# The Bible: Intentionally Misunderstood

## Dissecting the Bible by Focusing on Nits

Recently, New Testament scholar and expert on ancient New Testament documents, Dr. Daniel Wallace, spoke on the work being done to ensure we have the most accurate version of the Greek New Testament. He also mentioned several documents presenting a false view of this level of accuracy. One of these documents, *The Bible: So Misunderstood It's a Sin* by Kurt Eichenwald, appeared in *Newsweek* in December 2014.{1} His article presents arguments intended to undermine the New Testament. Let's evaluate some of these arguments to be better equipped in sharing the truth.

The article contains at least 125 errors and/or half-truths in 14 pages. Of course, I am not the first to respond to this article. Dr. Wallace and Dr. Darrel Bock both wrote responses shortly after the document was published addressing specific areas of interest to them. I commend their posts to you as excellent resources.{2}. I will address some areas that are not addressed or only partially addressed by these seminary professors.

### Using Survey Data Without Understanding It

Eichenwald begins his article by parroting the negative stereotypes put forth by those who cannot be bothered with trying to understand the vast majority of evangelicals. Attempting to add some rigor to his rant, he refers to two surveys on religious beliefs. Unfortunately for Eichenwald, rather than adding rigor, his comments showed that he did not take the time to examine the survey results he was spouting.

He first states, "[Evangelicals'] lack of knowledge about the

Bible is well established. A Pew Research poll in 2010{3} found that evangelicals ranked only a smidgen higher than atheists in familiarity with the New Testament and Jesus's teachings."{4} He referred to a table showing the average number of questions out of twelve that each faith group answered correctly. However, only two of the twelve questions had anything to do with the New Testament and none of them related to Jesus's teachings. The remaining questions were divided equally between the Old Testament and on latter day religious figures/beliefs. {5} Two questions are not enough to evaluate someone's knowledge of the New Testament. But, for the record, the questions were "Name the four gospels" and "Where, according to the Bible, was Jesus born?" Fifty three percent of those
professing to be born again answered these correctly versus twenty percent of atheists. Apparently to Eichenwald, a "smidgen higher" must mean almost three times as many. Perhaps, *Newsweek* cannot afford a fact checker?

The second poll he referenced was a 2012 effort by the Barna Group{6}. He said, "[It found] that evangelicals accepted the attitudes and beliefs of the Pharisees . . . more than they accepted the teachings of Jesus." The study actually showed that 63% of evangelicals accepted the attitudes and actions of Jesus at least as much, if not more, than the attitudes and actions the Barna Group associated with the Pharisees.

## Accuracy of English Translations Not Effectively Addressed

Eichenwald spends two pages bemoaning the translation problems in the New Testament. But as pointed out by Wallace and Bock, his critique really serves to highlight the excellence of today's translations. The areas he points out as having questionable additions in the text are clearly marked in all of today's popular translations and if removed make no difference in the overall message of the New Testament (i.e. the woman caught in adultery in John and snake handling at the end of Mark).

He goes on to say, “The same is true for other critical portions of the Bible, such as . . .”{7} and then lists three short passages which he claims did not appear in earlier Greek copies. One passage is 1 John 5:7 which was expanded in the original King James Version but (as Eichenwald is apparently unaware of) was removed in modern translations, e.g. NASU, NET, ESV, NIV. Another passage is Luke 22:20 which does appear in almost all modern translations as well as the KJV. As Metzger{8} points out, the longer version with Luke 22:20 appears in “all Greek manuscripts except for D and in most of the ancient versions and Fathers.” So this passage does appear in most earlier Greek copies, contrary to what Eichenwald claims. He finally refers to Luke 24:51 as a passage not found in the earlier Greek versions. Once again, he is wrong. This passage appears in many older manuscripts{9} including the Bodmer Papyrii written in about 200 AD.

When Eichenwald attempts to strengthen his argument, he draws from limited sources that contain questionable data. Even if they were correct, they and all the other areas where ancient manuscripts vary do not change the message of the New Testament in any significant way. As Wallace points out, “The reality is that we are getting closer and closer to the text of the original New Testament as more and more manuscripts are being discovered and catalogued. . . . The New Testament has more manuscripts that are within a century or two of the original than anything else from the Greco-Roman world too. If we must be skeptical about what the original New Testament said, that skepticism, on average, should be multiplied one thousand times for other Greco-Roman literature.”{10}

## Supposed Biblical Contradictions

After attacking the accuracy of the New Testaments available to most American Christians, Eichenwald attacks the consistency of the biblical record to undermine our confidence in what we read and the message we take from it. He presents

nine different topics where he sees obvious contradictions in the text.  We will examine four of them here, two from the Old Testament and two from the New Testament.

*Number One: Creation*

First, he claims there are three different creation models in the Bible, one in Genesis chapter 1, one in Genesis chapter 2, and "one referenced in the Books of Isaiah, Psalms and Job"{11} in which "the world is created in the aftermath of a great battle between God and . . . a dragon . . . called Rahab."{12}

Liberal theologians claim that chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis describe different accounts. If they were describing the same events in the same way, that might be so. However, whether Exodus was written by Moses or whether it was put together later, a human author would not contradict himself on the same page. A clear-headed look at the two passages shows that chapter 1 describes the overall creation as observed from earth while chapter 2 talks about what God did on the sixth day in creating Adam and Eve. As pointed out in the NET Bible, "for what follows (verse 2:4) is not another account of creation but a tracing of events from creation through the fall and judgment (the
section extends from 2:4 through 4:26."{13}

Eichenwald adds in the so-called third creation story of God and Rahab stating, "In fact, the Bible has three creation models"{14} as if this were a clear and well-known fact. If you read all the verses in Isaiah, Psalms and Job that reference Rahab, you will scratch your head and wonder how could anyone relate those few verses to a creation story. Rahab is a Hebrew word meaning "strong one and it is not necessarily a name. It is clear in Isaiah and Psalms that Rahab is a reference to Egypt, not some mythical dragon. In Job, it could be referring to the forces of chaos. He probably gets his idea from some articles that suggest that since Job

9:13 says “God does not restrain His anger; under Him the helpers of Rahab lie crushed” that the helpers of Rahab could refer to the helpers of Tiamat from the Babylonian Creation Epic. Even if this were true, rather than a third creation story one would say this verse tells us

1. God destroys all idols and false gods raised up by others, and
2. This is what Job said and Job was forced to retract what he said when he was confronted by Yahweh as seen in Job 42:1-6.

Eichenwald’s claim of three different creation models is an illusion.

*Number Two: The Flood*

Eichenwald reports another set of clear contradictions in the Genesis story of Noah and the flood. He points to three areas of supposed contradiction.

The first one has to do with how many animals are on the ark. In Genesis 6:19, God tells Noah that he shall “bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you.” Years later after Noah has completed the ark, God tells him in Genesis 7:2 to take seven pairs of every clean animal and two of every unclean animal. Eichenwald claims this is a contradiction that the author/editor was so incompetent as to include only five verses apart. He does not consider the option that after completing the ark, God gave Noah more complete instructions because more
clean animals would be needed to provide for the sacrifices to the Lord in Genesis 8:20. Noah did not need this detail before starting to build the ark.

The second contradiction is that the Bible has Noah and his family boarding the ark and the flood
beginning in two different sections. What Eichenwald sees as a contradiction, most readers take as a common literary

technique, i.e. summarize the situation and then describe it again with more details. This was a seminal event in human history and deserved repeating.

The third contradiction according to Eichenwald is, "The water flooded the earth for 40 days (Genesis 7:17), or 150 days (Genesis 7:24). But Noah and his family stayed on the ark for a year (Genesis 8:13)." Upon reading the account, it is clear that Noah was on the ark for 12 months and 11 days during which it rained for forty days, the earth was totally inundated for 150 days as the waters slowly receded, but Noah waited to leave the ark until the land had become dry. You may choose not to believe in a universal flood, but to say the Bible has contractions in its description is ludicrous.

*Number Three: The Trial and Crucifixion*

In this claim, he states that John was written "at a time when gentiles in Rome were gaining dramatically more influence over Christianity; that explains why the Romans are largely absolved from responsibility for Jesus's death and blame instead is pointed toward the Jews."{15} Thus, he implies that the other gospels put much of the blame on the Romans. Let us see if this is true.

Luke is very clear that the instigators of the death of Jesus were the Jewish leaders and those who followed them. In Luke 22:2 we read, "The chief priests and the experts in the law were trying to find some way to execute Jesus." When Pilate is brought in to the process, Luke records that Pilate did not find Jesus guilty of anything worthy of death and stated so three different times{16}. At least five times in the book of Acts, Luke records Paul as squarely placing the responsibility for Jesus' death onto the Jewish leaders and nation.{17} We find similar verses in Matthew{18} and Mark.{19}

All of the gospels squarely place the blame on the Jewish leaders and those that followed them. Either Eichenwald has

never read the gospels and just assumed the other gospels blamed the Romans, or he assumes his readers have never read the gospels.

*Number Four: Ascension of Jesus*

The fourth supposed contradiction deals with the ascension of Jesus. Eichenwald writes, "As told in Matthew, the disciples go to Galilee after the Crucifixion and see Jesus ascend to heaven; in Acts, written by Luke, the disciples stay in Jerusalem and see Jesus ascend from there."{20}

As most of you know, the gospel of Matthew ends with Jesus meeting his disciples in Galilee and giving them the Great Commission. Matthew says **nothing** about Jesus ascending to heaven in Galilee or anywhere else. Because the Gospel of Luke does not discuss the time intervals, one might interpret it as saying that Jesus ascended into heaven on the day He was resurrected. But in Acts, Luke tells us that the resurrected Lord was with His disciples over a 40-day period. During which time, it would have been easy to travel to Galilee, as recorded in Matthew and John, and then travel back to Jerusalem.

Not surprisingly, his other five so-called "contradictions" all fail to hold up when one examines the Scriptures.

## Faulty Interpretation of Scripture Passages Passages on Homosexuality

Eichenwald wants to convince us that what we think the Bible teaches about homosexuality is not what God intended.

He begins by pointing out, "The word homosexual didn't even exist until more than 1,800 years after the New Testament was written. . . . The editors of these modern Bibles just made it up."{21} But this could be said of many English words we use today. The ancient Greek word used in the text is a compound

word clearly meaning male-with-male sexual activity. A respected dictionary of New Testament words defines it this way, “a male engaging in same-gender sexual activity, a sodomite.”{22}

He then tells us, “Most biblical scholars agree that Paul did not write 1 Timothy”{23} and, presumably, should not be trusted when addressing behaviors we should avoid, such as homosexuality. The early church fathers from the second century on and many contemporary scholars{24} do not agree it is a forgery. Regardless, the same prohibition appears in other epistles and not just in Timothy.

Eichenwald points out Romans, Corinthians and Timothy discuss other sins in more detail than homosexual behavior. He writes, “So yes, there is one verse in Romans about homosexuality . . . and there are eight verses condemning those who criticize the government.”{25}

Most people understand that explaining our relationship to the government is more complex than forbidding homosexuality which is clearly understood. Romans talks about not resisting government authority. It says nothing about criticizing people in the government. In fact, that expression is protected by the laws of our land. In other words, to obey those laws you should feel free to criticize the government.

He then claims that people engage in other sins such as adultery, greed, drunkenness and lying and are not banished for those behaviors. But if you proclaimed you practice those actions regularly and teach them as truth, your church is going to remove you from any leadership position. They should still encourage you to attend worship services out of a desire to see God change your heart.{26} Mr. Eichenwald would be surprised to learn that most evangelical churches handle issues with homosexuality in the same way.

Then he declares, “Plenty of fundamentalist Christians who

have no idea where references to homosexuality are in the New Testament . . . always fall back on Leviticus."{27} Personally, I have never run into another church member who was unfamiliar with the New Testament, but knew "by memory" the details of Leviticus.

## Christianity and the Law

Eichenwald claims homosexuality is not a sin or if it is, it is the same as all the other sins that he believes we ignore so that we can throw all our venom at homosexuals. To strengthen his position, he brings out "a fundamental conflict in the New Testament—arguably the most important one in the Bible."{28} This conflict is whether as Christians we are to obey the Mosaic Law or whether we are to ignore it.

He claims, "The author of Matthew made it clear that Christians must keep Mosaic Law like the most religious Jews, in order to achieve salvation."{29}

Wow, what a mistaken understanding of the message. In Matthew, Jesus explains if we want to enter the kingdom of heaven "our righteousness must surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees (the most religious Jews)."{30} We must not get angry, call people names, or lust after others in our minds. He caps it off by saying, "You are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."{31} He is clearly not teaching them to be like Orthodox Jews and they will be okay. He is teaching they cannot be good enough. It is only through Hissacrifice that we can be made righteous.

In Acts 15, we see that some believers who were Pharisees by background brought this question up to the apostles and elders. Peter responded by telling them, "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our father nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they (the

Gentiles) also are."{32} And the apostles, the elders, and the whole church agreed to send directions to the Gentiles that they were not required to follow the Mosaic Law.

So as Gentiles, we are not required to follow the Law of Moses as laid out in Leviticus. But the New Testament is very careful to identify those actions and attitudes which are sin so that we Gentiles know to avoid them. Which is why sexual sins are specifically mentioned in the New Testament.{33} Even in Acts 15 where the church is Jerusalem is deciding what to tell Gentile Christians about the Law, they decide to tell them to abstain from fornication, a term generally covering all sexual activity outside of marriage.{34}

In summary, Eichenwald believes we should declare homosexuality is not a sin and those who practice it should be honored as leaders within the church. He does not suggest that we treat any other sins that way. He does not present a cogent argument that the New Testament agrees with his position. He is saying that we should ignore biblical teaching. But, we really do love those struggling with homosexual behavior and we want to help them gain freedom from those lusts just as much as someone struggling with opposite sex issues.

## Obeying the Law vs. Criticizing the Government

Eichenwald also castigates us for disobeying the New Testament teaching about government. He says Romans has "eight verses condemning those who criticize the government. . . . In other words, all fundamentalist Christians who decry Obama have sinned as much as they believe gay people have."{35} He points to Pat Robertson as sinning when Pat stated, "We need to do something, to pray to be delivered from this president." Does Romans condemn those who criticize the government?

Actually, Romans says, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. . . . the person who resists such authority resists the ordinance of God."{36} It doesn't say

that we are required to say good things about the government, but rather that we should obey the laws of our government. Our Bill
of Rights states that "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech."{37} So, if we do not voice our opinions about those running our government, we are in fact, not availing ourselves of the law established by our governing authorities.

## Judging Our Motives for Prayer

Eichenwald casts aspersion on people of faith for gathering together to pray. He begins by castigating a prayer rally in Houston in 2011. He says, "[Then-governor Rick] Perry stepped to a podium, his face projected on a giant screen . . . and boomed out a long prayer asking God to make America a better place . . . babbling on . . . about faith and country and the blessings of America." He further claimed that Perry "heaped up empty phrases as the Gentiles do."

In reality, during the daylong event, Rick Perry spoke about 12 minutes and prayed for slightly more than **two minutes**. In his short prayer, Perry prayed in a cogent manner, praying for among others our president and his family.

Eichenwald explains that Perry is just an example of our misguided ways. The problem is that most Christians in American are disobeying the teaching of Jesus by praying in front of people and praying words other than the Lord's Prayer. As Jesus told us, "Whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray . . . so that they may be seen by others."

Yes, Jesus is very clear that we are not to be hypocrites, but it is possible for someone to speak a prayer
in the presence of others without being a hypocrite. Jesus does tell us to make our prayers a personal conversation with our heavenly Father. But Jesus prayed often before synagogue

attenders, in front of his disciples, and before over 5,000 people. But clearly those times, although numerous, were much less than the time He spent communing with His Father alone. That ratio should be true of our lives as well.

Even stranger is Eichenwald's belief that we should only pray the Lord's Prayer just as Jesus stated it. But, the passage in Matthew 6 tells us that Jesus was giving us a model, an example, of how to pray, not giving us a set of words to repeat in a meaningless fashion. In the gospels and the other New Testaments books, we are privy to many of the prayers offered by the apostles. None of them use the words from the Lord's prayer. If only Eichenwald had been there to instruct them, they would not have sinned so grievously.

Eichenwald claims the only reason anyone could be praying in front of a large crowd, or on television, or
by extension in a small congregation is "to be seen." This claim does not make sense. The people he is judging can build themselves up without having to resort to prayer.

## Conclusion

In this article, we have seen that critics use an incomplete, shallow examination of Scripture to claim it is not accurate and our application is faulty. In every case, we have seen that these claims leak like a sieve.

Dan Wallace sums up Eichenwald's arguments this way:

"*Time and time again the author presents his arguments as though they were facts. Any serious disagreements with his reasoning are quietly ignored as though they did not exist. The most charitable thing I can say is that Eichenwald is in need of a healthy dose of epistemic humility as well as a good research assistant who can do some fact-checking before the author embarrasses himself further in print. . .. But his numerous factual errors and misleading statements, his lack of*

*concern for any semblance of objectivity, his apparent disdain for and lack of interaction with genuine evangelical scholarship, and his uber-confidence about more than a few suspect viewpoints, make me wonder. . . . Eichenwald's grasp of conservative Christianity in America as well as his grasp of genuine biblical scholarship are, at best, subpar. And this article is an embarrassment to Newsweek—or should be!"*{38}

If Eichenwald's article represents the best scholarship discrediting the Bible, one rejoices in our firm foundation. On the other hand, realizing how many readers of such pieces don't know their flimsy nature, one is saddened by the potential impact on a society inclined to ignore the Bible.

**Notes**

1. Eichenwald, Kurt, "The Bible: So Misunderstood It's a Sin," *Newsweek Magazine*, December 2014.
2. Daniel B. Wallace, "Predictable Christmas Fare: *Newsweek*'s Tirade against the Bible," blogpost December 2014 and Bock, Darrell, "Darrell Bock Responds to Kurt Eichenwald's *Newsweek* Article on the Bible," blogpost December 2014.
3. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey, September 2010, pages 17-23.
4. Eichenwald, paragraph 4.
5. The 12 questions are as follows:

    1. What is the first book of the Bible? (Open-ended)
    2. What are the names of the first four books of the New Testament, that is, the four Gospels?
    3. Where, according to the Bible, was Jesus born? Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Nazareth or Jericho?
    4. Which of these is NOT in the Ten Commandments? Do unto others . . ., no adultery, no stealing, keep Sabbath?
    5. Which figure is associated with remaining obedient to God despite suffering? Job, Elijah, Moses or Abraham?
    6. Which figure is associated with leading the exodus from Egypt? Moses, Job, Elijah or Abraham?

7. Which figure is associated with willingness to sacrifice his son for God? Abraham, Job, Moses or Elijah?
8. What is Catholic teaching about bread and wine in Communion? They become body and blood, or are symbols?
9. Which group traditionally teaches that salvation is through faith alone? Protestants, Catholics, both or neither?
10. Was Mother Teresa Catholic, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu or Mormon?
11. What is the name of the person whose writings and actions inspired the Reformation? Luther, Aquinas or Wesley?
12. Who was a preacher during the First Great Awakening? Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney or Billy Graham?

6. The Barna Group, *Christians: More Like Jesus or Pharisees?*, 2012.
7. Eichenwald, paragraph 19.
8. Metzger, Bruce, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second Edition, German Bible Society, Stuttgart, pages 148-150.
9. Ibid, pages 162-163.
10. Wallace.
11. Eichenwald, paragraph 66.
12. Ibid, paragraph 66.
13. New English Translation, Genesis Chapter 2 Notes 9 and 11.
14. Eichenwald, paragraph 66.
15. Eichenwald, paragraph 51.
16. See Luke 23:4,14,22.
17. See Acts 2:23,23,3:14-15,4:10,5:30.
18. Matthew 26:4,27:23-24.
19. Mark 14:1, 15:14-15.
20. Eichenwald, paragraph 52.
21. Ibid, paragraph 68.
22. William Mounce, *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Zondervan, 2006.
23. Eichenwald, paragraph 70.

24. Among those disagreeing with Eichenwald's assertion are Daniel Wallace, John MacArthur, Charles Swindoll, John Stott, and Craig Keener.
25. Eichenwald, paragraph 77.
26. See the Watermark Community Church story: www.watermark.org/statement
27. Eichenwald, paragraph 80.
28. Eichenwald, paragraph 81.
29. Eichenwald, paragraph 82.
30. Matthew 5:20.
31. Matthew 5:48.
32. Acts 15:10-11.
33. For example in Mt 5:27-28, Romans 13:13-14, 1 Corinthians 6:9-20, Ephesians 4:19, Col 3:5, 1 Peter 4:3.
34. Acts 15:20,29.
35. Eichenwald, paragraph 77.
36. Romans 13:1,2.
37. Amendment 1 to the Constitution of the United States of America.
38. Wallace.

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# The Resurrection: Fact or Fiction? – A Real Historical Event

*Dr. Pat Zukeran presents strong evidence discounting the most common theories given against a historical resurrection. The biblical account and other evidence clearly discount these attempts to cast doubt on the resurrection. Any strong*

*apologetic argument is anchored on the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ as an historical event.*

## Introduction

The most significant event in history is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the strongest evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. This event gives men and women the sure hope of eternal life a hope that not only gives us joy as we look to the future but also provides us with powerful reasons to live today.

Throughout the centuries, however, there have been scholars who have attempted to deny the account of the Resurrection. Our schools are filled with history books which give alternative explanations for the Resurrection or in some cases, fail even to mention this unique event.

In this essay we will take a look at the evidence for the Resurrection and see if this event is historical fact or fiction. But, first, we must establish the fact that Jesus Christ was a historical figure and not a legend. There are several highly accurate historical documents that attest to Jesus. First, let’s look at the four Gospels themselves. The authors Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John recorded very specific facts of the events surrounding the life of Jesus, and archaeology has verified the accuracy of the New Testament. Hundreds of facts such as the names of officials, geographical sites, financial currencies, and times of events have been confirmed. Sir William Ramsay, one of the greatest geographers of the 19th century, became firmly convinced of the accuracy of the New Testament as a result of the overwhelming evidence he discovered during his research. As a result, he completely reversed his antagonism against Christianity.

The textual evidence decisively shows that the Gospels were written and circulated during the lifetime of those who witnessed the events. Since there are so many specific names

and places mentioned, eyewitnesses could have easily discredited the writings. The New Testament would have never survived had the facts been inaccurate. These facts indicate that the Gospels are historically reliable and show Jesus to be a historical figure. For more information on the accuracy of the Bible, see the essay from Probe entitled Authority of the Bible.

Another document that supports the historicity of Jesus is the work of Josephus, a potentially hostile Jewish historian. He recorded Antiquities, a history of the Jews, for the Romans during the lifetime of Jesus. He wrote, "Now there was about that time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man."(1) Josephus goes on to relate other specific details about Jesus' life and death that correspond with the New Testament. Roman historians such as Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger also refer to Jesus as a historically real individual.

Skeptics often challenge Christians to prove the Resurrection scientifically. We must understand, the scientific method is based on showing that something is fact by repeated observations of the object or event. Therefore, the method is limited to repeatable events or observable objects. Historical events cannot be repeated. For example, can we repeatedly observe the creation of our solar system? The obvious answer is no, but that does not mean the creation of the solar system did not happen.

In proving a historical event like the Resurrection, we must look at the historical evidence. Thus far in our discussion we have shown that belief in the historical Jesus of the New Testament is certainly reasonable and that the scientific method cannot be applied to proving a historical event. For the reminder of this essay, we will examine the historical facts concerning the Resurrection and see what the evidence reveals.

## Examining the Evidence

Three facts must be reckoned with when investigating the Resurrection: the empty tomb, the transformation of the Apostles, and the preaching of the Resurrection originating in Jerusalem.

Let us first examine the case of the empty tomb. Jesus was a well-known figure in Israel. His burial site was known by many people. In fact Matthew records the exact location of Jesus' tomb. He states, "And Joseph of Arimathea took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb" (Matt. 27:59). Mark asserts that Joseph was "a prominent member of the Council" (Mark 15:43).

It would have been destructive for the writers to invent a man of such prominence, name him specifically, and designate the tomb site, since eyewitnesses would have easily discredited the author's fallacious claims.

Jewish and Roman sources both testify to an empty tomb. Matthew 28:12 13 specifically states that the chief priests invented the story that the disciples stole the body. There would be no need for this fabrication if the tomb had not been empty. Opponents of the Resurrection must account for this. If the tomb had not been empty, the preaching of the Apostles would not have lasted one day. All the Jewish authorities needed to do to put an end to Christianity was to produce the body of Jesus.

Along with the empty tomb is the fact that the corpse of Jesus was never found. Not one historical record from the first or second century is written attacking the factuality of the empty tomb or claiming discovery of the corpse. Tom Anderson, former president of the California Trial Lawyers Association states,

> Let's assume that the written accounts of His appearances to

> hundreds of people are false. I want to pose a question. With an event so well publicized, don't you think that it's reasonable that one historian, one eye witness, one antagonist would record for all time that he had seen Christ's body? . . . The silence of history is deafening when it comes to the testimony against the resurrection.(2)

Second, we have the changed lives of the Apostles. It is recorded in the Gospels that while Jesus was on trial, the Apostles deserted Him in fear. Yet 10 out of the 11 Apostles died as martyrs believing Christ rose from the dead. What accounts for their transformation into men willing to die for their message? It must have been a very compelling event to account for this.

Third, the Apostles began preaching the Resurrection in Jerusalem. This is significant since this is the very city in which Jesus was crucified. This was the most hostile city in which to preach. Furthermore, all the evidence was there for everyone to investigate. Legends take root in foreign lands or centuries after the event. Discrediting such legends is difficult since the facts are hard to verify. However, in this case the preaching occurs in the city of the event immediately after it occurred. Every possible fact could have been investigated thoroughly.

Anyone studying the Resurrection must somehow explain these three facts.

## Five Common Explanations

Over the years five explanations have been used to argue against the Resurrection. We will examine these explanations to see whether they are valid.

***The Wrong Tomb Theory***

Proponents of this first argument state that according to the Gospel accounts, the women visited the grave early in the

morning while it was dark. Due to their emotional condition and the darkness, they visited the wrong tomb. Overjoyed to see that it was empty, they rushed back to tell the disciples Jesus had risen. The disciples in turn ran into Jerusalem to proclaim the Resurrection.

There are several major flaws with this explanation. First, it is extremely doubtful that the Apostles would not have corrected the women's error. The Gospel of John gives a very detailed account of them doing just that. Second, the tomb site was known not only by the followers of Christ but also by their opponents. The Gospels make it clear the body was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish council. If the body still remained in the tomb while the Apostles began preaching, the authorities simply would have to go to the right tomb, produce the body, and march it down the streets. This would have ended the Christian faith once and for all. Remember, the preaching of the Resurrection began in Jerusalem, fifteen minutes away from the crucifixion site and the tomb. These factors make this theory extremely weak.

***The Hallucination Theory***

This second theory holds that the Resurrection of Christ just occurred in the minds' of the disciples. Dr. William McNeil articulates this position in his book, *A World History*. He writes,

> The Roman authorities in Jerusalem arrested and crucified Jesus. . . . But soon afterwards the dispirited Apostles gathered in an upstairs room' and suddenly felt again the heartwarming presence of their master. This seemed absolutely convincing evidence that Jesus' death on the cross had not been the end but the beginning. . . . The Apostles bubbled over with excitement and tried to explain to all who would listen all that had happened.(3)

This position is unrealistic for several reasons. In order for

hallucinations of this type to occur, psychiatrists agree that several conditions must exist. However, this situation was not conducive for hallucinations. Here are several reasons. Hallucinations generally occur to people who are imaginative and of a nervous make up. However, the appearances of Jesus occurred to a variety of people. Hallucinations are subjective and individual. No two people have the same experience. In this case, over five hundred people (Corinthians 15) have the same account. Hallucinations occur only at particular times and places and are associated with the events. The Resurrection appearances occur in many different environments and at different times. Finally, hallucinations of this nature occur to those who intensely want to believe. However, several such as Thomas and James, the half brother of Jesus were hostile to the news of the Resurrection.

If some continue to argue for this position, they still must account for the empty tomb. If the Apostles dreamed up the Resurrection at their preaching, all the authorities needed to do was produce the body and that would have ended the Apostles' dream. These facts make these two theories extremely unlikely.

***The Swoon Theory***

A third theory espouses that Jesus never died on the cross but merely passed out and was mistakenly considered dead. After three days He revived, exited the tomb, and appeared to His disciples who believed He had risen from the dead. This theory was developed in the early nineteenth century, but today it has been completely given up for several reasons.

First, it is a physical impossibility that Jesus could have survived the tortures of the crucifixion. Second, the soldiers who crucified Jesus were experts in executing this type of death penalty. Furthermore, they took several precautions to make sure He was actually dead. They thrust a spear in His side. When blood and water come out separately, this indicates

the blood cells had begun to separate from the plasma which will only happen when the blood stops circulating. Upon deciding to break the legs of the criminals (in order to speed up the process of dying), they carefully examined the body of Jesus and found that He was already dead.

After being taken down from the cross, Jesus was covered with eighty pounds of spices and embalmed. It is unreasonable to believe that after three days with no food or water, Jesus would revive. Even harder to believe is that Jesus could roll a two-ton stone up an incline, overpower the guards, and then walk several miles to Emmaeus. Even if Jesus had done this, His appearing to the disciples half-dead and desperately in need of medical attention would not have prompted their worship of Him as God.

In the 19th century, David F. Strauss, an opponent of Christianity, put an end to any hope in this theory. Although he did not believe in the Resurrection, he concluded this to be a very outlandish theory. He stated,

> It is impossible that a being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulchre, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening, and indulgence, and who still at last yielded to his sufferings, could have given the disciples the impression that he was a Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of life, an impression that would lay at the bottom of their future ministry.(4)

***The Stolen Body Theory***

This fourth argument holds that Jewish and Roman authorities stole the body or moved it for safekeeping. It is inconceivable to think this a possibility. If they had the body, why did they need to accuse the disciples of stealing it? (Matt. 28:11 15). In Acts 4, the Jewish authorities were angered and did everything they could to prevent the spread of

Christianity. Why would the disciples deceive their own people into believing in a false Messiah when they knew that this deception would mean the deaths of hundreds of their believing friends? If they really knew where the body was, they could have exposed it and ended the faith that caused them so much trouble and embarrassment. Throughout the preaching of the Apostles, the authorities never attempted to refute the Resurrection by producing a body. This theory has little merit.

***The Soldiers Fell Asleep Theory***

Thus far we have been studying the evidence for the Resurrection. We examined four theories used in attempts to invalidate this miracle. Careful analysis revealed the theories were inadequate to refute the Resurrection. The fifth and most popular theory has existed since the day of the Resurrection and is still believed by many opponents of Christianity. Matthew 28:12 13 articulates this position.

> When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money telling them, “You are to say, his disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.'”

Many have wondered why Matthew records this and then does not refute it. Perhaps it is because this explanation was so preposterous, he did not see the need to do so.

This explanation remains an impossibility for several reasons. First, if the soldiers were sleeping, how did they know it was the disciples who stole the body? Second, it seems physically impossible for the disciples to sneak past the soldiers and then move a two-ton stone up an incline in absolute silence. Certainly the guards would have heard something.

Third, the tomb was secured with a Roman seal. Anyone who moved the stone would break the seal, an offense punishable by death. The depression and cowardice of the disciples makes it

difficult to believe that they would suddenly become so brave as to face a detachment of soldiers, steal the body, and then lie about the Resurrection when the would ultimately face a life of suffering and death for their contrived message.

Fourth, Roman guards were not likely to fall asleep with such an important duty. There were penalties for doing so. The disciples would have needed to overpower them. A very unlikely scenario.

Finally, in the Gospel of John the grave clothes were found "lying there as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself separate from the linen" (20:6 7). There was not enough time for the disciples to sneak past the guards, roll away the stone, unwrap the body, rewrap it in their wrappings, and fold the head piece neatly next to the linen. In a robbery, the men would have flung the garments down in disorder and fled in fear of detection.

## Conclusion: Monumental Implications

These five theories inadequately account for the empty tomb, the transformation of the Apostles, and the birth of Christianity in the city of the crucifixion. The conclusion we must seriously consider is that Jesus rose from the grave. The implications of this are monumental.

First, if Jesus rose from the dead, then what He said about Himself is true. He stated, "I am the Resurrection and the life; he who believes in me shall live even if he dies" (John 11:25). He also stated, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man comes to the father , but through me" (John 14:6). Eternal life is found through Jesus Christ alone. Any religious belief that contradicts this must be false. Every religious leader has been buried in a grave. Their tombs have become places of worship. The location of Jesus' tomb is unknown because it was empty; his body is not there. There was

no need to enshrine an empty tomb.

Second, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:54, “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” Physical death is not the end; eternal life with our Lord awaits all who trust in Him because Jesus has conquered death.

**Notes**

1. Josephus, *Antiquities* xviii. 33. (Early second Century).

2. Josh McDowell, *The Resurrection Factor* (San Bernadino, Calif.: Here’s Life Publishers, 1981), p. 66.

3. William McNeil, *A World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 163.

4. David Strauss, *The Life of Jesus for the People* , vol. 1, 2nd edition (London: Williams and Norgate, 1879), p. 412.

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# Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Fiction? – A Clear Christian Perspective

*Rusty Wright presents a compelling case for the historicity of Jesus' resurrection. Looking a four outcomes of the resurrection, he presents a brief case supporting a Christian worldview understanding that Jesus acutallly died and was resurrected from the tomb.*

At Easter, some might wonder what all the fuss is about. Who cares? What difference does it make if Jesus rose from the dead?

It makes all the difference in the world. If Christ did not rise, then thousands of believers have died as martyrs for a hoax.

If he did rise, then he is still alive and can offer peace to

troubled, hurting lives.

Countless scholars—among them the apostle Paul, Augustine, Sir Isaac Newton and C.S. Lewis—believed in the resurrection. We need not fear committing intellectual suicide by believing it also. Where do the facts lead?

Paul, a first-century skeptic-turned believer, wrote that "Christ died for our sins…he was buried…he was raised on the third day…he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve (Disciples). After that, he appeared to more than five hundred…at the same time, most of whom are still living." Consider four pieces of evidence:

**1. The explosive growth of the Christian movement.** Within a few weeks after Jesus was crucified, a movement arose which, by the later admission of its enemies, "upset the world." What happened to ignite this movement shortly after its leader had been executed?

**2. The Disciples' changed lives.** After Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, most of the Disciples fled in fear. Peter denied three times that he was a follower of Jesus. (The women were braver and stayed to the end.) Yet ten out of the eleven Disciples (Judas committed suicide) were martyred for their faith. According to traditions, Peter was crucified upside down; Thomas was skewered; John was boiled in oil but survived. What turned these cowards into heroes? Each believed he had seen Jesus alive again.

**3. The empty tomb.** Jesus' corpse was removed from the cross, wrapped like a mummy and placed in a solid-rock tomb. A one-and-a-half to two-ton stone was rolled into a slightly depressed groove to seal the tomb's entrance.

A "Green Beret"-like unit of Roman soldiers guarded the grave. Sunday morning, the stone was found rolled away, the body was gone but the graveclothes were still in place. What happened?

Did Christ's friends steal the body? Perhaps one of the women sweet-talked (karate-chopped?) the guards while the others moved the stone and tiptoed off with the body. Or maybe Peter (remember his bravery) or Thomas (Doubting Thomas) overpowered the guards, stole the body, then fabricated—and died for—a resurrection myth.

These theories hardly seem plausible. The guard was too powerful, the stone too heavy and the disciples too spineless to attempt such a feat.

Did Christ's enemies steal the body? If Romans or Jewish religious leaders had the body, surely they would have exposed it publicly and Christianity would have died out. They didn't, and it didn't.

The "Swoon Theory" supposes that Jesus didn't really die but was only unconscious. The expert Roman executioners merely thought he was dead. After a few days in the tomb without food or medicine, the cool air revived him.

He burst from the 100 pounds of graveclothes, rolled away the stone with his nail-pierced hands, scared the daylights out of the Roman soldiers, walked miles on wounded feet and convinced his Disciples he'd been raised from the dead. This one is harder to believe than the resurrection itself.

**4. The appearances of the risen Christ.** For 40 days after his death, many different people said they saw Jesus alive. Witnesses included a woman, a shrewd tax collector, several fishermen and over 500 people at once. These claims provide further eyewitness testimony for the resurrection.

As a skeptic, I realized that attempts to explain away the evidences run into a brick wall of facts that point to one conclusion: Christ is risen.

The above does not constitute an exhaustive proof, rather a reasoned examination of the evidence. Each interested person

should evaluate the evidence and decide if it makes sense. Of course, the truth or falsity of the resurrection is a matter of historical fact and is not dependent on anyone's belief. If the facts support the claim, one can conclude that he arose. In any case, mere intellectual assent to the facts does little for one's life.

A major evidence comes experientially, in personally receiving Jesus' free gift of forgiveness. He said, "I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him (or her)."

Worth considering?

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# The Technological Simulacra: On the Edge of Reality and Illusion

*Dr. Lawrence Terlizzese says that our addiction to technology is heading toward the opposite of the life we want.*

## What Saccharine is to Sugar, or The Technological Simulacra: On the Edge of Reality and Illusion

"Anyone wishing to save humanity today must first of all save the word."{1} – Jacques Ellul

# Simulacra

Aerosmith sings a familiar tune:

*"There's something wrong with the world today,*
*I don't know what it is,*
*there's something wrong with our eyes,*
*we're seeing things in a different way*
*and God knows it ain't [isn't] his;*
*there's melt down in the sky. We're living on the edge."*{2}



What saccharine is to sugar, so the technological simulacra is to nature or reality—a technological replacement, purporting itself to be better than the original, more real than reality, sweeter than sugar: hypersugar.




*Simulacra,* (*Simulacrum,* Latin, pl., *likeness, image, to simulate*): or simulation, the term, was adapted by French social philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) to express his critical interpretation of the technological transformation of reality into hyperreality. Baudrillard's social critique provided the premise for the movie *The Matrix* (1999). However, he was made famous for declaring that the Gulf War never happened; TV wars are not a reflection of reality but projections (recreations) of the TV medium.{3}

Simulacra reduces reality to its lowest point or one-dimension and then recreates reality through attributing the highest qualities to it, like snapshots from family vacation. When primitive people refuse to have their picture taken because they are afraid that the camera steals their souls, they are resisting simulacra. The camera snaps a picture and recreates the image on paper or a digital medium; it then goes to a photo album or a profile page. Video highlights amount to the same thing in moving images; from three dimensions, the camera reduces its object to soulless one-dimensional fabrication.{4}

Simulacra does not end with the apparent benign pleasures of family vacation and media, although media represents its most recent stage.{5} Simulacra includes the entire technological environment or complex, its infrastructure, which acts as a false "second nature"{6} superimposed over the natural world, replacing it with a hyperreal one, marvelously illustrated in the movie *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991). As liquid metal conforms itself to everything it touches, it destroys the original.{7}

Humanity gradually replaces itself through recreation of human nature by technological enhancements, making the human race more adaptable to machine existence, ultimately for the purpose of space exploration. Transhumanists believe that through the advancements in genetic engineering, neuropharmaceuticals (experimental drugs), bionics, and artificial intelligence it will redesign the human condition in order to achieve immortality. "Humanity+," as Transhumanists say, will usher humanity into a higher state of being, a technological stairway to heaven, "glorification," "divinization" or "ascendency"in theological terms.{8}

God made man in his own image and now mankind remakes himself in the image of his greatest creation (image), the computer. If God's perfection is represented by the number seven and man's imperfection by the number six, then the Cyborg will be a five according to the descending order of being; the creature is never equal or greater than the creator but always a little lower.{9}

Glorious Reduction!{10}

www.probe.org/machinehead-from-1984-to-the-brave-new-world-order-and-beyond/

## Hyperreality

An old tape recording commercial used to say, “Is it real or is it Memorex?” By championing the superiority of recording to live performance the commercial creates hyperreality, a reproduction of an original that appears more real than reality, a replacement for reality with a reconstructed one, purported to be better than the original.

Disneyland serves as an excellent example by creating a copy of reality remade in order to substitute for reality; it confuses reality with an illusion that appears real, “more real than real.”{11} Disney anesthetizes the imagination, numbing it against reality, leaving spectators with a false or fake impression. Main Street plays off an idealized past. The technological reconstruction leads us to believe that the illusion “can give us more reality than nature can.”{12}

Hyperreality reflects a media dominated society where “signs and symbols” no longer reflect reality but are manipulated by their users to mean *whatever*. Signs recreate reality to achieve the opposite effect (metastasis){13}; for example, in Dallas I must travel west on Mockingbird Lane in order to go to East Mockingbird Lane. Or, Facebook invites social participation when no actual face to face conversation takes place.{14}

Hyperreality creates a false perception of reality, the glorification of reduction that confuses fantasy for reality, a proxy reality that imitates the lives of movie and TV characters for real life. When reel life in media becomes real life outside media we have entered the high definition, misty region—the Netherlands of concrete imagination—hyperreality!{15}

Hyperreality goes beyond escapism or simply “just entertainment.” If that was all there was to it, there would be no deception or confusion, at best a trivial waste of time

and money. Hyperreality is getting lost in the pleasures of escapism and confusing the fantasy world for the real one, believing that fantasy is real or even better than reality. Hyperreality results in the total inversion of society through technological sleight of hand, a cunning trick, a sorcerer's illusion transforming the world into a negative of itself, into its opposite, then calling it progress.

Hyperreality plays a trick on the mind, a self-induced hypnotism on a mass scale, duping us by our technological recreation into accepting a false reality as truth. Like Cypher from the movie *The Matrix* who chose the easy and pleasant simulated reality over the harsh conditions of the "desert of the real" in humanity's fictional war against the computer, he chose to believe a lie instead of the truth.{16}

## The Devil is a Liar

A lie plays a trick on the mind, skillfully crafted to deceive through partial omission or concealment of the truth. The lie is the devil's (devil means liar) only weapon, always made from a position of inferiority and weakness (Revelation 20:3, 8). A lie never stands on its own terms as equal to truth; it does not exist apart from twisting (recreating) truth. A lie never contradicts the truth by standing in opposition to it.

A lie is not a negative (no) or a positive (yes), but obscures one or the other. It adds by revealing what is not there—it subtracts by concealing what is there. A lie appears to be what is not and hides what it really is. "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

A lie does not negate (contradict) or affirm truth. Negation (No) establishes affirmation (Yes). Biblically speaking, the no comes before the yes—the cross then the resurrection; law first, grace second. The Law is no to sin (disobedience); the Gospel is yes to faith (obedience). Truth is always a

synthesis or combination between God's no in judgment on sin and His yes in grace through faith in Jesus Christ. "For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Law without grace is legalism; grace without law is license.{17}

www.probe.org/law-and-grace-combating-the-american-heresy-of-pelagianism/

The devil's lie adds doubt to the promise of God; "Indeed, has God said, 'you shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"(Genesis 3:1 NASB) It hides the promise of certain death; "You surely will not die" (Genesis 3:4). The serpent twists knowledge into doubt by turning God's imperative, "Don't eat!" into a satanic question "Don't eat?"{18}

But it is Eve who recreates the lie in her own imagination. "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate" (Genesis 3:6).{19}

Sight incites desire. We want what we see (temptation). Eve was tempted by "the lust of the eyes" (1 John 2:16) after seeing the fruit, then believed the false promise that it would make her wise. "She sees; she no longer hears a word to know what is good, bad or true."{20} Eve fell victim to her own idolatrous faith in hyperreality that departed from the simple trust in God's word.{21}

## The Void Machine

Media (television, cell phone, internet, telecommunications) is a void machine.{22} In the presence of a traditional social milieu, such as family, church or school, it will destroy its host, and then reconstruct it in its own hyperreal image (Simulacra). Telecommunication technology is a Trojan Horse

for all traditional institutions that accept it as pivotal to their "progress," except prison or jail.{23}. The purpose of all institutions is the promotion of values or social norms, impossible through the online medium.

Media at first appears beneficial, but this technology transforms the institution and user into a glorified version of itself. The personal computer, for example, imparts values not consistent with the mission of church or school, which is to bring people together in mutual support around a common goal or belief for learning and spiritual growth (community). This is done primarily through making friends and forming meaningful relationships, quite simply by people talking to each other. Values and social norms are only as good as the people we learn them from. Values must be embodied in order to be transmitted to the next generation.{24}

Talking as the major form of personal communication is disappearing. Professor of Communications John L. Locke noted that "Intimate talking, the social call of humans, is on the endangered species list."{25} People prefer to text, or phone.{26} Regrettably, educational institutions such as high schools and universities are rapidly losing their relevance as traditional socializing agents where young people would find a potential partner through like interests or learn a worldview from a mentor. What may be gained in convenience, accessibility or data acquisition for the online student is lost in terms of the social bonds necessary for personal ownership of knowledge, discipline and character development.{27}

An electronic community is not a traditional community of persons who meet face to face, in person, in the flesh where they establish personal presence. Modern communication technologies positively destroy human presence. What philosopher Martin Heidegger called *Dasein*, "being there," (embodiment or incarnation) is absent.{28} As Woody Allen put it, "90 percent of life is showing up."{29} The presence of

absence marks the use of all electronic communication technology. Ellul argued, “The simple fact that I carry a camera [cell phone] prevents me from grasping everything in an overall perception.”{30} The camera like the cell phone preoccupies its users, creating distance between himself and friends. The cellphone robs the soul from its users, who must exchange personal presence for absence; the body is there tapping away, but not the soul! The cell phone user has become a void!{31}

## The Power of Negative Thinking

According to popular American motivational speakers, the key to unlimited worldly wealth, success and happiness is in the power of positive thinking that unleashes our full potential; however, according to obscure French social critics the key to a meaningful life, lived in freedom, hope and individual dignity is in the power of negative thinking that brings limits, boundaries, direction and purpose.

Negativity gives birth to freedom, expanding our spiritual horizons with possibilities and wise choices, which grounds faith, hope and love in absolute truth, giving us self-definition greater than our circumstances, greater than reality of the senses. To freely choose in love one’s own path, identity and destiny is the essence of individual dignity.

According to French social critics Jacques Ellul and Herbert Marcuse, freedom is only established in negation that provides limits and boundaries, which tells us who we are. Technological hyperreality removes all natural and traditional limits in the recreation of humanity in the image of the cyborg. The transhuman transformation promises limitless potential at the expense of individual freedom, personal identity and ultimately human dignity and survival.

www.probe.org/into-the-void-the-coming-transhuman-transformation/

All limitless behavior ends in self-destruction. Human extinction looms over the technological future, like the Sword of Damocles, threatening humanity's attempt to refit itself for immortality in a grand explosion (nuclear war), a slow poisoning (ecocide) or suicidal regressive technological replacement. Stephen Hawking noted recently that technological progress threatens humanity's survival with nuclear war, global warming, artificial intelligence and genetic engineering over the course of the next 100 years. Hawking stated, "We are not going to stop making progress, or reverse it, so we must [recognize] the dangers and control them."{32}

In asserting "NO!" to unlimited technological advance and establishing personal and communal limits to our use of all technology, especially the cell phone, computer and TV, we free ourselves from the technological necessity darkening our future through paralyzing the will to resist.{33}

After we "JUST SAY NO!"{34} to our technological addictions, for instance, after a sabbatical fast on Sunday when the whole family turns off their electronic devices, and get reacquainted, a new birth of freedom will open before us teeming with possibilities. We will face unmediated reality in ourselves and family with a renewed hope that by changing our personal worlds for one day simply by pushing the off button on media technology we can change the future. Through a weekly media fast (negation) we will grow faith in the power of self-control by proving that we can live more abundant lives without what we once feared absolute necessity, inevitable and irresistible. "All things are possible with God" (Mark 10: 27). When we exchange our fear of idols for faith in the Living God the impossible becomes possible and our unlimited potential is released that will change the world forever!{35}

I see trees of green, red roses, too,

I see them bloom, for me and you
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world.

I see skies of blue, and clouds of white,
The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world.

The colors of the rainbow, so pretty in the sky,
Are also on the faces of people going by.
I see friends shaking hands, sayin', "How do you do?"
They're really sayin', "I love you."

I hear babies cryin'. I watch them grow.
They'll learn much more than I'll ever know
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world.{36}

"[I]f man does not pull himself together and assert himself . . . then things will go the way I describe [cyborg condition]." – Jacques Ellul{37}

**Notes**

1. Jacques Ellul, *The Humiliation of the Word* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), vii.

2. Aerosmith, *Eat the Rich*, "Livin' on the Edge," Sony, 1993.

3. The same is true of the game last night—I caught the highlights on ESPN—no difference really—it never happened! The Presidential debates, my Facebook page, 911, televangelism, the online (electric) church: all reproductions, all exist at the level of Santa Claus in a dreamy, surreal world not really real: hyperreal, really!

4. French social critic Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) described dimensional reduction in human nature through the process of "mimesis" very similar to Baudrillard's conception of

*simulacra* (technological simulation) and Ellul's *la technique* (technological order). *Mimesis* eradicates all protest and opposition to the prevailing technological normalcy and silences all conscientious objections to the obvious or self-evident benefits (taken for granted) and blessings of technological progress. Like a frontal lobotomy when a section of the brain is removed that leaves all necessary automatic biological functions but removes the capacity to higher critical thinking, effectively silencing all differences, removing unique personality, individuality, and private space. The person is reduced to *one dimension* without the critical higher thought process or skills. Mimesis or mimicry transcends the adjustment phase to new technology known as *Future Shock* and brings the population into a direct and immediate relationship with the technological environment comparable to prehistoric and primitive cultures in their relationship to their natural milieus, climates and habitats. Mimesis replaces the traditional social environment with a technological one, an imitation or mimicry (simulacra). Mimesis removes the ability to feel alienation. Through reduction of the individual to a cell (atomization) in the social body, one never feels out of place, discomfort or disease, etc., because there is no longer any sense of individuality or difference. Anesthetizing the soul kills the pain of maladjustment to modernity leaving all feelings alike; joy is indistinguishable from hate. What do people feel after a lobotomy? They feel nothing, *comfortably numb* describes postmodern sentimentality.

Mimesis reduces the population to impulsive consumers. Material goods tie us to the system. "People recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment. The very mechanism which ties the individual to his society has changed and social control is anchored in the new needs it has produced" (Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in Advanced Industrial Society* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1964],

9). People are in love with their technology. Consumer objects express passion and spirituality; “For example, cars are not simply neutral transportation objects but beloved expressions of soul.” Their self-image is locked in the kind of cars they drive, houses they live in: “From teen dreaming about a hot set of wheels to the self-imagined sophisticate, it is image that dictates our purchase . . . Most of us can’t imagine why anyone would buy a Hummer except to flaunt his financial ability to conspicuously consume . . . . Anyone who doubts the role of image needs only drive a rust bucket” (Lee Worth Bailey, *The Enchantments of Technology* [Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005], 7). “Image is everything!” Modern technological materialism has become the antithesis of the Christian way of life. Jesus said, “A man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15).

5. Orders of Simulacra:

Renaissance: Copies of Original

Industrial: Mass Production of Original

Hyperreality: Recreation of Original

Metastasis: Reverse effects of the hyperreal stage of simulacra proliferate, comparable to the spread of cancerous tissue. “Metastasis: the transfer of disease from one organ or part to another not directly connected with it” (Benjamin F. Miller and Claire Brackman Keane *Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine and Nursing* [Philadelphia: Saunders, 1972]). Hyperreality “more real than real” purports to be a technological improvement on nature and “the signs and symbols,” (language) and institutions of traditional society, “better than real;” however, despite the apparent success of the hyperreal stage to deliver on its promise of improvement or “progress,” opposite results threaten social stability. Disneyland gets boring. Media technology isolates people rather than bringing them together. Social media turns out to

be anti-social. The automobile extends the commute to work. The computer increases the average work load and illiteracy, reduces jobs, depersonalizes individuals, kills privacy, creates universal surveillance, makes pornography and depictions of violence readily accessible to children. The cell phone is actually an excellent bomb detonating device. The computer atrophies human intelligence, logic, and thinking (creative and problem solving skills); through societal dependence on the computer people have forgotten how to think for themselves, and solve problems in any other way. The computer is not a simple tool used to organize knowledge, making it readily accessible, but as the centralizing technology through the digitalization process it recreates the world in its own image. Instead of happiness, the technological order is producing mass neurosis evident in the increase in depression, anxiety, attention deficit disorder, anorexia, bulimia, suicide and the mass inability to differentiate between reality and illusion.

Metastasis in the Orders of Simulacra according to Baudrillard also reflects Jacques Ellul's critical technological analysis in his assertion of the law of diminishing returns (law of reverse effects), *The Technological Bluff* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990). Once the threshold of reversal in technological progress is reached, a saturation point, beyond which any further advance is completely unnecessary (and thus further progress despite mass optimism) will produce reverse or opposite effects than intended. The technological threshold is reached when new technology is imposed on the population which was unnecessary prior to its invention. When necessity for a new technology appears after its invention the threshold of beneficial effects inverts and harmful consequences, side effects—intended or not—rapidly multiply. There is no use or felt needs for much of the technology developed in the 20th century; TV, computer, jet engine, rockets, atom bomb, cell phone, innumerable widgets and gadgets, so use is found and need artificially created. People have no felt need for a

technology that does not yet exist. When useless technology is developed for its own sake (knowledge for knowledge's sake), rather than liberation it displaces *the good of mankind to the glory of God* as its object or *telos* and becomes an end in itself. The general population never asks for new technology; rather, technology is developed according to the technological imperative—whatever can be done should be done. Its beneficial use is unquestionably assumed and its use promoted through mass advertising and commercials (technological propaganda), and in short order a new necessity is added to the litany of technological requirements. As the list of "must haves" and "can't live without" grows in order to keep pace with the tempo of modern life, *users* voluntarily surrender their freedom for self-imposed technological necessity, blissfully unaware of any potential side-effects or untoward consequences.

The technological condition may be compared to generational slavery. Those born into servitude accept it as normal. The "happy slave" remains so through refusal to recognize his condition as "slave." He embraces the world as he finds it with all his material needs and appetites satiated. There is no reason to protest, compounded by the fact that he has no ability to do so. A slave will always remain a slave until he recognizes that he is a slave. And without an intellectual horizon to lift him above his condition as a real possibility he will forever remain a slave. The first step to freedom for the slave is to recognize his condition of slavery and the possibility of a different way of life through self-determination, but that is impossible without a degree of abstract analysis and a measure of critical reason. Comparatively, technological determinism imposes its frightful inescapable necessity as a natural order without a meaningful future beyond the present way of life. In stripping society of critical ability to reason and negate that order from a metaphysical view, humanity has lost its only absolute reference point outside its own limited existence and above

its concrete situation from which to criticize technology and bring it under ethical control and moral limitation. God is greater than any technological idol made by human hands and provides an immovable ground from which humanity can reassert control, but mankind's Creator, Savior and Helper does him no good if he does not believe in his power or worse confuses it with the status quo, so that the apocalyptic power of God's confrontational judgment that leveled Babel (Genesis 11), Egypt (Exodus), Jerusalem and Rome is convoluted through blessing the technological utopia as *New Atlantis*.

The idolization of technology follows in the wake of modern science and rationalism but has a dehumanizing effect rather than amelioration. New technology brings new necessity and demands rather than freedom that exacts its price from humanity and nature, resulting in a much more complicated and dangerous world. The Apostle Paul stated that if we have food and shelter we should be content (1 Timothy 6:8). The accumulation of material things beyond meeting basic needs becomes a new burden, an added necessity not there before, resulting in bondage not freedom. People are owned by their possessions, must work harder for their technology and have been reduced to cogs in the wheel of progress rather than individuals with inherent value made in the image of God. From electricity, to phones, appliances to automobiles to computers, cell phones, *ad infinitum, ad nauseam* each new technology begins with the promises of convenience and improving modern life by making it faster, then through habitual use it becomes necessary, eventually addictive. From the basic material needs of food and shelter modern life has added dishwashers, microwave ovens, vacuum cleaners, TVs, cars, computers and most recently the cell phone as necessary for life in modern times. The devaluation of human life pays for the technology that is developed for the sake of expanding the frontiers of knowledge and exploration rather than creating the condition of freedom. Human freedom is lost with each new artificial technical necessity, resulting in an

increasingly nihilistic society; where power increases, choice is lost, resulting in increased meaninglessness. Nihilistic sentiment develops along with technological power; "*We know that power always destroys values and meaning* . . . Where power augments indefinitely there is less and less meaning" (Jacques Ellul, *Perspectives on Our Age* [New York: Seabury, 1981], 45). Technological necessity proliferates along with technological power over nature, reducing the scope of available choices, options or way of life that differs from those ensnared in the modern mechanized mainstream. What possibilities for a decent way of life are open to those who own neither car nor home, do not use a cell phone or computer, or possess at least a college degree? How *successful* will any corporate organization, church, school or business be if it does not use modern communication technology, radio, TV, computer or advertising techniques (propaganda) to promote its cause or product? As the world conforms itself to technological necessity, "you must get a cell phone and use a computer or risk getting left behind," it loses touch with the reality outside these devices, which is reduced and recreated online. For example, the traditional "church service" where believers join together in the unity of faith around the communion table as community and family becomes the embarrassing forgery of a lone spectator in front of a one dimensional monitor.

6. Paul Tillich, *The Spiritual Situation in Our Technical Society* (Macon, GA: University Press, 1988), 7. "Tillich describes the creation of a 'second nature' that results from science's attempt to control nature. Second nature in turn subjects man to the same domination he wishes to exert over nature, making himself subject to the very thing he had created to liberate him" (Lawrence J. Terlizzese, *Trajectory of the 21st Century: Essays on Theology and Technology* [Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2009, 155]).

7. Baudrillard's description of Simulacra is reminiscence of

Herbert Marcuse's depiction of "Mimesis" in *One-Dimensional Man*. Mimesis: the total identification of the individual with technological environment that mimics, apes or imitates historical social conditions, for example the city replaces nature, the automobile replaces the horse and carriage, TV replaces the family hearth, social media substitutes for personal relationships. Muk-bang replaces family members at the dinner table, traditional institutions that requires a personal presence, school and church, are rapidly transferring to the online medium. Likewise Jacques Ellul in *The Technological Society* describes technological advancement or "*la technique*" as creating a new environment, one that overlays both the natural and historical social environments with an urban/industrial/digital one.

8. Braden Allenby and Daniel Sarewitz, *The Techno-Human Condition* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 1-13; *Humans Need Not Apply*, CGP Grey, 2014. The Transhuman Transformation is the ultimate in works salvation that lifts humanity to the next stage in evolutionary development through technological immortality or digitalized godhood that replaces all his physical corruptions with artificial replacements in the simulated heaven of a computer server. The computer does not dominate the will of humanity, enforcing universal peace through fear of annihilation as in the movie *Colossus: The Forbin Project* (1970), but assimilates humanity digitally and recreates it in its own image or highest ideal. The robots are not taking over, rather humanity is surrendering its will and decisions to the computer in tired resignation of life which has become too difficult by its own design.

9. "O LORD . . . What is man that you are mindful of him or the son of man that you visit him? For you have made him a little lower than the angels and crowned him with glory and honor" (Psalm 8:4, 5). "Angels," Elohim (God) in Psalm 8:5 refers to the divine visitation (theophany) mentioned in verse 4, the Angel of The LORD, i.e., Genesis 18; 19; 22:15;

32:24-32; Exodus 12:12, 13. Humanity was made highest in God's created order, below the creator and above the angelic host in the chain of being; "Don't you know you will judge angels?" (1 Corinthians 6:3). Angels are "ministering spirits sent to minister to the heirs of salvation" (Hebrews 1:14).

10. We are not saying one cannot reduce a complicated argument, book, movie etc., to its main points in outline form. We are saying that reduction does not replace the original, as somehow "better." A well-done outline does not alleviate the audience's responsibility to discover for itself, to pick up and read, but will inspire the audience to do so. Reading Calvin's *Institutes*, or Augustine's *City of God* or Thomas' *Summa Theologica* in PowerPoint or Cliff Notes is comparable to watching the Super Bowl in highlights instead of in its entirety from kickoff.

The proliferation of the digital camera as appendage to the cell phone has created the absurd phenomenon of reduction of reduction in the class room. As the PowerPoint slide has allowed professors to reduce all learning to three pertinent bullet points per slide, so students have followed their cue in picturing the text (taking a picture of the slide). Instead of suffering the laborious and tedious task of jotting down a simple outline in a note book, a helpful mnemonic practice, they take a picture of it, reducing the slide to digital acknowledgement and temporary storage before deletion, in order to make room for the pictures of tomorrow night's Harry Potter costume gala. Education isn't what it used to be, it just isn't!

11. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 166 ff.

12. Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality* (New York: HBJ, 1986), 43.

13. The projections of visual media may have their origins in "the desert of the real" as Baudrillard puts it, but what the

spectator sees on his screen, monitor or photograph should not be confused with “reality,” but recreated reality mediated through an electronic medium. Marshall McLuhan’s famous maxim for media analysis, “The medium is the message,” undergirds this critical understanding of media technology. Any fan of live entertainment or sports knows immediately that TV broadcast of a live venue is an entirely different event than being there live behind home plate or on the fifty yard line. Preference for the surreal, sterilized, cartoonish, Apollonian images on TV and in film, rather than seeing the actual blots, blemishes and facial scars of people, perspiring athletes or hearing the crack of the bat is not the central moral issue, which does not come down to preferences, which are already conditioned by excessive media exposure at an early age. The failure to distinguish between reality and hyperreality constitutes the greatest dangers of the technological simulacra. When the general audience mistakes or confuses the hyperreal for reality, it allows itself to be deceived. When it believes what it sees on TV to be the literal unbiased truth, when in fact TV broadcasts a highly opinionated reconstructed version designed to transport its audience to a dream-like existence, the audience loses touch with reality and becomes immune to moral conscience, guilt and remorse for its actions—for example, war, ecological destruction, racism, etc. Group deception and delusion is rooted in personal inability to distinguish fact and fantasy, reality and illusion creating a strange self-hypnotic mass psychosis, easily persuaded by the predominate image projected into its thinking. “Brainwashing” or “mind control” are not the best choice of words, yet the terms still resonate for many people in describing the immediate effects of visual media on the audience. Electronic media bypass the rational process and speaks directly to the emotional or subconscious. Media effects the shaping of behavior through mass appeal of image, a reproduction of reality framed in drama and grounded in the erotic (sex appeal), moving the mass to do something (doing is being), buy, give, join, fight, etc., without the ballast of

critical reflection that will spare a people from rushing headlong into disaster. The irrational nature of the emotional appeal was the cause for Plato's expulsion of artists, musicians and dramatists from his fictional utopia *The Republic*. By allowing irrational appeal free reign, the public loses the appeal to critical reason as the measure of truth and the people become prone to deception and mass manipulation by a tyrant. Likewise Jesus urges all to pause in rational reflection, "to count the cost" like a king going to war or building a tower, before deciding to follow him (Luke 14:25-33).

The failure to discern the difference between reality and illusion in mass and social media is due to the intoxicating effects of hyperreality and the loss of critical reason in the public's media consumption. Electronic media numbs awareness to reality and allows escape to fantasy, as the universal *soma* (perfect drug from Huxley's fictional tale *Brave New World*). The condition of intoxication or "drunkardness" is one of self-induced madness, so the self-hypnotic condition of electronic media creates a similar neurosis. Karl Marx criticized religion as "the opiate of the people," accurate for the masses living in the industrial conditions of the 19th century, but obsolete as a description of the masses since the invention of television, which has replaced religion as the opiate of the people.

When image dominates a societal mindset and learning, emotional (sex) appeal moves the population in mass conformity or group behavior that ousts critical reason in herd mentality, subject to the whims of the image makers, propagandists, clergy, advertisers, etc. Ellul noted two orders of thinking determined by the means of learning: image and language. Image learning presents knowledge as a totality, each image is a world, complete and ready-made, certain of its own truthfulness, imparting its information instantly so long as we occupy the same space as the image. "The image conveys

to me information belonging to the category of evidence, which convinces me without any prior criticism" (Ellul, *The Humiliation of the Word*, 36). The image impresses itself on the character of the learner through unconscious acceptance that does not follow the logical sequence of language from start to finish, beginning to end but produces a haphazard collage of contradicting light totalities that appeal immediately to the moment (instant gratification). Image based learning produces a monolithic mentality or stereotypical thinking and prescribed behavior. Critical reason is never allowed to assert differences; extremes are normalized so that everything is accepted. This is very apparent in the current PC orthodoxy widely accepted in the Millennial generation, the first generation raised on the computer, that stupidly pontificates that any assertion of difference between sexes, races, religion, etc., etc., amounts to "hate-crime." For example, the gay lifestyle is no longer an acceptable alternative to monogamy but now has legal sanction as part of the mainstream establishment, despite its irrational and unnatural character. Islam is accepted as a religion of peace and compatible with Western democracies, yet no proof is ever offered to support this claim from the history of Islam. And the universal inanity of technological neutrality that provides the false sense of individual control over technological use, rapidly degenerates to technological necessity and inevitability of technological progress in actual daily behavior. Technology cannot be both neutral in its character under control of human choices and necessary or not under control of human choices, but autonomous (developing according to its own inner logic) at the same time; yet this inherent contradiction is completely ignored by all advocates of unlimited technological progress, Transhumanists, Futurists or simply all those who feel invested in the latest innovation: intellectuals, preachers, writers, professors, technogeeks, technognostics and technophiles. The smartest people in society appear completely oblivious to the contradiction of believing that technology is neutral in its

essence yet necessary in application, rationalizing its rapid acceleration, not because they are bad people but because their thinking is dominated by the image of unlimited progress and human perfectibility projected onto them from the computer, rather than a rational way of thinking growing out of the book and lecture. Computerization of all human life creates the cardinal value of speed for its own sake (faster is better), which necessarily leads to nonlinear or irrational (emotional) learning through images because it is easy, instant, and unconscious, producing stereotypical categories and behavior. The word expressed in speech and writing produces opposition to image domination of the computer because it is slower, linear and critical.

The second order of thinking Ellul says comes from language or the spoken and written word which must follow an arduous task of connecting letters, words, sentences and thoughts to each other through the process of speaking, reading and writing which follows the contours of logical sequence in step by step growth in knowledge and reason. Language learning does not begin with the self-asserting certainty of the totalitarian image, but develops progressively from “the unknown to uncertain and then from the uncertain to the known.” (Ellul, *The Humiliation of the Word*, 36); dialectically including doubt, objection, protest or difference in the attainment of knowledge. Language is rational, self-aware or conscious, certain of what it knows but never exhaustive in its claim to absolute total knowledge, therefore it remains critical or open to differences of opinion and further learning; there is always something new to learn, discover and explore. Language allows for personal identity through individual choices that are free but never absolute or final beyond correction or criticism. In the total world imposed by the image, knowledge is absolute with nothing new possible, therefore it must be accepted uncritically.

Because language is rational it also produces the highest

standards in ethics and morality-rooted individual values and beliefs. Rationalism always produces the greatest moralism. In the ancient world the rational school of philosophy (Stoicism) based on their belief in logos (universal reason) was also the most ethical in their practice of universal peace, and equality. In world religions Buddhism stands as the most rational in its beliefs of simple universal truths leading to practical moral behavior (Four Noble Truths: life is suffering, suffering is caused by selfish desire, suffering is alleviated by limiting selfish desire, curb selfish desire through the practical application of the Eightfold Path). Modern Rationalism culminating in the 19th century was also one of the profoundest in moral character in all strata of society, education, politics, economics and religion. The ethic of love rooted in the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man was considered the essence of Christianity in the 19th century (Harnack, *What is Christianity?*). The Jewish rabbinical approach to learning through language is legendary for its rationalism and strict legalism as well as its Islamic counterpart in the Muslim devotion to the Koran, Sharia Law and iconoclasm.

In the second order of language, ethics are grounded in personal choices as a product of rational criticism, which allows for meaningful differences of opinion and the free creation of values. In the first order of image learning, all views are standard and all behavior an expression of group conformity. “The image tends . . . to produce conformity, to make us join a collective tendency” (Ellul, *The Humiliation of the Word*, 35). Thus the two orders of thinking are opposed to each other. The first order in totalitarian fashion is in the process of eradicating the second order through purging critical reason from the mindset of the population like a mass spiritual lobotomy that removes part of the brain that contains the higher function of reason and abstract thought process. The image overwhelms the word through reduction and then removal and remaps the collective mind to think

accordingly, freedom of thought is left open as possibility only because most people cannot think for themselves but are programed through media saturation. Note the drift in social media from glorified email responses on Facebook to the forced shrinkage of the word to 120 characters on Twitter, to finally pictures only on Tumblr, and Instagram. The second order in critical toleration of the image does not want to eradicate it, but put image in its place, not as an expression of truth or reality but a simple illustration in service of the word and higher critical function of human nature through which humanity creates its self-definition, limits and significance. The second order of language thinking does not separate rational discourse in philosophy from a dramatic presentation in literature, or the arts, film or TV, etc. The Twentieth Century French Existentialists demonstrated the compatibility of rational discourse through abstract prose and exposition and the concrete embodiment of their ideas in dramatic forms such as plays, novels and movie illustrations. Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Gabriel Marcel wrote the most penetrating philosophical analysis of the modern condition of alienation as well as the greatest poetic description of modern despair and hope, for example, compare Sartre's tome Being and Nothingness with his play "No Exit" or Camus' essay on The Myth of Sisyphus to his novel The Stranger. Theologian Paul Tillich argued likewise that art serves as the spiritual barometer of culture. Through rational analysis of art, literature and drama the church will gain a better read on the spiritual climate of the society it hopes to evangelize and better tailor its message of the gospel to the concrete situation expressed through peoples felt needs. Even Jacques Ellul the leading social critic of visual media and advocate of word over image adopted a similar method of point and counter point as the existentialists by pairing the most penetrating sociological analysis of technology, raising the question how to limit autonomous technique and answering it with an allegorical interpretative method of the biblical text under the respectable umbrella of Barthian theology through

his ethic of limits or nonpower. Compare The Technological Society to his biblical exposition of Genesis in The Meaning of the City.

14. On Facebook, friends can number into the thousands. New friends are just a click away; you don't even have to know them or even meet them to be friends. Aristotle said that friends are the people we eat with every day. Simple enough to grasp, but what does an ancient Greek philosopher know compared to the moguls of social media?

15. Baudrillard and Eco validated Gasset's thesis in *Revolt of the Masses* that science and technology sows the seeds of its own demise by elevating the mass of humanity through its values of discovery, invention and discipline, yet the mass revolt against those values that brought them to dominance. This is the same basic thesis that argues we are the victims of our own success as applied to capitalism and the accumulation of wealth. One generation works to achieve a level of wealth that the next generation inherits with all the benefits of wealth but none of the sacrifice of the previous generation. Therefore it squanders it not knowing the value of wealth not having to work for it and being raised in privilege.

Gay Marriage is another recent example of simulacra. The hyperreal replaces the real with a copy made in our own image. Contemporary society is under a spell, thinking it can remake the institution of marriage founded in the Bible between one man and one woman (Genesis 2 and Matthew 19) to include its opposite or whatever the courts deem acceptable; eventually the courts will accept the union of people and their pets. Already the Disney Corporation has changed the name of The Family Channel to Free Form, an ominous precursor to the dissolution of meaning to the sacred word family in American popular culture and its reprobate legal system.

16. Reality and Truth are not coequal or synonymous terms, but

signify different metaphysical orders. Ellul noted that the unity of reality and truth expresses “the unity of being” (Ellul, *Humiliation of the Word*, 96), or the right relationship between the Creator and his creation. Truth belongs to God’s essence alone, as the One Eternal Absolute. Reality expresses the multifaceted finite human concrete situation. When our reality aligns with God’s truth we experience the peace of redemption that passes understanding, harmonious being. Reality is the realm of sight that leads us away from the truth of the invisible God who cannot be seen and is found only through the word (speech, talk, conversation, discourse, lecture, song). The visible is the realm of false idols incarnated as very real visible powers (gods): Money, the State, and Technology (Ellul, *The Humiliation of the Word*, 94, 95). The order of reality is the order of human life which Nietzsche argued may include error. “Life no argument—We have fixed up a world for ourselves in which we can live-assuming bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content: without these articles of faith, nobody now would endure life. But that does not mean that they have been proved. Life is no argument; the conditions of life could include error.” (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (New York: Vintage, 1974), 177 [121]). Iconoclasm then becomes the mission of the church as it proclaims the gospel and demolishes spiritual strong holds which is the battle for the mind “destroying speculations . . . raised up against the knowledge of God” (2 Corinthians 10:3-6); “iconoclasm is always essential to the degree that other gods and other representations are manifested . . . Today reality triumphs, has swept everything away and monopolizes all our energy and projects. The image is everywhere, but now we bestow dignity, authenticity and spiritual truth on it. We enclose within the image everything that belongs to the order of truth” (Ellul, *The Humiliation of the Word*, 94, 95).

17. In terms of an ethic of technology biblical truth

translates as limit before use or law before license. For example, When adults set time limits on media use for their children anywhere from twenty minutes to an hour of screen time be it TV, computer or cell phone, they are practicing an ethic of technology.

Social critic Jacques Ellul stated; “The ‘yes’ makes no sense unless there is also the ‘no’ . . . the no comes first, death before resurrection. If the ‘No!’ is not lived in its reality the yes is a nice pleasantry, a comfort one adds to one’s material comfort, and as Barth has conclusively shown the No is included in the gospel” Quoted in Lawrence J. Terlizzese, *Hope in the Thought of Jacques Ellul* (Cascade: Eugene, OR, 2005), 127; Jacques Ellul, *False Presence of the Kingdom*, 25.

18. Original Divine Command: “From any tree of the Garden you may eat freely, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16, 17 NASB).

Satanic Recreation of the original command: “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'”(Genesis 3:1 NASB).

Imperative turns into question through a simple shift in voice emphasis, “Don’t eat!” to “Don’t eat?”, inciting disobedience instead of obedience as its effect, confusing the knowledge of good and evil.

19. The hyperreal replaces the real with a copy made in our own image. A copy is never greater than the original and to believe that a glorified reduction, a snap shot somehow surpasses the original shows just how far along the popular delusion has advanced. Simulacra is portent to antichrist: “The one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this

reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness”(2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). Mass media qualifies as “a deluding influence”: remaking the image of God in the image of an image. “Language is unobtrusive in that it never asserts itself on its own. When it [mass media] uses a loudspeaker and crushes others with its powerful equipment, when the television set speaks, the word is no longer involved, since no dialogue is possible. What we have in these cases is machines that use language as a way of asserting themselves. Their power is magnified, but language is reduced to a useless series of sounds which inspires only reflexes and animal instincts” (Jacques Ellul, *The Humiliation of the Word*, 23).

The first commandment teaches that “You shall not make any graven images . . . you shall not bow down to them nor worship them (Exodus 20:4, 5). The construction of image is always a reduction from an original and imperfectly copies what it claims to represent; presenting a false image of God, an idol. The idol transforms its worshipers into its own image. All those who worship idols become like them (Psalms 115).

By worshiping the creature humanity dehumanizes itself by bowing down to the created order lower than itself. The prohibition against worshiping idols is meant to spare God’s people from corrupting God’s glory by reducing the invisible Creator to the visible creation and enslaving themselves to the works of their own hands. Idolatry exchanges “the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man . . .” (Romans 1:23). The idol is the construction of man, representing his ideal of God (image) in his own image, which in turn recreates man as slave in the image of the idol. Here we see perfectly in the biblical model of idolatry, the same Transhumanists enterprise of constructing an ideal image (cyborg) in the image (mankind) of an image (the computer), leading not to human ascendance or godhood but dehumanization

or slavery by placing humanity lower than its own creation (the cyborg condition). Man builds an idol he thinks represents God which in truth is a reduction of the glory of God into the image of the creature and lowers himself through worship of the false image of God making himself a slave to a thing that appears real but really does not exist outside of humanity's faith in its own self-projection.

The first commandment prohibits "graven images" the invisible God cannot be seen in the works of human hands (Acts 17). All images of God are an affront to his holiness and danger to his children. Idols reduce God to the false image which then further reduces worshipers.

Iconoclasm is the central liberation mission of the church in its declaration of the gospel.

"No one can see God and live" (Exodus 33:20). "Images are incapable of expressing anything about God. In daily life as well, the word remains the expression God Chooses. Images are in a completely different domain—the domain that is not God and can never become God on any grounds" (Ellul, *The Humiliation of the Word*, 91).

20. Ellul, *The Humiliation of the Word*, 96.

21. God's revelation comes only through the spoken word received by faith never through sight, which must remain subservient to the oral, spoken invisible message. "Faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). "We look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18). "We walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, conviction of things not seen . . . By faith we understand . . . Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11). "The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as

it is written; ‘The righteous live by faith'” (Romans 1:17). “Set your mind on things above [the invisible Christ, “the way, the truth and the life”], not on the things that are on earth [the visible, material, tangible, concrete reality of the present world].” “Fixing our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of faith” (Hebrews 12:2). The aural, auditory sense or put simply the ear is the organ of perception and faith never the eyes. Sight brings only doubt; despite popular opinion seeing is not believing, but unbelief. The desire to see the truth is rooted in doubt and unbelief; “Unless I see . . .” doubting Thomas said, “. . . I will not believe” (John 20:25). “Blessed are they who have not seen and yet believe” (John 20:29). “Sight played an enormous role in the Fall and caused all of humanity and language to swing to its side. Under these circumstances, it is understandable that the Bible so often relates sight to sin. Sight is seen as the source of sin, and the eye becomes the link between reality and the flesh. The eye is seen as the focusing lens of the body (but only of the body). The Bible speaks of the lust of the eye and of the eye as the source and means of coveting. Now we know that covetousness is the crux of the whole affair, since sin always depends on it. “You shall not covet” (Ex. 20: 17) is the last of the commandments because it summarizes everything—all the other sins” (Ellul, *The Humiliation of the Word*, 100, 101). Because Eve looked upon the fruit, she lusted after wisdom, the knowledge of good and evil, a possession she desired but did not work for or earn that did not belong to her. “Eve coveted equality with God . . . She coveted autonomy of decision” (Ellul, *The Humiliation of the Word*, 101). Lust is born from sight of the material possession. The Tenth Commandment lists a prohibition of desire on what does not belong to us but is rightfully our neighbor’s: his wife, house, domesticated animals and servants, all must first be seen before desired. Today we call these possessions status symbols, spouse, house, cars, money, etc., etc., all the objects of consumer desire that dominate our visual horizon through advertising, commercials and the all-pervasive world

of image, which fills us with materialistic greed.

22. Technological convergence brings TV, computer, cell phone, video game (telecommunications) together as one medium. Professor of Philosophy Andy Clark notes that the cell phone is the gateway to the cyborg condition: “The cell phone is, indeed, a prime, if entry-level cyborg technology” (Andy Clark, *Natural-Born Cyborgs: Minds, Technologies, and the Future of Human Intelligence* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2003], 27). The cell phone has evolved from a clumsy mobile phone into a sleek microcomputer that puts the full resources of the internet at the fingertips of the user.

The computer medium heralds the absolute closing of the human mind and cultural diversity by subverting all ends to its means it creates the condition necessary for total domination of the human spirit. All total systems subvert ends to means in their revolutionary beginning, such as the Napoleonic empire, fascism and communism. “By any means necessary,” or “for the good of the cause” becomes the motto of the radical on the road to totalitarian paradise (Serfdom). The computer coopts all nontechnical areas; in the form of “technical aid and support” subverting their ends by overbearing means. As the absolute single point of convergence for all humanity the computer fixes its own organizational categories on every person, discipline (field) or organization that uses it. The passage of admission to digital utopia is technical conformity (surrender). All nontech people and fields must soon learn the ways of the computer, if they expect to survive in the new universal cyber regime (the technological order). Liberal Arts, for instance no longer exists as a separate track or discipline in a dialectical counter balance to Science. Beholden to the computer for success it has sold its spiritual birth right as moral conscience through cultural critic or prophet to the rational establishment. By way of apt analogy, in the past when churches received State support through official recognition as the established religion they became

in effect the court prophets, chaplain's to the king. They "sold out" to the powers that be, forfeiting their divisive voice. Dissent is never allowed in any total system by definition, otherwise it would not be total. Those who profit from the system are not in a position to disagree with its direction without mortal endangerment. The old maxim "never bite the hand that feeds you" was rigorously applied by the official religions in the past. Likewise, rarely is a critical voice heard today through the prodigious production of liberal arts in media, except for science fiction film. The old dichotomy of art and technology embodied in the Intellectual verses the City model has resolved itself in the computer. Chilton Williamson, Jr. noted the subtle reeducation the older generation of writers must endure in order to practice their craft using the computer. "Writing ought to be, technically speaking, among the simplest and natural of human actions. The computer makes it one of the most complex and unnatural ones. It is nothing less than a crime against humanity, and against art, that a writer should be required to learn how to master a machine of any kind whatsoever in order to write a single sentence. But no writer today can succeed in his craft if he does not learn to become a more or less skillful machine operator first." ("Digital Enthusiasm" in *Chronicles* [June 2014, 38.6], 33). The end or goal of writing (to be read by others) has been subverted by means of the computer (Subversion: to corrupt an alien system for different ends from within, for example; primitive Christianity was subverted by the political forces of the later Roman Empire, creating Christendom). Computer subversion of humanity has been repeated simultaneously with writing since the digital revolution in the 1990's.

By giving children at the earliest age possible a computer to play with and master, turning work into play, the technological oligarchy has guaranteed that they will grow to become computer technicians in some degree and has successfully circumvented the nasty reeducation process

necessary to all revolutions in the past. As the product of the digital revolution the Millennial generation has inherited the onerous responsibility of being the first generation raised on the computer as their defining characteristic. They are the first non-national generation, identifiable by digital acuity, video game addiction and the cell phone, rather than by race, gender or creed. The world that they create will ultimately prove their humanity or not.

One machine that can do everything controls everyone, even now as I write an unsolicited advertisement appears on my computer screen telling me that "Technical support is designed to monitor your system for issues." Positively Orwellian! No greater insidious subtlety to seduce the human spirit than the emerging global technological order has appeared since the Tower of Babel!

All total systems are inherently corrupt and eventually self-destruct.

23. Philosopher Michael Foucault builds on Jeremy Bentham's purposed panoptic system theory by arguing that Bentham's proposed universal prison surveillance system that kept prisoners under constant watch has been extended to contemporary society through media saturation. Law Professor Jerry Rosen argues that through social media society has entered a condition he describes as "Omniopticon" where we are all watching each other (*The Naked Crowd*); Ellul, *The Humiliation of the Word*, 152; Reg Whitaker *The End of Privacy: How Total Surveillance Is Becoming a Reality* (New York: New Press, 1999).

24. Hyperreal communities, churches, schools, dating sites do not allow for individual charisma, personal persona, flamboyancy, speech impediments, warts, blemishes, ugliness, beauty, intelligence, everything thing that makes an individual unique disappears behind the brilliance of a cartoon reality.

The modern socialization process once reserved for family, church and community in traditional society has been usurped by media and the State. Socialization is the rather sensitive and all important process through which values are imprinted on youth. Socialization is everything! Society receives its understanding of right and wrong, good and evil in a word normalcy through socialization. In the mission of the church socialization is equal to evangelism. If the church successfully evangelizes a society, converting everyone to the Christian faith, it must then pass those values to the next generation, if it fails to do so it must then start the whole evangelization process over. Regrettably, the American church is learning this lesson the hard way, after surrendering the socialization process of Christian youth to media, and public schools. The most media saturated and technologically adapt generation in human history is rapidly becoming the most nihilistic since late antiquity.

Media transmits collective values directly to the social body by passing the individual consciousness. Mass media transmits its own values of consumption and materialism that traditional family, church and community as social agents cannot compete with according to social critic Herbert Marcuse. Media transmits the values of "efficiency, dream, and romance." "With this education, the family can no longer compete." The father's authority is the first traditional value to fall.(Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry to Freud* (New York: Vintage 1955, 88).

25. John L. Locke, *The De-Voicing of Society: Why We Don't Talk to Each Other Anymore* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 19.

26. The only reason people give as to why they use media technology is because of its convenience, it is easier to send an email or text than write a letter and use a postage stamp. However, ease of use and convenience shows lack of understanding as well as accountability. "I use it because it

is easy” is hardly a thought-out moral defense for one’s action! And here is where the trap lies for all of us. The history of technology demonstrates that convenient and pervasive use over time slowly turns into necessity. What was once done because it was so easy to do, eventually must be done. TV, computer and most recently the cell phone, these technologies never appeared as necessities but convenience, but now they are irresistible necessities. Convenience turns into necessity because it was so easy to send a text, or email, we have forgotten how to communicate in any other way, or refuse to relearn those old ways. Convenience dulls the spirit and numbs the mind, producing stupidity and apathy by removing all other practices from our intellectual horizon. Beware of anything thing that looks so easy, it is nothing more than a hook to necessity. The old saying, “If it sounds too good to be true it probably is,” applies to technology as well. “Whatever appears to make your life easier right now in the long run may make it more difficult.” Convenience turns into habit, habit turns into need, need turns into addiction.

27. The friendships forged in traditional institutions create the social support network for an individual throughout his professional career. As an online professor I did not know how to write a letter of recommendation for a student I have never met in person. Education has become so dominated by technical learning, all students in essence are studying to be engineers in their field whether teachers, medical practitioners, social workers etc.; they are taught efficient methods as administrators or managers of large groups of people.

28. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1962).

29. Quoted in Locke, *The De-Voicing of Society*, 43.

30. Ellul, *The Humiliation of the Word*, 122. “Even more, it [the camera] keeps me from proceeding to cultural assimilation, because these two steps can be taken only in a

state of availability and lack of preoccupation with other matters – a state of "being there." (Ibid).

31. In line with Baudrillard thesis on the orders of simulacra, popular cell phone use, namely texting, demonstrates regressive effects of the latter stage of simulacra: metastasis or reversal of effects. It is quite common to see people texting and even preferring texting to any other mode of communication, especially phone calling, when it is obviously easier to call and talk than it is to text, time wise and in terms of context and amount of content necessary for successful conversation, yet texting is preferred because of its impersonal nature; people prefer the harder task of texting because it is impersonal, however, impersonal communication is less effective to the point of communication.

32. *Radio Times* (January 2016). Hawking said bluntly, "I think the development of full artificial intelligence could spell the end of the human race." Quoted in "Rise of the Machines" in the *Dallas Morning News* Sunday, February 14, 2016, 1P. Recognizing and controlling the dangers of progress is a call for limits and boundaries to technological acceleration possible only through negation.

33. The fear of living without the necessity that controls us reveals the modern condition of technological determinism. In confronting determinism we must appeal to "the individual's sense of responsibility . . . the first act of freedom, is to become aware of the necessity" (Ellul, *The Technological Society*, xxxiii).

Necessity (whatever we fear we cannot live without) is always a limitation placed on human nature, such as the basic biological needs to eat and sleep. Necessity limits freedom and therefore power and ability. Death is also a necessity, without which new life and growth cannot take place. However, death is the last enemy, which is defeated finally in the

resurrection of the saints (1 Corinthians 15:50-58). To believe as Transhumanists do that death can be overcome through technological enhancement can only result in abomination. Professor of Computer Science Matthew Dickerson prophetically asks, what if the Transhuman "transformation is based on something that is not true? What will we be transformed into?" (*The Mind and the Machine: What it Means to be Human and Why it Matters*, Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2011), xiv.

34. A campaign to "JUST SAY NO!" to further technological advance that threatens human existence, such as artificial intelligence, must be a collective effort for the entire human race, but begins with our own personal individual choices in limiting technological use, i.e. TV, computer, cell phone, and automobiles, and set boundaries to consumption on all consumer products. Resist the digitalization of traditional life through technological transfer of community to the online medium. Despite the convenience of a total online education it is unconscionable and detrimental if online students never encounter a real college classroom, talk face to face with a professor and argue in group discussion with peers. Likewise, the church cannot remain the Body of Christ by shunting its responsibilities to parishioners, new members and seekers by declaring online and televised services equal to a live one. "Do not forsake the assembly of yourselves together" (Hebrews 10:25) prohibits a total digitalization of Christian worship and community. Christ said, "Where two or three have gathered in my name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). The bodily presence necessary for community conveyed in these passages must not be allegorized by techno-gnostics who equate physical isolation in front of an electric screen to be "just as good" as being there.

35. We are enslaved to what we fear we cannot live without whether it be money, sex or technology. The rich young ruler did not follow Christ because he could not imagine life

without his wealth, the security, comfort and power it bestowed was greater than the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ. “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:24). The disciples were in shock at Jesus’ utter intolerance to devotion to anything other than God: “You cannot serve God and money [technology, power]” (Matthew 6:24). Knowing their own attachment to wealth, they despaired, “Who then can be saved?” (Mark 10:26). It appears impossible to give up what we fear we cannot live without. “What shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we wear?” (Matthew 6:25); the perennial anxiety and pursuit of the faithless and fearful enslaved to material (bodily) necessity; “Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing [enhancement]?” (Matthew 6:25). “For after all these things the Gentiles [unregenerate] seek” (Matthew 6:32). “But Lord Jesus, we cannot live without cell phones and computers, any more than we can live without money! Get real, be reasonable—Lord you are asking the impossible of mortal sinners.” And Jesus agrees, “With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God” (Mark 10:27).

36. Louis Armstrong – *What A Wonderful World* Lyrics | MetroLyrics

37. Ellul, *The Technological Society*, xxxi.

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# Trends in American Religious

# Beliefs: An Update

*Steve Cable examines the newest data reflecting Americans' religious beliefs. It's not encouraging.*

## Are Nones Still Increasing Toward a Majority?

One dismaying trend in my book, *Cultural Captives*, was the significant growth of people indicating their religion was atheist, agnostic, or nothing at all, referred to collectively as **the nones**. In 2008, the percentage of emerging adults (18- to 29-year-olds) who self-identified as **nones** was one fourth of the population, a tremendous increase almost two and a half times higher than recorded in 1990.

Now, let's look at some updated data on emerging adults. In 2014, the General Social Survey{1} showed the percentage of **nones** was now up to **one third** of the population. The Pew Religious Landscape{2} survey of over 35,000 Americans tallied **35% identifying as nones.**

When we consider everyone who does not identify as either Protestant or Catholic (i.e., adding in other religions such as Islam and Hinduism), the **percentage of emerging adults who do not identify as Christians increases to 43% of the population** in both surveys.

If this growth continues at the rate it has been on since 1990, we will see **over half** of American emerging adults who do not self-identify as Christians by 2020. Becoming, at least numerically, a post-Christian culture.

Some distinguished scholars have suggested that a large percentage of "**nones**" are actually Christians who just have an aversion to identifying with a particular religious tradition. Using the GSS from 2014, we can probe this assertion using

three investigative avenues:

How many of the "**nones**" in this survey say they actually attend a church at least once a month? The answer: less than 7% of them.

How many of these "**nones**" say they believe in a God, believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God, and believe that there is life after death? The answer: about 12% of them.

3. How many of these "**nones**" attend a church *and* have the three beliefs listed above? The answer: about one out of every one hundred emerging adults not identifying as a practicing Christian.

What about the "nothing at all" respondents, who are not atheists or agnostics? Perhaps, they simply do not want to identify with a specific Christian tradition. Since the majority of **nones** fall into this "nothing at all" category, if all the positive answers to the three questions above were given by "nothing at alls," their percentages would still be very small.

Clearly, the vast majority of **nones** and "nothing at alls" have broken away from organized religion and basic Christian doctrine. Most are not, as some scholars suggest, young believers keeping their identity options open.

American has long been non-evangelical in thinking, but is now becoming post-Christian as well.

## Role of Pluralism and Born-Agains in Our Emerging Adult Population

Pluralists believe there are many ways to eternal life, e.g. Christianity and Islam. Our 2010 book, *Cultural Captives*, looked at pluralism among American emerging adults (18 – 29), finding nearly 90% of non-evangelicals and 70% of evangelicals

were pluralists. So, the vast majority of young Americans believed in multiple ways to heaven.

Is that position changing in this decade? We analyzed two newer survey, Portraits of American Life Survey 2012{3} and Faith Matters 2011{4}. In the first, if a person disagreed strongly with the following, we categorized them as not pluralistic:

1. It doesn't much matter what I believe so long as I am a good person.
2. The founder of Islam, Muhammad, was the holy prophet of God.

In the second, if a person agreed strongly that "one religion is true and others are not," they are not pluralistic.

For non-evangelical, emerging adults, the number of pluralists grew to 92%. For evangelicals, the number grew to 76%. For those over thirty the number of evangelical pluralists drops to two out of three; still a disturbing majority of those called to evangelize their fellow citizens.

Under the threat of death, Peter told the Jewish leaders, "This Jesus . . . has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."{5}

God sent His Son because there was no other way to provide redemption. Many evangelicals seem to think this great sacrifice is one of many ways to reconciliation. But Jesus said, "***No one*** *comes to the Father except through me*."{6}

Not only are Protestants more pluralistic, at the same time there are fewer Protestants. From 1976 to 2008, emerging adults identifying as born-again Protestants only dropped from 28% to 25% of the population. Today only 20% are born-again Protestants while 43% are non-Christian.

Protestants who do not consider themselves to be born-again have dropped further, from around one quarter in 1990 down to around 14% now.

We are heading to a day when over half of emerging adults will be non-Christians and less that one fourth will identify as Protestants. And, the majority of those Protestants will take a pluralistic view, ignoring the call to evangelize—a major change in the religious make up of our country.

## Biblical Worldview Beliefs Considered from A Newer Survey

In our book, *Cultural Captives*, we reported that about one in three evangelical emerging adults and about one in ten non-evangelical emerging adults held a biblical worldview.

Today, we consider a newer survey of over 2,600 people called Faith Matters 2011.{7}
The questions used to define a biblical worldview were on: 1) belief in God, 2) belief in life after death, 3) the path to salvation, 4) inspiration of the Bible, 5) the existence of hell, and 6) how to determine right and wrong.

Let's begin by looking at how many have a biblical worldview on all of the questions above except for the correct path to salvation. About half of evangelical emerging adults (those 18 – 29) take a biblical view versus about 15% of non-evangelicals.

Adding the question about the path to salvation moves evangelical emerging adults from 50% down to about 5%. The question causing this massive reduction is: "Some people believe that the path to salvation comes through our actions or deeds and others believe that the path to salvation lies in our beliefs or faith. Which comes closer to your views?" The vast majority of evangelicals responding were unwilling to say that salvation is by faith alone even though the Bible clearly

states this is the case. Many of them responded with both, even though it was not one of the options given.

However, the reason may not be that evangelicals feel that they need to do some good works to become acceptable for heaven. Instead, they want to leave room for a pluralistic view that surmises that others, not really knowing of Jesus' sacrifice, may get by on their righteous activities. Supporting this premise, the Faith Matters survey shows that about 80% of evangelicals believe that there are more ways to heaven other than faith in Jesus Christ.

Another survey the 2012 Portraits in American Life Survey (PALS){8} also included questions similar to the biblical worldview questions above but did not ask how one obtained eternal life. About one in three evangelical{9} believers under the age of 30 professed a biblical worldview on those questions.

These new surveys clearly demonstrate a biblical worldview is not rebounding among emerging adults

## How Confident are Americans in Those Running Organized Religion?

What do the people of America feel about organized religion? Have those feelings changed since 1976? We can explore these questions using data from the General Social Survey (GSS) which asked this question across the decades from 1976 up to 2014:

As far as the people running organized religion are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?

Not surprisingly, the surveys show our confidence in these religious leaders has degraded over time. Let's begin by looking at how these results play out for different age

groups.

Across all age groups, the number with “a great deal of confidence” in the leaders of organized religion dropped significantly from 1976 to 2014. The greatest drop from 30% down to 15% was among emerging adults at the time of the survey.

At the same time, those having “hardly any confidence” grew significantly. Both emerging adults and those 45 and over increased the number taking this negative position by about 35% since 1976. For emerging adults, this was an increase from 20% in 1976 to 27% in 2014.

Now let’s look at how these results play out across different faith communities, specifically Protestants who claim to be born again, Mainline Protestants, Catholics, Other Religions and Nones (i.e. atheists, agnostics and nothing at all).

Once again consider those who said they had “a great deal of confidence” in the leaders of organized religion. All Christian groups show a significant downward trend in their confidence in faith leaders. Not surprisingly, the Nones fell by well over 60%, probably reflecting the general negative trend. If the mainstream population has problems with their religious leaders, the AAN’s are more than happy to jump on the bandwagon, expressing disdain toward those leaders. Mainline Protestants experienced the largest drop among any Christian religious group, dropping almost half from 32% down to 18% across the period.

Do we see a similar uptick across all religions in the percentage of respondents having “hardly any confidence” in the leaders of organized religion? Actually, we do not. We had significant decreases among born-again Protestants and those of other non-Christian religions. At the same time, we saw increases among Mainline Protestants and Catholics and a very significant increase among the AAN’s.

The trends shown here leads one to ask, Can religion have a positive impact on our society when four out of five people do not express a great deal of confidence in its leaders? Make it a point to contribute to our society by promoting a positive view of the religious leaders in your church and denomination.

## The Hispanic Religious Landscape

Since 1980, our Hispanic population has grown from 6.5% to 17.4%, almost tripling their percentage of our total population.

Many assume the Hispanic population would be primarily Catholic from the 1980's to today. Looking at General Social Surveys from 1976 through 2014, we can see what the actual situation is. Not surprisingly, in 1976 approximately 80% of Hispanics in American self-identified as Catholics. But, the 1980's saw a downward trend in this number, so that through the 1990's up until 2006, approximately 68% of Hispanics identified as Catholics. From 2006 to 2014, this percentage has dropped significantly down to about 55%.

At the same time, the percentage of Hispanics identifying as "nones," i.e., one having no religious affiliation, has grown from about 6% in the 1990's to 16% in 2014 (and to a high of 22% for emerging adult, Hispanics) according to GSS data.

The median age of Hispanics is America is much lower than that of other ethnicities. Many Hispanics in American are emerging adults between the ages of 18 and 29. How do their beliefs stack up? The GSS data shows that about 45% of Hispanic emerging adults indicate a Catholic affiliation while the Pew survey shows only 35%. Both surveys show that significantly less than half of emerging adult Hispanics are Catholic. So have they become mainline, evangelical, "nones" or some Eastern religion?

Both surveys show a significant increase in the percentage of

Hispanic “nones” for emerging adults compared to those over 30. As with other ethnic groups, Hispanic emerging adults are much more likely to select a religious affiliation of “none” than are older adults. According to extensive data in the Pew Research survey, among emerging adults, the 31% of Hispanics who identify as “nones” is coming very close to surpassing the 35% who identify as Catholic.

A majority of Hispanics still identify at Catholics. How closely are they associated with their local Catholic church through regular attendance? Among emerging adult Hispanics affiliated with a Catholic church, about two out of three state that they attend church once a month or less. So, the vast majority are not frequent attenders, but are still more likely to attend than their white counterparts. Among emerging adult whites affiliated with a Catholic church, about four out of five state that they attend church once a month or less.

Soon more Hispanics will be “nones,” evangelicals and mainline Protestants than are Catholic, portending dramatic shifts in the worldview of American Hispanics.

The religious makeup of young Americans is changing dramatically in the early part of this century. We need to proclaim the good news of Christ to our emerging generation.

## Notes

1. General Social Survey 2014, National Opinion Research Center, 2014, The data were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, www.TheARDA.com, and were collected by Tom W. Smith.
2. Pew Research Center, May 12, 2015, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape”, page 11, source: 2014 Pew Religious Landscape Study.
3. Emerson, Michael O., and David Sikkink. *Portraits of American Life Study*, 2nd Wave 2012.
4. Data downloaded from the Association of Religion Data

Archives, www.TheARDA.com, and were collected on behalf of Harvard University and the University of Notre Dame, principal investigators: Robert Putnam, Thomas Sander, and David E. Campbell.
5. Acts 4:11-12.
6. John 14:6.
7. Data downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, www.TheARDA.com, and were collected on behalf of Harvard University and the University of Notre Dame, principal investigators: Robert Putnam, Thomas Sander, and David E. Campbell.
8. Emerson, Michael O., and David Sikkink. Portraits of American Life Study, 2nd Wave, 2012.
9. Evangelical includes those who associate with a Historically Black Protestant Church as well as those who associate with an evangelical church.

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# Those Admirable English Puritans

*Michael Gleghorn corrects a number of misunderstandings and stereotypes about the Puritans, suggesting there is much about them to admire.*

## Introducing the Puritans

J. I. Packer begins his book, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life*, by comparing the English Puritans to the California Redwoods. He writes, "On . . . the northern California coastline grow the giant Redwoods, the biggest living things on earth. Some are over 360 feet tall,

and some trunks are more than 60 feet round."{1} A bit later he draws this comparison: "As Redwoods attract the eye, because they overtop other trees, so the mature holiness and seasoned fortitude of the great Puritans shine before us as a kind of beacon light, overtopping the stature of the majority of Christians in most eras."{2}



Of course, in our day, if people think of the Puritans at all, it's usually only for the purpose of making a joke of one kind or another. As one author notes, "the Puritans are the only collective stock-in-trade that virtually every cartoonist feels free to use to lampoon society's ills."{3}

But who were the Puritans really? When did they live? And, most importantly, why should we care?

Many scholarly studies of English Puritanism begin by noting the variety of ways in which the term "Puritanism" has been used and defined. Christopher Hill begins his book, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, with a chapter entitled, "The Definition of a Puritan."{4} And John Spurr, in his book on English Puritanism, has an introductory section on "Defining Puritans."{5} But we'll leave it to the scholars to haggle over details. For our purposes, it's good enough to say that the Puritans were English Protestants who were influenced by the theology of the Reformation. They were zealous to "purify" not only the Church of England, but also their society, and even themselves, from all doctrinal, ceremonial, and moral impurity—and to do so for the glory of God.{6} The time period of English Puritanism spans roughly the years between 1550 and 1700.{7}

So that's who the Puritans were, but why on earth should we care? Personally, I think it's because the Puritans can offer us a great deal of wisdom, wisdom that could really benefit the church and society of our own day. As Packer reminds us, "The great Puritans, though dead, still speak to us through

their writings, and say things . . . that we badly need to hear at the present time."{8}

## The Puritans and God

Before going any further, we need to come right out and admit that, at least on the popular level, the Puritans really seem to suffer from an "image problem." According to J. I. Packer, "Pillorying the Puritans . . . has long been a popular pastime."{9} Likewise, Peter Marshall and David Manuel observe that "Nearly everyone today seems to believe that the Puritans were bluenosed killjoys in tall black hats, a somber group of sin-obsessed, witch-hunting bigots."{10} Of course, like Packer, they regard this view as "a monstrous misrepresentation."{11} But when a view is so widely held, we seem to be in for an uphill battle if we want to suggest some ways in which the Puritans were admirable!

So where do we begin? Let's briefly consider the way in which Puritans sought to live their lives before God. The *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, a teaching device highly esteemed by many Puritans,{12} begins by asking, "What is the chief end of man?" That's a great question, isn't it? They answered it this way: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever."{13}

Now what follows if this answer is correct? Well first, it would mean that human life is *objectively* full of meaning, value, and purpose, for God exists and (as General Maximus asserted in the hit movie, *Gladiator*) "what we do in life echoes in eternity."{14} But second, in claiming that "man's chief end" consists not only in *glorifying* God in the here and now, but also in *enjoying* Him *forever*, we see the potential for the complete and eternal fulfillment of human existence. For what could be better than enjoying God, the greatest good, forever and ever?

It is doubtless for reasons such as this that the Puritan

theologian, William Perkins, defined theology as "the science of living blessedly forever"![15] He understood that theology is not some dry, academic discipline, with no relationship to the rest of one's life. Rather, theology is all about knowing God personally. And this, according to Jesus, is eternal life, the life of supreme blessedness (John 17:3). So the first reason for seeing the Puritans as admirable is that they sought to live their lives in such a way that they would glorify God and enjoy Him forever—and what could ultimately be wiser, more fulfilling—or more admirable—than that?

## The Puritans and Books

Now some may have thought of the Puritans as ignorant, or anti-intellectual—people who either feared or hated learning. But this, claims Leland Ryken, is "absolutely untrue." Indeed, he says, "No Christian movement in history has been more zealous for education than the Puritans."[16] Many leaders of the Puritan movement were university educated and saw great value in the life of the mind. One can list individual Puritans who were interested in things like astronomy, botany, medicine, and still other subjects from the book of nature.[17]

Above all, however, Puritanism was a movement which prized that greatest of all books, the Bible. Puritans loved their Bibles—and deemed it both their joy and duty to study, teach, believe and live out its promises and commandments. According to Packer, "Intense veneration for Scripture . . . and a devoted concern to know and do all that it prescribes, was Puritanism's hallmark."[18]

Indeed, so great was this Puritan veneration for Scripture that even those without much formal education often knew their English Bible exceedingly well. A great example of this can be seen in John Bunyan, the famed author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Although he did not have much in the way of formal education, one of his later editors declared (doubtless with

*some* exaggeration) that "No man ever possessed a more intimate knowledge of the Bible, nor greater aptitude in quoting it than Bunyan."{19}

For Puritans like Bunyan, the Bible was the inspired word of God. It was thus the highest court of appeal in all matters of Christian faith and practice. Indeed, since the Bible came from God, it was viewed as having the same divine authority as God himself. It was therefore worth one's time to know the Bible well, and to be intimately familiar with its contents. As two contemporary scholars of Puritanism remind us, the Bible was both "the mirror before which each person could see the . . . status of one's soul before God, and the guidebook for all human behavior . . ."{20}

The Puritan stress on knowing, believing, and obeying God's inspired word is refreshing. What might the church in America look like if it *really* recaptured this Puritan vision for the importance of Scripture? Here the writings of the Puritans can still be a valuable resource for the church today, which is yet another reason for seeing them as admirable.{21}

## The Puritans and the Church

Even in our own day, the Puritans remain fairly well-known for their desire to "purify" the Church of England from anything which, in their estimation, smacked of doctrinal, moral, or ceremonial impurity.{22} The Puritans were passionate about the purity of the church. But how were they to determine if a particular doctrine or practice was suspect?

For the Puritans, it was only natural that God's inspired word, the Bible, should serve as the final authority in all such matters. If a doctrine was taught in Scripture, then it should also be taught in the church. And if not, then it shouldn't. The same standard would apply to all moral and ceremonial issues as well. Scripture was to have the final word about whether any particular doctrine or practice was, or

was not, to be taught or permitted in the church of God.{23} Of course, this is right in line with what we said above about the Puritan devotion to Scripture.

But once one is committed to judging everything *within* the church according to the standard of Scripture, it probably won't be long before one's view *of* the church undergoes a similar biblical scrutiny. Such scrutiny soon led Puritans to "the notion that the church is a spiritual reality." The church is not the building in which the redeemed gather to meet, it is rather "the company of the redeemed" themselves.{24} Doubtless this was one of the reasons why the Puritans were eager to purify not only the church, understood in a corporate sense, but themselves as individuals as well.

It also helps explain the Puritans' devotion to both the fellowship of the saints and the discipline of an erring brother or sister in the faith. The Puritan pastor Richard Sibbes urged God's people "to strengthen and encourage one another in the ways of holiness."{25} And Robert Coachman reminded his readers that "it is no small privilege . . . to live in . . . a society" where one's brothers and sisters in Christ "will not suffer them to go on in sin."{26}

But isn't it all too easy to allow Christian fellowship to lapse into something that is superficial, boring, and sometimes even frankly unspiritual? Yes; and this is why the great English Puritans are quick to remind us (sometimes in the most forceful of ways) that we must continually seek, in our fellowship together, to promote both faith and holiness, along with a deep love and reverent fear of the Lord our God. And isn't that an admirable reminder?

## The Puritans on Marriage and the Family

If there's one thing that almost everyone thinks they know about the Puritans it's that they "were sexually inhibited and repressive," right?{27} But just how accurate is our knowledge

about the Puritans on this score? Well according to some scholars, it's wide of the mark indeed.{28}

Of course, it's certainly true that the Puritans believed, just as the New Testament teaches, that human sexual behavior should be enjoyed only within the marriage relationship between a husband and wife. And naturally enough, they disapproved of any sexual behavior outside of this relationship. But within the union of heterosexual marriage, the Puritans were actually quite vocal proponents of a rich and vibrant sex life. Indeed, one Puritan author described sex as "one of the most proper and essential acts of marriage" and encouraged married couples to engage in it "with good will and delight, willingly, readily and cheerfully."{29} And need I add that the Puritans thought it important to *practice* what they preached?!

But with Puritan couples so "readily and cheerfully" enjoying their sexual relationships within marriage, they naturally had to give some serious thought to the raising of children and the purpose of the family! So what did they have to say about such matters?

For the Puritans, the family ultimately had the same purpose as the individual; namely, "the glory of God." The reason this is important, notes Ryken, is that "it determines what goes on in a family," by setting "priorities in a spiritual rather than material direction."{30}

The Puritans rightly saw that if one wants a spiritually healthy church and a morally healthy society, one must first have spiritually and morally healthy individuals and families—for the former are inevitably composed of the latter.{31} Hence, if we want healthy churches and societies, we must also prize healthy individuals. And such individuals are best produced within spiritually and morally healthy families.

Now I personally find it difficult to argue with the Puritan logic on this point. And although they lived in a different era, Puritan views on the purpose of the family really seem to offer "some attractive possibilities for our own age."{32}

And now we've reached the end of our discussion of English Puritanism. Of course, the Puritans also had their faults—and I've no desire to pretend otherwise.{33} But I hope you'd agree that there's much to admire about these oft-maligned and misrepresented giants of the past. And I also hope this might encourage you to read (and profit from) these giants for yourself!

Notes

1. J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), 11. I should probably note that the California Department of Parks and Recreation gives figures slightly different from those in Packer's book, but this is really immaterial for my purposes in this article. See, for example, "How Big are Big Trees," California Department of Parks and Recreation, accessed February 12, 2015, www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=1146.

2. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 11.

3. Bruce C. Daniels, *New England Nation: The Country the Puritans Built* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 230.

4. Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 1-15.

5. John Spurr, *English Puritanism, 1603-1689*, ed. Jeremy Black, Social History in Perspective (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 3-8.

6. Definitional help was gathered from the sources cited above, as well as the article by Mark A Noll, "Puritanism," in

*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 897-900.

7. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 11.

8. Ibid., 16.

9. Ibid., 21.

10. Peter Marshall and David Manuel, *The Light and the Glory: 1492-1793*. Revised and expanded edition (Grand Rapids: Revell, 2009), 211.

11. Ibid.

12. According to Packer, the Puritan Richard Baxter used this catechism to help instruct (and encourage) his parishioners in the truths of the Christian faith. See Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 45.

13. This catechism can be found many places on the internet. See, for example, "The Westminster Shorter Catechism," The Westminster Presbyterian, accessed February 15, 2015, www.westminsterconfession.org/confessional-standards/the-westminster-shorter-catechism.php.

14. For a philosophical defense of this view, please see the chapter entitled, "The Absurdity of Life without God," in William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2008), 65-90.

15. William Perkins, *A Golden Chain*, or *The Description of Theology* (1592). In *The Work of William Perkins*, ed. Ian Breward. Courtenay Library of Reformation Classics 3 (Appleford, England: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1970), 177; cited in *Reformed Reader*, ed. William Stacy Johnson and John H. Leith (Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 7.

16. Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 7.

17. See the brief discussion in Charles Pastoor and Galen Johnson, *The A to Z of the Puritans* (Lanham, MY: Scarecrow Press, 2009), s.v. “Science.”

18. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 98.

19. *The Works of John Bunyan: Allegorical, Figurative, and Symbolical*, ed. George Offor, vol. 3 (London: Blackie and Son, 1859), 396.

20. See Pastoor and Johnson, *The A to Z of the Puritans*, s.v. “Scripture.”

21. Packer says much the same thing. See *A Quest for Godliness*, 16.

22. For the Puritans, of course, this was typically some vestige of Roman Catholicism. I purposefully chose not to mention this on the radio, however, because I did not want any of our listeners to somehow get the mistaken idea that this was an anti-Catholic program. It’s not. My purpose in this program is to extol the virtues of the Puritans—not to vilify some other segment of the Christian community.

23. Leland Ryken has an excellent discussion of this issue in his chapter on “Church and Worship” in *Worldly Saints*, 111-135. See particularly pp. 112-115.

24. This, and the previous quotation, are both taken from Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 115.

25. Richard Sibbes, “The Church’s Visitation” (London, 1634), cited in Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 133.

26. Robert Coachman (or Cushman), *The Cry of a Stone* (London, 1642), cited in Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 133.

27. Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 39.

28. See, for example, Ryken’s chapter on “Marriage and Sex” in

*Worldly Saints*, 39-55.

29. William Gouge, *Of Domestical Duties* (London, 1622), edited, updated and revised by Greg Fox (Puritan Reprints, 2006), 158.

30. Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 74.

31. Ryken provides numerous examples of this view from the writings of *Puritans in Worldly Saints*, 74-5; 84-7.
32. Ibid., 73.

33. See Ryken's chapter, "Learning from Negative Example: Some Puritan Faults," in *Worldly Saints*, 187-203.

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# Deism and America's Founders

*The views and beliefs of our country's founders were as diverse and complicated as today. Don Closson focuses on the role of deism.*

In his book *Is God on America's Side*, Erwin Lutzer asks the important question, "Is the American dream and the Christian dream one and the same?"{1} If our national dream fails, does it necessarily follow that our Christian dream also dies? Lutzer's book makes the point that it's dangerous to see the goals of the state and the purpose of the church as one and the same. It's dangerous to equate the "city of man" with the "city of God."



However, there are those who argue that because our Founding Fathers were devoted Christians who held to an orthodox Christian faith, the state and the church in America are already linked together, and that if America as a nation loses its uniquely Christian flavor, the church will fail in its task as well. They see America as a unique country that holds a special place in God's plan for reaching the world. Additionally, they argue that we enjoy God's special protection and blessings because of this Christian founding, blessings which will be lost if Christians lose control of the nation.

At the other end of the religious and political spectrum is the group who portray America and its founding as a thoroughly secular project. They argue that by the time the Revolution had occurred in the colonies, Enlightenment rationalism had won the day in the minds and hearts of the young nation's leaders. They often add that the drive towards religious tolerance was the result of a decline in belief in God and an attempt to remove religious influence from America's future.

For all those involved in this debate, the specific beliefs of our Founders are very important. Those who argue that America was founded by godless men who established a godless Constitution are, for the most part, wrong. Belief in God was practically universal among our Founding Founders. On the other hand, those who argue that our Founders were mostly devoted Christians who sought to establish a Christian nation devoted to the gospel of Jesus Christ are not giving us the full picture either. Because both sides in this debate tend to define America by the religious faith of our Founders, both sides tend to over-simplify the religious beliefs of those early patriots.

It's important, therefore, to consider the specific beliefs of some of our Founding Fathers so that we might get a clearer picture of religion in that era and avoid either of the two extremes usually presented. As we look into the actions and

words of specific Revolutionary era leaders we will find that their beliefs represent a mixture of viewpoints that are every bit as complicated as those of America's leaders today.

## Deism

The issue centers on how much influence Deism had on our Founders. So a good place to begin is with a definition of the movement while remembering that Deists "were never organized into a sect, had no [official] creed or form of worship, recognized no leader, and were constantly shifting their ground."{2} That said, Edward Herbert is often given credit for being the father of Deism in the seventeenth century. His five-point system is a good starting point for understanding the religious beliefs that affected many of our nation's leaders nearly one hundred years later.

Herbert's Deism begins with the fact that there is a God. However, Deists did not equate this God with the one who revealed himself to Moses or as having a special relationship with the Jews. Instead of being the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Deists referred to him with terms like "the First Cause," "the Divine Artist," the Grand Architect," "the God of Nature," or "Divine Providence."{3} Many Deists argued that more could be learned about God by studying nature and science than by seeking knowledge about him in the Bible.

Deists also thought that it naturally follows to worship this God, which is Herbert's second point. This belief is arrived at by reason alone and not revelation; it is a common sense response to the fact that "the God of Nature" exists. The nature of this worship is Herbert's third point. Deists worshipped their God by living ethically. Some acknowledged the superior example of an ethical life as lived by Jesus; others felt that Christianity itself was a barrier to an ethical life.

Interestingly, Deists included repentance as part of their system. What is not a surprise is that this repentance consists of agreeing with the Creator God that living an ethical life is better than to not live such a life. Herbert's last point may also be a surprise to many. Deists believed in an afterlife, and that in it there will be rewards and punishments based on our success or failure to live ethically now.

What should be obvious by now is that Deism was derivative of Christianity. As one cleric of the day wrote, "Deism is what is left of Christianity after casting off everything that is peculiar to it. The deist is one who denies the Divinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement of Christ, and the work of the Holy Ghost; who denies the God of Israel, and believes in the God of Nature."{4}

## Anti-Christian Deism

The impact of Deism on Americans in the 1700s is complicated because the word itself represents a spectrum of religious positions held at that time. One extreme represents a group that might be called the non-Christian Deists. This faction was openly hostile to the Christian faith. Thomas Paine, of *Common Sense* fame, and a leading advocate of this position, wrote that Deism "is free from all those invented and torturing articles that shock our reason . . . with which the Christian religion abounds. Its creed is pure and sublimely simple. It believes in God, and there it rests. It honors Reason as the choicest gift of God to man and the faculty by which he is enabled to contemplate the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator displayed in the creation; . . . it avoids all presumptuous beliefs and rejects, as the fabulous inventions of men, all books pretending to be revelation."{5} This quote clearly expresses the complaints and disdain that some Deists held against the Christian faith.

Although often accused of being godless pagans, it was not unusual for Thomas Paine and others in this group to see themselves as God's defenders. Paine says that he wrote *The Age of Reason* in France during the French Revolution to defend belief in God against the growing atheism in that country. But he agreed with the French that the power and influence of the Roman Catholic Church had to be removed. There was little love lost on the monarchy or the priesthood; one French philosopher wrote, "let us strangle the last king with the guts of the last priest."

Deists were very confident in the power of human reason. Reason informed them that miracles were impossible and that the Bible is a man-made book of mythical narratives. This faction of Deists also saw Christianity as a barrier to moral improvement and social justice. And since for them, living an ethical life is itself true worship, Christianity was seen as an impediment to worshipping God as well.

Reason is highlighted by the writings of these influential colonists. The former Presbyterian minister Elihu Palmer wrote a paper titled *Reason, the Glory of Our Nature,* and the well known patriot Ethan Allen published the Deistic piece *Reason: the Only Oracle of Man.*{6} In the preface of his book, Allen wrote, "I have generally been denominated a Deist, the reality of which I never disputed, being conscious I am no Christian, except mere infant baptism make me one."{7}

It is not surprising that this focus on reason led Deists to reject the Trinity. Unitarianism was making great inroads into American colleges by the 1750s, and America's best and brightest were now subject to this view at Yale, Harvard, and other prominent schools.

## Church-Going Deists

It can be argued that there was a form of Deism in the late

1700s that was comfortable with parts of Christianity but was not entirely orthodox. Some of our most cherished and famous early American patriots fit into this category.

A good argument can be made that Franklin, Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe were all significantly influenced by Deism and Unitarianism. Let's take a look at the actions and comments of two of these revolutionary era leaders who can justifiably be called church-going Deists.

Hearing that Benjamin Franklin was a Deist will probably not shock too many Americans. By some accounts he embraced Deism at the young age of fifteen.{8} As an adult he was asked by a minister to express his personal creed, and Franklin replied, "I believe in one God, Creator of the Universe: That he governs the World by his Providence. That he ought to be worshiped. That the most acceptable Service we can render to him, is doing good to his other Children. That the soul of man is immortal, and will be treated with Justice in another life, respecting its Conduct in this."{9} Franklin's faith was focused on personal behavior rather than faith in Christ's work on the cross. When asked about Jesus, Franklin said, "I have . . . some Doubts as to his Divinity, tho' it is a Question I do not dogmatize upon."{10} Rather than being openly hostile to Christianity, Franklin contributed to every church building project in Philadelphia, as well as its one synagogue.

The faith of George Washington is a more controversial matter. Washington consistently used Deistic language to describe God in both public and private communications, rarely referring to Jesus Christ in any setting. Comments made by his contemporaries also point to Deistic beliefs. Washington's bishop and pastor while he was in Philadelphia admitted that "Truth requires me to say, that General Washington never received the communion in the churches of which I am parochial minister."{11} Another pastor added, "Sir, he was a Deist," when questions about his faith arose shortly after his death.

The fact that Washington was never confirmed in the Episcopal Church and ceased to take communion after the war adds to the case for him being a Deist. The controversy will continue, but much evidence points to his less than orthodox beliefs.

It must be remembered that, while Washington and Deists in general were quite willing to speak about the "God of Providence" or the "Grand Architect," rarely are they found them referring to God as "Father," "Lord," "Redeemer," or "Savior."{12}

## Orthodox Christians

Samuel Adams is often called the father of the American Revolution, but he is also known as "the Last of the Puritans," a title that speaks to his commitment to orthodox Christianity.{13} His orthodoxy is confirmed by both his actions and comments. Adams was opposed to Freemasonry, which taught a belief system that was consistent with Deism. Neither ideology focused on Jesus or the Bible, and both accepted Jews, Muslims, Christians, or anyone else who believed in a divine being. In fact, the phrase "the Grand Architect," often used by Deists as a title for God, came from Freemasonry, not the Bible.

Adams maintained a religious household by personally practicing grace before meals, Bible readings, and morning and evening devotions. More important, Adams' religious language revealed an orthodox belief system. He referred to God as "our Divine Redeemer," and the one "who has given us his Son to purchase for us the reward of eternal life," phrases that a Deist would most likely not employ.{14} Even when thinking of his future passing Adams looked to Christ; his will spoke of his "relying on the merits of Jesus Christ for a pardon of all my sins."{15} Although many leaders of the day left their orthodox upbringing, Adams "was a New England Congregationalist who remained staunchly loyal to the

Calvinist orthodoxy in which he had been raised."{16}

John Jay was president of the Continental Congress and the first chief justice of the Supreme Court; he also exhibited leadership in spreading the Word of God among the new country's citizens. As president of the American Bible Society, Jay used his annual address to stress the authority of the Bible. He spoke of the events in its pages as events in history, not as religious mythology. He also employed the language of the church in his speeches and writings including "Saviour," "King of Heaven," and "Captain of our Salvation."{17} Although Jay had many friends among the Deists of the day, he differed greatly with them concerning the relationship of reason and revelation. Jay wrote that the truths of Christianity were "revealed to our faith, to be believed on the credit of Divine testimony" rather than a product of human reason.

Just as today, the religious landscape of early America was varied and complex. Those complexities should neither hinder nor determine our efforts to build God's kingdom in the twenty-first century. America has been blessed by God, but to argue that it is privileged over all other nations is presumptuous. Other nations have believed that their country would be used uniquely by God as well. Perhaps we stand on firmer ground when we look to the church as God's vehicle for accomplishing His purposes, a body of believers that will draw from every nation, tribe, people and language.

**Notes**

1. Erwin W. Lutzer, *Is God On America's Side* (Moody Publishers, 2008), 75.

2. David L. Holmes, *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers* (Oxford, 2006), 39.

3. Ibid., 47.

4. Ibid., 39.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. books.google.com/books?id=IHMAAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA1#PPA1,M1 accessed on 9/15/2008.

8. Holmes, 54.

9. Ibid., 56.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., 63.

12. Ibid., 65.

13. Ibid., 144.

14. Ibid., 146.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., p. 150.

17. Ibid., p. 158.

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# Truth: What It Is and Why We Can Know It

*Rick Wade explores truth from a biblical and philosophical perspective. Despite what many believe, it IS possible to know truth because of the role of Jesus Christ as creator and*

*revealer of truth.*

## The Loss of Confidence



Did you see the movie *City of Angels?* Nicholas Cage plays an angel named Seth who has taken a special interest in a surgeon named Maggie, played by Meg Ryan. Maggie's lost a patient on the operating table, and she is very upset about it. Seth meets her in a hallway in the hospital, and gets her to talk about the loss. Here is a snippet of the conversation:

**Maggie**: I lost a patient.

**Seth**: You did everything you could.

**Maggie**: I was holding his heart in my hand when he died.

**Seth**: He wasn't alone.

**Maggie**: Yes, he was.

**Seth**: People die.

**Maggie**: Not on my table.

**Seth**: People die when their bodies give out.

**Maggie**: It's my job to keep their bodies from giving out. Or what am I doing here?

**Seth**: It wasn't your fault, Maggie.

**Maggie**: I wanted him to live.

**Seth**: He *is* living. Just not the way you think.

**Maggie**: I don't believe in that.

**Seth**: Some things are true whether you believe in ‘em or not.{1}

What did he say?! “Some things are true whether you believe in ‘em or not”?? Are you kidding?!? That’s crazy talk these days! I have a right to my own opinion, and if I don’t believe it, if it’s not my opinion, it’s not true . . . for me, anyway.

The meaning of *truth* has changed in recent decades. Whereas once it meant statements about reality, today it often means what works or what is meaningful to me. This kind of language is heard primarily in the context of religion and morality. We have lost confidence in our ability to know what reality *is*. So much emphasis has been put on knowledge through sense experience that anything outside the boundaries of the senses is considered unknowable. Moral and religious discussions frequently end with, “Well, that’s *your* opinion,” or the more colorful, “Opinions are like belly buttons. Everyone has one.” It’s assumed that opinions can’t be universally, objectively true or false. Each person is his or her own authority over what is true. Truth is a personal possession which is why people get so offended when challenged. A challenge is taken personally. “This is *my* truth. Don’t touch it!” Strong challenges are even taken as a sign of disrespect.

What does it mean when truth is lost? In philosophy, the result is skepticism or pragmatism. In society in general, one sees a degeneration from skepticism to hypocrisy to cynicism. First we say no one can know what is true—that’s skepticism. Then someone says “I have the truth” but then speaks or acts in a way not in keeping with that “truth” (if truth is uncertain, it can change with my moods)—that’s hypocrisy. Then we stop trusting each other—that’s cynicism. In politics, power and image are what count. In matters of morality, there is no standard above us; social consensus is the best we can hope for, or “human solidarity,” according to Christopher Hitchens. Justice has no sure footing. Might becomes right.

Elsewhere I have written that we don't have to give in either to the demand for absolute certainty or to the skepticism of our day.{2} We can be confident in our ability to know truth even though not exhaustively. In this article I want to look at the nature and ground of truth, for these are of utmost importance in regard to the question of reliable knowledge.

## Truth: The Significance of Its Loss

Let's look more closely at what it means to lose confidence in knowing truth. One problem is that we become closed up in our individual shells with each of us having his or her own truth. Theologian Roger Nicole notes that the loss of truth means the loss of meaning in language; if we don't know whether a proposition means what it seems to mean or its opposite, then language is impotent to convey reliable knowledge. And we get caught up in contradictions. As Nicole wrote, those who deny objective validity "presuppose such validity at least for their denial!"{3}

Problems are also created in the realm of morality. Historian Felipe Fernández-Armesto wrote this:

> *The retreat from truth is one of the great dramatic, untold stories of history. . . . For professional academics in the affected disciplines, to have grown indifferent to truth is an extraordinary reversal of traditional obligations; it is like physicians renouncing the obligation to sustain life or theologians losing interest in God—developments, formerly unthinkable, which now loom as truth diminishes. The trashing of truth began as an academic vice, but the debris is now scattered all over society. It is spread through classroom programmes, . . . In a society of concessions to rival viewpoints, in which citizens hesitate to demand what is true and denounce what is false, it becomes impossible to defend the traditional moral distinction between right and wrong, which are relativized in turn. Unless it is true, what status is left for a statement like 'X is wrong' where X is, say,*

> *adultery, infanticide, euthanasia, drug-dealing, Nazism, paedophilia, sadism or any other wickedness due, in today's climate, for relativization into the ranks of the acceptable? It becomes, like everything else in western society today, a matter of opinion; and we are left with no moral basis for encoding some opinions rather than others, except the tyranny of the majority.{4}*

One of the worst problems for a well-ordered society is cynicism. First we say there's no truth. But then we hypocritically push our views on others as though *we* have the truth. Then people stop trusting each other. "You say there are no fixed truths, but then you push your claims on me." The result is cynicism.

Some people claim that truth claims are suspect because the words we use are changeable; they can't carry fixed, eternal truths. If we don't think it's possible that words convey truth, then words lose their objective meaning, and we start giving them our *own* meanings.

The loss of confidence in knowing truth is significant for Christians, too, who, without realizing it, adopt similar patterns of thought. When such confidence in knowing truth is weakened, one cannot have confidence that the Bible is the true Word of God. Its authority in the individual's life is weakened because what it says becomes questionable. Evangelism becomes a matter of sharing one's own religious preferences, rather than delivering God's authoritative Word. Bible study becomes a sharing of opinions with none being normative. Each has his or her own opinion and no one is supposed to say a given opinion is wrong.

## Truth in Scripture

What is this "truth" thing we talk so much about? My dictionary has such definitions as genuineness, reality,

correctness, and statements which accord with reality.{5} Truth can also be a characteristic of persons and things. Someone or some thing that is true is genuine or in keeping with his or its nature. And truth can refer to quality of conduct. The Bible speaks of people doing the truth rather than doing evil (cf. Nah. 9:33; Jn. 3:20, 21).{6}

To help in considering all these matters, let's look at truth as understood in Scripture, and then at truth considered in philosophical terms.

What does the Bible teach about truth?

In the Old Testament, the word most often translated *true, truth,* or *truly* is *'emet* or a cognate.{7} This word is also translated "faithfulness." Let's consider the matter of faithfulness first.

For the Israelites, Yahweh was "the God in whose word and work one could place complete confidence."{8} For example, God said through Zechariah: "I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God" (8:8). Nehemiah said to God: "You have acted faithfully, while we did wrong" (9:33). "The works of his hand are faithful and just," said the Psalmist; "all his precepts are trustworthy" (111:7).

*'Emet* also means truth as over against falsehood as when Joseph tested his brothers to see if they were telling the truth (Gen. 42:16), and when the Israelites were warned to test accusations that people were worshiping other gods to see if they were true (Deut. 13:14). Commenting on Ps. 43:3–"Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me"–theologian Anthony Thiselton says that "Truth enables [the writer] to escape from the dark, and to see things for what they are."{9}

We shouldn't conclude by these two uses of the word that on any given occasion "truth" always means *both* faithfulness *and* the opposite of falsehood. However, there is a connection

between the two. Theologian Anthony Thiselton says the connection depends "on the fact that when God or man is said to act faithfully, often this means that his word and his deed are one. He has acted faithfully in accordance with his spoken word. Hence the believer may lean his whole weight confidently on God, and find him faithful."{10}

Thus, in the Old Testament, truth is a matter of both words and deeds. "Men express their respect for truth not in abstract theory, but in their daily witness to their neighbour and their verbal and commercial transactions," Thiselton says.{11}

In the New Testament, there is an increased focus on truth as conformity to reality and as opposed to falsehood. The Greek word *alētheia* means, literally, "not hidden." When Peter was sprung from prison by an angel, he didn't know if it was real (or true) or a dream (Acts 12:9). John the Baptist bore witness to the truth (Jn. 5:33). Jesus used the phrase "I tell you in truth" four times to emphasize the correctness of what he was about to say (Lk. 4:25; 9:27; 12:44; 21:3). When Jesus said "I *am* the truth," (Jn. 14:6), He was identifying Himself with what is ultimately and finally real.

Truth in the New Testament isn't disconnected from how we live, however. We are to walk in the truth (2 Jn. 4; 2 Pet. 2:22), and we are to obey the truth (Gal. 5:7; 1 Pet. 1:22).

One mustn't oversimplify scriptural teaching on truth. However, it's safe to say that truth in the Bible means having the correct understanding of the way things really are, and living in accordance with this understanding.

## Truth Considered Philosophically

Let's look at truth now from a philosophical perspective, first as what is real, and then as true statements. This is important, because these are the terms according to which non-

Christians think about the matter.

First, truth is a characteristic of reality. In short, if something is real, it is true. Or put philosophically, if something "participates in being," it is true. When we say that the God of the Bible is the true God, we mean He really exists and really is God!

By analogy, we might ask if a plant we see in a room is a true or real plant. We want to know if it is organic, and not plastic or fabric. If we say a *person* has exhibited true love, we're saying the person's actions weren't motivated by anything other than concern for the object of the person's love.

Second, truth is a characteristic of accurate statements or propositions. Sentences which express true meanings convey truth. This is what we typically think of when we speak of truth.{12}

We often divide truth in this sense into the categories of *objective* and *subjective*. When we speak of objective truth, we mean that a statement truly reflects what is real, or really the case, apart from ourselves as knowers. And whether we believe it or not. Such truth is public; others can verify it. When we speak of *subjective* truth, we're speaking of truth that comes from us individually, where we ourselves are the only authority. For example, "My leg hurts" is subjective in the sense that I am the sole authority. Or if I claim that "French vanilla ice cream is the best tasting kind there is," that is a subjective truth claim."

Both truth as what's real and truth as objectively true statements are in crisis today. First, postmodernists say we can't know what's ultimately real. In academia this means there is no framework for integrating the various areas of study. In everyday life it results in fractured lives as we find ourselves having to conform to different situations

without any integrating structure. French sociologist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard had this to say about postmodernism: "[Postmodernism] has deconstructed its entire universe. So all that are left are pieces. All that remains to be done is to play with the pieces. Playing with the pieces—that is postmodern."{13}

We can rearrange the pieces in a number of different ways, but there is, as it were, no picture on the front of the puzzle box to guide us.{14} Such a view of truth leaves one unwilling, or unable really, to say what is true about anything of importance, and, as a result, forces one into the rather mindless tolerance demanded today. Dorothy Sayers had this to say about such "tolerance":

> *In the world it calls itself Tolerance; but in hell it is called Despair. It is the accomplice of the other sins and their worst punishment. It is the sin which believes nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, loves nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and only remains alive because there is nothing it would die for.{15}*

Second, although truth as true statements is still acknowledged today, some important matters are considered subjective which should be acknowledged as objective, such as statements about God and morality. Christians believe we can know what is ultimately and objectively real and true because the One who *is* ultimately real and true, God, has revealed Himself to us.

## A Foundation for Knowledge of Truth

Now we finally get to the key idea of this article.

Christians claim that they have the truth, a claim that is met with scorn. We are tempted to point to the Bible as our basis

for the claim, but critics claim that we're jumping the gun. If no one can have confidence in knowing truth, then what good is the Bible? It isn't the *source* that's the question; not yet anyway. It's the very *possibility* of knowing truth that is questioned. How are truth and the possibility of knowing it even possible?

In a nutshell, we have what philosophical naturalism has given up: we have a metaphysical basis for knowing truth, a basis in what is.

You see, for the naturalist, there is nothing fixed behind the changing world. Three things need to be the case about the world for us to know truth: that it is real; that it is rational; and that there is something fixed behind it. *And* we need to be able to connect with what is around us with our senses and our reason.

Here's the key point: *Knowledge of truth is possible because of the creating and revealing work of the* Logos *of God, Jesus Christ.* I'll return to this below.

It is not enough that Christians to simply throw their hands up in despair over this. We have a message that is true for all people. But it may not do to just point to the Bible as our source for true beliefs if the very possibility of knowing any enduring truth is in doubt. Upon what basis can we believe we can really know truth?

To have true knowledge of the world outside our own minds, there has to be a solid connection between our thoughts and the world. The world has to be rational, and we have to have the proper sensory and mental apparatus necessary to comprehend it. Christianity provides such a connection between our minds and reality outside us in the person of the *Logos* of God.

"In the beginning was the Word," John wrote, the *Logos* (John 1:1; cf. Rev. 19:13). In Greek philosophy, *logos* was the

impersonal principle of cosmic reason which was thought to give order and intelligibility to the world. John's *Logos*, however, is not impersonal; a Person, not a principle. The *Logos*—Jesus of Nazareth—is the intelligent expression of God or the Word of God (Jn. 1:1,14; Rev. 19:13). He is not secondary to God, but is God.

The significance of this for the possibility of knowing truth is this: knowledge is possible because of the creating and revealing work of the Logos. Remember that Jesus, the *Logos*, is not only the One who reveals God to us, but is also the creator of the universe (Jn.1:3; Col.1:16,17; Heb.1:2). Because the universe came from a rational Being, the universe is rational. Further, there is no hint in Scripture that the world is an illusion; it is just what it appears to be: real. And because we're made in God's image, we're rational beings who can know the universe.{16} Also, we can perceive the world around us because we were created with the sensory apparatus to perceive it.

But this is just knowledge of our world. What about knowledge of God? Not only has the *Logos* created us with the ability to know the world, He has also revealed Himself in a rational and even observable way. He is, as Carl Henry put it, "the God Who speaks and shows."{17}

Because of all this, it is not arrogance that is behind the Christian claim that truth can be known. We claim it because we have a basis for it: Jesus of Nazareth, the *Logos* of God, the Creator, has made knowledge of truth possible, knowledge of this world *and* of God. Modern philosophy and theology denied God's ability to reveal Himself to us in any significant way. But such ideas diminish God Himself. He made us to know His world. He gave us sense organs to know the empirical world; He gave us rational minds to engage in logical and mathematical reasoning and to engage in the many, many deductions we make every day of our lives. He also made us to know Him, and He revealed Himself to us through a

variety of ways.

It's no wonder that the naturalistic philosophy of our time is incapable of having confidence in knowing truth. It has lost a metaphysical ground for truth. Jesus of Nazareth is not only our source of salvation; He is also the Creator. And because of this, we can have confidence in our ability to know truth in general and truth about God in particular.

**Notes**

1. *City of Angels*, DVD, directed by Brad Silberling (Warner Home Video, 1998).

2. Rick Wade, "Confident Belief," Probe Ministries, 2001, www.probe.org/confident-belief/.

3. Roger Nicole, "The Biblical Concept of Truth," in D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, eds., *Scripture and Truth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 287.

4. Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Truth: A History and Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 165-66.

5. *Webster's New World College Dictionary*, 4th ed, s.v., "true."

6. John V. Dahms, "The Nature of Truth," *JETS* 28/4 (December. 1985), 455-465. This is parallel to Carnell's triad of ontological truth, propositional truth, and truth as personal rectitude. See Edward John Carnell, *Christian Commitment: An Apologetic* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1957), 14-17.

7. Nicole, 288. I am indebted to Nicole's and Thiselton's (cf. note 8 below) studies for much of what follows.

8. Colin Brown, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978); s.v. "Truth" by A. C. Thiselton, III.877, quoting Alfred Jepsen, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, I:313.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. See Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, Vol. 5, *God Who Stands and Stays, Part One* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1982), 336.

13. Jean Baudrillard, quoted in Douglas Groothuis, *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity Against the Challenges of Postmodernism* (Downers Grove, Ill.: 2000), 169.

14. See Groothuis, 170.

15. Dorothy Sayers, *Christian Letters to a Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1969), 4; quoted in Groothuis, 170.

16. As Henry says, "As creative, the Word of God is the ground of all existence; as revelatory, it is the ground of all human knowledge." (GRA, 5:334) Also, "The Logos is the creative Word whereby God fashioned and preserves the universe. He is the light of the understanding, the Reason that enables intelligible creatures to comprehend the truth." (GRA 3:212).

17. The subtitle to Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, Vol. 1.

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# Who Wrote the New Testament?

*David Graieg explores Bart Ehrman's contention that we can't trust the Bible's supposed authors. Yes we can.*

# Bart Ehrman



What if eighteen of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were not written by the people who have traditionally been credited with their authorship?{1} Just such a claim is made by Bart Ehrman's book *Forged: Writing in the Name of God* in which he argues that the Bible's authors are not who we think they are.

Dr. Ehrman is a professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. His work has been featured in *Time*, and he has appeared on NBC's *Dateline, The History Channel, National Geographic*, and other top media outlets.{2} Ehrman has authored over twenty books, including three *New York Times* bestsellers: *Jesus Interrupted, God's Problem*, and *Misquoting Jesus*, which argues that the New Testament manuscripts are unreliable and, hence, the text of the Bible is inaccurate. Ehrman's works are having a huge impact on the way that people perceive Christianity both here in the U.S. and abroad. Believers need to be ready to give an answer to Dr. Ehrman's claims.

Ehrman grew up in a liberal Episcopal church, but says that in high school a Youth for Christ leader took advantage of the loneliness that every teen experiences and led Ehrman to be born again.{3} Ehrman attended Moody Bible Institute and Wheaton College where his studies in New Testament textual criticism began to fuel doubt concerning the importance of variants in the manuscripts. Ehrman went on to pursue doctoral work at Princeton University, and, partly due to an issue concerning who the high priest was in the second chapter of Mark, Ehrman went down the path of agnosticism.

Ehrman's new book, *Forged,* contains eight chapters that include considerable overlap, and much of the space is devoted to forgeries outside the Bible. This makes the book's subtitle, "*Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They*

*Are,*" a little misleading. Also, there's not much new here. These concerns are covered in most recent textbooks on the New Testament.{4} Ehrman sees himself as making the public aware of what scholars have known for years.

As for the claim of *Forged,* Ehrman argues that Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, James, Jude, and 1–2 Peter are not written by those whose names are traditionally attached to them. It follows that if these books are written by liars and are deceptive in nature, and God Himself does not lie, the Church must have been mistaken in thinking these books were inspired by God. It would also follow that these books should be
removed from the canon of the Bible. However, as we shall see, there's good reason to think that these books are not forgeries.

## Determining Authorship

To begin, we will look into the important question of how scholars determine the author of a book written thousands of years ago.

There are two main lines of evidence that scholars use to determine the likely author of a book. The first is internal evidence, the most obvious being a claim to authorship in the document itself. There might also be hints in the document about when and where it was written, which may or may not match what we know of the life of the author, or might just seem out of place. For instance, if someone wrote that he visited Dallas, Texas in July and adds that it froze overnight, this scenario is not impossible but is very unlikely. Thus, we would have good reason to question other claims in the text.

If we have two letters that are supposed to have been written by the same author, we can compare their styles for confirmation. Do the documents share a similar vocabulary? Do

they use the same figures of speech and cultural expressions? Do they both use specific words or ideas in the same way or are they fairly distinct? If one of the documents uses a large number of unique words that are not used in the other, it may put in question mutual authorship.

Another important variable is the intended audience of a document since that can have a significant impact on its style and vocabulary. For instance, a medical doctor might write a work-related letter to a fellow oncologist and on the same day send a personal email to her husband. Ten years later, that same doctor writes a letter to her friend about a personal hobby. In all three cases, it's the same person writing, but there would be three distinct styles and vocabularies in each letter. Determining authorship can be a very complicated matter when considering both objective and subjective elements.

There's also external evidence to consider, information gathered from outside the letter itself. Eyewitness accounts can affirm a document's authorship. For instance, Grandma might have a letter that says, "Happy Valentine's Day, from your secret admirer." Grandma insists that she received this letter from Grandpa fifty years ago when they were still dating. Although there is nothing in the letter that identifies Grandpa as its author, we have the external testimony of a reliable witness. Such evidence is not certain, as Grandma might be a bit of a romantic who after all these years forgot who it was really from, but it is more probable than not that she is correct.

## What Is at Stake?

What if Ehrman's main contention is right, that seven of Paul's books, as well as James, Jude, and 1–2 Peter, are not written by who we traditionally have attributed them to? Not that I think Ehrman is right, but let us grant that he is. Is Christianity now false? Not at all. Ehrman concedes that

Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon were written by Paul and that Revelation was written by someone named John. Even with these few books, the heart of the Christian faith is maintained. Ehrman even includes the earliest account of the death and resurrection of Jesus in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. So while I do not think Ehrman is right in even one accusation of New Testament forgery, it is worth keeping all of this in proper perspective: Christ still saves and we still need to trust him.

So what evidence does Dr. Ehrman use to establish his claim of forgery? Let's consider his strongest case, that of 1 and 2 Peter. Ehrman's main argument is that Peter could not have written either of these books because he was a simple fisherman from Galilee and would surely have been illiterate.{5} He points to Acts 4:13 which says that when Peter and John were brought before the Jewish high priest, it was realized that they "were unschooled, ordinary men." From this Ehrman assumes that they were illiterate.

There is one major problem with this line of argument. Ehrman considers the book of Acts to be a forgery. So by Ehrman's own standard, Acts is unlikely to be reliable. That aside, it's more likely that Acts 4:13 is not indicating that Peter and John are illiterate, but that the Jewish leaders were comparing their training in the best schools of the day to the two men who lacked a rabbinic education.

Luke describes Peter's family's fishing business as having several boats along with the necessary nets and men to operate them. The business was located in Capernaum, only a few miles from the large Greek cities of Tiberias and Sepphoris. As a successful merchant, Peter likely had some knowledge of the Greek language as well as basic literacy. Even if we allow the shaky assumption that Peter might have been illiterate, it doesn't necessarily follow that 1 and 2 Peter are forgeries. It's likely that Peter may have used a secretary to write down

his words, a common practice in the first century.

Dr. Ehrman has failed to make his case that 1 and 2 Peter are forgeries. We still have good reason to trust these books as they guide us in defense of the faith and encourage us to endure sufferings for righteousness sake.

## Paul's Letters

Ehrman argues that Paul could not be the author of Ephesians because the letter contains some unusually long sentences, and the book "has an inordinate number of words that don't otherwise occur in Paul's writings."{6} Ehrman notes that Ephesians has fifty percent more unique words than found in Philippians which he says is about the same length.

It's true that Ephesians does have long sentences, but this is a bit subjective. There are long sentences in Romans, 1 Corinthians, Colossians and Titus, which Ehrman accepts as Pauline. His comparison with Philippians is also a bit unfair. Ephesians is thirty-three percent longer than Philippians and should be expected to have a greater number of unique words. In fact, Galatians has even more unique words than Ephesians but again is accepted
as Pauline by Ehrman. Further, Ephesians is a circular letter that was meant for a broader audience. It's reasonable to expect that it would address different topics from Paul's other letters and have more unique words.

Another point made by Dr. Ehrman is that Ephesians uses the words "saved" and "raised" mostly in the present tense while other Pauline letters refer to them as future events.{7} But is this really the case? In Romans, Paul talks of the believer as already saved being dead to sin and alive to Christ, and in Galatians Paul declares that "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." Ehrman's case against Ephesians is less than conclusive.

According to Ehrman, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus should be removed because the letters contain unique expressions not found in Paul's other works. Phrases such as "promise of life" and "with a pure conscience" are unique to these books.{8} Ehrman also argues that these pastoral letters replace an emphasis on the imminent return of Christ with nformation on the organizational structure of the church.

Paul does use unique vocabulary in his books to Timothy and Titus, but these letters are to individual friends and most of Paul's other letters are to community groups. Stylistic variation would be expected because of the different audiences. Other scholars point out that Ehrman exaggerates his case regarding the information about church structure. He seems to ignore the fact that there is information on church leadership and organization in Romans, Galatians, and especially in 1 Corinthians, letters accepted as Pauline by Ehrman.

In summary, it can be said that Dr. Ehrman often overstates his case and is somewhat selective in his examples.

## Presuppositions

To wrap up this article, I will look at some general problems in the way that Dr. Ehrman builds his case that many of the NT books are forgeries.

As with everyone, Dr. Ehrman interprets the world through a set of presuppositions. For instance, he has come to the conclusion that Jesus was merely an apocalyptic prophet.{9} Ehrman's Jesus proclaims that God is going to reveal himself in history and overthrow evil as represented by the Roman Empire. Ehrman discounts the role that the resurrection played in both confirming Jesus' claims to divinity and establishing Christianity itself. The result of constructing Jesus in this untraditional manner causes him to view passages that speak of the resurrection as inauthentic and probably later

fabrications.

Another weakness in *Forged* is that Ehrman doesn't seriously consider the role that secretaries (or an *amanuensis*) could have played in the writing of the New Testament.{10} Ehrman himself admits that "Virtually all of the problems with what I've been calling forgeries can be solved if secretaries were heavily involved in the composition of the early Christian writings."{11} Other scholars have argued that secretaries did play a significant role in the formation of the NT.{12} Ehrman assumes either no secretaries were involved, or if they were, they had no impact on the wording of the texts. Such a conclusion is at odds with modern scholarship on the subject. Dr. Ehrman either needs to interact more with this scholarship, or at worst he should take an agnostic position on the authorship of the NT books.

This is important because we know that secretaries were involved in helping Paul write his letters. Tertius inserts a greeting in Romans 16:22 as the one who "wrote down this letter." In 1 Corinthians, Galatians, and Philemon, Paul makes a point of telling his readers that he had written the letters with his own hand, acknowledging that other letters were written down for him. It is also recognized that others may have contributed to Paul's writings or at least had an impact on the style of some sections of his letters. For instance, Sosthenes, Silas, and Timothy are recognized contributors in the introductions of Paul's letters to the churches at Corinth, Philippi, Colossae, and Thessalonica.

Dr. Ehrman raises important questions regarding the text of the New Testament, but his accusations of forgery seem somewhat subjective. He has not given us good enough reason to abandon the authenticity of the New Testament writings nor their message of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

**Notes**

1. This article is a slightly adapted version of the program that aired on the Probe radio program.

2. Bart D. Ehrman. www.bartdehrman.com (accessed November 6, 2011).

3. Gary M. Burge, "The Lapsed Evangelical Critic," *Christianity Today*, June 1, 2006, vol. 50, no. 6. (accessed November 6, 2011).

4. D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2005); Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*. 4th ed. (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1990).

5. Bart D. Ehrman, *Forged: Writing in the Name of God—Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers. 2011), 70-77.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., 97.

9. Ehrman lays out his view on this in: Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophets of the New Millennium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). For an evaluation of the different views on Jesus see: James K. Beilby, and Paul R. Eddy, *The Historical Jesus: Five Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

10. Ehrman, *Forged*, 133-139.

11. Ibid., 134.

12. E. Randolph Richards, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991).

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# The Tug of War of Reason and Faith in C.S. Lewis's Favorite Novel

*Byron Barlowe examines the timeless battle between reason and faith in C.S. Lewis's novel—his favorite—*Till We Have Faces*. Are they mutually exclusive or can they balance one another? How do we reconcile them? "To rationally look at love and logic and to gaze along, to creatively depict and model its living out, may soon be all that is left to us to reach a new generation."*

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*"You think the gods have sent you there? All lies of priests and poets, child . . . The god within you is the god you should obey: reason, calmness, self-discipline."*

— The Fox, Greek tutor in *Till We Have Faces*[1]

*"Heaven forbid we should work [the garden of our human nature] in the spirit of . . . Stoics . . . We know very well that what we are hacking and pruning is big with a splendour and vitality which our rational will could never of itself have supplied. To liberate that splendour, to let it become fully what it is trying to be, to have tall trees instead of scrubby tangles, and sweet apples instead of crabs, is part of our purpose."*

— *C.S. Lewis*, *The Four Loves*[2]

A strong relationship between C.S. Lewis's conceptions of Contemplation and Enjoyment persists throughout his novel *Till*

*We Have Faces.* It seems most fruitful for today's apologist to examine two primary characters' relationship to the concepts in this way: the Greek slave-tutor known as the Fox, represents cold, hard, factual rationality which grudgingly gives a nod to the divine, but only in a limited, controlling way. He represents Stoicism more than any other school of thought. Meanwhile, the barbarian-pagan Priest of the god Ungit represents a less worldly wise, more mysterious and superstitious faith, rooted in earthy experience (fertility rites, blood sacrifice, etc.). Either worldview can limit human nature, truth and meaning. The Greek-infused contemplative life-view (nowadays seen most strongly in Modernism and its irreligious pupils), largely eschews the heartfelt experience of the latter, while the latter's religiosity often dismisses the thoughtful, discerning caution of the former. This artificially strict dichotomy and lack of balance shows forth at every turn in the Church today, creating a blindly loyal fideism with few answers for contemplative questions; or we see, in an overcorrection, a clinical, spiritless, formulaic religion of pure reason. The former, an unreflective *modus operandi,* chills—and according to testimonies of many apostates and atheists, creates—skeptics, who much like the Fox, seizing on pure reason, ceaselessly explain away the immaterial and numinous. In doing so they, like the Fox's star student Orual, act as plaintiffs against God or the gods. One apologist recently found that nearly all the young men he surveyed who serve as leaders of college atheist/agnostic groups in the U.S. were raised in church and attended Christian youth groups. Given the ubiquity of broken families, where little love borne of God-given freedom exists—much like the main character Orual's situation—and know-nothing, superstitious Christians, it is no wonder that a mass exodus of youth from the Church continues. One antidote to the current state of imbalance of Contemplation (reasoned examination toward applied wisdom) and Enjoyed faith (in Lewis's sense, experientially realized) may be to use and model the dual approach of Lewis's *The Four*

*Loves* alongside *Till We Have Faces*. To rationally *look at* love and logic and to *gaze along*, to creatively depict and model its living out, may soon be all that is left to us to reach a new generation.

In the mythic *Till We Have Faces*, which we will discuss here, the dual (and often dueling) dynamics of reason (often couched in secularized religion) versus mystical religion (often superstitious) interplay in various characters. It may help to explore these chief characters Lewis creates to embody the story of clashing worlds and worldviews, as well as the Fox's prize student, Orual. Meanwhile, we will briefly attempt to apply the lessons Lewis teaches apologists into the modern milieu.

First, Lewis revealed the predominant worldview, the Fox's philosophy, early in the novel as he tutored Orual. His Platonic views were summarized thus, "'No man can be an exile if he remembers that all the world is one city,' and 'Everything is as good or bad as our opinion makes it.'"[3] As a well-taught classical Greek, he sets out to import real learning into the barbarian kingdom to which he is enslaved. Orual admired her "grandfather's" constant quest for knowledge and carried on his tendency to question, Socratically, all that went on. Yet, since her dear Fox, always the philosopher, seemed "ashamed of loving poetry ('All folly, my child'), she overachieves in philosophy to "get a poem out of him."[4] Foretelling the dismissiveness and globalizing of the numinous by today's naturalistic thinkers, the Fox scoffs at surpranatural / supernatural explanations with a curt, "these things come about by natural causes."[5] In an ancient instance of positive-mental-attitude-laced freethinking, he lectures, "we must learn, child, not to fear anything that nature brings."[6] When Orual's sister Psyche goes about ostensibly healing the townspeople, and Orual asks about the validity of the claims, Fox the Naturalist characteristically keeps the options limited but somewhat open. "It might be in

accordance with nature that some hands can heal. Who knows?”[7] Herein lies a bit of epistemic humility, somewhat disingenuous it seems, something this writer detects quite a lot among materialist-naturalists.

The Fox’s framework of Platonic forms emerges in his assessment of Psyche’s ethereal beauty, “delight[ing] to say, she was ‘according to nature’; what every woman, or even every thing, ought to have been and meant to be, but had missed by some trip of chance.”[8] While talk of gods peppered his language (“Ah, Zeus” and “by the gods”—more than curses?), fate seems to drive the universe’s cause and effect. He considers suicide and opines about returning to the elements in death, fatefully acquiescing, to which Orual beseeches, “But, Grandfather, do you really *in your heart* believe nothing of what is said about the gods and Those Below? But you do . . . you are trembling.” His Gnostic-tinged response: the body fails me. I am a fool, being trapped in it so long.[9] From what little the writer knows of Greek theology, its progeny thrives in and out of the Church today as an admixture of practical atheism, pantheism and pragmatism. Lewis sneaks in the side door of the skeptical fortress by characterizing so strongly the Fox, whose loving humanity belies his deadening philosophy. If Lewis’s retelling of ancient myth can be refashioned again, or better, simply read, truth and meaning may get through.

On the second worldview, Lewis sets forth the theme of a grounding darkness, holy and otherworldly, chiefly through the pagan Priest of the local goddess Ungit. The Priest served as prophet, harbinger of judgment. He repeats the warning of Ungit’s all-hearing ears and vengefulness to the irreligious king on two occasions[10] He carries out shadowy, ancient rituals without explanation and in dark places, sticky with blood offerings. Even outside the dank and sacred temple, “every hour the Priest of Ungit walked around [the sacred fire],” narrates Orual, “and threw in the proper things.”[11]

Throughout, Lewis equates the *holy* with the mysterious, the hidden and darkened. Divine silence, corresponding to the biblical God's hiddenness and holiness, presents as a major theme of *Till We Have Faces.* The Priest offers few and brief explanations.[12] The god judging Orual in the afterlife allows her lifelong complaints to speak for themselves. Her resultant epiphany balances the equation between reason and religion, witty words and wordless (if corrupted) wisdom, and reconciles the silence: "I saw well why the gods do not speak to us openly, nor let us answer. Till that word [of inner secret] can be dug out of us, why should they hear the babble we think we mean?"[13] These characters serve as foils for one another, a creative way to tie Modern rationalism to man's inexorable and entirely unnatural acknowledgment of both the spiritual, or numinous and the moral law.

Sixteen years previous, Lewis had published *The Problem of Pain*, wherein he explores this undeniable yet insanely irrational or rather supernaturally revealed sense of numinous awe and moral law inherent in every man and culture. As if foreshadowing the clash of worldviews in discussion, Lewis writes, "Man . . . can close his spiritual eyes against the Numinous, if he is prepared to part company with half the great poets and prophets of his race, with his own childhood, with the richness and depth of uninhibited experience [the Fox, to a high degree, or] . . . He can refuse to identify the Numinous with the righteous, and remain a barbarian, worshipping sexuality, or the dead, or the lifeforce, or the future [the old Priest]."[14] The concepts of Contemplation and Enjoyment intertwine through a scholar and a man of the altar, through the gods and humans alike. In life and in myth, "men, and gods, flow in and out and mingle."[15]

The Fox's and Priest's views of one another and each other's worldview clashed like contemporary apologetic debates. The Fox saw the Priest's work as "mischief"[16] and nonsense. "A child of six would talk more sense" was the Fox's response to

the apparent contradictions of the Priestly doctrines regarding the Great Offering.[17] Contrarily, the Priest reflexively dismisses the Fox's Greek wisdom. According to Orual, "like all sacred matters, [a sacred, acted ritual] is and it is not (so that it was easy for the Fox to show its manifold contradictions)."[18] Yet, "even Stoicism finds itself willy-nilly bowing the knee to God."[19] The Fox at times let down his learned persona, evidencing the axiom that man is inherently religious. Yes, he gave a regular nod to the gods, and at the birth of Orual's sister Psyche he says wistfully, almost wishfully, "Now by all the gods . . . I could almost believe that there really is divine blood in your family." Though his comment regards the family bloodline, one picks up here and elsewhere a religious man, who then quickly covers the sentiment with appeals to reason, even rationalization. Such characterization seems both autobiographical on Lewis's part and testimony to his many dealings with materialist, humanist, secularist, liberal Christian, and unbelieving scholars and laymen.

The Priest's mythical, experiential religious conviction versus the Fox's worldly wisdom weaves itself through a climactic showdown. A death sentence falls on Psyche as the Accursed, to be offered to the goddess Ungit. (Here is the clash of wills between man and the divine in a crisis of state and religion so often seen in history.[20]) "Ungit will be avenged. It's not a bull or ram [sacrifice] that will quiet her now," pronounces the Priest.[21] He mentions "the Brute," who legend says will take away the human sacrifice. In classic rational fashion, the King challenges, "Who has ever seen this Brute . . . What is it like, eh?" In this moment, the Fox presents himself as the King's counsellor, living out his reasonable *raison d'etre*. Prosecution-style, he determines that the Brute only exists as an image, a shadow, six-year-old nonsense. The Priest dismisses this as "the wisdom of the Greeks," and seeks the peoples' fear as a fallback position. (Interestingly, many who either believe in or dismiss the

supernatural and mystical seek strength in numbers, popular opinion to make their case, which is no argument at all.) The high stakes exchange illustrates the gravity and consequences of the age-old clash. If religion is to be followed, it must be regulated by reason; if reason is to properly play its part, it must bow to realities beyond its grasp.

The Priest and Fox provide an extremely stark contrast of views during this conflict. The Fox presents a compare-and-contrast list of the Priest's teachings, revealing what he believes defies the Law of Non-Contradiction.[22] The Priest first responds to the abstractions by appeal to concrete realities. Greek wisdom "brings no rain and grows no corn." He portrays such constricting logic as unable to offer "understanding of holy things . . . demand[ing] to see such things clearly, as if the gods were no more than letters written in a book . . .nothing," he continues, "that is said clearly [about the gods] can be said truly about them . . . Holy wisdom is not clear and thin like water, but thick and dark like blood."[23] The apologist cannot help but think of the frustration of trying to communicate the mysterious paradoxes of spiritual truth and meaning to skeptics who demand only linear logic from a naturalist point of view. (The Fox continually appeals to "the Nature of things" and says "according to Nature.") One must also guard against becoming Fox-like, limiting inquiry and explanation merely to that accessible to the physical senses and human reason. Either philosopher or accommodating priest / poet can make that mistake; via their opposite approaches, whether overly from man's reason or God's assumed reasons, deny the paradoxes of reality.

Ironically, Orual's conversion to real belief in the numinous—halting and years-long—begins during this fight. Though she'd "have hanged the Priest and made the Fox a king" if she could, she realized the power lay in the Priest's position.[24] Her convincing comes in a climactic moment, when

pressed at literal knifepoint to stop prophesying the unwelcome judgment, the Priest shows unearthly peace, calm, and indeed a willingness to die. “While I have breath,” he intoned, “I am Ungit’s voice.” Resolute and full of faith at death’s door, his was evidence beyond reason, much as the testimony of Christ’s Apostles in their martyrdoms. This was not lost on Orual, who narrates, “The Fox had taught me to think—at any rate to speak of—the Priest as of a mere schemer and a politic man” who pretended and said whatever would provide him power or gain, in Ungit’s name.[25] The Fox’s prize student now saw through personal experience—the kind he taught her to guard against—that the Priest was sincere unto death. “He was sure of Ungit.”[26] He may have been mistaken or misled, but he did not pretend. One of the modern apologist’s greatest arguments is a convinced life and a faith, well-tested, sometimes right in front of the skeptic. The ultimate witness: a life and death scenario.

After a lifetime, in the afterlife, the Fox repents of his constraints and biases of the supernatural and religious. In this, Lewis communicates a truth applicable today. “I taught [Orual], as men teach a parrot, to say ‘Lies of poets,’ and ‘Ungit’s a false image.’ . . . I never told her why the old Priest got something from the dark House [of Ungit] that I never got from my trim sentences . . . I made her think a prattle of maxims would do, all thin and clear as water.”[27] How like so many testimonies of those who, in our day, come to Christ after years of dismissing and rationally ruling out the reality of the transcendent. Words are cheap and book knowledge only gets one so far, the Fox admits. What a mirror of teachers who lead people of faith away from that which requires revelation using smart-sounding verbiage. Hence, for those enamored with the Richard Dawkinses of our time, a reading of this novel may be the foxiest way of all to reach them.

Orual is a product of her own Need-Love[28], which is serviced

alternately by her Fox-taught Greek rationalism and belief in humanoid gods, whom she thinks she can control. As a young woman being flirted with by a prince on the lam, she characteristically staunches true emotions. “I had a fool’s wish to lengthen” the encounter, she says. “But I came to my senses.” On her odyssey to save her sister from a supposedly evil god, Orual blocks every sentiment with controlling motherly logic, eschewing all glimpses of and desires for the divine. She chooses to outwit the gods. She ends up the pawn in the hands of the gods, however gracious, that she fancied to be her equals.

The Orual-Queen-Psyche’s-twin character spends a lifetime employing Greek wisdom learned under the Fox to seek out life’s mysteries of human and divine relations, up to the bittersweet end, constantly denouncing the gods for the woes she experiences. Face to face with divinity, her bitter hiding reveals her glorious humanity. Now, true-faced, she is free. Up until then the helpless, yet defiantly and impressively skillful independence she exhibits as a mothering sister, and later as regent, so well illustrate fallen human defiance of the true God of the Bible, seen most vividly in well-educated apostates and atheists today. Those unbelievers, consumed by angry confusion regarding suffering and life’s seeming futilities, should find both empathy and resolution in this novel.[29] While doing excellently (in human terms) for a lifetime, as Orual did, one can still deny the existence of the divine while cursing the god’s or God’s supposed effects on mere mortals. Orual’s torturous private thought life increasingly revealed her sin nature, which she turned back into ravings against the fate of the gods. Control was her only weapon, until the deaths of all who propped up her life and kingdom, and until visions of her corrupted affections forced humility upon her. Such desperate machinations to live a meaningful life in the face of deadening routine punctuated by tragedy, in turn, raises the biggest questions of life: Why are we here? Are we mere mortals or eternal beings with a

destiny? If the latter, what or who determines our fate—is there really meaningful choice or only divine whim or something else? Lewis creates multi-layered characters who live out the quest for ultimate answers.

In another resolution of sorts, the myth comes full circle through the Fox and priesthood back to Greece. Arnom, the new Priest of Ungit, adds a notation on Orual's book (at our novel's end) entreating anyone travelling to Greece to take it there,[30] which may ironically imply that the barbarians had something to teach the world's greatest philosophers. Likelier, Arnom, who put himself under the tutelage of the Fox, meant to dedicate the Queen's life saga to a greater civilization. Is this a symbolic merging and maturing of the two schools of thought and faith? A reference to Arnom as "priest of Aphrodite," likely indicates his fuller "Greekification." Whether this change was for ill, good or neutral is hard to say. Perhaps the former priest of the crude barbarian goddess Ungit was effectively sending a message, as if to preach: "To those in Greece, supreme land of learning and reason, place of the gods of the philosophers, we commend you this account of a Being beyond description who revealed our Queen's aching fallenness, journey into redemption, and glorified revelation as a goddess in her own right." This writer's weak grasp of Greek mythology and theology notwithstanding, it seems clear Lewis offers much resolution of reason and religion, of the contemplative and the Enjoyed, however incomplete it must naturally be.

[1] C.S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, (San Diego and New York: A Harvest Book / Harcourt, 1956), 302-303.

[2] C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, (San Diego and New York: A Harvest Book / Harcourt, 1960), 117.

[3] Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, 7.

[4] Ibid., 8.

[5] Ibid., 10.

[6] Ibid., 14.

[7] Ibid., 31

[8] Ibid., 22.

[9] Ibid., 17-18.

[10] Ibid., 15,54.

[11] Ibid., 14.

[12] Ibid., 15-16, etc.

[13] Ibid., 293-294.

[14] Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: HarperCollins, 1940), 14-15.

[15] Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, 301.

[16] Ibid., 33.

[17] Ibid., 49.

[18] Ibid., 268.

[19] Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, 13.

[20] From the little the writer knows of Plato's *Republic*, there seem to be echoes of it here in the Fox's views. Worth exploring.

[21] Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, 46.

[22] Ibid., 49-50.

[23] Ibid., 50.

[24] Ibid., 51.

[25] Ibid., 54.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., 295.

[28] Lewis, *The Four Loves*, chapter 2 (“Affection”).

[29] The writer plans to use the novel and its contemplative companion, *The Four Loves*, to reach out to a struggling apostate with mother issues on both sides of her adoption.

[30] Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, 308-309.