

# Jerry Coyne's Illusions

*Dr. Ray Bohlin critiques evolutionary biologist Jerry Coyne's materialistic claim that our brain is only a meat computer.*

## Jerry Coyne Says Science Proves We Make No Real Choices



Let's see. This morning I chose my black t-shirt, tan dress slacks, black shoes, and black socks. After gathering all my things for the trip to the office, I put on my now-famous Grand Canyon felt hat and headed out the door, deciding I didn't need an umbrella for the short walk in the rain.



Oops! Wait a minute! According to evolutionary biologist, Jerry Coyne, I made none of those choices. Now I did do all those things, but my brain determined those "choices." After all, my brain is just a meat computer, destined to obey the laws of physics to combine my genetic history, past environmental cues, and my latest experiences to make those decisions. "I," meaning me as a person apart from the meat computer, don't exist! Enter with me into the wacky world of evolutionary naturalism where all there is, is matter and energy.

Dr. Jerry Coyne is a Professor at the University of Chicago in the Department of Ecology and Evolution. In many ways he has broken political ranks with many of those seeking to improve education in evolution by actively proclaiming that evolution entails atheism. He lines up with those like Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and the late Christopher Hitchens. Religion is the greatest evil on the planet, they decry, and we need to

dispose ourselves of all religious nonsense such as freedom of choice.

You see, our mental decisions are just chemical reactions in our brains which just happen. There is no purpose or even a choice in making our choices!

Now that I probably have you thoroughly confused, let me try to let Jerry Coyne speak for himself.

In January of last year, Coyne published a commentary in the online version of *USA Today* titled, "Why you don't really have free will."<sup>[1]</sup> He stated, "You may feel like you've made choices, but in reality your decision to read this piece, and whether to have eggs or pancakes, was determined long before you were aware of it—perhaps even before you woke up today. And your 'will' had no part in that decision. So it is with all of our other choices: not one of them results from a free and conscious decision on our part. There is no freedom of choice, no free will."

Despite Coyne's blatant certainty, he only offers, using his phrase, two lines of evidence. Notice even Coyne refers to them as just lines of evidence. There's no real fact or certainty.

## **Coyne's Ultra-naturalism "Predetermines" His Conclusions**

Let me allow Coyne to speak for himself as he explains his first line of evidence, a materialistic assumption. He says,

*We are biological creatures, collections of molecules that must obey the laws of physics. All the success of science rests on the regularity of those laws, which determine the behavior of every molecule in the universe. Those molecules, of course, also make up your brain – the organ that does the "choosing." And the neurons and molecules in your brain are*

*the product of both your genes and your environment, an environment including the other people we deal with. Memories, for example, are nothing more than structural and chemical changes in your brain cells. Everything that you think, say, or do, must come down to molecules and physics.*

It may be true that science depends on the regularity of the laws of physics, but Coyne makes no defense of whether there is anything else to our minds other than chemistry. He assumes without saying so that the material brain is all there is to our mind.

In 2007 neuroscientist Mario Beauregard and journalist Denyse O'Leary published [\*The Spiritual Brain\*](#).<sup>{2}</sup> Quoting from the dust jacket, Beauregard and O'Leary demonstrate that scientific materialism like Coyne's "is at a loss to explain irrefutable accounts of mind over matter, of intuition, willpower, and leaps of faith, of the 'placebo effect' in medicine, of near death experiences on the operating table, and of psychic premonitions of loved ones in crisis." For each of these phenomena, they provide numerous examples where people's minds understood, observed, changed, or perceived physical realities they simply could not know about in a purely physical sense.

Jerry Coyne's first line of evidence turns out to be an unverified materialist assumption that has plenty of physical evidence that cannot be explained on a materialist basis. So much for convincing evidence. But to his credit, Coyne proceeds to scientific evidence he says demonstrates that brain measurements indicate our "decisions" can be predicted by observing blood flow to certain areas of the brains seconds before we actually feel we have "decided."

## Does Our Brain “Decide” Before We’re Conscious of the Decision?

Coyne’s second line of evidence consists of brain experiments claiming to predict our decisions by observing blood flow in decision-making areas of our brain seconds before we are aware of our decision. Coyne says,

*Recent experiments involving brain scans show that when a subject “decides” to push a button on the left or right side of a computer, the choice can be predicted by brain activity at least seven seconds before the subject is consciously aware of having made it. (These studies use crude imaging techniques based on blood flow, and I suspect that future understanding of the brain will allow us to predict many of our decisions far earlier than seven seconds in advance.) “Decisions” made like that aren’t conscious ones. And if our choices are unconscious, with some determined well before the moment we think we’ve made them, then we don’t have free will in any meaningful sense.”*

This is certainly interesting research. My first reaction is to note that these are the simplest decisions we can make. Just choose left or right. No thinking involved, no consequences. What if the choice were far more substantial, such as “Should I buy this house based on my set of pros and cons of the decision?” Or what about those “split-second” decisions to avoid a collision in a vehicle or whether to stop or go when the traffic light unexpectedly turns yellow? Each of those decisions takes far less than seven seconds.

Granted, Coyne’s article is a simple commentary in an online newspaper, but I expect more solid and convincing evidence that this. Coyne leaves us with little else than his materialist assumptions as reviewed previously.

# Coyne is Required to Pretend He Has Choice

I'd like to turn my attention to Coyne's attempts to spell out our options, once we are convinced, as he is, that we really don't make any choices.

Coyne dismisses various philosophical attempts to rescue some sort of free will. It's clear Coyne is scornful of philosophy in general. Maybe that explains why he is such a bad philosopher. I say that because he continues by expressing that it's impossible to just throw up our hands and despair that life is not worth living if I don't really make choices. Coyne says:

*So if we don't have free will, what can we do? One possibility is to give in to a despairing nihilism and just stop doing anything. But that's impossible, for our feeling of personal agency is so overwhelming that we have no choice but to pretend that we do choose, and get on with our lives. After all, everyone deals with the unpalatable fact of our mortality, and usually do so by ignoring it rather than ruminating obsessively about it.*

Now that's a mouthful. First, Coyne rejects despairing nihilism simply because we are bound by the laws of physics. That's my understanding of his rationale that our "feeling" of personal agency is so overwhelming. But I hope you caught the absurdity of the following comment. Coyne says, "for our feeling of personal agency is so overwhelming that we have no choice but to pretend that we do choose." Really? We have no choice (was the pun intended?) but to "pretend" that we do choose?

I have to say that when your worldview requires you to pretend that reality is something other than what you perceive, your worldview clearly can't be trusted.

This reminds me of a class back in grad school when I asked about meaning and purpose in life in the evolutionary world view. They said that as just another animal, our only purpose is to survive and reproduce. I asked again, "What difference does it make, though, when I'm dead and in the ground?" According to evolution, my existence is over. One prof responded by saying that ultimately it doesn't really matter. So I asked, "Then why go on living, why stop at red lights, who cares?" The same professor responded by saying, "Well, in the future, those that will be selected for will be those who know there is no purpose in life, but will live as if there is."

So not only do we need to pretend that we choose but we also need to pretend that our lives have meaning. Doesn't that make you want to get up in the morning?!

## **How Does Knowing Our Brain's Illusions Lead to a "Kinder" World?**

Towards the end of Coyne's commentary he tries to discern what we should do with our understanding that we don't have any free will. First, as you might suspect, he disparages religion, specifically Christianity. He concludes that, since we have no real choice, none of us can really choose Jesus or reject him. It's all predetermined by our genetic and environmental history. So, "If we have no free choice, then such religious tenets—and the existence of a disembodied 'soul'—are undermined, and any post-mortem fates of the faithful are determined, Calvinistically, by circumstances over which they have no control." Well, there you have it, Reformed theology according to Jerry Coyne.

His second observation is that since we are little more than marionettes responding to the laws of physics, this should influence how we deal with criminals. We may decide for the sake of society that some need to be removed from circulation,

so to speak – sent to prison for our protection. But we certainly can't hold them responsible. According to Coyne, "What is not justified is revenge or retribution—the idea of punishing criminals for making the 'wrong choice.'"

Well if all this is really true, then why is Jerry Coyne trying to convince us of anything? We have no real choice. Coyne is an atheist because he can't help it. That would mean I'm a Christian because I can't help it. So why is he trying to convince me I have made a "wrong choice"? Obviously the internal contradictions abound.

Lastly, Coyne says our knowledge of no free will or real choices should lead to a kinder world, presumably because revenge is outdated. "Further, by losing free will we gain empathy, for we realize that in the end all of us, whether Bernie Madoffs or Nelson Mandelas, are victims of circumstance—of the genes we're bequeathed and the environments we encounter. With that under our belts, we can go about building a kinder world."

Just one word: Huh?

Well, personally I have gained empathy for Jerry Coyne because his commentary is just a product of circumstance, so I can just ignore it.

Thanks for reading.

## Notes

1. Jerry Coyne, "Why you don't really have free will," *USA Today*, Jan. 1, 2012, [usat.ly/WBnUBi](http://usat.ly/WBnUBi). All Coyne's quotations are from this commentary.
2. Mario Beauregard and Denyse O'Leary, *The Spiritual Brain: A Neuroscientist's Case for the Existence of the Soul* (Harper One: New York, NY, 2007).

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# The Impotence of Darwinism: A Christian Scientist Looks at the Evidence

*Dr. Ray Bohlin looks at some of the tenets of Darwinism and finds them lacking support in the real world. Speaking from a biblical worldview perspective, he finds the gaps and inconsistencies in current Darwinian thinking should demand that different theories be examined and evaluated.*

## Darwinism, Design, and Illusions

Darwinian evolution has been described as a universal acid that eats through everything it touches.[\[1\]](#) What Daniel Dennett meant was that evolution as an idea, what he called “Darwin’s dangerous idea,” is an all-encompassing worldview. Darwinism forms the basis of the way many people think and act. It touches everything.



What Darwin proposed in 1859 was simply that all organisms are related by common descent. This process of descent or evolution was carried out by natural selection acting on variation found in populations. There was no guidance, no purpose, and no design in nature. The modern Neo-Darwinian variety of evolution identifies the source of variation as genetic mutation, changes in the DNA structure of



organisms. Therefore, evolution is described as the common descent of all organisms by mutation and natural selection, and is assumed to be able to explain everything we see in the biological realm.

This explanatory power is what Dennett refers to as “Darwin’s dangerous idea.” Darwinism assumes there is no plan or purpose to life. Therefore, everything we see in the life history of an organism, including human beings, derives in some way from evolution, meaning mutation and natural selection. This includes our ways of thinking and the ways we behave. Even religion is said to have arisen as a survival mechanism to promote group unity that aids individual survival and reproduction.

Since evolution has become the cornerstone of the dominant worldview of our time—scientific naturalism—those who hold to it would be expected to take notice when somebody says it’s wrong! A growing number of scientists and philosophers are saying with greater confidence that Darwinism, as a mode of explaining all of life, is failing and failing badly. Much of the criticism can be found in the cornerstone of evolution, mutation and natural selection and the evidence for its pervasiveness in natural history. One of the biggest stumbling blocks is evolution’s repudiation of any form of design or purpose in nature. Even the staunch Darwinist and evolutionary naturalist, Britain’s Richard Dawkins, admits, “Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose.”[\[2\]](#)

No one denies that biological structures and organisms look designed; the argument is over what has caused this design. Is it due to a natural process that gives the appearance of design as Dawkins believes? Or is it actually designed with true purpose woven into the true fabric of life? Darwinian evolution claims to have the explanatory power and the evidence to fully explain life’s apparent design. Let’s explore the evidence.

# The Misuse of Artificial Selection

It is assumed by most that evolution makes possible almost unlimited biological change. However, a few simple observations will tell us that there are indeed [limits to change](#). Certainly the ubiquitous presence of convergence suggests that biological change is not limitless since certain solutions are arrived at again and again. There appear to be only so many ways that organisms can propel themselves: through water, over land or through the air. The wings of insects, birds and bats, though not ancestrally related, all show certain design similarities. At the very least, various physical parameters constrain biological change and adaptation. So there are certainly physical constraints, but what about biological constraints?

Darwin relied heavily on his analogy to *artificial* selection as evidence of *natural* selection. Darwin became a skilled breeder of pigeons, and he clearly recognized that just about any identifiable trait could be accentuated or diminished, whether the color scheme of feathers, length of the tail, or size of the bird itself. Darwin reasoned that natural selection could accomplish the same thing. It would just need more time.

But artificial selection has proven just the opposite. For essentially every trait, although it is usually harboring some variability, there has always been a limit. Whether the organisms or selected traits are roses, dogs, pigeons, horses, cattle, protein content in corn, or the sugar content in beets, selection is certainly possible. But all selected qualities eventually fizzle out. Chickens don't produce cylindrical eggs. We can't produce a plum the size of a pea or a grapefruit. There are limits to how far we can go. Some people grow as tall as seven feet, and some grow no taller than three; but none are over twelve feet or under two. There are limits to change.

But perhaps the most telling argument against the usefulness of artificial selection as a model for natural selection is the actual process of selection. Although Darwin called it *artificial* selection, a better term would have been *intentional* selection. The phrase “artificial selection” makes it sound simple and undirected. Yet every breeder, whether of plants or animals is always looking for something in particular. The selection process is always designed to a particular end.

If you want a dog that hunts better, you breed your best hunters hoping to accentuate the trait. If you desire roses of a particular color, you choose roses of similar color hoping to arrive at the desired shade. In other words, you plan and manipulate the process. Natural selection can do no such thing. Natural selection can only rely on what variation comes along. Trying to compare a directed to an undirected process offers no clues at all.

Most evolutionists I share this with usually object that we do have good examples of natural selection to document its reality. Let’s look at a few well-known examples.

## **The Real Power of Natural Selection**

It should have been instructive when we had to wait for the 1950s, almost 100 years after the publication of *Origin of Species*, for a documentable case of natural selection, the famous Peppered Moth (*Biston betularia*). The story begins with the observation that, before the industrial revolution, moth collections of Great Britain contained the peppered variety, a light colored but speckled moth. With the rise of industrial pollution, a dark form or melanic variety became more prevalent. As environmental controls were enacted, pollution levels decreased and the peppered variety made a strong comeback.

It seemed that as pollution increased, the lichens on trees died off and the bark became blackened. The previously camouflaged peppered variety was now conspicuous and the previously conspicuous melanic form was now camouflaged. Birds could more readily see the conspicuous variety and the two forms changed frequency depending on their surrounding conditions. This was natural selection at work.

There were always a few problems with this standard story. What did it really show? First, the melanic form was always in the population, just at very low frequencies. So we start with two varieties of the peppered moth and we still have two forms. The frequencies change but nothing new has been added to the population. Second, we really don't know the genetics of industrial melanism in these moths. We don't have a detailed explanation of how the two forms are generated. And third, in some populations, the frequencies of the two moths changed whether there was a corresponding change in the tree bark or not. The only consistent factor is pollution.[\[3\]](#) The most well-known example of evolution in action reduces to a mere footnote. Regarding this change in the Peppered Moth story, evolutionary biologist Jerry Coyne lamented that "From time to time evolutionists re-examine a classic experimental study and find, to their horror, that it is flawed or downright wrong."[\[4\]](#)

Even Darwin's Finches from the [Galapagos Islands](#) off the coast of Ecuador tell us little of large scale evolution. The thirteen species of finches on the Galapagos show subtle variation in the size and shape of their beaks based on the primary food source of the particular species of finch. Jonathan Wiener's *Beak of the Finch*[\[5\]](#) nicely summarizes the decades of work by ornithologists Peter and Rosemary Grant. While the finches do show change over time in response to environmental factors (hence, natural selection), the change is reversible! The ground finches (six species) do interbreed in the wild, and the size and shape of their beaks will vary

slightly depending if the year is wet or dry (varying the size seeds produced) and revert back when the conditions reverse. There is no directional change. It is even possible that the thirteen species are more like six to seven species since hybrids form so readily, especially among the ground finches, and survive quite well. Once again, where is the real evolution?

There are many other documented examples of natural selection operating in the wild. But they all show that, while limited change is possible, there are limits to change. No one as far as I know questions the reality of natural selection. The real issue is that examples such as the Peppered Moth and Darwin's Finches tell us nothing about evolution.

## **Mutations Do Not Produce Real Change**

While most evolutionists will acknowledge that there are limits to change, they insist that natural selection is not sufficient without a continual source of variation. In the Neo-Darwinian Synthesis, mutations of all sorts fill that role. These mutations fall into two main categories: mutations to structural genes and mutations to developmental genes. I will define structural genes as those which code for a protein which performs a maintenance, metabolic, support, or specialized function in the cell. Developmental genes influence specific tasks in embryological development, and therefore can change the morphology or actual appearance of an organism.

Most evolutionary studies have focused on mutations in structural genes. But in order for large scale changes to happen, mutations in developmental genes must be explored. Says Scott Gilbert:

*“To study large changes in evolution, biologists needed to look for changes in the regulatory genes that make the*

*embryo, not just in the structural genes that provide fitness within populations.”{6}*

We'll come back to these developmental mutations a little later.

Most examples we have of mutations generating supposed evolutionary change involve structural genes. The most common example of these kinds of mutations producing significant evolutionary change involves microbial antibiotic resistance. Since the introduction of penicillin during World War II, the use of antibiotics has mushroomed. Much to everyone's surprise, bacteria have the uncanny ability to become resistant to these antibiotics. This has been trumpeted far and wide as real evidence that nature's struggle for existence results in genetic change—evolution.

But microbial antibiotic resistance comes in many forms that aren't so dramatic. Sometimes the genetic mutation simply allows the antibiotic to be pumped out of the cell faster than normal or taken into the cell more slowly. Other times the antibiotic is deactivated inside the cell by a closely related enzyme already present. In other cases, the molecule inside the cell that is the target of the antibiotic is ever so slightly modified so the antibiotic no longer affects it. All of these mechanisms occur naturally and the mutations simply intensify an ability the cell already has. No new genetic information is added.{7}

In addition, genetically programmed antibiotic resistance is passed from one bacteria to another by special DNA molecules called plasmids. These are circular pieces of DNA that have only a few genes. Bacteria readily exchange plasmids as a matter of course, even across species lines. Therefore, rarely is a new mutation required when bacteria “become” resistant. They probably received the genes from another bacterium.

Most bacteria also suffer a metabolic cost to achieve

antibiotic resistance. That is, they grow more slowly than wild-type bacteria, even when the antibiotic is not present. And we have never observed a bacterium changing from a single-celled organism to a multicellular form by mutation. You just get a slightly different bacterium of the same species. The great French evolutionist Pierre Paul-Grassé, when speaking about the mutations of bacteria said,

*“What is the use of their unceasing mutations if they do not change? In sum the mutations of bacteria and viruses are merely hereditary fluctuations around a median position; a swing to the right, a swing to the left, but no final evolutionary effect.”*[{8}](#)

What I have been describing so far is what is often referred to as microevolution. Evolutionists have basically assumed that the well-documented processes of microevolution eventually produce macroevolutionary changes given enough time. But this has been coming under greater scrutiny lately, even by evolutionists. There appears to be a real discontinuity between microevolution and the kind of change necessary to turn an amoeba-like organism into a fish, even over hundreds of millions of years.

Below is just a quick sampling of comments and musings from the current literature.

*“One of the oldest problems in evolutionary biology remains largely unsolved. . . . historically, the neo-Darwinian synthesizers stressed the predominance of micromutations in evolution, whereas others noted the similarities between some dramatic mutations and evolutionary transitions to argue for macromutationism.”*[{9}](#)

*“A long-standing issue in evolutionary biology is whether the processes observable in extant populations and species (microevolution) are sufficient to account for the larger-*

*scale changes evident over longer periods of life's history (macroevolution)."*[{10}](#)

*"A persistent debate in evolutionary biology is one over the continuity of microevolution and macroevolution □ whether macroevolutionary trends are governed by the principles of microevolution."*[{11}](#)

While each of the above authors does not question evolution directly, they are questioning whether what we have been studying all these years, microevolution, has anything to do with the more important question of what leads to macroevolution. And if microevolution is not the process, then what is?

## **Natural Selection Does Not Produce New Body Plans**

The fundamental question which needs addressing is, How have we come to have sponges, starfish, cockroaches, butterflies, eels, frogs, woodpeckers, and humans from single cell beginnings with no design, purpose or plan? All the above listed organisms have very different body plans. A body plan simply describes how an organism is put together. So can we discover just how all these different body plans can arise by mutation and natural selection? This is a far bigger and more difficult problem than antibiotic resistance, a mere biochemical change. Now we have to consider just how morphological change comes about.

The problem of macroevolution requires developmental mutations. Simply changing a protein here and there won't do it. We somehow have to change how the organism is built. Structural genes tend to have little effect on the development of a body plan. But the genes that control development and ultimately influence the body plan tend to find their



expression quite early in development. But this is a problem because the developing embryo is quite sensitive to early developmental mutations. Wallace Arthur wrote:

*“Those genes that control key early developmental processes are involved in the establishment of the basic body plan. Mutations in these genes will usually be extremely disadvantageous, and it is conceivable that they are always so.”*[{12}](#)

But these are the mutations needed for altering body plans. However, evolutionists for decades have been studying the wrong mutations. Those dealing with structural genes, microevolution, only deal with how organisms survive as they are, it doesn't tell us how they got to be the way they are. Optiz and Raft note that

*“The Modern Synthesis is a remarkable achievement. However, starting in the 1970's, many biologists began questioning its adequacy in explaining evolution. . . . Microevolution looks at adaptations that concern only the survival of the fittest, not the arrival of the fittest.”*[{13}](#)

Wallace Arthur:

*“In a developmentally explicit approach it is clear that many late changes can not accumulate to give an early one. Thus if taxonomically distant organisms differ right back to their early embryogenesis, as is often the case, the mutations involved in their evolutionary divergence did not involve the same genes as those involved in the typical speciation event.”*[{14}](#)

To sum up the current dilemma, significant morphological change requires early developmental mutations. But these mutations are nearly universally disadvantageous. And microevolution, despite its presence in textbooks as proof of

evolution, actually tells us precious little about the evolutionary process. If these developmental mutations that can offer an actual benefit are so rare, then macroevolution would be expected to be a slow and difficult, yet bumpy process. Indeed, Darwin expected that "As natural selection acts solely by accumulating slight, successive, favorable variations, it can produce no great or sudden modifications; it can only act in short and slow steps."

The origin of body plans is wrapped up in the evidence of paleontology, the fossils and developmental biology. What does the fossil record have to say about the origin of basic body plans? When we look for fossils indicating Darwin's expected slow gradual process we are greatly disappointed. The Cambrian Explosion continues to mystify and intrigue. The Cambrian Explosion occurred around 543 million years ago according to paleontologists. In the space of just a few million years, nearly all the animal phyla make their first appearance.

*"The term 'explosion' should not be taken too literally, but in terms of evolution it is still very dramatic. What it means is rapid diversification of animal life. 'Rapid' in this case means a few million years, rather than the tens or even hundreds of millions of years that are more typical . . .*

[. {15}](#)

Prior to the Cambrian, (550-485 million years ago), during the Vendian (620-550 million years ago) we find fossil evidence for simple sponges, perhaps some cnidarians and the enigmatic Ediacaran assemblage. For the most part we find only single cell organisms such as bacteria, cyanobacteria, algae, and protozoan. Suddenly, in the Cambrian explosion (545-535 million years ago) we find sponges, cnidarians, platyhelminthes, ctenophores, mollusks, annelids, chordates (even a primitive fish), and echinoderms.

While many animal phyla are not present in the Cambrian, they

are mostly phyla of few members and unlikely to be fossilized in these conditions. James Valentine goes further in saying that "The diversity of body plans indicated by combining all of these Early Cambrian remains is very great. Judging from the phylogenetic tree of life, all living phyla (animal) were probably present by the close of the explosion interval."[{16}](#) Later Valentine assures us that the fossil record of the explosion period is as good as or better than an average section of the geologic column.[{17}](#) So we just can't resort to the notion that the fossil record is just too incomplete.

In the Cambrian Explosion we have the first appearance of most animal body plans. This sudden appearance is without evidence of ancestry in the previous periods. This explosion of body plans requires a quantum increase of biological information. New genetic information and regulation is required.[{18}](#) Mutations at the earliest stages of embryological development are required and they must come in almost rapid fire sequence. Some have suggested that perhaps the genetic regulation of body plans was just more flexible, making for more experimentation. But we find some of the same organisms in the strata from China to Canada and throughout the period of the explosion. These organisms do not show evidence of greater flexibility of form.

The type of mutation is definitely a problem, but so is the rate of mutation. Susumo Ohno points out that "it still takes 10 million years to undergo 1% change in DNA base sequences. . . . [The] emergence of nearly all the extant phyla of the Kingdom Animalia within the time span of 6-10 million years can't possibly be explained by mutational divergence of individual gene functions."[{19}](#)

Darwinism would also require early similarities between organisms with slow diversification. Phyla should only become recognizable after perhaps hundreds of millions of years of descent with modification. Yet the great diversity appears first with gradual drifting afterward, the opposite of what

evolution would predict. Again some suggest that the genetic structure of early organisms was less constrained today, allowing early developmental mutations with less severe results. But there would still be some developmental trajectory that would exist so the selective advantage of the mutation would have to outweigh the disruption of an already established developmental pathway.

But each of these speculations is unobservable and untestable. It's quite possible that developmental constraints may be even more rigid with fewer genes. But even if the constraints were weaker, then there should be more variability in morphology of species over space and time. But as I said earlier, the Cambrian fauna are easily recognizable from the early Cambrian deposits in China and Greenland to the middle Cambrian deposits of the Burgess Shale. There is no testable or observational basis for hypothesizing less stringent developmental constraints.

This stunning burst of body plans in the early Cambrian and the lack of significant new body plans since the Cambrian indicate a limit to change. Evolutionary developmental biologist Rudolf Raff told *Time* magazine over ten years ago that "There must be limits to change. After all, we've had these same old body plans for half a billion years."[\[20\]](#) Indeed, perhaps these limits to change are far more pervasive and genetically determined than Raff even suspects.

Along the way, functional organisms must form the intermediate forms. But even the functionality of these intermediate organisms transforming from one body plan to another has long puzzled even the most dedicated evolutionists. S. J. Gould, the late Harvard paleontologist, asked,

*"But how can a series of reasonable intermediates be constructed? . . . The dung-mimicking insect is well protected, but can there be any edge in looking only 5 percent like a turd?"*[\[21\]](#)

With his usual flair, Gould asks a penetrating question. Most have no problem with natural selection taking a nearly completed design and making it just a little bit more effective. Where the trouble really starts is trying to create a whole new design from old parts. Evolution has still not answered this critical question. I fully believe that evolution is incapable of answering this question with anything more than "I think it can." However, unlike the little train that could, it will take far more than willpower to come up with the evidence.

In this brief discussion I haven't even mentioned the challenges of [Michael Behe's irreducible complexity](#),<sup>{22}</sup> William Dembski's specified complexity,<sup>{23}</sup> and a host of other evolutionary problems and difficulties. This truly is a theory in crisis.

## Notes

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16. James Valentine, *On the Origin of Phyla* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 183.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
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21. S. J. Gould, *Ever Since Darwin*, 1977, 104.
22. Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: Free Press, 1996).
23. William A. Dembski, *No Free Lunch: Why Specified Complexity Cannot Be Purchased without Intelligence*, (Lanham, Maryland: Roman and Littlefield, 2002).

# The Biology of Human Uniqueness

*Dr. Ray Bohlin demonstrates unique biological attributes that set humans apart because we are made in the image of God.*

## What's So Special About Humans?

As humans we tend to think of ourselves as rather unique in the created order of things. As Christians, we understand ourselves to be created in the image and likeness of God as we learn in Genesis 1:26. But what does this really mean? Certainly being made in God's image does not refer to our physical construction; God is spirit and therefore does not have a physical body. But God's plan from the beginning was to rescue us from our sin through the incarnation, God becoming man. Jesus was and is the Son of God, Messiah, the God-Man. Therefore it is not a stretch to suggest that our bodily make-up is meant to be the unique earthly home of Jesus and His Spirit within us. Therefore, I suggest that our biological make-up is unique in the animal kingdom since no other animal is made in His image.

But what does this really mean? I am going to borrow from several sources, principally Michael Denton's *Nature's Destiny*[\[1\]](#), to discuss the biological uniqueness of humans. The [Discovery Institute](#) is also in the process of producing a film series based on Denton's work, titled *Privileged Species: How the Cosmos is Designed for Human Life*.



We are able to point out numerous qualitative abilities in the human species found nowhere else in the animal kingdom. I will discuss these in detail below, but I'll provide a brief overview now to whet your appetite.

First, I'll be discussing our unique intelligence. Humans' ability to think abstract thoughts appears to be absolutely unique. It is difficult to arrive at a selective advantage in an evolutionary sense to this type of thinking, so where did it come from?

Second, and related to our intelligence, is our unique language capability. Most animals communicate with their own species, but no other species, including primates, actually use *language*. As toddlers we accumulate language by simply being around it. Chimps and gorillas have to go through painstaking trial and error and still can't communicate as a three-year-old does.

Third, our excellent vision allows us to use our intelligence, language and other capabilities to manipulate our surroundings in precise and advantageous ways.

Fourth, our excellent manipulative tool, the hand, is unsurpassed in other primates. We have both strength and fine motor control in our hands, allowing us to combine a strong grip and delicate finger movements that allow a wide range of movements. This, combined with our upright stance, provides an ability to restructure our immediate surroundings as no other species can.

We are also a highly social species which allows for quick distribution of ideas to everyone's benefit. And all these combine to allow us to be the only species to use and manipulate fire, which brings a host of unique abilities.

## **Human Intelligence and Language**

As I mentioned above, our intelligence separates us from any other primate species. Our brain is three times the size of the brain of a chimp. But beyond that, the number of neurons and connections between neurons far surpasses any other mammal. Michael Denton cites that in each cubic millimeter of



the human cortex, are 100,000 cells, about 4 kilometers of axonal wiring and 500 meters of dendrites, and around 1 billion synapse connections between neurons. We have 10 million more of these synapses than a rat brain.

The size and scope is one thing, but our mental capabilities are indeed unique. As mentioned above, humans are capable of abstract and conceptual thought. No other primate exhibits any signs of this capacity. In addition, our mathematical reasoning is completely *other* compared to other animals. You might suspect that some animals can count. But it is a learned response attached to reward. We don't really suspect the rat/horse/chimp knows what they are doing. Comparing calculus to simply counting bananas is just no comparison at all.

When you stop to consider our appreciation of the arts, there is no place to go but humans. James Trefil is a physicist fascinated by biology and evolution. But when considering the arts he says, "No matter how hard I try, I can't think of a single evolutionary pressure that would drive the ability of humans to produce and enjoy music and dance. . . . This has always seemed like a serious problem to me—perhaps even a more serious problem than that perceived by most of my colleagues."

When we turn to language, our uniqueness is informed even further. Plants and animals all communicate in one form or another, but not by language as humans communicate. We communicate both new information and abstract concepts, something other species don't even approach. We possess the proper equipment to both produce and receive language and speech. And by proper equipment I mean both the brain processes and the anatomical necessities for actual speech (e.g., teeth, tongue, voice box, etc.). There is also a social ability that can utilize these upper levels of communication.

But we've heard about chimps and gorillas learning language. Kanzi, a bonobo chimpanzee, learned words and even symbolic use of a keyboard. Kanzi also learned through hearing the use

of new words. But that is where it stopped.

To quote James Trefil again, "If we take the claims being advanced for Kanzi at face value, where are we? We have a member of the most intelligent primate species, a veritable Shakespeare of non-human animals, raised under special and unusual conditions, performing at the level of a human child of two and a half. But remember that in humans, real language begins just after this age. . . . Then we have to conclude that even in this optimal case, animals other than humans cannot learn real human language."

## **Human Vision and the Hand**

Now I'd like to introduce two features we can easily take for granted, our hands and our eyes.

Ordinarily we don't think of our hands as being anything special. But just try to think of any other creature that can do the many and diverse things we can do with our hands. The closest match is the hand of a chimp. But chimp hands are larger, stronger, and even clumsy. Simple things like using all ten fingers to type, peel an apple, or tie a knot are beyond what chimps can do.

The strength in our fingers comes from larger muscles in the forearm and the fine manipulative control comes from much smaller muscles in the hand itself. Our ability to manipulate our environment with our hands is unparalleled. Using our intelligence we even devise additional tools for our hands to further extend our mastery of the world around us. Full use of our hands comes about from our upright and bipedal gait, allowing our hands the freedom not found in any other mammal.

In his book *Nature's Destiny* Michael Denton asks about the human hand "whether any other species possesses an organ approaching its capabilities. The answer simply must be that no other species possesses a manipulative organ remotely

approaching the universal utility of the human hand. Even in the field of robotics, nothing has been built which even remotely equals the all-around manipulative capacity of the hand.”

But in order to even use our hands well, we need exceptional vision to be able to detect all the little things our minds notice to manipulate. Given the physics of visible light and the dimensions and molecular process of detecting light in our eyes, the resolving power of the human eye is close to the optimum for a camera-type eye using biological cells and processes.

Some animals such as high-flying hawks and eagles detect motion from far greater distances than we can, and some organisms see much better in the dark than we do, but for all-around color vision, detail and resolution, our eyes seem to be the best there is. Combined with our highly interconnected brain, our upright gait for easily seeing straight ahead, a swiveling neck to see side to side, and our overall size, our eyes open the world to us as for no other species.

Developing science and technology, communicating to thousands and even millions through the written word, and simply exploring the world around us, are only possible through an integrated use of our unique intelligence, social structure and speech, hands and vision.

## **The Use of Fire**

As I have explored the biology of human uniqueness, I have focused on some of our individual capacities such as our intelligence, speech, our marvelous hands, and our unique all-around color vision. I have used throughout, the wonderful book by Michael Denton, *Nature's Destiny*. Now I'm looking at one of our key distinguishing characteristics which combine all of these. Humans are the only biological creatures that

have mastered the use of fire. If you think for a minute, every other animal has nothing but fear when it comes to fire. We are also fearful of fire and the damage it can do, but we have also managed to harness it and use it.

There are a couple of obvious advantages for the use of fire. First it provides additional light after sundown that extends our activity into the evening. Second, fire provides additional warmth in the evening and allows us to venture into colder climates. Third, fire allows us to cook food, particularly meat which is a very significant source of fat calories and protein. Cooking our food certainly distinguishes us from any other creature and has allowed us to add the necessary energy to fully use that big brain of ours which is a major drain on our energy stores, even at night.

But beyond these, if we never harnessed the energy and power of fire, we would not have been able to develop tools involving metal. Using heat to forge ever more powerful hand tools and weapons revolutionized human culture. Without fire we could not have developed any form of chemistry and especially the use of electricity. Electricity has revolutionized human existence in the last 100 years. Fire is an influential and powerful tool indeed.

But how have we been able to do this? First, we need to take advantage of our intelligent capability for abstract thought and reasoning. As I said earlier, we too fear fire, but we need to be able to think about it and be curious enough to not only rationalize that we might be able to harness its power, but that it would also be useful. This ability to deduce the control and use of fire requires high-level reasoning.

Denton also points out that for a fire to be sustainable it needs to be at least 50 centimeters across (or about a foot and a half). To create a fire of this size we need our upright stance to walk the distance to gather the right amount and size of branches. That means that our upright stance, free

arms, the manipulative tools of our hands, and our discerning vision work together to allow us to create a sustainable fire.

Therefore, the control and manipulation of fire requires a combined use of most of our unique biological capacities. Think about this the next time you sit around a campfire or grill your supper on a warm summer day. It's part of what makes us human!

## **Human Anatomy and Genome**

In this article I have been focusing on aspects of human biology that make us unique in the universe of living organisms. I discussed in some detail our unique intelligence, allowing us complex and abstract thought. We have a unique ability to communicate audibly and through a symbolic written word. These combine with our stereo vision and unique manipulative tool the hand, to allow us sole possession of the ability to use and manipulate fire. All of these capabilities are made possible by several unique aspects of our anatomy.

Humans have the largest brain of any primate species. Whales, dolphins, and elephants have larger brains, but size is not the main distinctive. Our human brain is structured like no other. If you were to open up just one cubic millimeter of our brain you would find over 100,000 cells with 4 kilometers of cell wiring and 1 billion connections between neurons. The structure and organization of our brain is definitely without parallel. Studies of our entire genome compared to chimpanzees indicate vast differences in non-coding sequences that influence the production of brain proteins. These changes are in the thousands.

In 1999, famous MIT linguist Noam Chomsky, reflected that "Thus, in the case of language, . . . (new research) is providing interesting grounds for taking seriously an idea that a few years ago would have seemed outlandish: that the

language organ of the brain approaches a kind of optimal design, that it is in some interesting sense an optimal solution to the minimal design specifications the language organ must meet to be usable at all." Without our unique brain structure, our language ability would not be forthcoming.

When comparing our skeletal structure to those of our supposed closest ancestors according to an evolutionary explanation, there are major changes that would have been needed to be accomplished in a relatively short time. Casey Luskin from the Discovery Institute does an admirable job digging into these differences and makes some sweeping conclusions. Numerous studies indicate that between the lineage of *Australopithecus* and *Homo* there would need to be significant changes in shoulders, rib cage, spine, pelvis, hip, legs, arms, hands and feet. But of these major transitions, the fossil record is silent.

Luskin also refers to a study by Durrett and Schmidt in 2007 that estimates that a single-nucleotide mutation in a primate species would take 6 million years to become fixed. But what is needed are multiple mutations in multiple segments of the skeletal system and in the physiology of the brain. *Homo sapiens* are far more unique than many have suspected. The more we learn, the more unique we become.

Since humans are created in the image of God, we expect human biological uniqueness. Even more significantly, bearing His image indicates an affinity for humans by the Creator we cannot fully comprehend.

## Notes

1. Michael Denton, *Nature's Destiny: How the Laws of Biology Reveal Purpose in the Universe* (New York: The Free Press, 1998).

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# Science and Human Origins

*Dr. Ray Bohlin explains how the Discovery Institute's book "Science and Human Origins" reveals why evolutionary theory cannot account for human origins.*

## Just What Needs to be Accomplished From Ape-like Ancestor to Humans?

In 2012 the Discovery Institute published an edited volume discussing the possibilities of human evolution from an ape-like ancestor by Darwinian evolution mechanisms. In this article I will offer an overview of the book, *Science and Human Origins*[\[1\]](#) and investigate the state of research into human origins from an evolutionary perspective.



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### SCIENCE & HUMAN ORIGINS



BY ANN GAUGER, DOUGLAS AXE, & CASEY LUSKIN

First I'd like to discuss the first chapter by Ann Gauger. Ann is a research scientist with Biologic Institute with laboratory experience at Harvard and the University of Washington. Initially Ann points out two

things that are necessary for there to be a link by common ancestry between humans and some ape-like ancestor. First there must be a step-wise adaptive path to follow. Neo-Darwinism depends on a slow, gradual path between two forms, genes or proteins. Rapid large jumps are likely to be too disruptive to the organism's state of being. Either survival or reproduction will be compromised.

Second, standard unguided Darwinian mechanisms such as mutation, selection, random drift and genetic recombination have to be sufficient for the task. Modern evolutionary theory is quite insistent that only natural unguided processes are necessary for evolution to occur no matter what the transition being considered.

To better understand the problem, the book discusses the numerous types of biological changes needed to transition from a primarily arboreal monkey adjusted to life in the trees to a walking, running, hunting gathering, intelligent, talking human being. Compared to the other great apes, humans possess longer legs, shorter arms, different pelvis and rib cage, refined muscles for fingers, lips and jaw, eyes that can focus straight ahead and still see where we are walking, larger and unique brain structures, a head that sits directly on top of the spine and a spine that will support upright walking and running. Now add to that our unique capacities for language, art and abstract thought and you can easily understand that a lot needs to happen.

The usual series of fossils links together Lucy, the australopithecine closest to humans and Turkana Boy (*Homo erectus*), the first full member of our genus *Homo*. Lucy is said to have lived 3.2 million years ago (mya) and Turkana Boy about 1.5 mya. This is indeed a very short time span in evolutionary terms, especially considering all that must change. One recent paper from the journal *Genetics* suggested that it would take about 6 million years for a single mutation to be fixed in a primate lineage. This transition probably



needs tens of mutations. If you need two mutations, forget it. That would require 216 million years.

It's not too hard to see that standard evolutionary processes are wholly insufficient to cause the transition between australopithecines and humans.

## **The Earliest Fossils Leading to Humans**

Now I want to discuss the evidence for human evolution from the fossils. Study into ancient humans is called paleoanthropology. Casey Luskin breaks down his discussion into two parts, Early Hominin Fossils and Later Hominins: The Australopithecines. Let's start with the early hominins. As the story goes, humans and chimpanzees share a common ancestor about six million years ago. The fossil record of six million years ago has been pretty stingy. Not much to choose from for a human/chimp ancestor until the last twenty years.

The Toumai Skull (*Sahelanthropus tchadnesis*) was first reported in 2002 and is widely referred to as the oldest fossil in the hominin line. But when you dig a bit deeper as is always necessary when discussing human evolution, not everyone agrees. Some suggest that the Toumai Skull has far more in common with apes than anything resembling a human. All this skull really shows is how complex the evolutionary story has become.

A second fossil known as "Orrorin" (*Orrorin tugenensis*) or "original man" in a local Kenyan language was designated as the earliest human link in 2001.[\[2\]](#) But it was little more than a few bone fragments from an arm, thigh, lower jaw and a few teeth. As usual, there were some saying that Orrorin walked on two feet and others who said there isn't enough information to determine how this organism moved. Another fossil found on the island of Sardinia is truly an ape but had some indications that it too was bipedal. But Oreopithecus is

thought to have arrived at its bipedal gait independently. This would clearly indicate that just because an ape-like fossil had bipedal adaptations doesn't mean it was ancestral to humans.

Last is the curious story of "Ardi" (*Ardipithecus ramidus*). Ardi is a 4.4 million year old fossil announced in 2009. Ardi quickly rose in fame and attention, being hailed by some as the oldest human ancestor found and the key to understanding how human bipedalism evolved. But Casey Luskin informs us that Ardi was originally found in the early 1990s. It took over a decade to piece the fossil together because it was found literally crushed and extremely brittle. How did they know how it all really fit together? Within a year other paleontologists indicated Ardi had little to do with human evolution and was simply overhyped. That's become a familiar story. So much change to cover and so little evidence.

## **From "Lucy" to "Turkana Boy"**

We now turn to the appearance and nature of a very important fossil category. If humans have evolved by a Darwinian process from an ape-like ancestor, then there must be some species or group of species that show clear signs of being intermediate between fossil apes and humans. For many years that position has been occupied by the "australopithecines." More specifically a particular species (*Australopithecus afarensis*) has been represented for decades as that ancestor, represented by a fossil known as "Lucy."

As Casey Luskin carefully documents, Lucy is a fossil that represents about 40% of the original organism so it is very incomplete, although far more representative than any earlier fossils. He also notes that the original fossil was found scattered over a hillside and may not truly represent a single individual. But significantly, Lucy is not necessarily closely related or descended from the Toumai Skull, Orrorin, or Ardi

that I discussed above. There is much about Lucy that is very ape-like, and many anthropologists even question whether Lucy can be considered as truly ancestral to humans.

Most significant about Lucy is the contention by some that she possessed a form of bipedalism that was very much or at least similar to human locomotion. But even that is highly contested by the evolutionary experts. Lucy's skull is small and quite ape-like. The chest cavity is shaped in a way that would make upright walking difficult and her arms are long like apes and her legs are short like apes. Much is made about the shape of her pelvis. But as Luskin points out, the shape may have been an error in reconstruction since that part of the skeleton was found severely crushed.

Even more to the point, Lucy shows numerous characteristics that require significant reworking compared to the earliest human-like fossils (*Homo erectus*) usually represented by "Turkana Boy." This two-million-year-old fossil shows itself to be entirely human. Even its small brain is within the range of modern humans and the brain architecture is also entirely human and nothing like Lucy. As Luskin points out there needs to be a sort of "Big Bang" between Lucy and Turkana Boy.[\[3\]](#)

What we have then is a large gap between apes and Lucy, and a large gap between Lucy and humans. So even though the fossil record could be interpreted to show a modest progression from apes to humans over time, there are no true transitional forms to document how this important transition took place.

## **DNA Doesn't Lie**

In a well-documented chapter, Casey Luskin examines the claims of evangelical scientist, Francis Collins, that there is explicit and undeniable genetic evidence that humans and chimps evolved from a common ancestor. Collins has earned a stellar reputation as a medical geneticist for first

discovering the gene responsible for cystic fibrosis, leading the Human Genome Project for over a decade, and then in 2009 being named by President Obama as the head of the prestigious National Institutes of Health (NIH). In between Collins's role as head of the Human Genome Project and his current role at NIH, he founded an organization, BioLogos, dedicated to convincing the church in America that evolution is indeed a fact and we need to adjust both our science and preaching to reflect that fact.

In preparation for BioLogos he published a book titled *The Language of God*.[{4}](#) In this book, Collins presents a two-fold line of evidence that humans and chimps evolved from a common ancestor. First he appeals to what are known as repetitive elements in our DNA. All mammalian genomes have relatively short sequences that can be very specific to species and groups of species, spread throughout the genome. It appears as if these sequences make copies of themselves and randomly insert the copy elsewhere in the genome. These repetitive elements are frequently found in the same place in the genome in distant species such as mice and humans. These are referred to as Ancient Repetitive Elements (ARE). These AREs are assumed to have no functional significance in the organism. This renders them as what is referred to as "selfish DNA" which exists only to survive and reproduce.

Some AREs are found in the same chromosomal location in mice and humans as well as humans and chimps. This sure seems like evidence of common ancestry, as Collins claims. But the assumption I just mentioned, that these sequences have no function, has been widely disproved in just the last ten years. As a result of the Human Genome Project that Collins led, we can now search all DNA sequences for some kind of function. Relying on work published by Richard Sternberg, Luskin lists twenty newly discovered functions for different types of repetitive elements in mammalian and human genomes.[{5}](#)

The chapter discusses two other now disproven evidences for common ancestry of humans and chimps. I hope you can see that new and mounting evidence is making the common ancestry of humans and chimps even more difficult to defend.

## **How Many Humans at the Start?**

In the final chapter of *Science and Human Origins*, Ann Gauger discusses a bit more of an academic argument for humans having evolved from an ape-like ancestor. Some evolutionary geneticists have described an argument that the level of genetic variation for particular human genes could not have arisen from a beginning of just two people. They state that standard genetic equations indicate that the human population most likely descends from a population of around 100,000 individuals. Just two people could not have generated this much variation in 100,000 years, let alone less than 10,000 years. If their analysis is true, then the Biblical account of Adam and Eve becomes a theological story with no historical significance. So let's take a look.

Gauger investigates in detail the most variable gene in humans. This gene codes for a protein involved in the immune system. One section of this gene is what geneticists call "hypervariable." Evolutionist Francisco Ayala and others researched this gene in the mid-1990s. Ayala's conclusion was that the original human population that separated from the line that evolved into chimps contained at least 32 copies of the gene in its population. Each of us has only two copies of each gene, so 32 copies requires at least 16 people. But since, over time, different gene copies are lost, Ayala estimated a human population of at least 10,000 individuals with an average closer to 100,000.

Gauger points out that Ayala misused several assumptions. He assumed a small mutation rate and he assumed no selection. When Gauger corrects for these errors and examines the studies

of others, she determines that the equations, when the proper assumptions and mutation rates are used, the original human population could have had as few as 4 copies of this gene. Let's see, two copies per person, four copies, only needs two people. How about that!

Obviously in this short article I have intentionally glossed over the technical details. Ann Gauger gives you the details as well as more non-technical summaries along the way. I strongly encourage you to purchase the book. At 122 pages, it's readable in a Saturday. Considering all I have covered this week, my doubts about human evolution have only been strengthened. It becomes even more obvious over time that Darwinian evolutionary mechanisms are proving less and less adequate.

## Notes

1. Gauger, Ann, Douglas Axe, and Casey Luskin, *Science and Human Origins* (Seattle: Discovery Institute Press, 2012).
2. Ibid., p. 51.
3. Ibid., p. 65-70.
4. Francis Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2006).
5. Gauger, Ann, et al., *Science and Human Origins*, p. 87-88.

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**“I’m a Girl Because That’s What Mommy Wanted!” – The**

# Ethics of Screening for Gender Using IVF

The brave new world of the future is not so far away anymore. Fertility clinics, originally created to assist infertile couples have children, can now screen for numerous genetic traits. Are we ready for the responsibility and future ethical questions? My experience says we are woefully unprepared. In our consumer oriented society of the 21st century, we want what we want, when we want it. If a couple has the financial resources and says they are willing to take the medical risks, who can say what they can and can't do?



Watch Dr. Bohlin  
on WFAA-TV video

In July 2015 an article appeared on Yahoo Parenting<sup>{1}</sup> about a couple in Frisco, Texas, north of Dallas. Rosa (36) and Vincent (37) Costa spent \$100,000, enduring seven rounds of In Vitro Fertilization (IVF), including one miscarriage, just to ensure their third child would be a girl.

Numerous fertility clinics allow infertile couples to genetically screen their embryos for nearly 400 genetic disorders. One additional benefit is that the embryos can also be screened for gender. Gender is a fairly simple assessment. Males will contain an X chromosome and a Y chromosome. Females are XX. These chromosomes are easily identified and distinguished.

This service is becoming more commonplace for couples since a round of IVF can cost around \$12,000. If for an additional \$6,000, screening can focus on healthy embryos, why not? Identifying the sex of the embryos is an added bonus. But in the last few years, couples like the Costas have mushroomed. Some clinics report a rise of 250%. As one who has addressed

the issue of genetic engineering for over twenty years, I have regularly discussed the possibility of choosing the sex of your next child. The primary method used by fertility clinics is to assess gender before implantation. If you desire a girl, then only female embryos are implanted. Embryos of the “wrong” sex can be discarded, frozen for later use, made available for adoption or donated to “science” for stem cell research. Most frozen embryos end up in limbo. They do not stay viable forever. Some frozen embryos have been successfully revived after 5 years in storage. But many are simply discarded. Embryos donated for stem cell research are also ultimately killed. In order to retrieve the valuable embryonic stem cells, the embryo is destroyed.

Consequently, this IVF procedure to guarantee the sex of your child ultimately results in the death of numerous perfectly healthy embryos. So you have perfectly healthy parents sacrificing healthy embryos just to get the male or female child they desire. This cost is far more consequential than the dollar amount. I’m opposed to even discarding genetically challenged embryos for healthy embryos. Now we have crossed the line to create human life in the laboratory with the full intention of sacrificing embryos of the wrong sex. In another [article{2}](#), fertility specialist, Dr. Jeffrey Steinberg, acknowledges he has had the technology to screen for eye-color since 2009. He delayed making it available then due to an outcry from the public. Saying he has a waiting list of 70-80 people, he’s getting ready to make it available again.

But despite the clear loss of innocent human life in our search for a “balanced family” or even worse, children of the preferred eye color, we run into the specter of facing up to responsibilities too few have considered. The Costas, for instance, want a little girl. There is nothing wrong with that necessarily. But what are they really expecting? After all, they’ve spent \$100,000 in the effort. The article mentions they will be decorating the new nursery in pink. But what if



Olivia, their chosen name, ends up not liking pink? What if she's a tomboy who doesn't even like dresses? Or even more extreme, what if she decides as a little girl, she's really a boy! What do you do then? Even when selecting a child's gender, you likely have some concept in your mind of what a boy or girl will be like-otherwise, why choose gender at all?

It seems we are unwilling to ask the hard questions. Fertility experts will likely cater to what their clients want. There is competition, after all. One fertility specialist even believes that withholding these technologies puts him in the role of "playing god." He won't withhold something a client wants when the technology is available. That equates the consumer as a "god." The American Idol is not just a performer looking to win a contest to land a lucrative recording contract. The American Idol is personal choice. As I said earlier, if someone says they understand the risks, has the money and wants to pursue a medical technology, whose is going to say no? Should we say no? We have known for some time that absolute power corrupts absolutely. Do we just stand by and allow people to make choices that show an utter disregard for innocent human lives in the pursuit of personal preferences? Life becomes cheap across the board. Everyone is suddenly at risk. Where do we draw the line?

My great concern is that public demand, not reasonable ethical considerations, will guide medical decisions. Do we really not have the collective will to say there are some medical procedures or even experiments we will not do?

#### Notes

1. [Why One Mom Spent 100K to Guarantee Baby No. 3 Is a Girl](#) Accessed July 14 2015.
2. [Couple Spends 50K to Choose Baby's Sex, Shining Light on Trend](#) Accessed July 14, 2015.

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# The Case for Christ – Reasons to Believe in the Reality of Christ

*Dr. Bohlin summarizes the evidence found by Lee Strobel when researching the question: Is Jesus Christ really who the Bible says He is? He shows that we have strong evidence on every front that backs up our belief in Jesus as the Son of God. This important apologetic argument helps us understand the enduring value of Christianity.*

## Sometimes the Evidence Doesn't Stack Up

Skeptics around the world claim that Jesus either never said He was God or He never exemplified the activities and mindset of God. Either way they rather triumphantly proclaim that Jesus was just a man. Some will go so far as to suggest that He was a very moral and special man, but a man nonetheless. Well, Lee Strobel was just such a skeptic. For Strobel, there was far too much evidence against the idea of God, let alone the possibility that God became a man. God was just mythology, superstition, or wishful thinking.

As a graduate of Yale Law School, an investigative reporter, and eventual legal affairs editor for the *Chicago Tribune*, Strobel was familiar with the weighing of evidence. He was familiar with plenty of university professors who knew Jesus as an iconoclastic Jew, a revolutionary, or a sage, but not God. He had read just enough philosophy and history to support his skepticism.

As Strobel himself says,

*As far as I was concerned, the case was closed. There was enough proof for me to rest easy with the conclusion that the divinity of Jesus was nothing more than the fanciful invention of superstitious people. Or so I thought.*[\[1\]](#)

That last hesitation came as a result of his wife's conversion. After the predictable rolling of the eyes and fears of his wife being the victim of a bait and switch scam, he noticed some very positive changes he found attractive and intriguing. The reporter in him eventually wanted to get to the bottom of this and he launched his own personal investigation. Setting aside as best he could his own personal interest and prejudices, he began reading and studying, interviewing experts, examining archaeology and the Bible.

Over time the evidence began to point to the previously unthinkable. Strobel's book *The Case for Christ* is a revisiting of his earlier quest. He interviews a host of experts along three lines of evidence. In the first section Strobel investigates what he calls the record. What did the eyewitnesses say they saw and heard? Can they be trusted? Can the gospel accounts be trusted? What about evidence from outside the Bible? Does archaeology help or hurt the case for Christ? Strobel puts tough questions to his experts and their answers will both surprise and exhilarate.

In the third section of the book, Strobel investigates the resurrection. He examines the medical evidence, explores the implications of the empty tomb, the reliability of the appearances after the resurrection, and the wide-ranging circumstantial evidence.

However, here we'll focus on the middle section of the book, the analysis of Jesus Himself. Did Jesus really think He was God? Was He crazy? Did He act like He was God? And did He truly match the picture painted in the Old Testament of the Messiah?

# Was Jesus Really Convinced that He Was the Son of God?

The psychological profiler is a new weapon in the arsenal of criminal investigators. They understand that behavior reflects personality. These highly trained professionals examine the actions and words of criminals and from these clues construct a psychological and sometimes historical profile of the likely perpetrator.

These same skills can be applied to our question of whether Jesus actually thought He was God. We can learn a great deal about what Jesus thought of Himself, not just from what He said, but what He did and how He did it.

Ben Witherington was educated at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (M. Div.) and the University of Durham in England (Th. D.). He has taught at several universities and seminaries and authored numerous books and articles about the person of Jesus.

Strobel began his interview by stating that Jesus wasn't very forthcoming about His identity in public, even mysterious. He didn't come right out and say He was the Son of God or the Messiah. Couldn't it be that Jesus simply didn't see Himself that way?

Witherington points out that Jesus needed to operate in the context of His day. To boldly state that He was God would have at first confused and then maddened the Jews of His day. Blasphemy was not treated lightly. Therefore He was very careful, especially at first, of what He said publicly.

There are other clues to Jesus' self-identity as God. He chose twelve disciples, as God chose the twelve nations of Israel. He called John the Baptist the greatest man on earth; yet He went on to do even greater things in His miracles. He told the Pharisees, in contradiction to much of the Old Testament law,

that what defiled a man was what came out of his mouth, not what he put in it. "We have to ask, what kind of person thinks he has the authority to set aside the divinely inspired Jewish Scriptures and supplant them with his own teaching." {2} Even the Romans labeled Him King of the Jews. Either Jesus actually said that or someone thought He did.

Since Jesus' followers called Him Rabboni or Rabbi, it seems they just thought of Him as a teacher and nothing more. But Witherington reminds us that Jesus actually taught in a radical new way. In Judaism, the authority of two or more witnesses was required for the proclamation of truth. But Jesus frequently said, "Amen I say to you," or in modern English, "I swear in advance to the truthfulness of what I am about to say." Jesus attested to the truth of what He was saying on His own authority. This was truly revolutionary.

The evidence that Jesus believed that He stood in the very place of God is absolutely convincing. Maybe He was just crazy. We'll explore that question next.

## **Was Jesus Crazy When He Claimed to be the Son of God?**

There's considerable doubt in the general public about the usefulness of psychological testimony in the courtroom. It seems that you can find some psychologist to testify to just about anything concerning someone's state of mind at the time a crime was committed. But while abuses can occur, most people recognize that a trained and experienced psychologist can offer helpful insights into a person's state of mind while examining his words and actions.

In our investigation of Jesus, if He really believed He was God, can we determine if He was crazy or insane? You can visit just about any mental health facility and be introduced to people who think they are Julius Caesar or Napoleon or even Jesus Christ. Could Jesus have been deluded?

Not so, according to Gary Collins, a psychologist with a doctorate in clinical psychology from Purdue and the author of numerous books and articles in popular magazines and professional journals. Disturbed individuals often show signs of depression or anxiety or explosive anger. But Jesus never displays inappropriate emotions.

He does get angry, but this is clearly appropriate—in the temple, for instance, when He saw the misuse of the temple courtyard and that the moneychangers were taking advantage of the poor. He didn't just get ticked off because someone was annoying Him. In fact, Jesus seems at His most composed when being challenged. In a beautiful passage, Collins describes Jesus as he would an old friend:

*He was loving but didn't let his compassion immobilize him; he didn't have a bloated ego, even though he was often surrounded by adoring crowds; he maintained balance despite an often demanding lifestyle; he always knew what he was doing and where he was going; he cared deeply about people, including women and children, who weren't seen as being important back then; he was able to accept people while not merely winking at their sin; he responded to individuals based on where they were at and what they uniquely needed. All in all I just don't see signs that Jesus was suffering from any known mental illness. {3}*

OK, so maybe Jesus wasn't mentally disturbed, but maybe He used psychological tricks to perform His miracles. Many illnesses are psychosomatic, so maybe His healings were just by the power of suggestion. Collins readily admits that maybe some of Jesus' miracles were of this very type, but they were still healed. And some of His miracles just can't fit this description. Jesus healed leprosy and people blind since birth, both of which would be difficult to pull off as a psychological trick. His miracles over nature also can't be explained psychologically, and raising Lazarus from the dead

after being in the tomb for a few days is not the stuff of trickery. No, Jesus wasn't crazy.

## **Did Jesus Fulfill the Attributes of God?**

Modern forensics utilizes artists who are able to sketch the appearance of a criminal based on the recollections of the victims. This is an important tool to be able to alert the public as to the appearance of a usually violent offender. In Lee Strobel's investigation of the evidence for Jesus, he uses the Old Testament as a sketch of what God is supposed to be like. If Jesus claims to be God, then what we see of Him in the Gospels should mirror the picture of God in the Old Testament.

For this purpose, Strobel interviewed Dr. D. A. Carson, research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. Carson can read a dozen languages and has authored or edited over forty books about Jesus and the New Testament.

At the start of the interview, Strobel asks Carson, "What did Jesus say or do that convinces you that Jesus is God?" The answer was a little surprising. Jesus forgave sins.

We all see ourselves as having the power and authority to forgive someone who has wronged us. Jesus forgave people for things they did that didn't involve Jesus at all. This was startling for that time and even today. Only God can truly forgive sins, and Jesus specifically does so on a number of occasions.[{4}](#)

In addition, Jesus considered himself to be without sin. Historically, we consider people to be holy who are fully conscious of their own failures and are fighting them honestly in the power of the Holy Spirit. But Jesus gave no such impression. In that wonderful chapter, John 8, Jesus asks if anyone can convict Him of sin (John 8:46). The question itself

is startling, but no one answers. Sinlessness is another attribute of deity.

This chapter is a wonderful interview with Carson, covering other questions, such as: how could Jesus be God and actually be born; or say that the Father was greater than He; or not speak out strongly against the slavery of the Jewish and Roman culture; or believe in and send people to Hell? I'll leave you to explore those fascinating questions on your own in the book.

Strobel concludes that the Bible declares several attributes for God and applies them to Jesus. John 16:30 records one of the disciples saying, "Now we can see that you know all things." Jesus says in Matthew 28:20, "Surely I am with you even unto the end of the age." And in Matthew 18:20 He says, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am with them." All authority was given Him (Matthew 28:18) and Hebrews tells us that He is the same yesterday and today. So Jesus is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and immutable. In John 14:7, Jesus says, "If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well."

## **Did Jesus—and Jesus Alone—Match the Identity of the Messiah?**

So far in Strobel's interviews with scholars we have affirmed that Jesus did claim to be God, He wasn't insane or emotionally disturbed, and He did things that only God would do. Now we want to review Strobel's interview with Louis Lapedes, a Jewish believer as to whether Jesus actually fit the Old Testament picture of what the Messiah would be like.

One of the important pieces of evidence that convinced Lapedes that Jesus was the long-looked-for Messiah was the fulfillment of prophecy. There are over forty prophecies concerning the coming Messiah, and Jesus fulfilled every one. Some say this is just coincidence. But, the odds of just one person



fulfilling even five of these prophecies is less than one chance in one hundred million billion—a number millions of times greater than the number of all people who have ever lived on earth. [{5}](#)

But maybe this isn't all it seems. Objections to the correlation of Jesus' life to the prophecies of the Messiah fall into four categories. The first is the coincidence argument, which we just dispelled. Perhaps the most frequently heard argument is that the gospel writers fabricated the details to make it appear that Jesus was the Messiah. But the gospels were written close enough in time to the actual events that, if false, critics could have exposed the details. Certainly this is true of those in the Jewish community who had every reason to squash this new religion before it got started.

Third, there is the suggestion that Jesus intentionally fulfilled these many prophecies so as to make Himself appear as the Messiah. That's conceivable for some of the prophecies, such as Jesus' riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, but for others it's impossible. How could Jesus arrange for his ancestry, or place of birth, or the method of execution, or that soldiers would gamble for his clothing? The list goes on.

Fourth, perhaps Christians have just ripped these so-called prophecies out of context and have misinterpreted them. When asked, Lapidés sighed and replied:

*You know, I go through books that people write to try to tear down what we believe. That's not fun to do, but I spend the time to look at each objection individually and then to research the context and the wording in the original language. And every single time, the prophecies have stood up and shown themselves to be true. [{6}](#)*

What I found most intriguing about the interviews was the combination of academic integrity on the part of these

scholars alongside a very evident love for the One of whom they were speaking. For these scholars, finding the historical Jesus was not just an academic exercise, but also a life-changing personal encounter with Jesus. Perhaps it can be for you too.

## Notes

1. Lee Strobel, 1998, *The Case for Christ*, Grand Rapids Michigan/Zondervan Publishing House, p. 13.
2. Ben Witherington, quoted in *The Case for Christ*, p. 135.
3. Gary Collins, quoted in *The Case for Christ*, p. 147.
4. Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, p. 157-158.
5. Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, p. 183.
6. Louis Lapidès, quoted in *The Case for Christ*, p. 185.

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# “How Do I Convince My Friends to Be Saved?”

I have some really good friends who claim that they are Christians but I know for a fact that they aren't saved and I'm not exactly sure how to talk to them about Christ and getting saved. I also hear some of them who claim to be Christians say that they are glad that their parents don't go to church because then they wouldn't be able to sleep in on Sundays. I have brought a couple of them to my church but they acted like they didn't like it. How should I convince them that they should believe in Christ?

My second question is this: I have a friend who always talks about Christ and how he has changed her life. But I know that

**she hasn't been saved. Do you have to be saved go to heaven?**

Having an attitude of trying to convince people to believe in Christ will seldom be successful. There needs to be a sincere desire to seek the truth. Your time would be well spent demonstrating an attractive vision of the Savior through your life and be ready to discuss and answer their eventual questions. Those who are indifferent to Christianity—or even hostile—need to see a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ which faithfully follows 1 Peter 3:15: a life that sanctifies Jesus as Lord of their lives and is always ready to give an answer for the hope that they have and yet do so with gentleness and respect. Evidence and arguments will rarely make an impact unless there is an inquisitiveness first.

And yes, we must be saved to spend eternity in heaven. Be careful however, about being certain in judging someone's salvation. Even the greatest saints still sin and while there should be a pattern of good works to verify someone's salvation, we all go through periods of rebellion. Also, only Christ can judge the true condition of a person's heart.

If a person truly thinks they are saved and seems to at least have a basic understanding of salvation through Christ, we should take them at their word until something incontrovertible happens that leads you to believe they have been living a lie. I'm just asking that you be careful in making these kinds of judgments and that as far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men (Rom. 12:18).

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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# “What Is the Prevailing Evolutionary Theory for the Origin of the Universe?”

What is the prevailing evolutionary theory for the origin of the universe? I would also like to know your views on the “Gap Theory.”

The prevailing theory for the origin of the universe is the Big Bang Theory which suggests that the universe began as a particle that was infinitely dense and occupied no space. This particle came into existence essentially from nothing (actually a quantum fluctuation from nothing to something), and immediately exploded, thus beginning a process that led to the universe as we see it today. This happened approximately 12-13 billion years ago.

Astronomers, cosmologists, and astrophysicists alike will admit they have a problem accounting for the origin of the initial particle. How does something come from nothing? The quantum fluctuation idea is a dead end since quantum physics is a property of the current universe. If there was no universe prior to the existence of the particle, how do we know that a quantum fluctuation was even possible? You must have a universe first!

In addition, the mechanistic process following the explosion that led to our current universe as we see it has difficulty explaining the many finely tuned characteristics of this universe seemingly designed for life with no purpose or design. How does a mechanistic process accomplish this? [Some Christians](#) believe that God ordered the initial particle in such a way to allow these finely tuned parameters to arise by His design by a seemingly mechanistic but preordained process. However, others like me see these properties requiring God's

intimate involvement and perhaps even intervention. The other view seems more deistic (a distant God who wound up the universe initially and then left it alone) than theistic. It also seems difficult to reconcile Romans 1:20 where we are told we are without excuse of God's existence by simply observing what has been made. If it all looks like a mechanistic process, how are we without excuse?

The gap theory has been largely rejected by evangelical scholars since it requires a reading of Genesis 1:1-1:2 that seems to be ruled out by the grammatical construction of the sentence. The Gap Theory usually suggests that the earth BECAME formless and void, suggesting that God's original creation was marred (perhaps by the fall of Satan) and then God recreated it in six literal days. However, while the verb *was* is sometime translated as *became*, the Hebrew grammar of the sentence does not allow it in this case. Therefore the traditional translation that the earth WAS formless and void is preferred.

Hope this helps.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, PhD

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## **“Should I Be Concerned About Sarah Young’s ‘Jesus Calling’?”**

What do you have to say about *Jesus Calling* author Sarah Young? I'm seeing and hearing about red flags from several

**other reputable Christian sources such Lighthouse Trails and Worldview Weekend.**

One ought to be skeptical when someone is writing a book telling you they have heard from Jesus and this is what He said. The popularity of Sarah Young's *Jesus Calling* also calls for scrutiny because millions are reading it and saying they have benefited from it. I have looked at the links you provided and here is what I think.

Their use of Galatians 1 to criticize the book is puzzling to me because Sarah Young does not offer another gospel. Paul was dealing with the Judaizers and those who were adding works to the salvation message. She makes quite clear that Jesus is her Savior and as a former missionary she also is clear that salvation is by grace alone. This also comes across in many of the daily entries.

Sarah Young also makes no pretension to be adding to Scripture. She makes it clear that the Bible is the only infallible word of God. In the foreword to a follow-up book, *Jesus Lives*, she says she has written what she "heard" (quotation marks are hers) and has tried to make sure it aligns with Scripture. So she is careful to indicate she is not hearing the infallible Word of God and she checks what she eventually writes with the Bible. Each entry is followed by several Scriptures, and when Scripture is quoted in what she has written it appears in italics.

One of the links referenced 1 John 4:1 which admonishes us to test the spirits since not every spirit is from God. They did not mention the following two verses which tell us that we know a spirit is from God if "that spirit confesses Jesus as the Christ who has come in the flesh" (1 John 4:3). Sarah Young tests what she "hears" against the Word of God and she definitely believes Jesus is the Christ and came in the flesh. John also implies that we may sometimes hear from spirits that are from God! Why else would he admonish us to test them? If

we never hear from God after the apostolic age, John should simply have said do not pay any attention to any spirit—it can't be from God. Testing is a waste of time if the authors from Lighthouse and Worldview Weekend are to be followed.

The gospel of John closes by telling us that Jesus did many more things that have not been written (and presumably said other things that were not written). So Jesus said some things that are not in the Bible. Since Jesus did not sin and He tells us He spoke only what the Father told Him to say (John 17:7-8), then there are words of God that were not recorded in Scripture. They are not in the Bible presumably because they were not intended for all people at all times. Similarly, I'm sure kings and leaders in Israel consulted prophets of God at times for which we have no recording. It's reasonable to assume that often the prophets did indeed hear from God but didn't write it down. Again, there have been words God has spoken that we do not have in the Bible because they were not intended for all people at all times. But it was still communication from God. The links provided verses that clearly say we are not to add to the Scriptures. I agree. Sarah Young makes no claim to do so. Some will find what she has written useful and some will not. She may occasionally write something that is not clearly Biblical in character. Her admission that she tries to make sure what she writes is in accordance with the Bible indicates that she knows she is human, makes mistakes, and does not claim any sort of infallibility of her writings. Any Christian writer today should always recognize their own fallibility.

In John 15, Jesus calls His disciples "friends." Since this is in the Bible it's meant for all people at all times. Those of us who have fully accepted Jesus' death on the cross as payment for our sin and believe God raised Him from the dead are friends of Jesus. With my earthly friends I don't just know in my head they are my friends; I spend time with them, and yes, even converse with them. The canon of Scripture is

definitely closed. Sarah Young does not pretend to be opening the canon back up again.

*Jesus Calling* is not for everybody. (The claims that the Jesus of *Jesus Calling* sounds feminine is more a problem of the writers than of Sarah Young.) The Triune God is the author of both masculinity and femininity. I would think He knows how to speak both languages (Isaiah 49:15).

Again, I was not impressed with the arguments put forth that what Sarah Young has written is somehow adding to Scripture, presents a false gospel, or that the only way God speaks to us today is from the Scriptures.

I have been using *Jesus Calling* and *Jesus Lives* as part of my daily devotional time for a year and a half. My discernment filter is operational all the time, and I have not come across anything that concerns me.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, Ph.D.

Posted June 22, 2013

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**“There is No Proof Your Pathetic Manmade God Ever Lived”**

There is not one proof that Jesus ever lived. Everything you quoted on your stupid page was all hearsay that was passed along by g\*dd\*mn fools. Yeshu was real and lived one hundred



years before your concocted fake savior. There was jesus of gamala who was another savior. There was jesus bar kocba, yet another savior. Josephus never wrote that passage about jesus and only a f\*\*\*ing fool would believe it was anything other than another 'christian' lie and forgery. Josephus was a Jew and would have been stoned to death for such a statement. You people lie like dogs and couldn't tell the truth if your lives depended on it. There were at least 50 well known authors/historians during the era that your pathetic manmade god was said to have lived yet not one of them bothered to write one word about him. Hell, man don't you think with all his miracles and dead people popping out of graves during his crucifixion that someone might sit up and take notice? There are no people on this planet meaner or more insane than Christians. Also, our Founders did not found this nation on your sickening repulsive deadly religion and most of them hated it. History is completely silent on all the major bible characters, including the child raping killer Moses and the pimp Abraham. Thank goodness, for you couldn't find a more disgusting and perverted bunch if you spent your life looking. Yahweh was a real b\*stard that I wouldn't allow in my neighborhood. Why don't you try the truth for a change?

I am sorry that our material has caused you to respond with such negative emotion.

But if I may, I'd like to engage some of your points.

*There is not one proof that jesus ever lived. Everything you quoted on your stupid page was all hearsay that was passed along by g\*dd\*mn fools.*

This is a fairly broad generalization. Could you refer to something specific so we can get a better idea of what you object to most?

*Yeshu was real and lived one hundred years before your concocted fake savior. There was jesus of gamala who was*

*another savior. There was jesus bar kocba, yet another savior.*

Do you have some documentation for these various Jesus characters so we can research ourselves? This is a commonly held notion but the documentation we often see is not reliable.

*Josephus never wrote that passage about jesus and only a f\*\*\*ing fool would believe it was anything other than another 'christian' lie and forgery. Josephus was a jew and would have been stoned to death for such a statement.*

Concerning Josephus, Michael [Gleghorn] clearly indicates that the second passage he refers to by Josephus was likely edited by a Christian scholar to include the references to Jesus as the Christ and other messianic phrases. Most scholars regard the rest of the passage as genuine. [www.probe.org/ancient-evidence-for-jesus-from-non-christian-sources/](http://www.probe.org/ancient-evidence-for-jesus-from-non-christian-sources/).

*You people lie like dogs and couldn't tell the truth if your lives depended on it. There were at least 50 well known authors/historians during the era that your pathetic manmade god was said to have lived yet not one of them bothered to write one word about him.*

Can you provide us a list of a few of these authors/historians? You have to consider that any news did not travel very far or very fast in that era. Many of Jesus' miracles would be beyond belief for many and would have just been dismissed. It makes sense therefore, that Jesus was noted a few decades later when the number of his followers continued to grow despite severe persecution.

*Hell, man don't you think with all his miracles and dead people popping out of graves during his crucifixion that*

*someone might sit up and take notice? There are no people on this planet meaner or more insane than Christians. Also, our Founders did not found this nation on your sickening repulsive deadly religion and most of them hated it.*

I agree with you to a degree. Jefferson and Franklin were likely [deists](#) who used the Bible when it suited them. [George Washington](#) however, seems to be a genuine Christian. Do you have sources who indicate otherwise?

*History is completely silent on all the major bible characters, including the child raping killer Moses and the pimp Abraham.*

Well, that's not exactly true. Roman and Jewish historians make reference to Jesus and Christians in the first century. Also a stone from around 800BC contained the phrase "House of David." Babylonian records refer to the appropriate kings of Judah in the early years of the Babylonian captivity, both those left in Jerusalem and those taken to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar is real as are the accounts of various Assyrian kings mentioned in Chronicles and Kings. The Babylonian and Persian kings are accurately reflected in Daniel. It's quite unlikely to find any archeological references to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They were nomadic herders who didn't keep any history.

*Thank goodness, for you couldn't find a more disgusting and perverted bunch if you spent your life looking. Yahweh was a real b\*stard that I wouldn't allow in my neighborhood. Why don't you try the truth for a change?*

We are looking for the truth and confidently believe we have found it in Jesus Christ of Nazareth. I suspect that something else besides your perceived lack of evidence is driving the strength of your rejection. Whatever that may be, I am truly

sorry that some Christian or group of Christians have grievously harmed you in some way in the past. No true Christians ever claim to be perfect or to have exhaustive knowledge. But we have seen and experienced the truth in ways that are quite convincing.

Respectfully,

Raymond G. Bohlin, Ph.D.

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<https://sites.google.com/site/yahwehelohiym/sons-of-god/the-boundaries-of-the-nations>

**Yahweh was just a hateful petty tribal god and one of the many sons of el elyon, the most high god, and your bible proves it but you people do not understand what the hell you read and keep the lies going.**

I'm afraid your source is a bit behind the times. While some of what he says is correct, that some names of God go back to the Ugaritic language, his/her reliance on the Documentary Hypothesis is outdated.  
[www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2010/09/24/the-documentary-hypothesis.aspx#Article](http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2010/09/24/the-documentary-hypothesis.aspx#Article)

“Sons of God” appears elsewhere in the Old Testament, in Genesis 6:2,4 and Job 38:7. In each case it is either a reference to men who followed God (Genesis 6) or angels (Job 38). Nothing new or damaging here.

If you just look a little further in the Old Testament you find Isaiah saying;

*I am the Lord, I have no peer,  
there is no God but me.*

*I arm you for battle, even though you do not recognize me.  
I do this so people will recognize from east to west  
that there is no God but me;*

*I am the Lord, I have no peer.  
Remember what I accomplished in antiquity!  
Truly I am God, I have no peer;  
I am God, and there is none like me (45:5-9)*

The God of the Bible is a monotheistic God throughout. And we do have a nearly complete Book of Isaiah from the [Dead Sea Scrolls](#) and the only difference with the Masoretic text of AD 900 is a few spelling changes.

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**One item at a time.**

[www.stephenjaygould.org/ctrl/buckner\\_ncn.html](http://www.stephenjaygould.org/ctrl/buckner_ncn.html)

**I also advise you to read *Liars for Jesus* and Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason*. Paine helped word our Constitution and Bill of Rights and named this country The United States of America. Few Christians will speak about his book because it cannot be refuted intelligently. His part 3 proves there are NO OT prophecies of jesus and makes jackasses of anyone who says otherwise. Can you people read? Christians don't follow the doctrine of jesus, they follow the apostate liar paul. Read the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* to find the Lord's Prayer and the so-called ten commandments along with many other items the murdering jews (who are not jews but are liars from the synagogue of satan) stole and created their rotten religion. Much of what they stole was from the ancient Sumerians who lived about 1000 years before the hyksos came to be known as Hebrews. Their epic of creation was used by these maggots to create the most bloody and perverted religion this world has known, until Christians showed up.**

Hmmm. I don't recall claiming that the U.S. is a Christian nation. You won't find that anywhere on our website. But do read from George Washington's farewell address:

*Of all the dispositions and habits, which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men and Citizens. The mere Politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connexions with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked, Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in Courts of Justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect, that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.*

Clearly he doesn't say what religion, but there was little else in America at that time except for different forms of Christianity. Even if he only means a loose form of deism, he clearly questions that government can function for long without it.

So you really want to use Thomas Paine as your source for the conviction that there are no OT prophecies about Jesus? There is so much we didn't know in the late 18th century. Archaeology was barely a fledgling science. So many manuscripts were unknown. We have thousands of OT and NT manuscripts today that Paine had no knowledge of whatsoever. Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12 is about as clear a prophecy of Jesus that you will find. And remember we have a complete copy of Isaiah from the Dead Sea Scrolls, well before Jesus lived.

*Liars for Jesus* looks like an interesting book. I have no doubt there has been sloppy scholarship on the part of many in the religious right. At Probe Ministries we make every effort

to research with integrity and write with a biblical reasonableness and respect for those we disagree with.

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**Two of the foremost and revered Jewish Archaeologists in Israel have proven the OT is a lie but preachers will never tell that. They are greedy dogs and deceivers.**  
[www.hiddenmysteries.org/mysteries/history/jehovah.html](http://www.hiddenmysteries.org/mysteries/history/jehovah.html)

I am familiar with the archaeologists you mention and their conclusions are quite controversial. Archaeology comes with a need for publicity to help donors and foundations continue your funding. Making such an outrageous claim would certainly get headlines and keep the dollars flowing.

I'm not surprised that there are "official" documents declaring that YHWH had Ashterah as a consort. The Jewish histories of the Bible are filled with condemnation for continuing to worship in the high places and using Ashterah poles for fertility. They did indeed worship many gods at times. The Bible doesn't hide that.

But again, this document refers to the Documentary Hypothesis and the P source. This has been debunked for decades but is still used in many secular universities because it fits their predetermined conclusions about biblical texts.

By the way, you can find documentation for the House of David inscription [here:](http://www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/category/archaeology/)  
[www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/category/archaeology/](http://www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/category/archaeology/).

Also we do have the oldest form of writing from Tell Mardikh, the Ebla Tablets. These date to between the 26th and 23rd centuries BCE. There are names, of places, people, and customs similar to those found in Genesis. If Genesis was supposedly written in the 7th century BCE as many claim, these names,

places and customs could not be known.

[evidenceforchristianity.blogspot.com/2008/11/ebla-tablets-ancient-sumerian.html](http://evidenceforchristianity.blogspot.com/2008/11/ebla-tablets-ancient-sumerian.html)

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**Elba Tablets?! Ha, your man was long ago discredited. You must keep up.**

[www.infidels.org/library/modern/james\\_still/reliability.html](http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/james_still/reliability.html)

**Everything the so-called jews have or ever had was stolen from other cultures. It is easy to understand why those horrid creatures have been tossed out of every nation they tried to infiltrate with their money making schemes and corruptions. They were the central bankers our founders hated and tried to keep out of this nation. The Presidents who came against them were assassinated. Jackson managed to survive the attempts they made on his life but they still managed to gain the upper hand again and now the swine damn near own this entire nation. The only method used to gain control of Palestine was more lies. Go figure. You don't have a clue what is even happening in this world and who is in control.**

I don't think Mr. Still refutes much of anything about the Ebla Tablets. He admits that Pettinato is a Sumerologist and therefore will have skills of translation. The only quibble Mr. Still seems to have with Pettinato is his claim to find the name Yah, similar to Yahweh. OK fine, he just offers another opinion. He says nothing about the names of the cities on the plain. He lost almost all credibility with me in his opening three paragraphs, claiming that Christianity is just a faith and mystery religion according to Paul. Then says Josh McDowell's theology is in tension with this since McDowell wants an inerrant scripture based on facts. Sorry, I don't see any tension at all. Paul refers to actual events in his



letters, things that happened to him and things he learned from the apostles. Paul is the one in 1 Corinthians 15 who puts a lot of weight on the historical resurrection. There's no tension. He's making mountains out of ant hills.

His account of how the gospels came about is some shoddy tying together of weird threads. The so-called "Q" document does not exist. It is only supposed to exist because it fits this model. He refers to some of the church fathers to back up some of his points but not to the early tradition among those same church fathers that Mark was written by Mark from Peter's recollections. Luke is indeed an historian. Still's confusion over the middle chapters is not worth responding to. Most conservative scholars now suggest that all the gospels were written before AD 70 because none of them mention the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple when Jesus specifically predicts this in all three synoptic gospels. It would be easy to add this as an editorial proof that Jesus got it right. Especially if these gospels were supposedly cobbled together from sayings and other recollections.

Last, I really liked the part about Jesus waving a magic wand over Lazarus in the catacombs indicating they saw him as a magician. I haven't actually seen the picture though I looked for one. Found a few articles stating the same but no documentation. I suspect that it's another Everest out of an ant hill.

I'm still working on the Thomas Paine refutation of messianic prophecies. Not terribly impressed though. As suspected some of his objections no longer hold up. He also assumes away the supernatural so when Isaiah refers to the Persian Cyrus who wasn't even born in Isaiah's time, he uses that to say that obviously Isaiah was written after 500 BCE. It's bad form to assume away what you are trying to discredit.

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Funny how you keep claiming that men like Paine just assume things while he at least existed and that is more than you can say about your bible supermen. It would be one thing to have one of these paragons of virtue (not) to disappear but to have the great majority of them to vaporize from all historical records should wake up even the village idiot. I guess when a man makes his living off conning the sheeple he will stand by his deception until the end. Religion is now a trillion dollar a year BUSINESS. That is like waiting for a used car salesman to tell the buyer to be ware, there may be something wrong with his intended purchase. If Christians really claim the bible is the word of god they must really be confused about what the book says since there are over 3000 sects of Christianity and they disagree on many points. If god is not the author of confusion he sure messed up with his only written word to man. Not only is the bible a mess of contradictions and falsehoods, it is by far the filthiest and bloodiest book ever penned by man. You claim the Creator of this entire world had any part of that filth and to me that is where blasphemy truly is found. You are obviously rooted in lies or you are just taking advantage of brainwashed people to make a living. Either way, you will never open your eyes. Enjoy the holiday of greed and materialism with the rest of the Christian world.

Your hatred blinds you at least as much as you would say my faith blinds me.

I will readily admit that much that passes for Christianity indeed is little more than business. But I would say you are guilty of following the old adage of throwing out the baby with the bathwater. We're not all liars, cheats and frauds.

Jesus did/does exist.

He indeed fulfilled dozens of OT prophecies about the Messiah.

Performed signs and miracles beyond the plain ability of a simple magician, control over nature that frightened even his own disciples, raised a man dead for four days, healed a man blind from birth.

He died for my sins and for yours.

His historical resurrection proved his claims of deity and opened the door for all who call Him Lord and believe that God raised him from the dead, will be saved. Ten of eleven disciples died a martyr's death, believing all that they saw and heard was real.

You are following the imaginations of those who are guilty of seeking to destroy what they simply don't like. Besides, as the evolutionary biologist J.B.S. Haldane said, "If my brain is simply composed of atoms, and my thoughts are simply the interaction of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose my brain to be composed of atoms" (loose paraphrase). In a fully materialistic universe, there is no truth, no way to truly know what is real; truth is simply what works, for the moment. Truth is indeed relative and ultimately unknowable. So why bother with your crusade? If some choose to believe a benevolent fiction, what do you care? Obviously you do care, you believe some things to be true and false. I only observe that you need to borrow from a Christian worldview to do so.

Pascal's wager is still worth considering; if I am wrong and death is the end and there is no afterlife, I've lost nothing. I've lived a good life, loved my wife and kids, kind to my neighbors, supported an Indian boy, and help give others hope. If you're wrong, you lose everything.

I will enjoy the celebration of the Incarnation that the now secular culture of the USA has turned into a necessary economic ritual. My family will enjoy a very modest Christmas.

I hope you can enjoy some time with friends or family during this end of year.

Respectfully,

Dr. Ray Bohlin

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