father's will; 2) The Son is a metaphor for the second hypostasis (or person of God); and 3) The Son's position is dependent on the will of God.⁴¹ Jesus has been made divine by the will of God, created

for the purpose of acting as the mediator between God and the rest of creation.

Arius attempted to develop a "biblically based and rationally consistent catechesis."⁴² The Old Testament presents a confusing collection of scriptures describing the nature of "the mediator" between God and creation and God.⁴³ Arius concluded that the metaphors referencing sonship did not reflect a familial relation in the sense of biology, but a familial relation in the sense of love.⁴⁴

One thing that should be remembered about the Arian side of the controversy is that the Arians (even though they were labeled heretics) were trying to understand and exegete the Bible honestly believing that the Bible meant what its plain language said.⁴⁵ Arius and those who agreed with him were not trying to promote or teach a new doctrine, but to remain true to Scripture. Arius and his fellows believed in an all-powerful, transcendent, uncreated God.⁴⁶ God is anachronous, literally uncreated, without a beginning. Jesus is arche, with a beginning. According to an Arian reading and understanding of the Bible, Jesus might be considered homoiousios or similar to God, but could not be homoousios or the same as God.

B. ATHANASIUS' THEOLOGY

Athanasius conceived of God as beyond everything. Athanasius also maintained an Christological focus with respect to the relationship between God and creation.⁴⁷ Athanasius found the interplay between the goodness and loving nature of God extremely important.⁴⁸ He held that God had made man through the Word. God could not be known to the world as He was so far beyond everything. God arranged things that humanity could know God through



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the Word or Jesus.⁴⁹ “For Athanasius both are inextricably connected: Christ’s coming is his salvation. The Incarnation is participation in death and his participation in death is the glorification of human existence and essence which was subject to death.”⁵⁰

A major focus of Athanasius, the focus of his polemics, and the major part of his writings concerns the unified nature of God. For Athanasius, God does not need to create a mediator. He is able to connect with humanity without such a thing. Jesus fittingly takes on humanity in addition to his position in the godhead as otherwise humanity could not know God.⁵¹ Jesus cannot be created. If Jesus were less than completely divine, salvation would be imperfect.⁵² Athanasius reasons:

“If the Son was a creature, humanity would have remained none the less mortal and not united to God. It was not a creature that united creatures to God, for in that case this creature would be itself in search of one to unite it to God. Nor would a part of creation be the salvation of creation, that part itself being in need of salvation. To prevent this, God sends his own Son who becomes the Son of Man by taking created flesh, so that he may offer his own body to death on behalf of all, since all were sentenced to death but he was other than all. Henceforth, the utterance of that sentence is fulfilled, in so far as all have died through him—for “all have died” in Christ (2 Cor 5:14)— and henceforth all can be freed through him from sin and the curse that comes from it and may truly remain forever as risen from the dead and as putting on immortality and incorruptibility.”⁵³

Athanasius said Jesus “brought all humanity to himself and through him to the Father.”⁵⁴

In his work *Against the Arians*, Athanasius implied a co-equal relationship between the Son and Holy Spirit to show the Son’s co-equal nature with the Father.⁵⁵ Athanasius wrote and firmly believed that the Godhead has three hypostases or persons but that these persons are one God.⁵⁶ This position took center stage at the Council of Nicea.

IV. THE COUNCIL OF NICEA

Convened in 325, the Council of Nicea’s primary purpose was to decide whether Athanasius’ or Arius’ theology was correct.⁵⁷ Emperor Constantine presided over the council, participating in some of the debates. Athanasius served as secretary, leading some of the debates.⁵⁸ The Council debated the issue of whether Jesus was homoiousios (like God) or homoousios (identical to God.) Arius did have his supporters at the Council, most notably the Libyan bishops. Arius reaffirmed his view that Jesus was created, “divine only by participation.”⁵⁹ As a created being Christ could fall into error.⁶⁰ As Will Durant put it, Arius answers were “logical, honest, and suicidal.”⁶¹ Constantine himself argued in favor of the Athanasian position regarding whether Jesus was like God or identical to God. In the end, the Council devised a formula clearly stating the position that had been taken. All but five, then two of the bishops signed the new confession. Those who initially sided with Arius agreed to sign the document if the council agreed to add an iota to the word homoousios.⁶² Naturally, the Council did not agree. In the end, all but two bishops including Arius refused to sign. The Emperor exiled Arius and ordered that all of his books should be burnt.⁶³ The Council wanted to stress the unanimity, equality, and unique nature of God. The Nicene Creed adopted by the Council articulated the orthodox position about the nature of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit as a Trinity. The Nicene Creed recited by millions of

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Christians today as a statement of faith reads:

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father [and the Son]; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

It might be pleasant to say that the debate concerning this issue was dead following Nicea. Naturally this was not the case and further struggles would occur. However, the Council at Nicea developed a lasting doctrine which remains the orthodox position today in the majority of the Christian Church.

V. MODERN MANIFESTATIONS OF ARIUS

Belief in the Trinity remains a cornerstone of church theology. Abraham Van De Beek opines that most people today engage in some kind of subordinationism.⁶⁴ In other words, Jesus' divinity derives and is subordinate to the Father, along with that of the Holy Spirit. Van De Beek believes that these kinds of unorthodox beliefs stem from Barthian notions of God as able to act arbitrarily instead of in unity with his nature together with Enlightenment anthropology.⁶⁵ Van de Beek may be a trifle pessimistic as Trinitarian theology is of primary importance in the vast majority of denominations whether they be Catholic or Protestant. It may also be that as the doctrine of the Trinity is difficult to picture, the mind naturally puts the persons of the Godhead in some kind of order. One need only watch a preacher attempting to describe the Trinity to a group of children (or adults for that matter) to know how difficult this is. It cannot be denied however, that some denominations have adopted positions that seem Arian such as the protestant Church of the Netherlands which states that Jesus' is divine because He is the Son of God, a person separate from God.⁶⁶ A doctrine popular among a few conservative reformed groups called the Eternal Subordination of the Son approaches Arianism in that it holds that the Son is eternally subordinate to the Father, although of the same essence. As Kevin Giles puts it, this is a move in the opposite direction of orthodoxy which stresses the coequal nature and unity of God.⁶⁷ Also, many groups that are Christian-like such as the Jehovah Witnesses are characterized as heretical by, among other things, their lack of Trinitarian theology. Trends towards diminishing or subordinating any person of the Trinity is disastrous for soterian ministry as it is through knowing Jesus that



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humanity may know God. "Christ does not only make God known, but in Him God became manifest as our Savior. Revelation and salvation are one and the same."⁶⁸

VI. CONCLUSION

The disputes between Athanasius and Arius led to the adoption of creeds which spelled out the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine is the dominant orthodox creed, but is still not entirely universal. Looking ahead, ministers should study and develop ways to teach the meaning of and importance of the Trinity. Many battles are fought over second-tier issues. Given that the doctrine of the Trinity is essential to salvation; its instruction should be of primary importance. Apologists should understand how this doctrine was established beginning with the Council of Nicea to better explain it to those both inside and outside the faith.



*Handling
Objections: I
love the
moral
teachings of
Jesus but I
don't think
He is divine.*
—Eric
Chabot

*The Deity of
Christ in the
Gospel of
Mark*
—Jonathan
McLatchie

*The Divinity
of Jesus:
1, 2 & 3*
—JC Lamont

BATTER MY HEART, THREE-PERSON'D GOD —JOHN DONNE

*Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurp'd town to another due,
Labor to admit you, but oh, to no end;
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue.
Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov'd fain,
But am betroth'd unto your enemy;
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.*

*HOW CAN
JESUS BE BOTH
GOD AND
MAN?*
—JOHN LENNOX

*A
Formulation
and Defense
of the
Doctrine of
the Trinity*
—William
Lane Craig

*WAS JESUS
ADOPTED AS
THE SON OF
GOD?*
—STEPHEN
BEDARD

THE TRINITY
—THEOPEDIA

*Trinity Debate
Craig vs. Singer*

*Doctrine of the
Trinity*
—William Lane Craig

Significance

[sig-nif-i-kuhns]: importance; consequence; meaningful

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS' WIFE DEBUNKED: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS
—BEGINNING AND END

JACOBAVICH'S
GREATEST
MISSES
—TRUTH IN THE
TRENCHES

THE MARRIAGE OF JESUS AND MARY MAGDALENE: FACT OR FICTION?
—MAXWELL MILLS

The Gospel of Jesus' Wife
—Harvard Divinity School

EXTRA! EXTRA!

Jesus' Marriage to Mary the Magdalene is Fact, Not Fiction
—Huffington Post

The Curious Case of Jesus's Wife
—The Atlantic

DID JESUS HAVE A WIFE?
—BIBLEGATEWAY

EXPERTS
DEBUNK CLAIM
JESUS WAS A
HUSBAND AND
FATHER
—DISCOVERY

WAS JESUS CHRIST MARRIED? DID JESUS HAVE A WIFE?
—GOT QUESTIONS



JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Robert L. Lawrence of Banah de Cristo Ministries. Sonora, Mexico

Much has been said about Theophanies in the Old Testament and one doesn't have to wait long in many sermons from the Old Testament to hear the pastor talk about an "appearance of Christ." While these times of the pre-incarnate Christ appearing in human or angelic form capture our attention quickly, it has unfortunately led to a wrong assumption in regards to Yahweh in the Bible. Hopefully through this article, some light can be shed on this misunderstanding and more importantly help us see in a much grander scale the work of the Second Person of our Triune God. Additionally, it is hoped that our appreciation of the Old Testament can be seen in light of a curious statement made by our Lord himself, which was "The volume of the Book is written of me!"

J.C. Ryle says of this concept, "The eye of mortal man has never beheld God the Father. No man could bear the sight. Even to Moses it was said, "You cannot see my face—for there shall no man see me, and live." (Exod. 33:20.) Yet all that mortal man is capable of knowing about God the Father is fully revealed to us by God the Son." Additionally Ryle goes on to note the implications of this when he says that all which our human minds are capable of knowing about the Trinity is revealed to us in Christ. Therefore, we can NEVER give him too much honor, for when we honor the Son, we honor the Father who

sent him and the Godhead that dwells in him fully.¹ Resting in the assurance that we can never give too much glory to the Son, let us humbly examine the possibility that maybe, in some way, we may be giving too little honor to the Son by relegating his presence to rare appearances in the Old Testament.

I must also clarify that in no way, in such a short article, will this writer be trying to convince by overwhelming proofs and arguments that the view expressed here is true beyond any doubt. Such arrogance has no place in a discussion of a non-essential issue. All agree that God has spoken and appeared in many forms and manners in history. The question that I wish to raise is, which person of the Trinity is it? My argument will be that the Spirit has not been seen or heard from by any man, nor has the Father ever appeared, and possibly even communicated to mankind until the Baptism of Jesus, where the voice thundered from heaven saying, "This is my son." If this is true, then we should understand that when Jesus said that the volume of the book was written about him, he did not only mean that everything in the Old Testament was directing mankind towards the revelation of Jesus and his work as the Messiah. He was also literally saying that everything in the revelation of Yahweh in the Old Testament, every spoken and inspired word written in the Old Testament were the very works and words

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

of the Son of God.

Let us begin by taking a short look in the Gospel of John at two curious statements made by both John and Jesus. The first is in the introduction to the book in verse eighteen, “No one has seen God at any time. The Only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared him.” The second is in John 5:37 which says, “And the Father himself, who sent me, has testified of me. You have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his form.” Taken alone it might be argued that the second reference is simply referring to these Pharisees and Jewish leaders. However combined with John’s introduction, it seems that John may have been building a case for the entire Old Testament being a Theophany. What if the entirety of the Old Testament was an appearance of the Son of God to man who constantly rejected him, with rare exceptions? Well, let’s see how this would pan out.

The first question would have to be, “If every appearance and word in the Old Testament is of, and from Jesus pre-incarnate, then what was the role of the Father?” Also, by extension we would ask, “what about the visions of Heaven or the word of God that came to the numerous Prophets, Kings, and Priests?” Don’t we see anything of the Father before Christ?

In one sense, we can see that when the Bible is describing an event in heaven, such as in Genesis one where it is generally agreed that the Triune God is working together in the creation of heaven and Earth, these would be descriptions of God working in history. However it is curious to note that it is in these words spoken from heaven out of the presence of man, we find the curious plural-singular mode used, “Let US make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness” followed by the phrase, “So God created man in HIS own image, in the image of God HE created him, male and female HE created them.” Also, later in Genesis we read, “let US go down...” which followed “and the LORD came down.”

It is in these phrases that we can agree the Trinity is working together and conversing together about man, but nowhere in these passages do we find anything that would contradict the view being presented here, that the Father has never appeared to man, nor spoken to man. But what about the visions? These most likely come in the letters of Daniel and other of the Prophets where God was seen in Heaven. The first is the vision of Isaiah in chapter six, but here we see only one throne and one Lord. It is here we find that Isaiah thought he would die since he has seen, “The King, the LORD of Hosts.” However curiously, despite God saying no man can see God and live, he did not die. This is the second clue in the Scriptures that the term, no man



JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

can see God and live may not be referring to the Son of God but is either intended to say that no man can see the fullness of the Godhead or that no man can see one of the persons of the Trinity. It is logical to assume that since man has seen at the least one person of the trinity and lived, that the warning is not referring to that person. For now, suffice it to say that somehow Moses seeing God face to face, or Isaiah seeing God on the throne somehow does not qualify as seeing God's face in the sense that God warns Moses about that would kill any man.

What about the visions of David where he sees two thrones in Heaven? It is here in Chapter seven that we learn that Daniel saw throne placed in heaven and "the Ancient of Days took his seat." But in the following description nothing is mentioned of seeing God's face. The clothing was white as snow, and the hair like pure wool, but the closest we see to the actual one on that throne is flames and fire coming out of the throne and from before Him. (Verses 9-10) Following this is the second night vision where another comes on the clouds like the Son of Man. It is this one that comes TO the Ancient of Days, and is presented before the Ancient of Days. This Son of Man is clearly none other than the Son of God by his description, and the Father would be the Ancient of days. It is this passage that I would venture the Apostle Paul refers to when he tells Timothy not to be afraid of his opponents in I Timothy 6 but instead to remember that the Lord he serves and will one day give an account to is the "king of kings, Lord of lords, alone immortal, who dwells in an unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see." This would also remind Timothy of this same Daniel passage where the Son of Man is given all authority to judge all mankind for all ages rather than be afraid of men who have no authority over him. Also

implied is Moses who petitions for courage and authority to confront Pharaoh.

This passage in Timothy becomes the only anomaly in the Scriptures to identifying the Father as the one which no man can see. However it is very likely that Paul was citing an early church doxology in reference to God who is "altogether other" and Holy, and that Timothy should remember that all that one knows of God is also found in the person of Jesus.

Now, if one takes the rest of the passages in the Bible at face value then it would follow that if anyone was said to have "seen God" or "seen the LORD face to face," then this would not have been, nor could have been the Father. It also follows from Jesus' description of the Holy Spirit that nobody could have seen the third person of the Trinity either. The conclusion would be that it was in fact the second person of the trinity who is seen in all of the Old Testament.

Many take the word used by John, "logos," as a reference to the expressed word of God. Some describe this as "the self-expression of God" and "has a rich Old Testament background."² I would submit that it is richer than may be realized. The term "the Word of the Lord/God" is used 248 times; "God said" or "God spoke" is used 52 times; "The Lord said" or "the Lord spoke" is used 263 times. This spoken and revealed word of the Lord God in the Old Testament as referenced by the uses of the phrase "In the Beginning was the Word," and Jesus' words, "...the volume of the book is written of me," would be directly understood especially by John's Jewish audience in his gospel. If this is John's meaning then one would infer that to John, Jesus was the very Lord God, Yahweh, and Elohim who spoke every "word of God" ever heard by mortal man in the entire Old Testament. Jesus

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

would also then be the only person of the Triune God who was ever seen by any man or woman in the Old Testament.

With these thoughts in mind, let me follow some implications of this to see whether these detract from honoring God or not. First, how then should we answer when the skeptics challenge that Jesus taught something totally different than the God of the Old Testament. Armed with this ammunition, we can show that it is very likely that it wasn't even a different person of the trinity but rather the teachings of Jesus were the transition from the Law of Moses to the way in which God would rule as King and God physically ruling over the world. In the past where man was the government appointed by God, with the King of King present, he himself was to be the police, witness, judge, jury and executioner of the guilty having divine knowledge of all things. Humans were to forgive, love, and bless their enemies and all who were disobedient to the Lord and leave all vengeance and justice to the God who is incapable of error.

Second, this is sufficient to explain the differences in the Old Testament and the New Testament teachings of Jesus that explain and apply God's moral values more profoundly than ever understood in the Old. It was not a different God, it is simply a different government (the Kingdom of God) due to a different relationship with the sacrifice paid and the Holy Spirit indwelling believers. However it is the same Jesus, eternal, never changing, and always being and having been the mediator between God and man. Jesus was the mediator far before the cross actually occurred since in the eternal perspective of God, he was slain before the foundation of the word and is therefore more than qualified to be the living revelation of the Father to man, whom no man has seen, nor has any man heard at any time. The

Father who sits on the throne, with hair like wool, robed in white light, with fire coming out from before him, who is eternally seated on the Throne, and the Spirit, who "is Spirit" and "is like the wind" that cannot be seen, only the effects, have been fully revealed to man in the Son.

Finally, this would mean that from the garden of Eden to the last revelation of Jesus Christ to John, it possibly, and I would venture to say, it is likely, that it is the Second person of the Triune God that has revealed all that our feeble minds are capable of comprehending about the God who is impossible to be comprehended fully by any creation. It is the Son who alone fully knows God and also fully knows man, and who is therefore perfectly qualified to reveal to us who God is. This is the Jesus in the Old Testament. In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. This word has become flesh. No one has in the past seen the Father or the Spirit at any time except the Son, who became flesh and dwelled among us to reveal to us the nature and character of this God. As an added point, it also adds depth to the words of Jesus, "NO ONE comes to the Father but through ME." I pray that this adds to our love for the Old Testament and for Jesus, who is likely the author of, and is therefore found in, every word of it.

He who honors the Son honors the Father, for as Jesus said,

"If you have seen me, you have seen the Father."



*Did Moses
Write About
Jesus?
—Eric
Chabot*

*Looking
at
Jesus
—RZIM*

*Where does
the Old
Testament
Predict the
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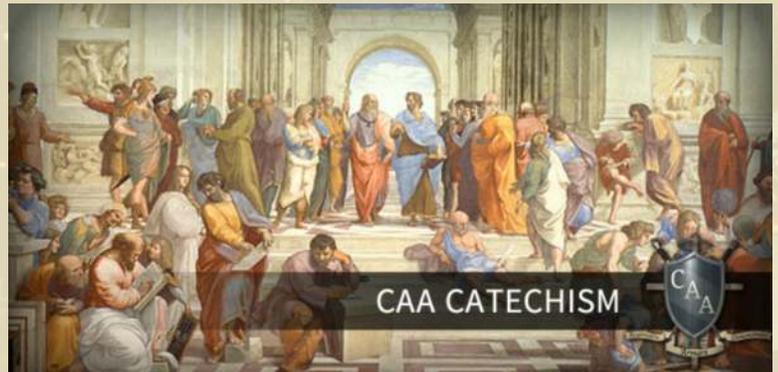
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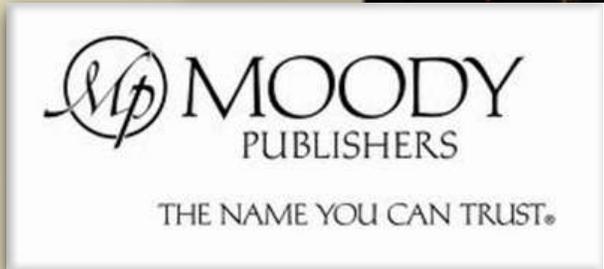
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Publication Notes

*I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?
My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.
Psalms 121:1*

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COVER SCRIPTURE: Top: 2 Corinthians 10:5 (Darby Bible Translation),
Right-side: John 1:14, Bottom: Revelation 3:20.

BACKGROUND PHOTOS: Used with permission.

- Cover: "Always Welcome" - The parent's house.
- Other photos: Los Angeles from Griffith Park Observatory, Ice Skating in Pershing Square, LAX, Cerritos Swap Meet, Santa Monica Promenade, Skid Row, Whittier Narrows Nature Preserve, Grand Canyon National Park.

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References

[ref-er-uh-ns]: a book, passage, etc., to which one is directed

SEARCHING FOR JESUS

—MARK MCGEE

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—ERIC CHABOT

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—JOHNNY WILSON

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ALL THINGS WERE MADE THROUGH HIM: WHY DID GOD CHOOSE TO CREATE?

—JOEL FURCHES

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THE MERE MORAL ARGUMENT

—SAMUEL RONICKER

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WHERE THE JESUS MYTH GOES WRONG

—STEPHEN J. BEDARD

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THE TRINITY

—TONY ARSENAL

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- 6 There is obvious debate regarding the meaning of this passage in relation to divine foreknowledge or predestination. In the interest of transparency, the author of this article is a Reformed Christian. However, no specific statement regarding the foreknowledge/election debate was intended by the inclusion of this passage, nor does the Christian Apologetics Alliance take a specific position on the issue
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- 12 *Ibid*, (pp. 24–25)
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THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY

—NADINE SALIM

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JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

—ROBERT LAWRENCE

- 1 Ryle, J.C. *The Gospel of John*. (Kindle E-Edition, 1900), e-book Location 260
- 2 From ESV Study Bible commentary on John chapter 1

Mary's Song of Praise: The Magnificent

**“My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.**

**And his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.**

**He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble estate;**

**he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.**

**He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”**

Luke 1:46-55

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*. . . he was buried,
and he was raised
on the third day
according to the
Scriptures*

1 Corinthians 15:4

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