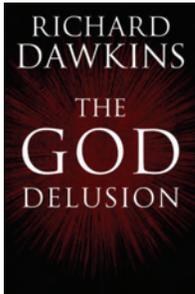


Evidence For Christianity Newsletter

The God Delusion by Richard Dawkins: A Review

by John Oakes

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Richard Dawkins is arguably the best-known evolutionist and atheist today. He has written a number of books explaining modern discoveries as they relate to the neo-Darwinian theory of evolution. Some of his better-known works include *The Selfish Gene*, *The Blind Watchmaker*, *River out of Eden* and *Unweaving the Rainbow*. These books, as their titles suggest, offer a mixture of solid evolutionary science and polemic against those who do not accept the full implications of the atheistic theory of evolution. In using the phrase atheistic theory of evolution, I do not at all mean to imply that all evolutionists are atheistic or that evolution is necessarily even an atheistic theory. I am applying this label to those who teach two ideas: 1. It is a *fact* that all life on the earth today originated by random, natural processes from inorganic matter to the

original life form to all the variety of life observable today. 2. This *fact* is evidence that there is no creative or supernatural force as an underlying cause to what we observe in nature today.

With his latest addition to his resume as an author, Dawkins has thrown down the gauntlet. *The God Delusion* is really not about evolution at all. It is a bold attack on the very spirit of religion itself. Dawkins is not trying to convince his reader of the evidence supporting organic change by mutation and natural selection (although there is some of this in the book). He is trying to stake the claim that belief in God is the most dangerous and pernicious force in the world today. It is the evil behind virtually everything bad which happens in human society. Dawkins makes the point that religion is the natural enemy of all those who seek for truth and human justice. It is no wonder that this book has aroused a significant response. In order to give the reader a flavor for the tone of this book, let us look at the first sentence. "As a child, my wife *hated* her school and wished she could leave." This sentence gives us a hint of what is to come. This book is laced with anger, vitriol and hatred against religion on every page. To summarize the book, the title should have been, "Why I hate religion and all religious people." Dawkins pretends to be an unbiased observer, yet when one reads this angry diatribe, it becomes immediately obvious that this can not be farther from the truth. This is just about the most biased, unfair attack I have ever read by any author.

A few more quotes and examples from the book will illustrate the bitter and unbalanced tone of the book. On page one; he mentions the BBC documentary about religion, *The Root of All Evil?* Dawkins says he does not believe religion is the root of *all* evil, but he then proceeds to undermine that statement in the book by basically stating that it is in fact the root of all evil—at least all the evil he can think of. Another quote he praises (p. 5) is as follows (taken from Robert Pirsig), "When one person suffers from a delusion, it is

those who are religious are in a sense insane. He believes they suffer delusions. These are fighting words. They are not used by accident. He calls religion a vice (p. 6). "The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction," (p. 31). Is Dawkins speaking as a scientist here? Is he speaking as a literary critic? No, he is speaking as a bitter opponent of belief in a Creator and in absolute moral truth. He calls belief in God silly (p. 36). He calls the Christian God a psychotic delinquent (p. 38) and a monster (p. 46). Is this evidence of what Dawkins claims to offer, which is carefully reasoned argument? He calls believers weird (p. 53). Again and again in this book, he mentions how he is "amused" by the things "religionists" do. We see him ridiculing and laughing at his enemies. He says that we should reject Deuteronomy "as all enlightened moderns do" (p. 57). Well, by definition, anyone who accepts the historical accuracy of Deuteronomy is not enlightened or modern. The list of those who do accept Deuteronomy will show the bias of this statement. He calls his opponents (i.e. all believers) unworthy (p. 57). He calls attempts to test the viability of prayer pathetic (p. 61). He calls those who believe in evolution but also believe in God members of "The Neville Chamberlain School of Evolutionists." (p. 66). You get the idea. This is a sampling from the first 20% of the book. Believe it or not, the tone actually gets worse as the book proceeds. To illustrate, on p. 321 he says that he regrets the doctrine of hell is not true, because part of him wishes the nuns he knew when he grew up could go there. He makes this point more than once. He argues (p. 317) that being influenced by the Catholic Church is "more harmful than being sexually abused". I am not kidding!

I teach a course on the history and philosophy of science. As part of this course, we cover logical fallacies and marks of pseudo-science. It is ironic, that Dawkins uses a wide variety of those techniques which the scientific community has determined to be absolutely unacceptable for scientific practice. Marks of pseudo-science found in *The God Delusion* include;

1. Argument by analogy. This is trying to prove one claim to be true (despite a lack of evidence supporting it) simply because it is similar to another claim which is known to be true. Dawkins claims that Darwinism proves that complicated systems can be created by natural forces. Never mind whether this is proven or not, he then proceeds to argue, by direct analogy, that there will certainly be a Darwinian equivalent to explain how the universe was created. This is simply not a scientific argument, yet Dawkins uses it to explain away the fact that

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Concordia University
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the universe was created with laws unimaginably fine-tuned to allow life to exist.

2. Claims of suppression. Dawkins argues for atheism by constantly referring to how vigorously he has been persecuted. He makes the patently false statement that atheistic scientists are persecuted for their beliefs. I am a scientist myself. I can testify that in scientific circles it is the belief in God which is far more likely to be subject to ridicule, to the point that there are a number of documented cases of professors being fired or refused tenure for their religious beliefs. Such never happens to atheists, at least as far as I know. If Dawkins gets persecuted, and I believe he has received some unwarranted hate-filled attacks, it is at least in part because of his own actions in making personal, vitriolic attacks on Christianity.

3. Quoting other scientists out of context. Dawkins complains, not without cause, that many creationists abuse those they quote, making them say things which they clearly do not believe in at all. This is a standard technique of pseudo-scientists. The problem with this is that Dawkins is a blatant perpetrator of this technique as well. Time and time again in *The God Delusion* he abuses those from whom he quotes.

4. Bogus use of statistics to create a false case for an argument. Dawkins tries to imply cause and effect where there is mere correlation—a tactic unworthy of those who use the scientific method. He states (p. 229) that the more religious states in the United States have higher crime rates, implying that the greater amount of religion in those states is what leads to their higher rate of violence. This is very bad science indeed. Bogus use of statistics is found in several places in *The God Delusion* (p. 237, 255, 257 and others).

5. Appeals to mysteries and myths. A common technique of pseudo-scientists is to refer to as evidence obviously mythological beliefs of ancient peoples or unsolved mysteries about the past. Dawkins is blatantly guilty of this non-scientific argument. For example, he tries to argue by analogy to the work of Julian Jayne, *The Bicameral Mind*. Interestingly, this is one of the case studies I use in my section on pseudo-science. The bicameral mind is a completely unsupported effort to explain the (supposedly) sudden increase in human knowledge about 2000 BC as being due to some sort of sudden change in human brain chemistry. Dawkins uses this in his completely unfounded attempts to explain how human beings acquired the universal tendency toward believing in absolute moral truth and in a spiritual dimension to life.

This list is not comprehensive. When I teach about pseudo-science, I tell the students that if something quacks like a duck, it may not be a duck, but if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it is probably a duck. The point is that if a scientific claim is accompanied by one or two marks of pseudo-science, perhaps we ought to withhold judgment, but if one finds several, as is the case with Dawkins' book, then the conclusion is straightforward. *The God Delusion* is obvious pseudo-science.

Dawkins is guilty of blatantly poor reasoning on almost every page of this book. Some of the logical fallacies I teach about in my Intro to Scientific Thought course include the following—used extensively by Dawkins.

1. *Ad Hominem*. When making some sort of an argument, if one has a relatively weak case, it is common to resort to attacking, not the argument of your opponent, but your opponent. The quotes above are sufficient to show that Dawkins does this repeatedly. He brazenly and unfairly attacks the character and motives of believers in the book. He calls Mother Theresa a sanctimonious hypocrite (p. 292). Dawkins uses words such as barking mad (p. 253), sadomasochistic (p. 253), viciously unpleasant (p. 253), and infantile (363) to describe Christians' belief in God in general. This is not the sort of technique used by people who have a solid, convincing argument to make.

2. No True Scotsman. This fallacious argument goes something like this. No true Scotsman would do such and such. Person A does such and such. Therefore, person A is not a Scotsman. Dawkins repeatedly states that no true scientist will accept even the possibility that God's finger somehow has intervened in the course of nature. The implication is that it is not scientific to believe in such things and that those who do so are not true scientists. If this is true, then Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Lord Kelvin and an almost unlimited list of the most eminent scientists are not good scientists.

3. Begging the Question. Begging the question involves assuming the answer to a question as a precondition to asking the question. Dawkins reasons that anyone who believes in a supernatural force is, by definition, not scientific, and therefore, science proves that there is no supernatural force.

4. Straw Man Argument. This involves creating a completely exaggerated and unrealistic picture of what your opponent believes or stands for and then arguing against the "Straw Man" rather than against what your opponent is actually saying. It is a great way to avoid facing the actual questions at hand. On almost every page of *The God Delusion* Dawkins describes the worst cases of Religious closed-mindedness and hypocrisy. Admittedly, there are a good number of extremely bad things which have been done in the name of religion. Admittedly, there are some in the young earth creationist camp whose

ATHENS INSTITUTE OF MINISTRY IN SAN DIEGO

AIM West NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY & NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION

Date: 8/2/07 - 8/5/07

Time: 9:15 AM

Place: San Diego, CA

Teachers: Douglas Jacoby,
Gordon Ferguson, and John
Oakes.

This survey course introduces the student to the world of the New Testament, from the historical and geographical background to the formation of the New Testament itself. This will involve 4 days of teaching (four 75 minute classes a day). Students will need to do some advance reading, and will be expected to take the examination as well. Students will take the exam a few weeks later and then mail it in. This fourth AIM West Coast session will complement the April '07 session on Old Testament Survey in Phoenix. This is open to staff and non-staff, men and women. For info email Jan Oakes joakes01@san.rr.com

Required Reading

Registration Form

Dead Sea Scrolls

In 2007, the San Diego Natural History Museum will be exhibiting 24 (two sets of 12) of the Dead Sea Scrolls for a 6 month exhibition.

www.sdscrolls.org



“science” is completely insupportable. Dawkins tries to paint all believers as being either like this or one slippery slope step away from being like this. He literally does not concede a single positive contribution to human society or culture from religious people. Even the most hardened enemy of Christianity, if he or she is honest, will admit that people of faith have made positive contributions to humanity as a result of their having faith.

I could continue, but hopefully the case is made. As an atheist friend of mine admitted, “Dawkins creates a lot more heat than light.” In fact, even the great majority of famous atheists and agnostics have either distanced themselves from Dawkins or outright repudiated him for his ungracious and unscientific attacks on faith. For example, Steven Weinberg, an avowed atheist and no friend of religion panned *The God Delusion*: <http://www.tls.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,25349-2552017,00.html>

Atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel is unimpressed as well if the quote from him below is any indication:

“Richard Dawkins, the most prominent and accomplished scientific writer of our time, is convinced that religion is the enemy of science. Not just fundamentalist or fanatical or extremist religion, but all religion that admits faith as a ground of belief and asserts the existence of God. In his new book, he attacks religion with all the weapons at his disposal, and as a result the book is a very uneven collection of scriptural ridicule, amateur philosophy, historical and contemporary horror stories, anthropological speculations, and cosmological scientific argument...” - Thomas Nagel

Alister McGrath provides one of the most cogent critiques of *The God Delusion*. He is a former atheist-turned Anglican. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=433628&in_page_id=1770

Andrew Brown, a British reviewer and sympathizer with the anti-religious movement is unimpressed: “Incurious and rambling, Richard Dawkins's diatribe against religion doesn't come close to explaining how faith has survived the assault of Darwinism.”

Having given the reader an idea of the tone of the book, I will now consider the basic line of reasoning of *The God Delusion*. Essentially, Dawkins' argument is that Darwinism has provided solid, irrefutable evidence that the incredible order, variety and complexity of life, which some have seen as evidence for a Creator, can be explained, by a random, natural process. It is not my intention in this essay to disprove this contention (some material is found in my book *Is There a God?* www.ipibooks.com). Let us, for the sake of gracious argument, concede the point (although I do not believe this for a moment). To be honest, Dawkins has provided some strong arguments against certain points made by the Intelligent Design camp. The man is a very accomplished scientist, whose grasp of the evidence for evolution a serious Christian apologist ought to at least give good attention to.

The problem with his argument is that Dawkins proceeds to conclude that he has thus, by analogy, proven that science can explain **all** the order in nature, as well as the admittedly (even by Dawkins) amazing coincidence of all the important constants of nature being perfectly tuned so that life can exist. As all atheists do, he argues for the infinite universe theory, hoping that some sort of Darwinism of universes has acted to produce such a finely tuned universe for us to live in. I am not exaggerating. Dawkins proposes some sort of Darwinian natural-selection-like theory of how our universe was created. One thing is clear. He is outside his area of expertise. Another thing is clear. Dawkins is out on a very long speculative limb here. His arguments against the Strong Anthropic Principle (the idea that the universe we live in shows strong evidence that it was designed so that advanced life forms can exist) are rambling, speculative and completely unconvincing, at least in my opinion.

It is interesting that Dawkins proposes an analogy to Darwinism for cosmology, but he chooses to absolutely ignore what is probably the strongest argument of all for a Creator, which is the existence of life. His silence on how life itself came about by random chemical events is deafening. There is a reason for this. To propose a theory that natural selection of chemicals might have the ability to produce a living thing is nothing short of ludicrous. Even Dawkins does not have the audacity to propose an analogy to Darwinism as a means to create life from inorganic matter. Because he cannot mount a workable argument, he simply ignores the issue of the creation of life. I can only suppose that he hoped we would not notice this gaping hole.

After providing what is, at least for me, an unsatisfactory explanation of the fine tuned universe and completely ignoring the creation of life, Dawkins simply declares his job done. God does not exist, and anyone who does not agree is deluded, infantile, unenlightened and so forth. This leads him to his second thesis, which is clearly why he has written the book. Dawkins argues that not only is religion wrong on the existence of God, it is the single most destructive element ever introduced into human culture. It is an unfortunate by-product of the evolution of the human brain. He proposes that the tendency to believe in a purposeful life, in a higher power, in an absolute moral good, is simply the by-product of evolutionary forces in human brain development. At this point, Dawkins brings to bear a number of dubious pseudoscientific explanations of brain evolution. He concludes that the idea of belief in an absolute moral standard (such as it is wrong to lie or evil to kill another human) is just an artifact, and a dangerous one at that. He argues that the only way to arrive at a correct ethic is to use the scientific method. He also contradicts himself again and again, because he calls religionists evil. There is no absolute moral law, except the one that belief in an absolute moral law is immoral.

Dawkins lives in a Pollyanna world in which scientists will make us better and better. Human beings are slowly but steadily evolving to a more enlightened state in which they will reject all ideas of good and evil, yet will treat one another more and more humanely. As evidence, he provides a litany of the evils perpetrated by religion. He reserves a particular vitriol for Roman Catholicism. To be honest, his list of the evils done in the name of religion, include a number of examples of some of the worst of human behavior, which has indeed been motivated by religion. What he does, though, is completely ignore even the possibility that human belief in God has produced any good in the world. He has the gall to imply that anyone who does not completely disavow God is part and parcel with Hitler (who he claims, by the way, was a Christian), the Taliban and Al Qaeda. This absolutely irresponsible hate-mongering on the part of Dawkins is what made it extremely difficult to even read the book to the end.

Teaching Day for East Region of LA International Church of Christ

Date: **05/06/2007** - Time: **10:00 AM** Place: **Los Angeles**

This teaching event will include a lesson on Freedom in Christ as well as one from the book From Shadow to Reality. For more information, contact Javier Amaya at javieramaya@icoc.org This teaching event will include a lesson on Freedom in Christ as well as one from the book From Shadow to Reality. For more information, contact Javier Amaya at javieramaya@icoc.org

Teaching Christian Evidences Weekend in Houston, Texas

Date: **05/18/2007** - **05/20/2007** Time: **TBA** Place: **Houston , Texas**

This will be a series of evangelistic events and classes put on by the Houston Church of Christ. Details are still being worked out. For more information, contact Tim Huffman tjhuff@msn.com

Teaching Visit to the UK

Date: **06/06/2007** - **06/13/2007** Time: **TBA** Place: **London, Manchester, Edinburgh,**

United Kingdom Teaching events will be held in Edinburgh 6/6 and 6/7, in Reading and London 6/8 and 6/9, in Manchester 6/10 and 6/11. For more information, contact Tim Dannatt at Tim_Dannatt@icoc.org.

Teaching Trip to Abidjan, Ivory Coast

Date: **6/14/07** - **6/19/07** Time: **TBA** Place: **Abidjan, Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire)**

This will be a five day teaching visit to encourage the churches and the teaching ministry in French-speaking West Africa. More details will be forthcoming. For details, contact Blaise Feumba at feumba@aviso.ci

After time in Abidjan, I will be moving on to Abuja, Nigeria and Lagos, Nigeria July 20th-25th for an West African Christian Conference. This will be a meeting of many churches in West Africa. For more information, contact Chris Ogonnaya at kris-rols@yahoo.com

2007 International Apologetics Conference

Date: **6/22/07** - **6/24/07** Time: **TBA** Place: **Concordia University, Irvine, CA**

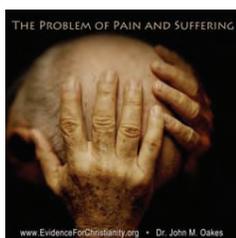
This teaching event will include a campus outreach lesson, apologetics classes and fieldtrips. evidenceforchristianity.org Contact joakes01@san.rr.com

AIM West New Testament Survey & New Testament Interpretation

Date: **8/2/07** - **8/5/07** Time: **9:15 AM** Place: **San Diego, CA**

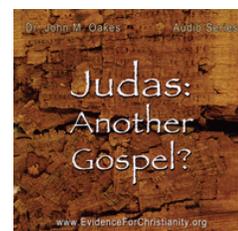
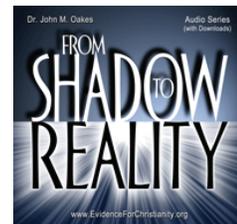
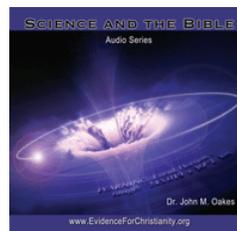
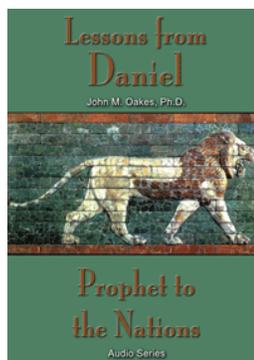
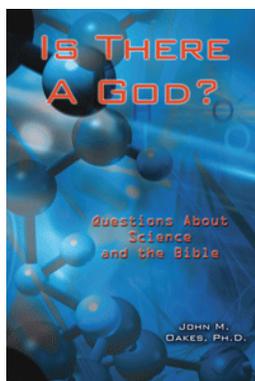
Teachers: Douglas Jacoby with Gordon Ferguson and John Oakes. This survey course introduces the student to the world of the New Testament. For information on the class description, required reading and how to register contact Jan Oakes at joakes01@san.rr.com 858 505.8841.

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The Problem of Pain and Suffering

Suffering is not only a problem of intellect, it is also a problem of the heart. How do Christians respond to suffering and the accusation that a loving God wouldn't allow it to happen. John addresses this thorny issue and others. The audio CD also includes a 22 page article on this vital subject.



What is your opinion on the Ten Ossuaries that were found in Israel, apparently belonging to the family of Jesus of Nazareth?

It is my opinion that the ten ossuaries, or bone boxes, found in Israel have absolutely no significance to the biblical narrative. James Cameron, the Canadian director of *The Titanic* made a big splash for himself and gained a lot of publicity for his documentary from his announcement that he found ossuaries relevant to the family of Jesus. The problem is that the evidence is based on the names on the artifacts. I believe we can assume that these are indeed genuine ancient ossuaries. They were discovered in a tomb several miles from Jerusalem 1980. The problem with using these as evidence either for or against the biblical story is that the connection is based only on the names found there. Apparently, one of the ossuaries had the name Jesus (Jeshua in Aramaic), son of Joseph, and two had the name Mary and one had Judah, son of Jesus. Unfortunately for Cameron's claims, this tells us nothing. The most common name for males in Israel at the time of Jesus was Jesus. Judas or Judah was also very common. In fact, two of the apostles were named Judas. Three of Jesus' close companions were named Mary. Obviously, if a group of ten ossuaries had two persons named Mary included among them, this is not convincing evidence at all that the Mary in question is the mother of Jesus.



As far as I know, not a single important scholar has agreed with Cameron's spectacular claims. At his press conference Cameron had a statistician who attempted to prove that the set of names on the ossuaries are an unlikely coincidence. His statistical argument has been unconvincing to scholars. The statistician claimed that the chances of finding this combination of names are one in 600. There are several problems with this. First of all, over 900 large family tombs have been discovered in the area of Jerusalem. If there is a one in 600 chance any single one of them having the combination of names mentioned above, then the probability is well over 50% that at least one of the 900 tombs will have a set of names like that found by Cameron. Of the 900 burial caves discovered so far, 71 of them had the name Jesus on at least one of the ossuaries, More than one had Judah, the son of Jesus inscribed on it. Given the location, the number of similar burial caves and the commonness of the names involved, we can safely conclude that these are not the ossuaries of Mary and her son Jesus of Nazareth.

A couple other problems with Cameron's claim bear pointing out. First, it is strange to think that a family from Galilee would be buried near Jerusalem. Second, even skeptics of Christianity will balk at the claim that Jesus had children. Despite the outrageous claims of Dan Brown in the *DaVinci Code*, good scholars are virtually unanimous in rejecting this theory as unsubstantiated.

One other point, it is not very likely that anyone will ever discover the ossuary containing the bones of Jesus for the simple reason that Jesus resurrected from the dead. This point is so obvious that one is forced to wonder if Cameron is a non-believer who is allowing wishful thinking to affect his interpretation. It seems quite likely that James Cameron is using this find as a way to indirectly attack Christianity. He claims to be a believer, but clearly he does not believe in the resurrection. It probably does not hurt his motivation that he is receiving a lot of publicity and most likely is making a large profit from this completely insubstantial claim. I assume that Cameron is fully aware that his claims are bogus, and that he is a publicity hound, using an important find (important, but not connected with biblical events) to his own advantage.

3/13/2007



The Talpiot Tomb



James' Ossuary

I have just finished reading the book "Misquoting Jesus - The story behind who changed the Bible and why" by scholar/author Bart D. Ehrman has raised innumerable questions in my mind as to the validity of what Jesus actually taught his disciples. Ehrman says that the composition of the New Testament began as late as 70 years after the death of Jesus and was recorded from stories passed through generations; inherent errors must have been there. Also, for hundreds of years scribes hand copied these words (on occasion with errors) to the printed King James Bible we study today. I wonder, if we don't really know the explicit words the Lord used in his divine instruction how can we actually follow the teaching found in the bible and know we are following the true word of God?

There has been an upsurge in such books lately. Let me assure you that folks such as Bart Ehrman are not interested in the truth. They have an agenda to create an unscholarly and deceitful smear campaign against the Bible. This fits the pattern of Dan Brown, the author of the Da Vinci Code, as well as James Cameron, the one who recently produced a documentary on the supposed finding of the tomb and ossuary of Jesus of Nazareth, the National Geographic group who published the Gospel of Judas (which, by the way, is a legitimate document, but their treatment of it as a credible testament to the life of Jesus is totally outrageous) and others. Such witnesses are not to be trusted at all. There is not a lot of money to be made and not much of a reputation to be gained by supporting the truth—which is that the Bible is an accurate historical record and is the inspired Word of God. Brown made tens of millions of dollars by hyping the totally insupportable claim that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene. Cameron is cashing in on the same satanic idea. Mr. Ehrman is of the same ilk, I am afraid.

Having made some pretty strong statements, let me add that there are many scholars asking legitimate questions about the historical accuracy of the Bible, about the dates at which the original letters were penned, the authorship, the history of the texts and in what ways they later became corrupted by copying and so forth. I do not mind at all skeptics giving good scholarly input into the discussion. It is just that popularizers of completely unfounded ideas who make large profits from their bogus so-called scholarship are not welcome, in my opinion.

This is what Bart Ehrman is. I have read some of his material. He is not a careful scholar. He may do a lot of research, but his conclusions are blatantly biased and not useful for discussion of the facts. First of all, there is not a single scholar (legitimate one, that is) who says that the composition of the New Testament began seventy years after the death of Jesus. It is obvious what Ehrman is trying to do. He is trying to say that all the eye-witnesses were dead before the New Testament was written. There is one problem with this thesis. It is proven wrong by facts of which Ehrman absolutely has to be aware. We have manuscripts as old as AD 125 (the Rylands Papyrus). In addition, there exist a large body of letters written by the early church "fathers" such as Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and others. These early Christian writers from the very late first and the second century AD quoted extensively from every part of the New Testament. The letters known as the Epistle of Barnabas, the Didache and the Letter of Clement of Rome have all been dated from around 100 AD. These authors quote from Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, Romans, I Corinthians, Ephesians, Titus, Hebrews, I Peter and others. The early church father Ignatius was martyred in 115 AD. In a set of letters he composed on his way to his execution in Rome, he quoted from nearly every New Testament book. One could continue by mentioning the much more extensive writings of Justin Martyr from around 150 AD, and those of Irenaeus, from near the end of the second century. Justin called the gospels the "memoirs of the apostles." Experts have claimed that using quotes from early Christian writers in the second century, one could reconstruct nearly the entire text of the New Testament. Nearly all scholars agree that Matthew Mark and Luke were written before AD 70. John was almost certainly written before AD 90, and probably at least ten years before that. Some debate whether Paul wrote 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. However, virtually no scholars debate his authorship of Romans, 1, 2 Corinthians, and Galatians-2 Thessalonians. Ehrman chooses, to ignore all these facts. Why? You will have to ask him.

Again, Ehrman's mention of "hundreds of years scribes copied the New Testament until the King James Version" shows his obviously deceitful intent. I am sure Ehrman is aware that we have entire manuscripts of the New Testament in Greek from about AD 350, including the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Vaticanus, as well as a number of manuscripts of entire books of the New Testament and large parts of others from the third century (The Washington Manuscripts, the Chester Beatty Papyri, etc.), and even some from the second century. Why would anyone who was well aware of this fact pretend that errors in copying after the second or third century matter, when all scholars know that they are basically irrelevant to the accuracy of the New Testament? The fact is that we have a virtually perfect version of the original New Testament documents. We can cross check this by reading the extensive quotes of Irenaeus, Polycarp, Justin and others in the second century AD who were quoting from the manuscripts in their possession.

Of the criticisms you mention by Ehrman, I believe that one of them has at least some validity. The claim that these documents were not written by eye-witnesses is disproved by the evidence. The claim that hundreds of years allowed for massive mistakes in the New Testament is disproved. However, he does raise one legitimate question, in my opinion. It is almost certainly true that we do not have exact word-for-word transcripts of the sayings of Jesus. I believe that the gospel writers are reliable witnesses, but surely the speeches recorded are not exact, perfect word-for-word quotes. Surely the memory of the apostles is a factor in what we read. This I will concede. It is probably true that we do not have every single word spoken by Jesus, exactly as he spoke. What we have is the report of men who were with him for three years, twenty-four hours per day. Jesus said many things, and I assume he had a similar message wherever he went. There is a place for faith in this. I believe that there is overwhelming evidence that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. For this reason, I believe that God, through the Holy Spirit, had influence on the final form of the things written in the bible.

“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21). The original writings were inspired by God. I believe this by faith, but also because of the incontrovertible evidence for inspiration found everywhere I look in the Bible. I suggest you do some reading at the web site for some evidence for biblical inspiration. I have four books published which speak to the question of inspiration. (From Shadow to Reality, Reasons for Belief, Daniel, Prophet to the Nations, and Is There a God? all available at www.ipibooks.com)

Bottom line, the original writings were inspired by God. Whether or not the words quoted are exact transcripts of one particular discourse by Jesus or whether they are the summary of words spoken by Jesus many times and on many occasions are not relevant to the fact that these are the Word of God. Please do not let the deceitful and biased words from Ehrman disturb your faith in what is obvious—which is that the Bible is from God. Ehrman has an agenda, which is to destroy your faith in God and in Jesus. You would do well to take everything he says with one giant grain of salt.

3/19/2007

There is evidence of proto-Israelite settlement in Canaan around 1400BC. The Iron Age in Canaan is dated to 1150BC at the earliest. How then can Moses be the author of Leviticus when he reports God as speaking of iron in 26:19 when it was not to be discovered until 200 years after his death?

A few points.

1. The Hebrew word seems to definitely denote something made out of iron.
2. I have never held that Moses wrote the book of Leviticus. This is a tradition with no evidence behind it.
3. Nevertheless, whether or not Moses wrote the book, your question still stands. It is not relevant who wrote the book, but when the laws were given.
4. Estimates for the time of the invention of iron vary, but archaeologists have found evidence of iron in Anatolia from about 2000 BC onward. There is evidence that the rise of the Hittite empire in the period around 1500 BC was largely due to its advanced use of iron weapons. By 1500 BC it had already become apparent that iron weapons were superior to bronze. We know that in conquering Palestine, Israel came into contact with Hittite power and culture. Therefore, it is quite reasonable that a writer of Leviticus in around 1400 BC (I am open to a later date of writing for this book, but I prefer this date) would use the metal iron as a metaphor for stubbornness, as it was the most stubborn metal available at that time.

Whoever produced this supposed evidence against the Bible ought to be reminded to do a better job of scholarship before he or she puts out insupportable "dirt" on the Bible.

4/3/2007

The God Delusion: A Review continued from page 3

To summarize, I have always been an advocate of people reading works by those with whom they do not agree. I am not in accord at all with those who would impose a sort of spiritual censorship. In fact, I believe that it may even be worthwhile for people to read some of Dawkins’ other works. *The God Delusion* is a book which a lot of people are reading. It has been a huge success in Europe and is making its way to the United States. Normally, I would therefore suggest that believers acquaint themselves with the book so that they can make a reasoned defense. However in this case I make an exception to my own personal rule. This book is so poorly argued; it is so full of hatred and bitterness, that I suggest we not even read this book.

*Thanks to Dan Condor for research into the scholarly response to the book..



2007 International Apologetics Conference

Presented by Apologetics Research Society

Concordia University

Irvine, California

Friday June 22 –Sunday June 24, 2007

We at Apologetics Research Society are excited to announce our first apologetics conference. This much-anticipated event will bring together scientists, scholars, teachers and Christians from around the world to share ideas and to hear inspiring messages.

It is for anyone who is interested in using Christian evidences as a way to build up their own faith , the faith of those in their churches and to reach out to the unbelievers. Classes by experts in different fields of apologetics, discussion groups, forums and an evangelistic event on Friday evening. Sunday morning we will have a worship service with an apologetic theme.

Issues to be discussed are: What is the Evidence for Creation? Intelligent Design and Creationism: The relevance of current research; Can We Trust the Bible? Who is the Real Jesus? Apologetics and Evangelism; Christianity and Human Values.

Presenters are Dr John Beggs Professor of Physics, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN; Mr. Glenn Giles MTh Pharmacist, Denver, CO; Dr. Tom Hedman, Professor of Bioengineering, Los Angeles, CA; Dr. Robert Kurka, Professor of Bible & Theology, Lincoln Christian College and Seminary, Lincoln, IL; Dr. Doug Jacoby, Director, Athens Institute of Ministry, Atlanta, GA; Dr. John Oakes, Professor of Chemistry, Grossmont College, San Diego, CA

Classes on Bioengineering and Design, Intelligent Design, Creationism and Current Research, The Jesus Seminar and Higher Criticism, Philosophical and Religious Implications of Neuroscience Research, Philosophy and Belief, and World View Apologetics.

Field trips are planned to the La Brea Tar Pits, Natural History Museum or Griffith Observatory on Saturday

The registration fee is \$75 for students, and \$95 for all others. The fee includes Saturday's field trip and a sack lunch.

Housing is available at Concordia University. Suites are large dorm rooms with 4 beds and 1 bath. The cost for Single occupancy is \$100 per person per night; Double occupancy is \$50 per person per night; Triple occupancy is \$34 per person per night; Quadruple occupancy is \$25 per person per night. Check-in on Thursday evening.

For information and to register go to www.evidenceforchristianity.org or call 858-505-8841.

Hello John!

I am a co-leader for the Christian club on my college campus, CRU, Christians Reasoning in the University. Approaching the campus with not only love and passion for God and people, but valid, logical and coherent answers for the reasonableness of Christianity has been our goal. Needless to say it's been a long, hard, but incredible 2 1/2 years for me, my sister, and others. Looking for those resources that help us in engaging faculty and students in conversing about God, religion, and philosophy, but that are easy to use as material for meetings is hard to come by. I know J.P. Moreland, Habermas, John Mark Reynolds, etc., but coming across your site was VERY exciting. To have actual power points on the History of Christianity with notes intact? AMAZING!

So, all in all, thank you so very much for doing this. Your work is enabling and equipping us for ours, as we strive together for His Kingdom.

I pray for joy and comfort this week for you through our Lord Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory!

Gratefully your fellow servant,
Karen Williams
4/17/2007

Dear John,

My husband (also John) and I had the opportunity to talk with your wife and her niece briefly on Sunday. I'm sorry I did not get the chance to meet you. Your lesson on Sunday caused me to look at the OT in a new light, or in your words, thru new glasses. Another sister was also very intrigued and we are going to read your book (From Shadow to Reality) together for our weekly quiet time. Thank you for all the information on your website. I will have to be disciplined in the amount of time I spend each day on it. It's so interesting that I could spend hours just reading and learning.

Thank you so much for speaking to our region. I hope to be able to hear you teach again. Please say hi to Jan for me.

Sincerely,
Regina Martinez
April 25, 2007

John,

It was great to meet you over this weekend. Please know that you are always welcome. We really appreciate your depth of knowledge and your heart for the church. Thanks for coming!!

Jeff Shockley
3/12/2007

John,

Thanks very much for the recent newsletter. I'm amused, and slightly relieved, at the open scorn with which virtually everyone, including Fox News, seems to be greeting the "tomb of Jesus" business.

John madden
March 24, 2007

A Note From The Authors

The newsletters contains questions and answers from that month, new articles, information about future events, and letters to the editors. Send letters to john.oakes@gccd.edu or reply to joakes01@san.rr.com. Send links to other sites, book reviews and the like, any suggestions or ideas for articles, format of the newsletter, ideas for the web site www.evidenceforchristianity.org.

The purpose of the Apologetics Research Society is to disseminate and discuss materials relevant to the evidence supporting faith in Jesus Christ and in the Bible. Relevant topics will include science and the Bible, historical and archaeological evidence, theological questions, answers to common criticisms of the Bible (such as supposed inconsistencies and errors), questions about the text of the Bible, prophecies, miracles, and others. Our goal is not necessarily to give THE answer, but to give out useful information, bring up a variety of points of view, and incite people to think about why they believe what they believe. We will remain as non-denominational and non-sectarian as we can.

ARS is incorporated, and is exempt from California state franchise and income tax. We now have IRS 501 (c)3 tax exempt status. We are currently raising funds for the summer teaching schedule of John Oakes' teaching ministry, the sending of apologetic materials to developing countries, translations and other projects. Please mail donations to Apologetics Research Society 10747 Cariuto Ct. San Diego, CA 92124, or use a credit card on the Make A Gift page of www.evidenceforchristianity.org.