

HOW DID ONE BECOME THREE.

God (or Gods)?

Excerpts and Quotes - From The Catholic Church History

By Brother John Raymond

Introduction

Arianism with its fundamental Trinitarian controversy must not be looked upon as an isolated theory by its founder Arius. Its appeal, which began in Alexandria and spread through the whole Empire, must be seen in the context of the times. The Church emerged in a Jewish and Greek world. The question occupying this non-Christian world was the contrast between the

"One and the Many, between the ultimate unity that lay behind the visible universe and the incalculable variety that exists in the world."

[Ward 1955, 38]

Relationship of God And World

The relationship between God and the world had to be solved.

The Jews proposed a supreme God who created by His word. It was an idea of a mediating

"Word or Wisdom - the Word which is pronounced, the Wisdom which is created - whereby the Father communicated Himself to man and took possession of him."

[Guitton 1965, 81]

The Greeks could not see how a finite and changeable world could come from an eternal and changeless God. They proposed the idea of a

"mediating Intelligence or even Word, a first emanation of the first principle which reduced the distance between God and the world"

[Guitton 1965, 81]

The primitive Church had to

"reconcile the notions they had inherited from Judaism with those they had derived from philosophy. Jew and Greek had to meet in Christ. They had to find an answer that would agree with the revelation they had received from Christ as recorded in the scriptures."

[Ward 1955, 39]

This struggle for a reconciliation of thought reached its climax with the Arian controversy. The Church responded with the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea that brought together Scriptural and philosophical thought to explain the Trinity. The Council did triumph over Arianism but only after fifty years of bitter battling. Imperial support and confusion in theological terminology were the principal reasons for such a long drawn out battle as we will see.

Arius And His Teaching

Arius, who was born in Egypt in 256 A.D., was a parish priest in Alexandria. He had studied under St. Lucian of Antioch, the founder of the school of Antioch, who had earlier been condemned for holding that Christ was only a man; although he was later reconciled. He is called the "Father of Arianism" because

"Arius and almost all the 4th-century Arian theologians were his students. Calling themselves Lucianists and Collucianists, they developed his adoptionist and subordinationist tendencies into a full heresy."

[Harkins 1967, 1057, 1058]

With this background Arius struggled with the question of the Trinity. His teaching in Alexandria was the following:

"Personal distinctions were not eternally present within the nature of God. . . the Godhead Himself was responsible for them. . . Identifying the eternal Godhead with the Father and regarding the Logos ('Logos' is simply a Greek word for 'word') as no more than a power or quality of the Father, he said that before time began the Father had created the Son by the power of the Word to be His agent in creation.

The Son was not therefore to be identified with the Godhead, He was only God in a derivative sense, and since there was once when he did not exist He could not be eternal. Arius stressed the subordination of the Logos to such an extent as to affirm His creaturehood, to deny His eternity and to assert His capacity for change and suffering."

[Ward 1955, 41]

This teaching of Arius

"drove the distinctions outside the Deity and thus destroyed the Trinity. It meant solving the difficulty of the One and the Many by proposing a theory of one Supreme Being and two inferior deities."

[Ward 1955, 43]

The Person of Christ

"belonged to no order of being that the Church could recognize. . . He was neither God nor man."

[Ward 1955,42]

Arius Versus The Alexandrian Bishop

Arius' views began to spread among the people and the Alexandrian clergy. Alexander the Bishop called a meeting of his priests and deacons. The Bishop insisted on the unity of the Godhead. Arius continued to argue that since the Son was begotten of the Father then at some point He began to exist. Therefore there was a time when the Son did not exist. Arius refused to submit to the Bishop and continued to spread his teaching.

Alexander called a synod of Bishops of Egypt and Libya. Of the hundred Bishops who attended eighty voted for the condemnation and exile of Arius. After the synod Alexander wrote letters to

the other Bishops refuting Arius' views. In doing so the Bishop used the term "homoousios" to describe the Father and Son as being of one substance.

Alexander

"used a term which was to become the keyword of the whole controversy."

[Ward 1955, 43, 44]

With the decision of the synod Arius fled to Palestine. Some of the Bishops there, especially Eusebius of Caesarea, supported him. From here Arius continued his journey to Nicomedia in Asia Minor. The Bishop of that city, Eusebius, had studied under Lucian of Antioch. He became Arius' most influential supporter. From this city Arius enlisted the support of other Bishops, many of whom had studied under Lucian. His supporters held their own synod calling Arius' views orthodox and condemning Bishop Alexander of Alexandria. Arius seemed to have good grounds for this condemnation.

The term homoousios was rejected by Alexander's own predecessor Dionysus when arguing against the Sabellians (who claimed the Father and Son were identical). All this controversy was taking place just as the Church was emerging from Roman oppression.

Constantine And Ossius

With the rise of Constantine to power Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire. Constantine had politically united the Empire but he was distressed to find a divided Christianity. Constantine, certainly not understanding the significance of the controversy, sent Ossius his main ecclesiastical adviser with letters to both Alexander and Arius. In the letters he tried to reconcile them by saying that their disagreement was merely just a matter of words. Both of them really were in agreement on major doctrines and neither was involved in heresy.

The letters failed to have an effect. In 325 A.D. Ossius presided over a Council of the Orient in Antioch that was attended by fifty-nine bishops, forty-six of whom would soon attend the Council of Nicaea. This Council in Antioch was a forerunner of the latter Council in Nicaea.

Under the influence of Ossius a new Church practice was inaugurated - that of issuing a creedal statement. At this Council Arianism was condemned, a profession of faith resembling the Alexandrian creed was promulgated and three Bishops who refused to agree with the teaching of this Council were provisionally excommunicated until the Council of Nicaea.

Roman Emperor Calls Council of his Church (Universal or Catholic Church of Rome). It was the year 325 AD in what is now Turkey and in the summer of that year, probably under the suggestion of Ossius, Constantine called for a general council of the Church at Nicaea in Bithynia.

That an Emperor should invoke a Council should not be considered unusual since in Hellenistic thought he

"was given by God supreme power in things material and spiritual."

[Davis 1987, 56]

The Council of Nicaea. The General Council was well attended by the major sees of the Eastern Empire. Also some Western Bishops were present. Because of old age and sickness Pope Sylvester did not attend but sent two papal legates. The total number of Bishops who attended the Council has been disputed. Eusebius of Caesarea who attended it claimed 250; Athanasius also in attendance mentioned 300; after the Council a symbolic number of 318 was used; modern scholars put the number at 220.

If there were minutes taken of the Council proceedings they are no longer in existence. We know from the writings of Rufinus that

"daily sessions were held and that Arius was often summoned before the assembly; his arguments attentively considered. The majority, especially those who were confessors of the Faith, energetically declared themselves against the impious doctrines of Arius."

[LeClercq 1913, 45]

Concerning the Creed that was drafted at the Council

"Eusebius of Caesarea, Athanasius of Alexandria and Philostorgius have given divergent accounts of how this Creed was drafted."

[LeClercq 1967, 792]

But from one reconstruction of the events Eusebius of Nicomedia offered a creed that was favorable to Arian views. This creed was rejected by the Council. Eusebius of Caesarea proposed the baptismal creed used in Caesarea. Although accepted it does not seem to form the basis of the Council's Creed. Attempts were made to construct a creed using only scriptural terms. These creeds proved insufficient to exclude the Arian position.

"Finally, it seems, a Syro-Palestinian creed was used as the basis for a new credal statement . . . The finished creed was preserved in the writings of Athanasius, of the historian Socrates and of Basil of Caesarea and in the acts of the Council of Chalcedon of 451."

[Davis 1987, 59]

When the creed was finished eighteen Bishops still opposed it. Constantine at this point intervened to threaten with exile anyone who would not sign for it. Two Libyan Bishops and Arius still refused to accept the creed. All three were exiled. The Creed and an Analysis some parts of the literal translation of the Nicaea Creed are as follows:

"We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, that is, of the substance (ousia) of the Father, God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of the same substance (homoousios) with the Father, through whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth . . . Those who say: 'There was a time when He was not, and He was not before He was begotten;' and that 'He was made out of nothing;' or who maintain that 'He is of another hypostasis or another substance,' or that 'the Son of God is created, or mutable, or subject to change,' the Catholic Church anathematizes."

[LeClercq 1913, 45]

The Arians were very clever in twisting phrases in creedal statements to reflect their own doctrine. The Son being "begotten of the Father" was seen by them as saying that the Son was created from nothing. But to counter their doctrine the phrase "*begotten not made*" was added to the creed that totally ruled out their position of the Son having a beginning. Another Arian teaching was that the Son was God by grace and name only.

The creedal statement "*true God of true God*" was an affirmation that the Son was really truly God against this Arian position. The most important statement in the creed that affirms

"that the Son shares the same being as the Father and is therefore fully divine" was the phrase "of one substance (homoousios) with the Father"

[Davis 1987, 61]

This statement totally destroyed the Arian view of the Son as an intermediary being between God and Creation. In case the creed was not enough to end the Arian controversy anathemas were attached directly condemning Arian positions. The Arian denial of the Son's co-eternity with the Father is expressed in the two phrases "*there was when the Son of God was not*" and "*before He was begotten He was not.*"

The Arian belief in the Son being created out of nothing is expressed in the phrase "*He came into being from things that are not.*" The Arian doctrine that the Son being a creature was subject to moral changeability and only remained virtuous by an act of the will is expressed in the phrase "*He is mutable or alterable.*"

Finally the Arian position of the Son as subordinate to the Father and not really God is expressed in the phrase "*He is of a different hypostasis or substance.*" With these specific anathemas against them the Arians and their heresy seemed to be finished. Terminology Problem With the Eastern Church using Greek and the Western Church using Latin misunderstandings were bound to arise over theological terminology. One instance of confusion is the statement "He is of a different hypostasis or substance."

The two words in the Eastern Church were seen to be synonymous. In the West hypostasis meant person. So for a Westerner the Council would look as if it was condemning the statement that the Son was a different Person from the Father, which would clearly be erroneous. Only later would the East come to distinguish hypostasis from substance (ousia) as in the West.

This instance of confusion

"points up the terminological difficulty which continued to bedevil Eastern theology and to confuse the West about the East's position."

[Davis 1987, 63]

A second and very important term used by the Council was homoousios. At that time this word could have three possible meanings.

**"First, it could be generic; of one substance could be said of two individual men, both of whom share human nature while remaining individuals.
Second, it could signify numerical identity, that is, that the Father and the Son are identical in concrete being.**

Finally, it could refer to material things, as two pots are of the same substance because both are made of the same clay."

[Davis 1987, 61]

The Council intended the *first meaning* to stress the equality of the Son with the Father.

If the *second meaning* for the word was taken to be the Council's intention it would mean that the Father and Son were identical and indistinguishable - clearly a Sabellian heresy.

The *third meaning* gave the word a materialistic tendency that would infer that the Father and Son are parts of the same stuff.

Along with these possible misunderstandings of the meaning of the word homoousios the history of the word is closely associated with heresies.

The word was originally used by the *Gnostics*

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. The word had even been condemned at the Council of Antioch in 268 regarding its use by the Adoptionist Paul of Samosata.

Another factor making the word unpopular was that it was never used in Sacred Scripture. The Council's defeat by Arianism. It is not surprising that with its use of the word homoousios the Council could be called into question.

Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia gained the confidence of Emperor Constantine. He convinced Constantine that the Council's use of the word homoousios was Sabellian (Father and Son were identical). The Emperor now favored the Arians.

With the death of Constantine the Empire was divided between his sons. Constans who ruled in the West favored Nicaea while his brother Constantius who ruled the East was anti-Nicaea.

Supporters of Nicaea in the East especially Bishop Athanasius were deposed and excommunicated by the Dedication Council of Antioch. This Council directly attacked the Nicaea Council by promulgating its own creed that omitted the phrases "from the substance of the Father" and "homoousios."

Some attempts were made to find a substitute word for homoousios. As many as fourteen Councils were held between 341 and 360

"in which every shade of heretical subterfuge found expression . . . The term `like in substance,' homoiousion . . . had been employed merely to get rid of the Nicene formula."

[Barry 1913, 709]

Not all Arians, or their new name of Semi-Arian, agreed with this new word. One group emphasized that the Father and Son were "dissimilar" or anomoiou. Another group used the word "similar" or homoios to describe the Father and Son relationship.

With the death of Constans in 350 his anti-Nicaea brother Constantius became sole ruler of the Empire. The new Emperor demanded that all the Bishops of his Empire should agree with the

homoios formula. In 359 he summoned two Councils, one in the East at Seleucia and the other in the West at Rimini.

Both Councils, under the Emperor's threats and with rationalizing arguments aimed at calming consciences, were induced to sign the homoios formula.

"This Homoean victory was confirmed and imposed on the whole Church by the Council of Constantinople in the following year"

which condemned the terms homoousios, homoousios and anomoios.

[Ward 1955, 57]

It seemed that the Arians had triumphed over the Nicaea creed. The Final Battle. The seeming triumph of homoeism was short lived.

First it gained its popularity solely by imperial imposition. With the death of Constantius in 361 it collapsed.

Second by persecuting both homoousios and homoousios supporters alike

"it brought about better understanding and, ultimately, reconciliation between the two groups."

[DeClercq 1967, 793]

Athanasius an ardent defender of the homoousios position and following the Alexandrian train of thought had begun his reasoning with the unity of God. From there he had concluded that the Son and Spirit Who shared that unity must have the same essential substance.

The Cappadocian Fathers Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa were associated with Homoiousians.

The point of departure for them as well as the Antiochenes had been the individual aspect of the divine personality. With the help of Athanasius they came to the realization that the three Persons as God must share the same identical substance also. By using the term homoousios the Cappadocian Fathers

"had never meant to deny the unity but only to preserve the distinction of persons."

[Ward 1955, 58]

Both came to the conclusion that although they used different terms what they meant to say was the same.

The Cappadocian Fathers came to accept the term homoousios. Athanasius, on the other hand, accepted the Cappadocian formula for the Trinity - one substance (ousia) in three persons (hypostaseis).

At about the same time as Athanasius and the Cappadocian Fathers were reaching an agreement another development was taking place. The East and the West were arriving at a better understanding of each others theological terminology.

At the Synod of Alexandria in 362 the Nicene Creed was re-affirmed, the terms ousia and hypostasis were explained and Macedonianism (sometimes referred to as another form of Semi-Arianism in its subordination of the Holy Spirit) was condemned.

Under the Eastern Emperor Valens (364-378) homoeism still had imperial favor. In the West Ambrose of Milan led the fight for the Nicene Creed. At the Council of Sirmium in 378, with the support of the Western Emperor Gratian, six Arian Bishops were deposed. A series of laws were passed in 379 and 380 the Emperor prohibited Arianism in the West.

In the East with the succession of Valens by a Nicene sympathizing Emperor Theodosius I all exiled Bishops under Valens to return to their sees. In 381 he convoked a regional Council at Constantinople. The first canon from this Council states that

"the faith of the 318 fathers who assembled at Nicaea in Bithynia is not to be made void, but shall continue to be established."

[Davis 1987, 126]

In 380 the Emperor Theodosius outlawed Arianism. The last victory over Arianism came in 381 with the Council of Constantinople in the East and the Council of Aquileia in the West. Both of them

"sealed the final adoption of the faith of Nicaea by the entire Church."

[DeClercq 1967, 793]

Conclusion

The Council of Nicaea was victorious in the end. It took over fifty years of bitter battling between the upholders of the Council of Nicaea and those against it. The Arian heresy seemed finished when the Council so specifically anathematized their teachings one by one.

The Arian doctrines condemned were the following:

- The Son was created by the Father out of nothing.
- Thus the Son was not God in the strict sense but by grace and in name only.
- The Father and Son did not share the same substance.
- The Son being a creature was subject to moral changeability and only remained virtuous by an act of the will.

Terminology difficulties had kept the door open for the Arians to continue after the Council. This was especially true with the term homoousios (of the same substance) used by the Council to describe the relationship between the Father and the Son.

The Arians took advantage of one of the term's other meaning, that of identity, to claim that the Council said the Father and Son were identical thereby invalidating the Council. The Arians then started producing their own creeds either eliminating this term or substituting another for it. This led to the breaking up of the Arians into diverse groups according to which term they supported - anomoios (dissimilar), homoios (similar) or homoiousion (like in substance).

It is obvious that Imperial involvement in the controversy determined at any given moment whether the Council of Nicaea or the Arianism was dominating the controversy. With the imposition of the term homoios on the Church by the Emperor Constantius the work of the Council of Nicaea seemed doomed. But the popularity of this term died with the Emperor.

The persecution of both the Homoiousians and the Homoiousians forced them to begin to dialogue. With the two great representatives of these positions, St. Athanasius and the Cappadocian Fathers, finding theological grounds for their eventual agreement the way was paved for the triumph of the Council of Nicaea. This incident later coupled with Eastern and Western Emperors who were pro-Nicaea led to the final Arian downfall.

REFERENCE:

[1] Gnostics - meaning "to know secret or hidden knowledge"; lit., those who know; a mystic order of Christianity. Often known for giving up all worldly matters, often living apart from society and being reclusive, fasting and remaining celibate. Possible forerunners of the sufi orders found amongst some Muslims today.

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NICAEA COUNCIL 325 AD

What Was It All About? - How Did It Change Christianity?

Read what the Catholic Church Says About Itself

The year was 325 A.D. according to the Roman calendar. A council was convened by order of Constantine, the Roman emperor. He had been a leader in the cult known as Sol Invictus (Invincible Sun) and now wanted to unite the Christian sects in the empire under his existing

church; the Universal Church of Rome. Many changes to the religion of Christianity were about to take place at that council, including:

Formulation for wording concerning the Trinity based on Athanasius (description of the formulation is mentioned below)

Changing Verses of Bible

Eliminating certain verses and books from the Bible

Declaring Arian's "unitarian" (belief in the Unity of God) as heresy

Changing the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday

Changing the date of Jesus' birthday to December 25th

Introduction of Easter (pagan worship called "Feast of Ishtar")

Church of Roman "officially" became the "Universal Church of the Holy Roman Empire" (the word 'Catholic' means 'universal')

The Roman Catholic Church took on a new face.

What follows is a quote from the Roman Catholic Church. It is their explanation behind the many changes occurring during the Nicaea Council.

[Begin Quote]

Council of Nicaea, First Ecumenical Council - 325 A.D. (Christian Era)

The Nicene Council is considered by all as the first Ecumenical Council of the Church (Roman Catholic Church). It was occasioned by the Arian heresy which in effect denied the divinity of Jesus Christ. The major product of this council was the Creed, the "Nicene Creed"; but it also addressed the date of Easter, and the place of the Patriarch of Alexandria.

Occasion For The Council

The Arian *heresy* had infected parts of the Church all the way from Alexandria through Palestine, Syria, Asia minor to Greece. It was bad enough that it vitiated the very heart of Christian doctrine from within, but there was also danger that it would weaken the Empire itself, and so Constantine, who was trying hard to consolidate the Empire, took an active part in trying to solve the matter. He called for a council of bishops of the Church. At first it appeared that he had in mind only the Eastern bishops since he first designated Ancyra in Galatia (Ankara in Turkey) as a place for the bishops to assemble. Arianism had particularly divided the Church there. But this would make it difficult for himself to attend, and besides it might be good for other bishops to attend, those not necessarily involved in the controversy. Hence Nicaea in Bithynia was finally selected; it was close to the sea making it easier for more bishops to attend, he had there a large palace compound, both to house the bishops and with a great hall in which they could assemble, and he could keep an eye on them from nearby Nicomedia.

Constantine himself was strongly influenced by certain Arian bishops, particularly by Bishop Eusebius of the capitol city of Nicomedia, and if he did not actually have Arian leanings himself, he had been informed by them that a council of the Church would show that the teaching of Arius was correct. It would be to Constantine's credit that when the bishops in council voted the

opposite way, condemned Arianism and overwhelmingly affirmed the traditional doctrine, that he got behind them 100% and promulgated their decisions.

The Council Called

He announced the council (a command-performance for important bishops) by the imperial post, heretofore reserved for civil administration and urgent military matters. Of course the bishops wanted to settle matters too; the heresy and schism were tearing the Church apart, but Constantine's calling for a general council and the manner in which the council was conducted shows us to what great extent there was almost a union between church and state. Constantine put the imperial transportation system at the disposal of the bishops. This meant they could travel on his boats free, that they could go by cart or wagon, horse, whatever means the Empire had to offer, all under the protection of the Roman army (travel was not only difficult, but brigands made it dangerous). Constantine housed the bishops, fed them and provided his own palace as a place to meet.

The Council Assembled 300 bishops were present (Ambrose of Milan and Hilary of Poitiers report 318, but this may be a symbolic number representing the 318 servants of Abraham, Gen 14:14) most of them from the East. Not a few of the bishops attending were maimed or their predecessors had been killed by the very soldiery which now guarded them; they winced as they paraded into the council chamber, the soldiers with their swords and shining armor now forming an honor guard on either side of their procession. There is no doubt but what the bishops had every freedom of discussion and vote (at this council at least) because that was the rule of the Roman senate after which a council is patterned, and yet to these bishops at least so shortly out of persecution, the soldiers who stood guard inside the chamber, both to assure good order and prevent any intrusion from outside, must have been a symbol of imperial power and influence, formerly unleashed against them.

Constantine himself opened the council with an impassioned plea for unity and peace, and his good friend Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (a suspected Arian or at least an Arian sympathizer) gave the opening address. According to the pattern of the Roman senate the council was actually presided over by another good friend of Constantine, Hosius, bishop of Cordoba, Spain, who had presided over a local council in Elvia, Spain, some 30 years before. Hosius was assisted by the delegates from Pope Sylvester, the simple priests, Vitus and Vicentius, all in true senatorial style. The history at the time does not explain why the delegates of the Bishop of Rome held such a prominent place in the Council. Catholics like to stress that it was because the pope has some position of authority or leadership over the other bishops. Others maintain it was because Rome was the seat of the civil government (but it had just been moved from there to Constantinople). Anyway this pattern would be followed at many succeeding councils.

The Nicene Creed

The big thing which happened was the Nicene Creed, but in this way:

Most held out at first for a Scriptural language and expression to make clear against the Arians what the catholic doctrine had been, but as the discussions progressed it became evident that

there was no Scriptural vocabulary which would correctly express the orthodox teaching. They lighted on a philosophical term, *homoosios* (same substance as) to express what they meant and what had always been the catholic teaching, but there was still needed a formula to summarize and convey their meaning. Of all bishops, Eusebius of Caesarea, who had been clobbered by the synod at Antioch the year before, produced a creed he used in his church. As far as it went, it was acceptable to the rest of the bishops, but they made additions in order to make it very clear that Arius' position was not what they espoused. This creed would be further amended by the First Council of Constantinople, and hence is technically known as the "Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed", but maybe it should be known as the Caesarean-Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

Here it is beneficial to explain something councils do, almost as a byproduct. Primarily a council's purpose, at least a dogmatic council, is to proclaim with unmistakable clarity a doctrine already a part of the teaching of the Church. But at Nicaea there were not a few bishops, well-intentioned and open to the Spirit, who actually would have been hard pressed themselves to give a clear explanation of the relationship of the Son to the Father. But because they had humility and good will they learned from the discussions of the Council, at the same time that they were a part of the council process. Hence a council can also teach bishops. All of the bishops present signed the Creed, except two, Secundus of Ptolemais and Theonas of Marmarica. Constantine banished them along with Arius (whom he later recalled).

Date of Easter

Among other things they also settled (they thought) was the date of Easter. While most celebrated Easter on a Sunday to commemorate the resurrection, there were a few who celebrated on weekdays (even Good Friday) according to a Jewish reckoning (the Quartodeciman controversy addressed by Pope Victor, 189-198), and those who did observe Sunday did not all observe on the same Sunday. Constantine wanted, as did most bishops, a universal observance. To this very day it is disputed what the council fathers meant by their decision, and Easter is still observed variously, but the points of their decree supposed by most are: 1) Easter should be celebrated on the same day by all (a point all agree was contained in the decree); 2) Jewish custom was not the criterion to be followed (a point which is not cited by the Greeks, but strongly mentioned both in the writings which preceded the council and in Eusebius' report of it); and 3) that the practice of Rome and Alexandria (then West and Egypt) should remain in force, namely the Sunday after the first full moon of the vernal equinox (the Greeks do not cite the first half of this point, only the second). But even Alexandria and Rome did not agree for a long time, due to calculations (miscalculations) as to the date of the vernal equinox. Rome celebrated the equinox on March 18, and Alexandria on March 23. Since this is something scientific, that is, half way between the shortest and the longest day of the year, it could be and was eventually solved by the devising of various cycles, so that a fixed day in the lunar calendar (14th of Nisan) would occur according to a predetermined pattern in the Julian calendar. Today Greeks and other Orthodox maintain that the Roman date of Easter is wrong, saying that the Nicene Council stipulated that the Resurrection must always be celebrated after the Jewish Passover.

Now it must be remembered that only incomplete records of canons and decrees exist from the

Council at Nicaea. What we actually have is the Creed, the disciplinary action against the Arians, 20 disciplinary canons, a letter to the Alexandrian church, and a list of the bishops present (a list which varies from language to language).

The rest of the canons (if authentic at all) have been garnered from other sources, including *Arabic* writings. In thus citing Nicaea about Easter coming after the Jewish Passover, the Greeks must have sources which are not commonly known, and stronger sources than the west is aware. For example, Eusebius of Caesarea writing just after the Council quotes from the letter of Emperor Constantine to all who were not present at the Council,

". . .relative to the sacred festival of Easter. . . it was declared to be particularly unworthy for this holiest of all festivals to follow the custom of the Jews. We ought not therefore, to have anything in common with the Jews. We desire to separate ourselves from the detestable company of the Jews for it is surely shameful for us to hear the Jews boast that without their direction we could not keep this feast. In their blindness, they frequently celebrate two Passovers in the same year. . . How then could we follow these Jews. . . for to celebrate the Passover twice in one year is totally inadmissible ."

Alexandrian Patriarchate

Another important question (Canon 6) the council took up was the position of the ancient sees of Alexandria because there were problems of jurisdiction down there due to the Melitian schism. The Council's purpose was to bring order to the Church in Alexandria, but in so doing they gave evidence to something which was developing in the Church, namely, listing the metropolitan centers of Christianity and putting them in order of their importance. Not a few have seen this as a sort of ambitious clamoring on the part of some sees to "lord it over" less important places. Perhaps there was some of this (later there certainly was), but it would seem that the intention of Nicaea was merely to establish order and place responsibility of keeping order and orthodoxy on strong and capable centers of Christian teaching. In brief, the council stated that Alexandria had under its jurisdiction the whole of Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis. But in solving this problem with regard to Alexandria, almost as a byproduct and as if it went without saying, they mentioned that Alexandria was second only to Rome which had similar rights in the West. It mentions Antioch being in the third place but does not define its territory.

They remind all, however (Canon 7) of the importance of the See of Jerusalem but still left it under the jurisdiction of Caesarea. (Remember Jerusalem had been destroyed in the year 70 by Titus and it took a while for Christians there to make a come-back.) Of course there was no Constantinople yet. We speak nowadays of the "Patriarchates" of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, as being established or recognized by the Council of Nicaea, but it is important to stress that at this juncture Nicaea doesn't use this term at all. It does use the term "Metropolitan", but mostly it just refers to the "Bishop of Alexandria", or the "Bishop of Rome" etc. (Canon VI). Of the remaining canons, all interesting, none really apply to the question of East-West relations or the church-state problem we are addressing. Constantine himself (who apparently had attended many sessions, though neither he nor the Roman presidents voted) brought the council to a close with another talk on unity but in it he calls himself a "*fellow bishop*", showing how closely he associated himself with the work of the Church.

[end quote]

SECRET GOSPEL OF MARK.

Purpose And Intent of This Paper

My name is Yusuf Estes, I am a former Christian and chaplain, having served for the Federal Bureau Prisons, as a delegate to the World Peace Summit for Religious Leaders, at the United Nations and as a volunteer for religious services to the various men and women of the United States Military. I am constantly working with other various faith groups and their leaders and as such it is my duty to show respect with regard to the way other faiths handle their own investigation and research into their various sources for establishing their systems of belief. The purpose of this work is to offer to the Muslim scholars and students of knowledge in Islam the opportunity to see the actual workings going on within the scholarly world of Biblical criticism.

Attention Muslims - Please Read Carefully Before Continuing:

Muslims are not often privileged to have the opportunity to "go inside" to see what goes on behind the scenes of scholarly debate and discussion with regard to findings of materials held to be associated with the collection of the Bible. It is with this aim in mind that we have offered the following research work, just as it came from the sources of the scholars themselves, in copies of letters, emails and websites regarding an issue they had been debating over for more than 40 years.

Not for Debate Purposes:

This is not placed here to be used for criticism of Bible scholars, the Bible or to initiate any types of debates or harsh treatment towards Christians or Jews. It is only a reference for comparison to observe the differences and/or similarities in presenting evidences and dealing with scholars of the Book. Please respect others and pray for all of us to be rightly guided to all truth. Thank you and peace be with all who seek truth, ameen. - Yusuf Estes, National Chaplain (ret.)

The Secret Gospel of Mark

Bible Scholars Discuss a Secret Gospel Allegedly Belonging to Mark
[In 4 Parts]

Read for yourself how the Discovery of a Lost Letter by Clement of Alexandria (Egypt) Scandalized Biblical Scholarship in the past century - a secret Gospel? - Read on, if you dare.

Morton Smith may not be a familiar name to the Christian lay person, but perhaps he is a better known amongst the scholars and researchers of ancient texts, particularly the manuscripts pertaining to the Bible.

In 1958 Smith made a discovery while working in a library in Jerusalem. He found a document that appeared, at least to him, to be a gospel of Mark, older than the one now occupying the third position in the Christian New Testament.

A reference to **Secret Mark** is made in Elizabeth Clare Prophet's book on the supposed "lost years" of Jesus. She writes about **Secret Mark** saying, she suggests early Christians possessed a larger, *more diverse body of writings and traditions* of Jesus than what has been handed down to

us in the New Testament of today.

OK - now get ready to read for yourself about - *the Secret Gospel of Mark*

These articles were originally published in Alexandria, Egypt: The Journal for the Western Cosmological Traditions, volume 3 (1995), pp. 103-129. Alexandria is edited by David Fiderer and is published by Phanes Press. The whole of this article is copyright © 1995 by Phanes Press. All rights reserved, including international rights.

NOTICE: TO MUSLIMS REGARDING ALL SCRIPTURE

Respect For Holy Books

Muslims are told by Allah in the Holy Quran that He is the One who sent down the "Furqan" (Quran) and He sent down the scriptures before it. Muslims have no option but they must respect the Bible because some of it does still contain some of the original teachings of Allah. But there is no need to go to Bible classes or purchase one to read to try to learn about what our purpose is here in this life. The Quran makes it clear that Allah has indeed, perfected our "way of life" for us and has conferred on us His favor and has chosen for us to submit to Him in Islam.

We would like to suggest to the non-Muslims to consider obtaining a Quran (order one free through our site if you like) and then investigate for themselves what the Quran is really all about and what it might mean to them in their lives.

[Free Quran available at: <http://islamtomorrow.com/free>]

Final comment from Yusuf Estes:

I would like to state that after years of studying the Bible and then learning the Arabic language to read the Quran as it was originally recited to Muhammad, peace be upon him, by the angel Gabriel, I have come to an amazing conclusion. It seems to me that the Bible and the Quran are most definitely from the exact same source and they compliment each other very nicely. In fact, it appears that the Bible does not contradict the Quran, except in the very same places where the Bible contradicts itself.

THE SECRET GOSPEL OF MARK

Y. Kuchinsky against forgery 1998

Date: Mon, 13 Apr 1998 13:47:33 -0400

From: y.kuchinskX@utoronto.ca

To: crosstalk [crosstalX@info.harpercollins.com]

Subject: SecMk is authentic

Yuri Kuchinsky - Toronto, Canada says; "[This is a well written post arguing for authenticity. I agree with most of it. It has been written before Yuri went at odds with everybody.]"

Why it is impossible that Morton Smith could have forged Clement's letter & the SecMk fragment.

Now I have revisited this old controversy. In the course of my recent research re: the compositional history of the Gospel of Mark, I have reread Morton Smith's two books on the subject, after many years. I was interested primarily by what SecMk can tell us about the history of early Christianity.

I certainly don't agree with Smith in everything he says. In fact, I see quite a few areas where Smith seems rather off base in his interpretations of early Christian history. In particular, I'm much more skeptical than he in attributing the events SecMk narrates directly to the events in life of the Historical Jesus. SecMk seems to me more like a later gnostic-oriented expansion, while still produced within the Markan community. Nevertheless, Smith had done a huge amount of background research in this area, and his book reveals many unexpected surprises on my later rereading.

Speculation has been rife in recent years that Smith was the forger of this intriguing document, or else was in charge of a criminal conspiracy to produce this forgery. Such speculation has been broadcast of late especially by the famous scholar Prof. Jack Neusner, the former student of Smith turned his enemy (this happened for reasons entirely unconnected with the ms). Neusner is of course a very influential man in the biblical field, and his views cannot be disregarded. Some other scholars also tended to lend support to such accusations.

It is my purpose to show in this article that these accusations are entirely without merit, and that, if anything, they may only raise doubts about the professional competence of those making them.

It needs to be noted, of course, that there are many responsible scholars who are skeptical about this SecMk fragment, and who suspect it is a forgery. But generally these skeptics consider that this was an old forgery of some sort. Some maintain it is a forgery produced in the 18th century; others say it was produced any time in between the 2nd and the 18th centuries.

Prima facie, that this is an old forgery is not impossible, of course. And academic discussions of such scenarios have been going on for great many years, ever since the discovery of the fragment was announced by Smith, first privately to some scholars in 1958, and then publicly in 1960. This is a very complex debate, and I will not be able to deal with it now. The purpose of this article is merely to defend Smith from what I see as entirely unjustified accusations of wrongdoing. He was an honest scholar who happened to come across a mysterious manuscript, and who devoted many years of his life to trying to understand its meaning. He did not deserve these sordid accusations.

While, as I show further, it would have been impossible for Smith to have accomplished such a forgery, the same arguments should apply to a lesser extent to other theories of forgery not involving Smith. Myself, I have looked at length into these debates and into various versions offered by different scholars, and my view is that the balance of the evidence points to Clement's letter fragment as being genuine, i.e. authored by Clement himself. I think the whole ms is exactly what it claims to be, i.e. it is a letter of Clement containing what Clement thinks is part of

a secret version of Mk's gospel, as used in the Church of Alexandria. (By the way, it also seems likely to me that Clement's version of the textual development of Mk as given in the letter is not entirely accurate, for whatever reasons.)

MANUSCRIPT ITSELF

It seems like most serious opponents of SecMk in the last few years have been focusing their criticism on the fact that the manuscript has been seen by so few. There was some mystery about this manuscript. Where is it? How come basic tests on paper, ink, or other such tests have not been conducted? The piece of information Mahlon Smith have supplied recently on Crosstalk list about the manuscript having been seen recently after all by a credible witness is very important in this respect, to help put some of these doubts to rest.

I've suggested before that perhaps the main reason the manuscript has been seen by so few was that so few were really so interested in seeing it. Certainly it is a lot easier to spread groundless rumours behind people's backs than to go out and actually do such field research, which, needless to say, may involve such complications as having to pack your suitcase and do a bit of travel for a change... It is to the credit of Charles Hedrick that he did go out and take his time to look up the ms, instead of just talking endlessly about how few have seen it, and what all this may signify...

THREE FORGERIES IN ONE

Now, to begin my case for authenticity, I would like to stress that we are actually talking about three separate hypothetical forgeries here. Let's keep this in mind. In other words, in order for Smith to have accomplished such a highly complex forgery, he would have had to have done the following.

He would have needed to forge not one but two documents:

1. The letter of Clement itself.
2. The two SecMk gospel fragments.

And also, the third item that he would have needed to have pulled off.

3. To have found a scribe, really a genius of a scribe, who would have been able to forge some very unique and specialized 18th century Greek scribal handwriting, and to forge it flawlessly, with all its highly unique abbreviations and complexities. Nobody in their right mind would try to suggest that Smith was an expert scribe himself. Not quite. He would have certainly needed an accomplice for this.

Since these two texts, the letter itself, and the gospel fragments as given by Clement, are composed in completely different styles, and using very different vocabularies, in order to forge them Smith would have had to be an expert on both Clement and Mk. He was neither, certainly not before 1958.

So, now, let's consider these 3 items in order.

1. The excerpt from the letter of Clement, itself, is much longer than the gospel fragments, and it would have been a lot harder to forge credibly. As Thomas Talley, one serious investigator of this problem, indicated, at this time only a small handful of scholars still dispute that the letter represents an authentic tradition from Clement of Alexandria. Every word and sentence of the Clementine portion of this ms has been put under the microscope and compared in minutest detail to the extant undisputed Clementine texts, of which we have quite a lot. And every comparison has basically held up. These detailed studies are many and freely available for perusal by interested parties.

Out of the fourteen leading Clementine scholars Smith consulted originally, only two had some reservations, and Smith had dealt with their quite minor technical objections in detail, and showed them insufficient to cause doubt as to authenticity.

It is important for our case that the letter has been included in the standard edition of the Alexandrian father's writings since 1980. [Talley, Thomas. "Liturgical Time in the Ancient Church: The State of Research." *Studia Liturgica* 14 (1982), p. 45] And this should speak better than anything else about where the consensus of the Clementine scholars is now in regard to this matter.

This first item alone should make it appear highly unlikely that Smith could have pulled it off, i.e. could have fooled the whole world of scholarship to such an extent.

2. Now, the SecMk fragment, in itself, presents us with a very special set of highly complicated problems of its own. On purely linguistic basis, scholars have been arguing whether or not the fragment could have been put together merely from scraps of the canonical material. (Since almost every serious opponent of SecMk thinks this would have been an ancient forgery, the debate has been conducted primarily in this context.) The balance of evidence seems to point to the fragment being based on an original tradition, separate from and prior to the canonical traditions. But a definitive judgment here on purely stylistic grounds is quite a tough call, since the fragment is rather short. In any case, Smith not being known as a Mk scholar prior to his discovery, very few indeed suggested that he, himself, could have created the fragment *ex nihilo*.

Now, the next and a separate question about this SecMk fragment should be, Supposing it's genuine, how does it fit together with the canonical gospels? I.e. what about the contents of this fragment, rather than just the style of writing? Because, it is important to note, the parallels must be considered not only with the rest of Mk, but also with Jn, since the SecMk fragment narrates the raising of a young man that is very close to the raising of Lazarus in the Fourth Gospel.

And not only that, there's yet another complicated matter to consider here. Smith has also suggested in his two books that there are also other and more significant structural parallels between Mk and Jn, the parallels going far beyond the fragment.

According to Smith, his thinking in this area was stimulated by the research associated with the

fragment. Once he saw the parallels between the SecMk fragment and Jn, he also began to see much greater parallels between large parts of Mk (beginning at 6:32; cf. p. 56 in SECRET GOSPEL) and large parts of Jn (beginning at 6:1). He bases his theories in this area in part on the work of some scholars who were working early in this century, and who suggested compatible theories re: the redactional history of Jn, and Jn's possible use of Mk -- among them Bultmann, N. Huffmann, and especially Charles Dodd. (CLEMENT, p. 146ff.)

It is not possible to deal here now with all these complex relationships. Their full consideration should involve, the proto Mk theories of Helmut Koester, and of Alfred Loisy, other controversial wider theories about how Jn, Lk, and Mt relate to Mk (was Jn really influenced by Mk's structure?), Smith's own views on the matter that were clearly evolving and changing over time, as his published work indicates, the question of how many other commentators, such as Crossan, evaluated this evidence, possible Aramaic proto-sources (Smith favored this idea, but received little support from other scholars on this), and much more besides.

All that needs to be said at this point is that for Smith to have managed to accomplish this second forgery, and to accomplish it in such a way that scholars are still debating the matter hotly after 40 years, would be nothing short of miraculous. And, generally, I don't believe in such unlikely miracles.

EPIGRAPHY LEAVES LITTLE ROOM FOR DOUBT

3. And, finally, the handwriting. As Smith details in his book, the near consensus of all the top paleographic experts he consulted both in Greece and the US was that the manuscript dates to the 18th century (on pp. 22-23 of his SECRET GOSPEL, Smith gives the long list of the names of these experts).

Certainly the opinion of these competent scholars should not be taken lightly. We are talking here about some highly specialized criteria that they take into consideration, such as the use of special scribal ligatures, of subscripts, of very complex abbreviations, both medial and terminal, the use of the coronis, and other such matters comprehensible for the most part only to experts.

And also Smith reports in his CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA that a rare manuscript was found that is remarkably close in appearance to our ms. Smith writes that a Greek scholar, Professor Scouvaras, has discovered

"...an eighteenth-century ecclesiastical document in a native Greek hand strikingly similar to that of our manuscript. [It is reproduced on Plate IV in Smith's book] ... [It is] an autograph codex of the Oecumenical Patriarch Callinicus III and was written about 1760 in the Phanariot hand which had been formed in Constantinople shortly before that time." (p. 2)

So here we are, ladies and gentlemen of the jury. Three forgeries in one, Smith's critics would like to charge him with. Two unique ancient texts, so different in style and content, plus finding an epigraphic genius forger to put them down on paper. Does this stray far beyond the realm of reality? I sure think so.

AN IMPOSSIBLE SCENARIO

And now let's look at what Smith would have had to do to put it all together. To remind, his discovery was made when he was doing the job of cataloguing odd mss in the rather neglected library of the great Greek Orthodox desert monastery of Mar Saba, near Jerusalem. Presumably, the critics charge, Smith would have planted the book with the text already written into it while he was doing that job. This means that he would have had to have spent years of his life previously to that getting himself totally immersed into Clement and Mk, becoming a "secret world-class expert" in these two highly complex areas.

And when he finally accomplished that task, and composed the two texts, next he would have had to find the "Genius Scribe", his presumed accomplice. (Or did he find this accomplice even before he embarked on his nefarious course?) So they pulled it off, and produced the flawless forgery. Then he goes to Mar Saba and plants the mss. From then on, the story unfolds as previously known.

An obvious question needs to be asked here. Is there any evidence that Smith knew far in advance that he would be doing this two-week job at Mar Saba in 1958? Actually, according to his CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, p. ix, Smith was given permission by Benedict, Patriarch of Jerusalem, to catalogue the library when he was already in Jerusalem in 1958.

In my opinion, it is this premeditation part of this supposed plot to forge these documents that makes it really quite fantastic. He had this idea, "I will produce this forgery and will plant this book in this library." And then he devotes years of his life to this, working in the highest secrecy... Does this sound like a light-hearted prank that some suggested as his motivation?

And it also needs to be noted here that if Smith managed to "plant" this particular manuscript in any other library other than Mar Saba, the case for authenticity would have been rather weaker. This is because there's a recorded tradition that a collection of Clement's letters _has been attested_ in Mar Saba during the Middle Ages. So such a discovery in Mar Saba was not totally unpredictable, after all...

Smith devoted many well-documented years of his life on an academic study of the ms he discovered. Some commentators have actually suggested half-jokingly that the amount of effort he put into all this was almost inexplicable. After reading his two books, it indeed seems like Smith was genuinely obsessed with his discovery.

So Neusner and Co. would presumably claim that Smith did all this background research _before_ he "discovered" the ms? And then he "pretended" to do all this work later? But he repeatedly consulted dozens of noted scholars later and not before! Many of these scholars are still around to tell their side of the story...

To summarize. To accomplish _the three_ such highly complex forgeries, and not to have been caught, would have been beyond the power of one man. To have even _attempted_ such a hopeless task, a task both so hopeless and so time-consuming, would have been quite silly, and Smith was generally not thought of as silly.

And finally, when Smith's discovery is looked at dispassionately, there's really not much there on the surface. What kind of an earth-shaking reaction did he accomplish? Not much really beyond some obscure disputes among professional text crunchers. It's not like the ms just comes out and says, "Jesus was a homosexual, and the whole of Christian religion is a hoax"... Not at all. All it really says is that the Carpocratian heretics were perverts and twisted the Scriptures. But this was already well known before. So, in other words, the pay-off from such a monumental forgery would have been not all that much in any case.

To conclude, the mss is genuine.

And for any who still have doubts, by all means, lobby for the tests on the ink of the mss. Such tests should surely remove all doubt as to the authenticity of this, on the whole, certainly very intriguing, and probably highly revealing document.

Regards, Yuri.

Yuri Kuchinsky || Toronto

ADDENDUM - HOBBS CRITIQUE AND MORE

Discussion on Crosstalk 1996

Addendum on Secret Mark
By Bart Ehrman @email.unc.edu
Thursday
April 25, 1996 11:13 PM PST

An addendum to my posting on a sixth-century ms of Mark. I also asked Charlesworth if he had ever thought about trying to track down the 18th century copy of the letter of Clement of Alexandria found in an edition of the letters of Ignatius in the monastery of Mar Saba near Jerusalem which allegedly preserves Clement's discussion of the Secret Gospel of Mark (Morton Smith published his own photographs of the letter, but no one else has actually seen the thing itself). Charlesworth told me that he in fact made some inquiries, but that the book in which the letter is found has been moved to Jerusalem, and no one, evidently, knows exactly where.

Does anyone else have additional information on this?

-- Bart D. Ehrman, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Re: Addendum on Secret Mark
By GLENN WOODEN @acadiu.ca
Friday
April 26, 1996 12:54 PM PST

Bart and others interested in Smith and the letter of Clement of Alex:

Last year at this time there was an extended discussion about this very topic on B-Greek. At that time Professor Edward Hobbs posted a lengthy article in which he relates various discussions and events surrounding Smith's claims about the said document. With Hobbs' permission (I have sent a request to him) I will forward that post to this list, hopefully soon. The long and short of it is: scholars concluded that it was a forgery; and Smith was not amused!

Glenn Wooden
Acadia Divinity College
Wolfville N.S.
Canada

Re: Addendum on Secret Mark
By Bart Ehrman @email.unc.edu
Friday
April 26, 1996 02:49 PM PST

Glenn,

Yes, I was on B-Greek at the time and recall the interchange. What I'm wondering about is the actual *place* of the text in question. (I should point out in fairness to both Smith and the discussion, that the forgery question was raised but it has not been answered to the satisfaction of all; before everyone jumps on that bandwagon, they should reread Smith's longer treatment of the question in his _Clement of Alexandria..._; I was inspired to do so by the discussion, and despite my propensity to think he forged it, have to say that his analysis is *extremely* compelling -- the sort of thing that loses almost everything in translation. If he did forge this thing, it's one the most amazing feats of scholarship in the 20th century; and he would have done so at a remarkably young age.)

In any event, does anyone else know where the ms itself is?

-- Bart D. Ehrman

Re: Addendum on Secret Mark
By Maurice Robinson @mercury.interpath.com
Saturday
April 27, 1996 03:06 PM PST

On Fri, 26 Apr 1996, Bart Ehrman wrote:

Despite my propensity to think he forged it, have to say that his analysis is *extremely* compelling -- the sort of thing that loses almost everything in translation. If he did forge this thing, it's one the most amazing feats of scholarship in the 20th century; and he would have done so at a remarkably young age.

This sounds much like the matter of the Brazilian Paraiba inscription which Cyrus Gordon pronounced authentic (it recounts some Phoenecians blown off course while attempting to circumnavigate Africa, ending up in what is now Brazil). Gordon's point there was that there were certain grammatical peculiarities in the inscription (found in 1898) which were not known within northwest Semitic until the Ugaritic materials had been discovered. Nevertheless, most scholars still considered the Paraiba inscription to be a forgery, which seems peculiar.

Maurice A. Robinson, Ph.D. Assoc. Prof./Greek and New Testament Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary Wake Forest, North Carolina

Re: Addendum on Secret Mark
By William L. Petersen @psu.edu
Friday
April 26, 1996 02:20 PM PST

Just a quick bibliographic note: P.W. van der Horst, of Utrecht, published an article in Dutch in 1979 in *_Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift_* 33, pp. 27-51, titled "Het 'geheime Markusevangelie'. Over een nieuwe vondst" ("The 'Secret Gospel of Mark.' Concerning a new find"). It is a survey of the first 5 years' scholarly reaction to Smith's publication of the text(which appeared in 1973), and deserves study. He has, with typical thoroughness, examined every position; therefore, even if you don't read Dutch, the bibliography in the notes is valuable.

The article is reprinted in v.d. Horst's collected essays, *_De onbekende god_*, Utrechtse Theologische Reeks 2 (Utrecht 1988), pp. 37-64.

Petersen--Penn State University

Re: Addendum on Secret Mark
By shemichaeX@aol.com
Friday
April 26, 1996 10:06 PM PST

In a message dated 96-04-26 11:55:38 EDT, you write:

The long and short of it is: scholars concluded that it was a forgery; and Smith was not amused!

It was a 16th century text incorporating the Secret Mark text, wasn't it? Was it supposed to have been a 16th century forgery? If so, it was a hidden one, used as the back of another text as I remember, or was it? Who was trying to fool whom? Smith had so many questions, himself, that I thought he rather ran through most of the possibilities of fraud.

Hobbs et al. on Smith & Secret Mark, I

By GLENN WOODEN@acadiu.ca

Monday

April 29, 1996 11:36 AM PST

Edward Hobbs forwarded his archived material on Smith and the controversy surrounding the letter of Clement of Alex, with permission to forward it to this list for those interested. It has some up-to-date bibliography (1995) on the matter. Because it was so long I am sending it in two sections.

Glenn Wooden

Forwarded material, #1: a long collection.

From: "pmoseX@cpua.it.luc.edu" "Paul Moser" 5-MAY-1995 15:31:26.14

To: "b-greeX@virginia.edu"

Subject: Secret Mark, Neusner, Smith, etc.

I wonder if any listmember knows of a careful review of Jacob Neusner, **Are There Really Tannaitic Parallels to the Gospels?** (Scholars Press, 1993). The book is a vigorous criticism of Morton Smith's **Tannaitic Parallels to the Gospels**. In addition, Neusner announces that Smith's proposed evidence for the so-called Secret Gospel of Mark "must now be declared the forgery of the century" (p. 28). Neusner suggests that Smith himself forged the Clement of Alexandria fragment that allegedly surfaced in a library in Sinai in 1958, giving evidence of the Secret Gospel. As one might have expected, Helmut Koester and J.D. Crossan regard canonical Mark as postdating Secret Mark. For overwhelming evidence against the latter view, see Robert Gundry, **Mark** (Eerdmans, 1993); cf. F.F. Bruce, **The Canon of Scripture**, and J.H. Charlesworth & C.A. Evans, in **Studying the Historical Jesus** (Brill, 1994), pp. 526-32. Neusner, in any case, clearly has higher standards for authenticity than Koester or Crossan. Neusner suggests that Smith presented only photographs, not the actual MS, of the Clement fragment.-- Paul Moser, Loyola University of Chicago.

From: "gdoudnX@ednet1.osl.or.gov" 5-MAY-1995 23:05:04.04

To: "b-greeX@virginia.edu"

Subject: Secret Mark, Neusner, Smith, etc.

I had not heard of Neusner's claim or this particular work of Neusner's (_Are There Really Tannaitic Parallels to the Gospels?_) but I have studied this issue of Secret Mark and had become convinced that Morton Smith perpetrated a fraud, also. Not a single reference to or reaction against this alleged Clement letter is known in history; and the book in which Morton Smith found the letter at the Mar Saba monastery was not listed in any previous catalogue of that monastery. Morton Smith made no effort whatever toward conservation of the manuscript, nor has the document apparently been seen or brought to light for testing and analysis by anyone else. (I do not doubt that a genuine 17th century book with a letter in the back exists; but there is no evidence beyond M Smith's word that he found it in the monastery.) The shocking contents of the letter sound suspiciously like theories Morton Smith was working on; and there is much more. I am unfamiliar with Neusner's analysis, but in my own reading of Smith's account of the discovery I have noted strange ways Smith puts things. For example, he dedicated his book on the Secret Gospel, cryptically, "To the one who knows"; and never disclosed who this person was or what this person knew.

For articulation of suspicions of forgery before now Quentin Quesnell in _Catholic Biblical Quarterly_ 37 (1975): 48-67 is a classic, and see also M. Smith's reply and Quesnell's reply to Smith's reply in the next issue, CBQ 38. There is a good discussion of the forgery question in _Longer Mark: Forgery, Interpolation, or Old Tradition?- ed. R. Fuller (Berkeley: Center for Hermeneutical Studies, 1976). This list's very own Edward Hobbs was at the Colloquium reported in this last citation, where Smith was also present at the discussion of whether his discovery was a forgery; perhaps Dr. Hobbs can offer some illuminating firsthand anecdotal information of that occasion! Greg Doudna West Linn, Oregonx

From: LUCY::EHOBBS "Edward Hobbs" 14-MAY-1995 18:46:02.72

To: "b-greeX@virginia.edu"

Subject: Lengthy account of Secret Mark

Dear Friends of the B-Greek List:

Thanks to several of you who have asked me to comment on the "Secret Mark" issue, and the 18th Colloquy of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, called "Longer Mark: Forgery, Interpolation, or Old Tradition?". I'll post in two parts: this one, and a follow-up which will be the first part of the text of my Critique, not including the Synopsis (in Greek) which I produced to show the obvious Gospel source of every phrase in Smith's supposed Secret Mark.

BACKGROUND (Skip to SECRET MARK if you wish.)

The Center (founded in 1969 by me and Dieter Georgi, in a [vain] effort to keep Dieter in Berkeley rather than leaving for Harvard) brought together faculty from U.C.Berkeley, GTU, Stanford, Un. of S.F., Un. of Santa Clara, U.C.Santa Cruz, occasionally others. Nine departments of U.C. Berkeley were participants! At the Colloquies, we solicited a Position Paper (from scholars everywhere: besides the Bay Area, Harvard (many times), Columbia (Morton Smith himself!), Chicago, Bryn Mawr, Claremont, SUNY, as well as Oxford, St. Andrews, Constanz, Cologne, Zurich, Paris (Sorbonne), and on and on. The Position Paper was printed and distributed to a select group of Critics (local and elsewhere), who wrote Critiques. The Position Paper and the Critiques were then printed together and sent to the participants a couple of weeks before the Colloquy met. At the Colloquy, we first had 45 minutes of fine wines (from my cellar) and nibbles, with pleasant conversation. Then we met in a giant circle (if possible -- when 40 or more showed up we had to use concentric circles), the Paper author had 15 minutes to respond orally to the Critics, followed by general discussion, following a series of questions which I usually presented as we began. All this was tape-recorded (by my son Kevin--now a mathematician, one of the "Hubble-fixers" who designed the new lenses for the Hubble space telescope). The tape-recording was then transcribed (by one of my graduate students), and copies of everyone's remarks (now severely edited down, usually by me or a trusted graduate student) were typed up and sent to every speaker who was being summarized. Each speaker was allowed to expunge idiocies unless they provoked further discussion, to edit down further, and to improve their English. (Imagine doing all this without computers!) After taking all these things into account, the results were published in a series of Protocols (also handled physically by me, dealing with various local printers and binders), and sent out to subscribers by another of my graduate students (Sharon Boucher, who was never paid for years of this). My colleague at PSR, Wilhelm Wuellner, dearly loved the limelight, and so we usually called him Chairman, often Editor, etc., though in fact all the labors were done by unsung others. We met thus three to seven times a year.

SECRET MARK

Reginald Fuller (of Virginia Theological Seminary at that time) was planning to visit Berkeley for a few weeks, and wrote to say that he had a paper in the works on Morton Smith's "Secret Mark", wondering whether we wanted to use it as a Position Paper. We agreed, and the Colloquy was initiated (actual meeting on 7 December 1975). Smith himself wrote a Critique, as well as Helmut Koester (always a fan of Smith, to my eternal puzzlement), Hans Dieter Betz, Birger Pearson (UC-SB), Bud (Paul) Achtemeier (Union-Virginia), and locals (including me, and my then-student Daryl Schmidt). Charles Murgia, then Chairman of the Dept. of Classics at Berkeley, wrote a devastating proof of forgery. In the discussion, he said that he didn't think Smith himself did the forging, because Smith's knowledge of Greek was inferior to that of the author/forgery, and because the forger had an excellent sense of humor, which Smith lacked. (My reaction was to say that I'd rather be accused of forgery than of lacking a sense of humor and being deficient in Greek!) My own effort in advance was to prepare a Greek Synopsis, with three columns: "Clement's" Text, Parallels in Mark, and Parallels in John. I thought it evidenced that the work was a "pastiche" created from canonical Gospel materials. (I also said that since I wasn't a Clement-scholar, I couldn't judge whether the forgery was pre- or post-Clement, hence I would simply assume Robert Grant's opinion that the letter sounded like Clement. I didn't believe it, but I didn't want to take on THAT issue as well. Smith later cited me, in Harvard Theological

Review, as one who accepted the authenticity of the work!) After publication, the hate-mail from Smith began. He quickly learned that I was the center of this vortex, and letter after letter of vitriol, spite, irrational attacks, and the like were showered upon me. This was despite the fact that I had refrained from voicing my personal opinion, that the "letter" and the "secret Mark text" never existed, but were invented by Smith. He produced no MS., only some "photographs" he claimed to have made at Mar Saba monastery in 1958. He kept the matter secret for 14 years, then published two books, a "scholarly" one and a "popular" one. No other person has ever been able to locate the book in which this stuff was supposedly written (mainly on the flyleaf and the binding paper). The entire affair reeks of fraud, which Quentin Quesnell had the courage to publish aloud (I DID have the courage to call attention to his work during the Colloquy!)

A SECOND ATTEMPT (to debunk Jesus)

Three years later, I was Visiting Professor at Claremont, and working with the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity. Hans Dieter Betz (this was before he went to Chicago) was Chairman, and he asked me to be the critic for an all-day session planned to discuss Smith's new MS. which he had sent ahead, "Jesus the Magician". (Having failed to convince everyone that Jesus was executed for running a gay-liberation group, caught in the act in Gethsemane, he now turned to prove that he was executed for being a magician.) I tried to beg off, but Betz was insistent; he assured me that Smith would be quite open to any valid criticism. The typed MS. was about three inches thick, and ruined a week for me. When the day arrived, he walked in, took one look at me, and paled noticeably. He was furious that I had been chosen, but had to sit quietly for 45 minutes while I took his MS. apart (the published version withdrew EVERYTHING I leveled my fire at, fortunately for him). I even pointed out that his major evidence for claiming that Jesus was the bastard child of a German soldier, was in Alfred Rosenberg's Nazi pseudo-philosophical work, *The Myth of the 20th Century*; Smith quoted the German title, and thought readers would assume this was from some renowned German historian! He raged at me for about half an hour, but then (thankfully) Jim Robinson picked up on the attack, and we had a heavy day of argument, about it and about. That evening, it turned out that Smith and I were the guests of honor at a dinner put on by Betz! And we were seated together! So we discussed magical amulets, about which he knew a great deal and I knew nothing, thus escaping ulcers for the evening. The hate-mail began pouring in about a week later; but I noticed that the published book eliminated all the stupidities and errors I had nastily pointed out. Thereafter, when we met at the annual Harvard receptions for faculty (including me) and alumni (including him) at the AAR/SBL national meetings, we avoided each other conspicuously.

TWO LOYAL COLLEAGUES

Chopped into mincemeat at the 1979 SBL meeting in NYC, a special event was held for Pierson Parker (of General Seminary most of his life), focusing on his early-fifties book *The Gospel before Mark* [positing a kind of Ur-Markus called K, on which Matthew was based, with canonical Matthew being thus earlier than canonical Mark]. Four speakers were lined up, one of whom had been a student of Parker (Rhys was his name), and another of whom was Morton Smith. Smith was chosen at Parker's request, for Parker had always championed Smith and his work, even though most others in the guild despised (and feared) him. Rhys gave a pleasant little

talk, followed by Smith, who worked himself up into a rage over Rhys's words. He said that this speech should be printed as an example of every stupidity possible in the scholarly world. He then went on to attack Parker, saying that Parker's view that Matthew was prior to Mark was simply the old Roman Catholic view, and that Parker, being an Episcopal priest, was sucking up to Rome, as Episcopal priests always do. It was a horrifying performance! When the brief time for discussion arrived, the Chair wanted to close things off quickly. But I leaped to my feet and asked just how it was that Episcopal priest Parker was driven into bias by that fact, whereas somehow Episcopal priest Smith had miraculously escaped, and was enabled to be objective and full of truth? I pressed the issue of ad hominem attacks, questioning whether anyone--EVEN MORTON SMITH--had a right to behave in that fashion at a scholarly meeting. He sputtered for a moment, then stalked out. About ten years ago (I think it was in Chicago, but all these hotels are so similar I'm not sure), Smith took the platform to denounce the translation by Jacob Neusner of an ancient rabbinic document. Neusner claimed this was the first time it had appeared in English, and that he had done the translation. Smith revealed that it in fact was lifted from a translation made centuries ago. Neusner was publicly humiliated, and found it hard to show up for things for a few years. (My vagueness about the exact titles, etc., is because I was in an adjacent room, and did not directly hear this attack; I was told of it many times over during the hours and days which followed.) Now, the interesting thing about this is not that such a thing could happen; plagiarism is shameful, maybe on a par with forgery (?). It is that Jacob Neusner was one of Smith's few ardent champions (Parker and Koester being two of the other three or four). Smith had turned on one of the few friends he had left! Finally: I gather Neusner is now having his revenge!

Edward C. Hobbs

Hobbs et al. on Smith & Secret Mark, II
By GLENN WOODEN @acadiau.ca
Monday
April 29, 1996 11:36 AM PST

Forwarded material, #2: a long collection.

From: LUCY::EHOBBS "Edward Hobbs" 14-MAY-1995 18:47:00.73

To: "b-greeX@virginia.edu"

Subject: Portion of My Critique on "Secret Mark" [Colloquy 18] [This material is Copyright 1975.]

The issue before us in this Colloquy (as it properly is in each of our Colloquies) should be the fundamental methodological one: How is it that we solve problems about the interpretation of a text? This is a special form of the more general issue of how we make historical judgments. Since we deal with the unrepeatable, and thus are deprived of the experimental method in any strict sense, and since we further are not engaged with logical deduction from postulates in the

fashion of mathematics, we are faced with the criterion of probability. Thus much is, however, granted by everyone (or, almost everyone!). The problem remains, what constitutes probability?

I wish to suggest that one crucial dimension of any theory of probability, whether in the natural sciences or in the humanistic disciplines including history, is the well-proven Law of Parsimony, or Ockham's Razor: *Non sunt multiplicanda entia praeter necessitatem*. Ockham himself, as is well-known, did not invent the principle; but he used it effectively and constantly (though not in this exact formulation which goes by his name; he preferred two other wordings), and he has handed on to us a tool for cutting away flights of fancy and distinguishing the probable from the merely possible. The modern form of it in the sciences usually demands the postulation of the fewest unobservable commensurate with or necessary to explain the evidence. Morton Smith acknowledges the criterion of probability quite explicitly (e.g., *The Secret Gospel*, p. 148--the last paragraph of the book; and *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark*, pp. 289-290--a passage parallel to the previous one); but he also undercuts the criterion by saying, "But the truth is that improbable things sometimes happen. Therefore truth is necessarily stranger than history." (*The Secret Gospel*, p. 148) Unless this sentence has a hidden meaning (and Smith seems to love them), he seems to be saying that our notions of probability are not fitted to the actual course of happenings in the world, and thus that "truth" (what really happened?) is stranger than "history" (what non-Smith historians write down?). This is a curious notion of probability, indeed! At the level of small detail, Smith's work is indeed "erudite," as it is usually called; his *Clement* volume is filled with a wealth of homework preparatory to historical explanation.

At the next stage of work, however, he moves suddenly into a rarified realm from which he is able to dismiss all scholars and all scholarly methods in general use with whom and which he differs; scholars' work at odds with his (or even potentially at odds, in the future: see, e.g., *Clement*, p. 287, "To prevent foreseeable stupidities...") regularly is labeled "worthless," "ludicrous," "hostile," "muddled," "stupidity," in some cases "malicious and deliberately deceitful" (he says there are several of these apparently, while singling out one as "most" so), "extravagance of exegetic fantasy," and the like. Tools basic to the discipline seem either to be non-existent (e.g. redaction criticism) or to be so badly used by everyone else that "alternatives" need to be used (e.g. form criticism). Important redaction-critical work is ignored or else dismissed as "fantasy" (so with Marxsen's important work), and recent form-critical study, even of this precise passage of Mark, is nowhere mentioned (e.g. H.-W. Kuhn's work). In view of this treatment of differing scholars and methods, our deliberations are unlikely to meet any different fate at the hands of Smith; those who are sympathetic to his work will be praised, and those who differ will be damned (will we, hopefully, be allowed to choose whether we are to be labeled "stupid," "ludicrous," or merely engaging in "fantasy"?).

It seems to me that Ockham's Razor demands that we utilize the least new hypotheses to account for this text. Smith calls his explanation an "account" or a "history"; it is, in fact, an elaborate web of many hypotheses, each one constructed to fit the facts of the text to the previously constructed hypothesis. It is ingenious, and is just the method adopted by the author of historical fiction--one constructs an account which will touch on the known facts at as many points as possible, so as to create the effect "Yes, it might well have happened like this, indeed!" Like many scholars and others, I enjoy historical fiction; I become uneasy only when the word

"fiction" is omitted from the sub-title or jacket description. And note that "fiction" does not here mean untrue; it is possible that it happened in such fashion. But the historian does not call his elaborate construction that touches all points while going far beyond them, a "history"; he reserves that term for the work to which he has applied Ockham's Razor, removing all absolutely unessential or unnecessary unobservables.

The simplest explanation is one which accords with other phenomena already known to us from early Christian history. (In what follows, I am assuming that the Letter is indeed from Clement. I am uncertain of this; but Robert Grant, who is far more capable than I to judge the question, considers that Smith has proved this point, and I accept his judgment.) It is roughly as follows:

(1) Following Paul's lead (Romans 6:1-11), some Christians in Alexandria (Carpocratians, apparently, and others) interpreted baptism as resurrection. Someone among them felt the need of an account in the Gospels to illustrate this, and set out to fill the need.

(2) Our author, working after the collection of our four Gospels, is acquainted with the texts of all of them; but he best knows Mark (long associated with Alexandria), just as most people have a favorite Gospel. The Lazarus story (John 11) is the one lengthy resurrection account, but it cannot be simply duplicated. Luke has a resurrection story concerning a male (all of the Synoptics have the story of Jairus' daughter), also; he is called *neaniskos*, a term also occurring in Mark's story of the empty tomb.

(3) Our author has his clues, and begins to piece together his paradigmatic pericope. The to-be-resurrected *neaniskos* has (a mother--Luke? two sisters--John?) a sister, who intercedes for him. The details of the pericope are easily assembled from other healing accounts in Mark, plus the obvious Lazarus-parallel. Especially attractive are some accounts which involve "resurrection" (*egeiro*, 1:31; 5:41; 10:49; 16:6) or a "tomb" (*mnemeion*, 5:2,3,5; 15:46; 16:2,3,5,8).

(4) The *neaniskos* produces by easy connections his clothing (Mark 14:51) which is like that of the pre-resurrected Jesus (Mark 15:46) and the statement that "looking on him, he loved him" (Mark 10:21, with its Matthaean parallel for *neaniskos*), as well as his wealth (Mark 10:22; cf. Luke 18:23 for exact wording).

(5) The locale is given by the Lazarus story--perhaps also by Mark 8:22, text of Codex Beza. As noted by Smith, the pericope's text often accords with the "Western" text; but the simpler explanation is that our author actually read such a text (coming into being about 150 by the usual dating), rather than that the Western text derived from "Longer Mark," a theory that explains nothing about the Western text in the rest of the Gospels and Acts. Even the dating is given by the Lazarus story, conflated (or maybe not, though the wording is identical) with the opening of Mark's Transfiguration story (in which Jesus is clothed in white, as is the *neaniskos* in the empty tomb).

(6) Our author at the end has to get Jesus back to where the account in Mark continues. The entire process is a simple one: A Mark-sounding story is produced by utilizing related stories in Mark and their phrasing, combined with the obvious resurrection story in John, and some

inevitable wording derived from memory of the Matthew and Luke parallels (cf. our own "rich young ruler," a description which is a conflation of the synoptic accounts). To account for the similarities to Mark by having a translator (working from an Aramaic Vorlage) deliberately imitate Mark's style is "multiplying entities," indeed. Finally, could such an "invention" (a "pastiche" might be the best term) be interpolated into Mark's text, even though the Gospel was already accepted as in some sense "canonical"? Of course it could!--all we have to recall is the way in which the pericope on the adulterous woman was inserted into various places, without fire falling from heaven (after Luke 21:38; after John 7:36; after John 7:52; after John 21:24), or the way in which various endings were attached to Mark, endings pieced together in much the fashion we have observed here. If Stendhal's statement (quoted on p. 85, Clement) means that the text cannot have originated in the late second century or after, then it is demonstrably wrong, on the evidence of the pericopes just cited and their textual history; perhaps, however, Stendhal's comment refers to a time after the fixing of the text, i.e., after the supremacy of the Byzantine text.

(by: Edward C. Hobbs -- From the Protocol of the 18th Colloquy)

From: "lisatiX@aol.com" 15-MAY-1995 03:43:41.88

To: "ehobbX@wellesley.edu" CC: "b-greeX@virginia.edu"

Subject: RE: Lengthy account of Secret...

Dear Professor Hobbs and friends, Thanks to the professor for recalling Morton's visit to Berkeley in 1975. The topic seems now to be more important and exciting than it was at the time, which is a surprise to me. I just want to add a few things in order to balance out the report of E. Hobbs. No one that I knew took Professor Smith seriously at that time. I never cease to be amazed when I hear people twenty years later talking about his invention. Prof. Hobbs is right when he consigns this gospel to the genre of historical novel. We all knew our visitor was mad, but now people don't know this. I didn't know that Prof. Hobbs openly contradicted our visitor. I don't remember anyone wanting to offend the mad one. We thought it our duty to humor him and give him an open forum at the Hermeneutic Center. At the time he was travelling all over California attracting big crowds and newspaper coverage. I was sent to the airport to pick him up and found a place for him to stay in Benton Hall. I think I heard him speak but was more interested in Professor Hobbs's selections of California reds at the time. Professor Smith's apologia in the Harvard Theological Review came as a real shock to me, him marshalling and counting all these famous names who believed in his historical romance. I really do not understand how anyone, student or professor, can take seriously his fantasy. On the other hand, I am concerned that apparently people are doing just that. That's the reason I am saying that at that time no one who knew him took this seriously but people tried to be courteous and not offend someone who was obviously deranged.

Richard Arthur, Merrimack NHlisatiX@aol.com

From: LUCY::EHOBBS "Edward Hobbs" 15-MAY-1995 13:08:17.51

To: "b-greeX@virginia.edu"

Subject: Smith's visit to Berkeley: correction

Richard Arthur's supplement to my account was a pleasant reminder that other people still live who were there. But I'm afraid he is remembering the wrong Colloquy. Smith visited Berkeley only once, to my knowledge; it was for Colloquy 6, held on 12 April 1973. The subject of his position paper was "The Aretalogy Used by Mark". It was on that occasion that Richard Arthur picked up Smith and took him to his room at PSR. Colloquy 18 is the one we have been discussing. Smith was not present; neither was Richard Arthur (who may have graduated by then?). The date for this Colloquy was close to three years later, on 7 December 1975. The Position Paper was by Reginald Fuller. Secret Mark had not even been published when Smith was present in early 1973, so of course I did not challenge him on it (never having heard of it). I stand by my statement sent yesterday. How I wish everyone had thought Smith deranged! But I did take him on, not only then (in his absence), but on several later occasions, two of which I reported to all of you yesterday. There was never an agreement to be nice to him, at least not one I signed. I wasn't even nice to Ernest Badian (Harvard) when he was with us in 1976 (what an arrogant fellow he was). Incidentally, I received a message asking if I knew Morton Smith was dead. Yes, I knew, almost immediately. So does Neusner know. Edward Hobbs

From: LUCY::EHOBBS "Edward Hobbs" 17-MAY-1995 15:46:38.71

To: "b-greeX@virginia.edu"

Secret Mark, Smith, Ad Hominem, & Koester

First, may I thank most warmly those of you who have responded to unwarranted innuendoes about my report on the Secret Mark controversy. I did not write that material of my own choice; I was asked by more than a half-dozen of you to do so. Nothing in it was fabricated, and nothing in it suggested that because Smith behaved outrageously when crossed, his scholarship was to be disregarded. A student from Canada has exhorted us to avoid ad hominem attacks, implying that I had engaged in them. It was precisely for that reason I had reported Smith's repeated use of the ad hominem attack; but I did not use it myself. May I point out that;

(1) I personally spent most of two months of 1975 in organizing, conducting, and editing/publishing a careful analysis of Smith's "Secret Mark" work. I also pointed out that I had carefully refrained from expressing my private belief that the supposed MS. was a recent forgery (i.e., within the last 1800 years). Surely this counts as "judging his views on the basis of his written legacy."

(2) "Jesus the Magician" was the recipient of more than 40 hours of my time, in 1976, resulting in more than 50 pages of criticism delivered to Smith by me, along with a 45-minute oral summary at the beginning of a day-long discussion of his MS. The published volume altered almost every one of the passages I criticized; had I not devoted that extended time to working through his original MS., the published volume would have been far more roundly criticized by its reviewers. This was not an ad hominem attack. That I reported to you some of what was asked

for -- namely, the living-person relationship I had with Smith -- was offered not to attack his views, but to report what almost everyone knew about him who disagreed with him. Bob Kraft has rightly -- and generously -- pointed out the supportive, humorous, and congenial way Smith (at times) treated his friends. He also acknowledged his cantankerous, intimidating, confrontational ways on other occasions. I happen to admire Bob Kraft for his loyalty toward his friends, even when dead; I count this a great quality in a person. As I pointed out, sometimes Smith did not share this quality (re: Parker and Neusner, for example). And I want to state emphatically that Helmut Koester also possesses this quality, even at great cost to himself (as in the Bob Funk affair). Hence Helmut has loyally defended Smith through the years, and gave him a forum at Harvard when he otherwise would have been dismissed out of hand. Helmut is an honest scholar, and a great scholar. He and I disagree about many matters of N.T. scholarship, but he has never dismissed me or my work as a consequence. He was my department chairman at the time of my second major broadside against the Q-hypothesis (at SBL in Chicago, six years after my first), and even then he only declined to speak to me for two days! Then all was well again. I cannot want for a better friend and colleague. May I suggest that when we evaluate the written legacy of a scholar, we also take the trouble to read the written legacy of those who have faulted that scholar's legacy. Apparently Smith has supporters of his views who have not bothered to read the reviews and follow-up work. (And among these I do NOT count either Bob Kraft or Helmut Koester.)

Edward Hobbs

From: "emkrentX@mcs.com" "Edgar M. Krentz" 15-JUN-1995 11:22:23.14

To: "b-greeX@virginia.edu"

Subject: Secret Gospel of Mark

There was a recent lengthy string about the Secret Gospel of Mark published by Morton Smith. Those interested may want to read a recent article: A. H. Criddle, "On the Mar Saba Letter Attributed to Clement of Alexandria," Journal of Early Christian Studies 2,3 (Summer 1995) 215-220. Criddle argues that the Clement letter is spurious and that Secret Mark is therefore of dubious authenticity. His argument is based on a model of vocabulary statistics that he and an analysis of uaanitative rhythms.

Edgar Krentz [emkrentX@mcs.com]

MAGIC AND HOMOSEXUALITY

MAGIC AND ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY - & HOMOSEXUALITY?

What follows are the discourses and comments of Biblical, ancient authorities and scholars on the discoveries, by Morton Smith about 50 years ago in a Jerusalem library, of what may be a "secret gospel" coming from Mark.

The purpose of this work is to offer to the scholars and students of knowledge in Islam the opportunity to see the actual workings going on within the scholarly world of Biblical criticism.

The Strange Case of the Secret Gospel according to Mark How Morton Smith's Discovery of a Lost Letter by Clement of Alexandria Scandalized Biblical Scholarship

Shawn Eyer

"Dear reader, do not be alarmed at the parallels between.. magic and ancient Christianity. Christianity never claimed to be original. It claimed . . . to be true!"

With these words in the New York Times Book Review, Pierson Parker reassured the faithful American public that it need not be concerned with the latest news from the obscure and bookish world of New Testament scholarship.

[1]

It was 1973, and the Biblical studies community, as well as the popular press, was in a stir over a small manuscript discovery that--to judge from the reactions of some--seemingly threatened to call down the apocalypse. A newly-released book by Columbia University's Morton Smith, presenting a translation and interpretation of a fragment of a newly-recovered Secret Gospel of Mark, was at the center of the controversy.

The Discovery:1958-1960

In the spring of 1958 Smith, then a graduate student in Theology at Columbia University, was invited to catalogue the manuscript holdings in the library of the Mar Saba monastery, located twelve miles south of Jerusalem. Smith had been a guest of the same hermitage years earlier, when he was stranded in Palestine by the conflagrations of the second World War.

What Smith found during his task in the tower library surprised him. He discovered some new scholia of Sophocles, for instance, and dozens of other manuscripts.

[2]

Despite these finds, however, the beleaguered scholar soon resigned himself to what looked like a reasonable conclusion: he would find nothing of major importance at Mar Saba. His malaise evaporated one day as he first deciphered the manuscript that would always thereafter be identified with him:

[. . .]One afternoon near the end of my stay, I found myself in my cell, staring incredulously at a text written in a tiny scrawl. [. . .]If this writing was what it claimed to be, I had a hitherto unknown text by a writer of major significance for early church history.

[3]

What Smith then began photographing was a three-page handwritten addition penned into the endpapers of a printed book, Isaac Voss' 1646 edition of the *Epistolae Genuinae S. Ignatii Martyris*.

[4]

It identified itself as a letter by Clement of the Stromateis, i.e., Clement of Alexandria, the second-century church father well-known for his neo-platonic applications of Christian belief. Clement writes "to Theodore," congratulating him for success in his disputes with the Carpocratians, a heterodoxical sect about which little is known. Apparently in their conflict with Theodore, the Carpocratians appealed to Mark's gospel.

Clement responds by recounting a new story about the Gospel. After Peter's death, Mark brought his original gospel to Alexandria and wrote a "more spiritual gospel for the use of those who were being perfected." Clement says this text is kept by the Alexandrian church for use only in the initiation into "the great mysteries."

However, Carpocrates the heretic, by means of magical stealth, obtained a copy and adapted it to his own ends. Because this version of the "secret" or "mystery" gospel had been polluted with "shameless lies," Clement urges Theodore to deny its Markan authorship even under oath. "Not all true things are to be said to all men," he advises.

Theodore has asked questions about particular passages of the special Carpocratian Gospel of Mark, and by way of reply Clement transcribes two sections which he claims have been distorted by the heretics. The first fragment of the Secret Gospel of Mark, meant to be inserted between Mark 10.34 and 35, reads:

They came to Bethany. There was one woman there whose brother had died. She came and prostrated herself before Jesus and spoke to him. "Son of David, pity me!" But the disciples rebuked her. Jesus was angry and went with her into the garden where the tomb was. Immediately a great cry was heard from the tomb. And going up to it, Jesus rolled the stone away from the door of the tomb, and immediately went in where the young man was. Stretching out his hand, he lifted him up, taking hold of his hand. And the youth, looking intently at him, loved him and started begging him to let him remain with him. And going out of the tomb, they went into the house of the youth, for he was rich. And after six days Jesus gave him an order and, at evening, the young man came to him wearing nothing but a linen cloth. And he stayed with him for the night, because Jesus taught him the mystery of the Kingdom of God. And then when he left he went back to the other side of the Jordan.

Then a second fragment of Secret Mark is given, this time to be inserted into Mark 10.46. This has long been recognized as a narrative snag in Mark's Gospel, as it awkwardly reads, "Then they come to Jericho. As he was leaving Jericho with his disciples.."

Then he came into Jericho. And the sister of the young man whom Jesus loved was there with his mother and Salome, but Jesus would not receive them. Just as Clement prepares to reveal the "real interpretation" of these verses to Theodore, the copyist discontinues and Smith's discovery is, sadly, complete.

Smith stopped briefly in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem to share his discovery with Gerschom Scholem.

[5]

He then returned to America where he sought the opinions of his mentors Erwin Goodenough and Arthur Darby Nock. "God knows what you've got hold of," Goodenough said.

[6]

"They made up all sorts of stuff in the fifth century," said Nock. "But, I say, it is exciting."

[7]

At the 1960 annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Morton Smith announced his discovery to the scholarly community, openly presenting a translation and discussion of the Clementine letter. A well-written account of his presentation, with a photograph of the Mar Saba monastery, appeared the next morning on the front page of The New York Times.

[8]

A list of the seventy-five manuscripts Smith catalogued appeared the same year in the journal Archaeology

[9]

as well as the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate journal, Nea Sion.

[10]

And Morton Smith embarked on a decade of meticulous investigation into the nature of his find.

The Reaction (1973--1982)

While there may seem nothing particularly scandalous about the apocryphal episodes of Secret Mark in and of themselves, the release of the material to the general public aroused a great deal of popular and scholarly derision. Smith wrote two books on the subject: first, the voluminous and intricate scholarly analysis Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark, and then The Secret Gospel, a thin and conversational popular account of the discovery and its interpretation. The first book was delivered to the Harvard University Press in 1966, but was very slow at going through the press.

[11]

Smith's popular treatment, however, was released by Harper and Row in the summer of 1973. This is the version that most scholars had in their hands first. What did it say that was so shocking?

Smith's analysis of the Secret Mark text--and consequently the wider body of literature bearing on the history of early Christianity--brought him to consider unusual possibilities. Because Secret Mark presents a miracle story, this meant a particular concentration upon material of a like type. Smith was working outside of the traditional school of Biblical criticism which automatically regarded all miracle accounts as mythological inventions of the early Christian communities.

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Instead of taking as his goal the theological deconstruction of the miracle traditions, Smith asked to what degree the miracle stories of the gospels might in fact be based upon actions of Jesus, much in the same way scholars examine the sayings traditions.

It has been typical for critical scholars of the Bible to reject any historical foundation for the "miracle-worker" stories about Jesus. Because such tales would tend to rely on the supernatural, and scholars seek to understand the origins of the Bible in realistic terms, it is more plausible for

the modern critic to propose reasons for which an early Christian community might have come to understand Jesus as a miracle-worker and subsequently engage in the production of mythologies depicting him in that mold. Smith's understanding of the kingdom language in the Christian writings, with its well-known ambivalent eschatological and yet emphatically present or "realized" tendencies, evolved to the conclusion that:

[Jesus] could admit his followers to the kingdom of God, and he could do it in some special way, so that they were not there merely by anticipation, nor by virtue of belief and obedience, nor by some other figure of speech, but were really, actually, in.

[13]

Smith held that the best explanation for the literary and historical evidence surrounding the miracles of Jesus was that Jesus himself actually performed--or meant to and was understood to have performed--magical feats. Among these was a baptismal initiation rite through which he was able to "give" his disciples a vision of the heavenly spheres. This was in the form of an altered state of consciousness induced by "the recitation of repetitive, hypnotic prayers and hymns," a technique common in Jewish mystical texts, Qumran material, Greek magical papyri and later Christian practices such as the Byzantine liturgy.

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This is a radical departure from the mainstream scholarship which seeks to minimize or eliminate altogether any possible "supernatural" elements attached to the Historical Jesus, who is most often understood as a speaker on social issues and applied ethics . . . an Elijahform social worker, if you will.

Morton Smith did not begin with that assumption, nor did his reinterpretation of Christian history arrive at it. Thus, the new theory summarized in his 1973 book for general readership displeased practically everyone:

[. . .]From the scattered indications in the canonical Gospels and the secret Gospel of Mark, we can put together a picture of Jesus' baptism, "the mystery of the kingdom of God." It was a water baptism administered by Jesus to chosen disciples, singly and by night. The costume, for the disciple, was a linen cloth worn over the naked body. This cloth was probably removed for the baptism proper, the immersion in water, which was now reduced to a preparatory purification. After that, by unknown ceremonies, the disciple was possessed by Jesus' spirit and so united with Jesus. One with him, he participated by hallucination in Jesus' ascent into the heavens, he entered the kingdom of God, and was thereby set free from the laws ordained for and in the lower world. Freedom from the law may have resulted in completion of the spiritual union by physical union. This certainly occurred in many forms of gnostic Christianity; how early it began there is no telling.

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In an interview with The New York Times just before his books were released onto the market, Smith noted with appreciation, "Thank God I have tenure."

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The Inquisition: Let's Begin

Not a moment was lost in the ensuing backlash. Smith had laid aside the canon of unwritten rules that most Biblical scholars worked by. He took the Gospels as more firmly rooted in history than in the imagination of the early church. He refused to operate with an artificially thick barrier between pagan and Christian, magic and mythology. And he not only promulgated his theories from his office in Columbia University via obscure scholarly periodicals: he had given them to the world in plain, understandable and all-too-clear language. Thus there was no time for the typical scholarly method of thorough, researched, logical refutation. The public attention span was short. It was imperative that Smith be discredited before too many Biblical scholars told the press that there might be something to his theories. Some of the high-pitched remarks of well-known scholars are amusing to us in retrospect:

Patrick Skehan: "...a morbid concatenation of fancies.."

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Joseph Fitzmyer: "...venal popularization.."

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"...replete with innuendos and eisegesis..."

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Paul J. Achtemeier: "Characteristically, his arguments are awash in speculation."

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"...an a priori principle of selective credulity.."

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William Beardslee: "...ill- founded..."

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Pierson Parker: "...the alleged parallels are far-fetched..."

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Hans Conzelmann: "...science fiction.."

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"...Does not belong to scholarly, nor even ...discussable, literature.."

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Raymond Brown: "...debunking attitude towards Christianity.."

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Frederick Danker: "...in the same niche with Allegro's mushroom fantasies and Eisler's salmagundi."

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Helmut Merkel: "Once again total warfare has been declared on New Testament scholarship."

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The possibility that the initiation could have included elements of eroticism was unthinkable to many scholars, whose reaction was to project onto Smith's entire interpretive work an imaginary emphasis on Jesus being a homosexual:

[. . . T]he fact that the young man comes to Jesus "wearing a linen cloth over his naked body" naturally suggests implications which Smith does not fail to infer.

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Hostility has marked some of the initial reactions to Smith's publication because of his debunking attitude towards Christianity and his unpleasant suggestion that Jesus engaged in homosexual practices with his disciples.

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Many others cited rather prominently the homoerotic overtures of Smith's thesis in their objections to his overall work.

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Another criticism, which holds more weight from a scholar's standpoint, was Smith's rejection of the form and redaction critical techniques preferred by the reviewer.

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Two scholars, embarrassingly, found a flaw in Smith's use of what they considered too much documentation, as a ploy to confuse the reader.

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Many scholars felt that the Secret Mark fragments were a pastiche from the four gospels, some even suggesting that Mark's style is so simple to imitate the fragment must be a useless pseudepigraphon.

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In reaction to Clement's claim to perform initiation rites, some scholars simply dogmatized that Alexandrian Christians only used words like "initiation" and "mystery" in a figurative sense, therefore the letter must not be authentic.

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Finally, some reactions truly border on the petty. Two scholars held that Morton Smith didn't really "discover" the Secret Gospel of Mark at all. Because the letter only contains two fragments of it, Smith is described as dishonest in his subtitle "The Discovery and Interpretation of the Secret Gospel of Mark."

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Worst of all is Danker, who complains that the Smith's first, non-technical book does not include the Greek text. "The designer of the jacket, as though fond of palimpsests, has obscured with the book title and the editor's name even the partial reproduction of Clement's letter," and that while there is another photo inside the book, "the publishers do not supply a magnifying glass with which to read it."

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All this just to tell us that, after he and a companion had painstakingly transcribed the Greek text, Smith's transcription and translation are "substantially correct."

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He deceptively omits that Smith's Harvard edition includes large, easily legible photographic plates of the original manuscript, alleging that Smith was "reluctant...to share the Greek text"

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he had discovered.

Only one reviewer, Fitzmeyer, saw it worthwhile to point out that Morton Smith was bald. Whatever importance we may attach to the thickness of a scholar's hair, it seems that detached scholarly criticism fails when certain tenets of faith--even "enlightened" liberal faith--are called into question.

Is the Ink Still Wet? The Question of a Forgery

Inevitably a document which is so controversial as Secret Mark will be accused of being a forgery. This is precisely what happened in 1975 when Quentin Quesnell published his lengthy paper "The Mar Saba Clementine: A Question of Evidence" in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly. In this article he brings to bear a host of objections to Smith's treatment of the document.

Foremost is the lack of the physical manuscript. Smith left the manuscript in the tower at Mar Saba in 1958 and had been working with his set of photographs ever since. Quesnell regards this as a neglect of Smith's scholarly duties.

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Perhaps those duties might be assumed to include the theft of the volume a la Sinaiticus or the Jung Codex. In fact, even Smith's publication of photographic plates of the Ms. is considered sub-standard by Quesnell. They "do not include the margins and edges of the pages," they "are only black and white," and are in Quesnell's eyes marred by "numerous discrepancies in shading, in wrinkles and dips in the paper."

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Quesnell calls into question all of Smith's efforts to date the manuscript to the eighteenth century. Although Smith consulted many paleographic experts, Quesnell feels this information to be useless as compared to a chemical analysis of the ink, and a "microscopic examination of the writing."

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Then he asks the "unavoidable next question"

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: was the letter of Clement a modern forgery? He remarks that Smith "tells a story on himself that could make clear the kind of motivation that might stir a serious scholar even apart from any long-concealed spirit of fun."

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Pointing out Smith's interest in how scholars tend to fit newly-discovered evidence into their previously-held sacrosanct interpretive paradigms,

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and how Smith requested scholars in his longer treatise to keep him abreast of their research,

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Quesnell asks if it might not be that a certain modern forger who shall not be named might have "found himself moved to concoct some 'evidence' in order to set up a controlled experiment?"

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Quesnell raises still more objections, and representative of them is his claim that the mass of documentation Smith brought to bear in Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark is really a ploy to distract the reader. "[. . .] It is hard to believe that this material is included as a serious contribution to scholarly investigation," Quesnell suggests.

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In fact, he insinuates that its function is really to "deepen the darkness."

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Quesnell did not feel that scholarly discussion could "reasonably continue" until all these issues--and more--were resolved.

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Smith's answer to the accusation of forgery was published in the next volume of the Catholic Biblical Quarterly. Humorously he advised his detractor that "one should not suppose a text spurious simply because one dislikes what it says."

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"Not at all," was Quesnell's reply. "I find it quite harmless."

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Quesnell's arguments were still echoed in 1983 by Per Beskow, who wrote that Smith "can only present some mediocre photographs, which do not even cover the entire margins of the manuscript."

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While the photographic plates in the Harvard volume do not extend to the margins due to the cropping of the publishers,

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Smith's photographs are printed elsewhere and do include the margins of the pages. Furthermore, they are quite in-focus and cannot be described as mediocre.

The Popular Response

The religious right was particularly displeased with the new Secret Gospel of Mark. Even without the magical interpretation of earliest Christianity Smith promulgated in his two books, the discovery of another apocryphal gospel only spells trouble for conservative theologians and apologists. What information about Secret Mark made it past the blockade into the evangelical press? There was Ronald J. Sider's quick review in Christianity Today:

Unfounded . . . wildly speculative ...pockmarked with irresponsible inferences . . . highly speculative . . .operates with the presupposition that Jesus could not have been the incarnate Son of God filled with the Holy Spirit . . . simply absurd! . . . unacceptable . . . highly speculative . . . numerous other fundamental weaknesses . . . highly speculative . . . irresponsible . . . will not fool the careful reader.

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Evangelical scholarship has since treated Secret Mark as it traditionally has any other non-canonical text: as a peculiar but ultimately unimportant document which would be spiritually dangerous to take seriously.

Secret Mark and Da Avabhasa's Initiation to Ecstasy

Perhaps the strangest chapter in Secret Mark's long history was its appropriation by the Free Daist Communion, a California-based Eastern religious group led by American-born guru Da Avabhasa (formerly known as Franklin Jones, Da Free John, and Da Kalki). In 1982, The Dawn Horse Press, the voice of this interesting sect, re-published Smith's Harper and Row volume, with a new foreword by Elaine Pagels and an added postscript by Smith himself.

In 1991 I made contact with this publisher in order to ascertain why they were interested in Secret Mark. I was answered by Saniel Bonder, Da Avabhasa's official biographer and a main spokesman for the Communion.

Heart-Master Da Avabhasa is Himself a great Spiritual "Transmitter" or "Baptizer" of the highest type. And this is the key to understanding both His interest in, and The Dawn Horse

Press's publication of, Smith's Secret Gospel. What Smith discovered, in the fragment of the letter by Clement of Alexandria, is--to Heart-Master Da--an apparent ancient confirmation that Jesus too was a Spirit-Baptizer who initiated disciples into the authentic Spiritual and Yogic process, by night and in circumstances of sacred privacy. This is the single reason why Heart-Master Da was so interested in the story. As it happened, Morton Smith's contract with a previous publisher had expired, and so he was happy to arrange for us to publish the book.

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Because of the general compatibility of Smith's interpretation of the historical Jesus and the practices of the Da Free John community, the group's leader was inclined to promulgate Smith's theory. It is difficult to judge the precise degree of ritual identity which exists between Master Da and Jesus the magician. Some identity, however, is explicit, as revealed in Bonder's official biography of Master Da:

Over the course of Heart-Master Da's Teaching years, His devotees explored all manner of emotional-sexual possibilities, including celibacy, promiscuity, heterosexuality, homosexuality, monogamy, polygamy, polyandry, and many different kinds of living arrangements between intimate partners and among groups of devotees in our various communities.

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The parallel between the Daist community during this time and the libertine Christian rituals described by Smith is made stronger by the spiritual leader's intimate involvement with this thorough exploration of the group's erogeny. "Heart-Master Da never withheld Himself from participation in the play of our experiments with us . . ."

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George Feuerstein has published an interview with an anonymous devotee of Master Da who describes a party during which the Master borrowed his wife in order to free him of egotistical jealousy.

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Like the Carpocratians of eighteen-hundred years ago, and the Corinthian Christians of a century earlier still, the devotees of the Daist Communion sought to come to terms with and conquer their sexual obstacles to ultimate liberation not by merely denying the natural urges, but by immersing themselves in them.

For many years Da Avabhasa himself was surrounded by an "innermost circle" of nine female devotees, which was dismantled in 1986 after the Community and the Master himself had been through trying experiences.

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In 1988 Da Avabhasa formally declared four of these original nine longtime female devotees his "Kanyas," the significance of which is described well by Saniel Bonder:

Kanyadana is an ancient traditional practice in India, wherein a chaste young woman...is given...to a Sat-Guru either in formal marriage, or as a consort, or simply as a serving intimate. Each kanya thus becomes devoted...in a manner that is unique among all His devotees. She

serves the Sat-Guru Personally at all times and, in that unique context, at all times is the recipient of His very Personal Instructions, Blessings, and Regard.

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As a kanyadana "kumari", a young woman is necessarily "pure"--that is, chaste and self-transcending in her practice, but also Spiritually Awakened by her Guru, whether she is celibate or Yogically sexually active.

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The formation of the Da Avabhasa Gurukala Kanyadana Kumari Order should be seen against the background of sexual experimentation and confrontation through which the Master's community had passed in the decade before, and in light of the sexuality-affirming stance of the Daist Communion in general. The Secret Gospel presented a picture of Jesus as an initiator into ecstasy and a libertine bearing more than a little resemblance to the radical and challenging lessons of Master Da Avabhasa, in place long before 1982 when The Dawn Horse Press re-issued the book.

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The Cultural Fringe and Secret Mark

Occasionally one still encounter brief references to Secret Mark in marginal or sensational literature. A simple but accurate account of its discovery was related in the 1982 British best-seller *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*. Written by three television documentary reporters, the book describes an actual French society called the Priory of Sion which seeks to restore the French monarchy to a particular family which, it seems, traces its blood-line back to Jesus himself. In the course of arguing that this could actually be the truth, the authors find it convenient to cite Secret Mark as an example of how the early church edited unwanted elements from its scriptures. "This missing fragment had not been lost. On the contrary, it had apparently been deliberately suppressed."

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A quick reference to Secret Mark is made in Elizabeth Clare Prophet's book on the supposed "lost years" of Jesus. She writes that discoveries such as Secret Mark "strongly suggest that early Christians possessed a larger, markedly more diverse body of writings and traditions on the life of Jesus that appears in what has been handed down to us in the New Testament."

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However, the remainder of the book speculates about whether Jesus might have studied yoga in India, and has little to do with Secret Mark or Jesus the magician.

FINAL DISCUSSION AND REFERENCES

And Finally - the Conclusion of the Discussion of the Discovery of a Lost Letter by Clement of

Alexandria (Egypt) Scandalized Biblical Scholarship - A Lost Gospel of Mark:

Where Are We Now? (Scholarly Interest from 1982 to the present)

For scholars the problem remains unsettled. While even the most acid of reviews often ended with a statement to wit that a real conclusion would require an in-depth treatment of Smith's books, none came. In 1982 Smith commented wryly on the rhetoric of the reviews which made work on the Secret Mark problem almost impossible in the 1970s:

For example, Achtemeier's review, of which the predededly factual statements are often grossly inaccurate. Though worthless as criticism, it cannot confidently be described as "useless." It probably pleased Fitzmyer, who was then editor of *The Journal of Biblical Literature*, and thus may have helped Achtemeier get the secretaryship of the Society of Biblical Literature. That both names rhyme with "liar" is a curious coincidence.

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Some important Catholic scholars, including Achtemeier, Fitzmyer, Quesnell, Skehan and Brown, have tended to ignore Secret Mark or dismiss it as worthless. C.S. Mann's *Anchor Bible* commentary on Mark, published in 1986, represents the whole controversy as finished, a matter of "mere curiosity."

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With the blessing of the Imprimatur behind him, John P. Meier advised in 1991 that Secret Mark, the Gospels of Thomas and Peter, the Egerton Gospel and all other non-canonical Jesus material were worthless and might simply be thrown "back into the sea."

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At the same time, there has been an increase in the number of scholars producing Secret Mark studies since 1982. That "Morton Smith seems quite alone in his view that the fragment is a piece of genuine Gospel material," as claimed in 1983 by Beskow is manifestly false.

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Smith's work in the early 70s was greeted with more-or-less positive reviews by a small number of important scholars including Helmut Koester, Cyril Richardson, George MacRae, and Hugh Trevor-Roper. Some scholars did not write reviews but openly expressed the notion that Smith's work was meritorious. When asked by the *New York Times* about Smith's interpretation of Jesus as a magician, Krister Stendhal tactfully replied, "I have much sympathy for that way of placing Jesus in the social setting of his time."

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While that sympathy does not remain particularly widespread, accepting Smith's magical Jesus has nothing to do with taking Secret Mark seriously. The two issues may be discussed separately: the argument for magical practices in early Christianity may certainly be made without reference to Secret Mark, and Secret Mark may be discussed as a text with no more magical implications than we find in canonical Mark.

In Thomas Talley's 1982 article on ancient liturgy, he describes his own attempt to physically examine the Secret Mark manuscript. As his is the last word on the physical artifact in question,

it is fortuitous to quote him at length:

Given the late date of the manuscript itself and the fact that Prof. Smith published photographs of it, it seemed rather beside the point that some scholars wished to dispute the very existence of a manuscript which no one but the editor had seen. My own attempts to see the manuscript in January of 19080 were frustrated, but as witnesses to its existence I can cite the Archimandrite Meliton of the Jerusalem Greek Patriarchate who, after the publication of Smith's work, found the volume at Mar Saba and removed it to the patriarchal library, and the patriarchal librarian, Father Kallistos, who told me that the manuscript (two folios) has been removed from the printed volume and is being repaired.

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Although one wishes this document were available for the examination of Western scholars, it is no longer reasonable to doubt the existence of the manuscript itself. That it represents an authentic tradition from Clement of Alexandria is disputed only by a handful of scholars and, as Talley also points out, the letter has itself been included in the standard edition of the Alexandrian father's writings since 1980.

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Taking on the pressing question of Secret Mark's textual relationship with the version of Mark in our New Testament, Helmut Koester has published two intriguing studies arguing that the development of Mark was an evolutionary process. First came the version of Mark known by Matthew and Luke, the proto-Mark or Urmarkus long known to scholars of the synoptic problem. After this original version of Mark was published, the expanded version used by the Alexandrian church in Christian mysteries was made (and from that, its gnosticized Carpocratian version). Soon afterward or simultaneously, a mostly expurgated version of Secret Mark was published widely and became canonical Mark.

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The original Urmarkus, lacking anything not found in Matthew or Luke, went the way of the sayings source and was not preserved.

Koester's view has made some inroads. Hans-Martin Schenke adopts it with the modification that Carpocratian Mark predates the Secret Mark of the Alexandrian Church.

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John Dominic Crossan developed a theory like Koester's in his 1985 *Four Other Gospels*. Secret Mark has been included in the texts being translated as part of the Scholars Version project, and is described as an early gospel fragment in material that the Jesus Seminar has been making available to popular audiences. None of these treatments is significantly affected by one's assessment of the magical Jesus suggested by Smith.

Still, Jesus as magician is not a dead issue. John Dominic Crossan's very intriguing book on *The Historical Jesus* has an extended discussion of the topic. He argues that Jesus may indeed be understood as a magician. He rejects an artificial dichotomy between magic and religion, saying, "The prescriptive distinction that states that we practice religion but they practice magic should be seen for what it is, a political validation of the approved and the official against the unapproved and unofficial."

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Conclusion: Where No Secret Gospel Has Gone Before Secret Mark's plight constitutes a warning to all scholars as to the dangers of allowing sentiments of faith to cloud or prevent critical examination of evidence. When seen in light of the massive literature which has been produced by the other major manuscript finds of our century, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Nag Hammadi codices, the comparative dearth of good studies on this piece in particular cannot be explained in any other way than a stubborn refusal to deal with information which might challenge deeply-held personal convictions. It is good to keep in mind an unofficial directive of the Jesus Seminar: "Beware of finding a Jesus entirely congenial to you."

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"It is my opinion," writes Hans Dieter Betz, "that Smith's book and the texts he discovered should be carefully and seriously studied. Criticizing Smith is not enough."

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Certainly it is reasonable to concur. After twenty years of confusion, it must be time to set aside emotionalism and approach both this fragment and Morton Smith's assessment of the role of magic in early Christianity with objective and critical eyes. However that question is ultimately to be resolved, Secret Mark provides yet another fascinating window into the remarkable ritual diversity we may identify in the first phases of the development of Christianity.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Parker, "An Early Christian Cover-up?", 5.
- 2 Smith, "Monasteries and their Manuscripts."
- 3 Smith, *The Secret Gospel*, 12.
- 4 Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel according to Mark*, 1.
- 5 Smith, *The Secret Gospel*, 13-14.
- 6 *ibid.*, 24.
- 7 *ibid.*, 25.
- 8 Knox, "A New Gospel Ascribed to Mark."
- 9 Smith, "Monasteries and their Manuscripts."
- 10 Smith, "Hellenika Cheirographa en tei Monei tou Hagiou Sabba."
- 11 Smith, *The Secret Gospel*, 76.
- 12 Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 3-4.
- 13 Smith, *The Secret Gospel*, 94.
- 14 *ibid.*, 113n1.
- 15 *ibid.*, 113-114.
- 16 Shenker, "A Scholar Infers Jesus Practiced Magic."
- 17 Skehan, review of Smith's work in *Catholic Historical Review*, 452.
- 18 Fitzmyer, "How to Exploit a Secret Gospel," 572.
- 19 Fitzmyer, "Mark's 'Secret Gospel?'," 65.
- 20 Achtemeier, review of Smith in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 626.
- 21 *ibid.*
- 22 Beardslee, review of Smith in *Interpretation*, 234.
- 23 Parker, "An Early Christian Cover-Up?", 5.
- 24 Conzelmann, "Literaturbericht zu den Synoptischen Evangelien (Fortsetzung).", 321.

(Translation from Schenke, "The Mystery of the Gospel of Mark," 70-71.)
25 *ibid.*, 23. (Translation from Schenke, "The Mystery of the Gospel of Mark," 70-71.)
26 Brown, "The Relation of 'The Secret Gospel of Mark' to the Fourth Gospel," 466n1.
27 Danker, review of Smith in *Dialog*, 316.
28 Merkel, "Auf den Spuren des Urmarkus?", 123. (Translation from Schenke, "The Mystery of the Gospel of Mark," 69.)
29 Musurillo, "Morton Smith's Secret Gospel," 328.
30 Brown, "The Relation of 'The Secret Gospel of Mark' to the Fourth Gospel," 466n1.
31 Including Fitzmeyer, "How to Exploit a Secret Gospel"; Parker, "An Early Christian Cover-Up?"; Skehan, review of Smith in *Catholic Historical Review* 60(1974); Gibbs, review of Smith in *Theology Today* 30 (1974); Grant, "Morton Smith's Two Books"; Merkel, "Auf den Spuren des Urmarkus?"; Kummel, "Ein Jahrzehnt Jesusforschung"; and Beskow, *Strange Tales about Jesus*. Anitra Kolenkow's comments on this bias are salient: "We know that the gospel of John long has been known as possibly containing both gnostic and homosexual motifs. John may have been written at approximately the same time as Mark. What difference does it make to us if Jesus is not separated from a homosexual situation?" (Quoted from Kolenkow's response to Reginald Fuller, *Longer Mark*, 33.)
32 Examples are Achtemeier, review of Smith in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93(1974); MacRae, "Yet Another Jesus"; Gibbs, review of Smith in *Theology Today* 30(1974); and Fuller, *Longer Mark: Forgery, Interpolation, or Old Tradition?*
33 See the statements to this effect in Quesnell, "The Mar Saba Clementine," and Hobbs (response in Fuller, *Longer Mark: Forgery, Interpolation, or Old Tradition?*).
34 Such scholars included Pierson Parker, Edward Hobbs and Per Beskow.
35 See Bruce, *The 'Secret' Gospel of Mark*; Musurillo, "Morton Smith's Secret Gospel"; and Kummel, "Ein Jahrzehnt Jesusforschung."
36 Fitzmyer, "How to Exploit a Secret Gospel"; Gibbs, review of Smith in *Theology Today* 30(1974).
37 Danker, review of Smith in *Dialog*, 316.
38 *ibid.*
39 *ibid.*
40 Quesnell, "The Mar Saba Clementine," 49.
41 *ibid.*, 50.
42 *ibid.*, 52.
43 *ibid.*, 53.
44 *ibid.*, 57.
45 Smith, *The Secret Gospel*, 25.
46 Smith, *Clement of Alexandria*, ix.
47 Quesnell, "The Mar Saba Clementine," 58.
48 *ibid.*, 61.
49 *ibid.*, 60n30.
50 *ibid.*, 48.
51 Smith, "On the Authenticity of the Mar Saba Letter of Clement," 196.
52 Quesnell, "A Reply to Morton Smith," 201.
53 Beskow, *Strange Tales about Jesus*, 101.
54 Smith, "On the Authenticity of the Mar Saba Letter of Clement," 196.
55 Sider, "Unfounded 'Secret'," 160.
56 Private correspondence with Sanieel Bonder.
57 Bonder, *The Divine Emergence of the World-Teacher*, 234.
58 *ibid.*, 235.
59 Feuerstein, *Holy Madness*, 90-92.
60 *ibid.*, 94.
61 Bonder, *The Divine Emergence of the World-Teacher*, 287.

62 *ibid.*, 288.

63 It is necessary to stipulate that nothing in the above discussion of the Free Daist Communion should be read as derogatory. The purpose is simple description. Despite the controversy which has sometimes surrounded this movement, the author does not feel that its practices are in any way fraudulent or abusive. Scholars should consider the possibility that examination of modern new religious movements such as the Da Avabhasa sect might be extraordinarily helpful in our understanding of the community dynamics of early libertine Christians such as the Carpocratians.

64 Baigent et al, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, 290.

65 Prophet, *The Lost Years of Jesus*, 9. Most interestingly, in her notes Prophet quotes a 1984 telephone interview with scholar Birger A. Pearson, in which he says that "many scholars, maybe even most, would now accept the authenticity of the Clement fragment, including what it said about the Secret Gospel of Mark." (434n16)

66 Smith, *The Secret Gospel* (1982 Dawn Horse edition), 150n7.

67 Mann, *Mark* (The Anchor Bible), 423.

68 Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 140.

69 Beskow, *Strange Tales about Jesus*, 99. One wonders what a "genuine piece of gospel material" might be. Are gospel additions such as the second ending of Mark (16.9-20) and the famous story of the adulterous woman (John 8.53-9.11) "genuine gospel material," even if we know they were not originally part of the gospels in which they are found?

70 Shenker, "Jesus: New Ideas about his Powers."

71 Talley, "Liturgical Time in the Ancient Church," 45.

72 *ibid.*

73 See Koester, "History and Development of Mark's Gospel," and *Ancient Christian Gospels*.

74 Schenke, "The Mystery of the Gospel of Mark," 76.

75 Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, 310.

76 Funk et al., *The Five Gospels*, 5.

77 Fuller, *Longer Mark: Forgery, Interpolation, or Old Tradition?*, 18.

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Author's note: The author would like to offer thanks to Saniel Bonder of the Mountain of Attention Sanctuary for his kind assistance in providing research materials and his willingness to share with me information pertaining to The Dawn Horse Press and The Secret Gospel. Further thanks are due to Dr. Jon Daniels of The Defiance College for his helpful insights into the subject matter of this study.

BIBLE COMPARED TO QURAN

Based on transcripts of various lectures given by Yusuf Estes & Dr. Gary Miller

Introduction

It should be stated at the outset of this work, that Muslims do not seek to put down or desecrate the Holy Bible. It is a critical matter of faith for Muslims to believe in the original revelations that came down to Moses, David, Solomon and Jesus, just as it is important for Muslims to believe in the revelation of the Quran that came to Muhammad (peace be upon him). The key word here however, is "original." As we all know the origin of the Bible is clouded with centuries of copying, translating and passing down information, now long lost with only copies of manuscripts remaining to remind us of what once was the Bible.

Additionally, it should be noted that Muslims do not seek to destroy the Christians or Jews belief in the Word of God, rather it is an obligation for Muslims to call to what is right and to halt that which is evil. Certainly, causing the "People of the Book" (as the Quran refers to Christians and Jews) to fall into disbelief and leave off any faith in God at all, is the very opposite of the

direction Muslims should take in presenting any comparison between Islam and what has come down in the past from the Almighty God. We only seek to bring about more light to the people seeking guidance and pray for all of us to be successful with our Lord in this life and in the Next life and we ask His Guidance and Support in doing so, ameen.

The Bible

Old Testament

There exists today a number of different versions in the ancient Hebrew language of the Jewish Book called the Torah [Law] and this is usually referred to in Christianity as The Old Testament. Naturally, there have been many different translations to a great number of languages over the centuries and one could not expect them to be identical in text or meaning. What we have in English today still remains somewhat similar to large amounts of these older documents.

New Testament

There are also different versions of the Gospel or what is commonly called The New Testament in the Koine Greek language and Latin and these also have many translations to even other languages. Even amongst the English translations there are great differences. To mention two very clear differences for example; the Catholic Bible [c. 325 A.D] contains 73 books in total, while the Protestant Bible contains only 66 books, and although the newer (Protestant version) was taken from the Catholic Bible even then these books do not match completely with each other. There is no common denominator for any of the many different versions of the Bible.

Dead Sea Scrolls

There have been a number of scrolls and parchments found in places surrounding what we call the "Holy Land" over the centuries, not the least of which are those often referred to as the "Dead Sea Scrolls" or as they are known to the scholars "Wadi Qumran Scrolls." These were discovered in the last century around 1930 and have been proven to be very ancient and could well be older than any other extant manuscripts. Much of what has been translated from these scrolls is similar to some of the oldest manuscripts, but there are still very important differences worthy of note. We would like to recommend some important reading on this topic at the end of this paper.

The Quran

Quran Means "Recitation"

The word "**Quran**" means "that which is recited; or that which is dictated in memory form." As such, it is not a book, nor is it something that reaches us only in written form. The documentation in writing about the Quran has been preserved in museums throughout the world, including the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul, Turkey, the museum in Tashkent, Uzbekistan and also in England. Keep in mind also, the Quran is only considered "Quran" while it is in the recitation form, not in the written or the book form. The word for what is written and held in the hand to be read by the

eye is called "mus-haf" (meaning script or that which is written down).

Only One Version - Arabic

There are no different versions of the Quran in the Arabic language, only different translations and of course, none of these would be considered to hold the value and authenticity of the original Arabic Recitation. The Quran is divided up into 30 equal parts, called "Juz" (parts) in the Arabic language. These are learned by Muslims from their very early beginnings as children.

Memorized by Millions - Entirely

The important thing to keep in mind about the Quran is the memorization and transmission of the actual "**Recitation**" just as it came to Muhammad (peace be upon him) from the Angel Gabriel and was learned and memorized by his companions and they in turn, passed it down to their followers and continued in this way until we see today, over 10,000,000 (ten million) Muslims who have committed the entire Quran to memory. This is not a small feat. After all, how many other works of literary value have been memorized and passed down through so many generations, in the original language, without a single change in even one sentence?

Each Muslim Has "Quran" Memorized

All Muslims have memorized a portion of the Quran in the Arabic language, as this is an important part of their daily prayers. Many Muslims have memorized large portions of the Quran from one tenth to one half to all of the entire Quran, and all in the original Arabic language. It should be noted, there are over one and a half billion (1,500,000,000) Muslims worldwide and only about 10% are Arab, all the rest are learning the Quran in Arabic as a second language.

God Speaks in First Person to Mankind in Quran

The Quran contains clear statements from Almighty God (Allah) and it is Him speaking to all of us in the first person. He tells of us our own creation, the creation of all that is the universe and what has happened to those before us and what is to become of us if we do not take heed of the warnings clearly spelled out in His Revelation. He speaks also to Muhammad (peace be upon him) to show that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is not making this up himself and even chastises Muhammad (peace be upon him) for making human assumptions rather than waiting for revelation in matters (i.e.; surah At-Tahrim and surah Abasa).

Quran Mentions Itself

The Quran refers to itself as "The Quran" (The Recitation) and mentions that it is to all mankind and jinn (another creation of Allah, similar to humans in that they could make choices as to whether or not they would obey God's Commandments, and they existed before humans).

Quran Describes God's Nature Exactly

The Quran is clear on who God is and who He is not. There is no room left for doubt after

reading the Quran in the Arabic language: God is One. He is the only Creator, Sustainer and Owner of the Universe. He has no partners. He has no relatives; wives, children or offspring. He is not like His creation and He does not need it for His existence, while all the time the creation is totally dependent on Him. His attributes are clearly spelled out as the epitome of each and every one. He is for instance, the All-Knowing; the All-Hearing; the All-Seeing; the All-Forgiving; the All-Loving; the All-Merciful; the Only One God. There is never a contradiction to this found anywhere in the Quran.

Quran Challenges Readers

The Quran makes the clear challenge, that if you are in doubt about it - then bring a book like it. Also, to bring ten chapters like it and then finally, to bring one single chapter like it. 1,400 years - and no one has been able to duplicate its beauty, recitation, miracles and ease of memorization. Another challenge for the unbelievers to consider;

✦

"If this (Quran) were from other than Allah, you would find within it many contradictions."

And yet, another challenge offered by Allah in the Quran is for the unbelievers to look around for evidences. Allah says He will show them His signs within themselves and on the farthest horizons.

Scientific Miracles in Quran

The scientific miracles of the Quran could not have been understood at that time, yet today we take for granted the many things included in the revelation of the Quran. Some include mentioning: The formation of embryo in the womb of the mother (surah 98); deep seas partitions; waters that do not mix; clouds and how they make rain and how lightning is caused by ice crystals; formation of the earth's mountains deep underground; orbits of planets and stars and moons - and even the mention of space travel (surah 55:33).

[Watch videos of world's top scientists commenting on the "Miracle of Science in Quran"]

ScienceIslam.com/scientists_quran.php

COMPARISON OF BIBLE AND QURAN

[Dr. Gary Miller- with Commentary by Yusuf Estes]

Bible is Collection of Writings

Quran is Recitation From God to Muhammad (peace be upon him)

Whereas, The Bible is a collection of writings by many different authors, the **Quran** is a dictation (or recitation). The speaker in the **Quran** - in the first person - is God Almighty (Allah) talking directly to man. In the **Bible** you have many men writing about God and you have in some places the word of God speaking to men and still in other places you have some men

simply writing about history or personal exchanges of information to one another (ex: Epistle of John 3). The Bible in the English King James Version consists of 66 small books. About 18 of them begin by saying: This is the revelation God gave to so and so... The rest make no claim as to their origin. You have for example the beginning of the book of Jonah which begins by saying: The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Elmitaeh saying... quote and then it continues for two or three pages.

Compare this to the beginning of the Book of "Luke" begins by saying: "In as much as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, (2) Just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, (3) It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, (4) That you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

We see the author of the Book of "Luke" saying essentially, "Many people have written about things, it seems fitting for me to do so too." "Luke" says it seems to him that as long as others are taking in hand to write something about it, even though they were eye witnesses to the whole thing, he feels that even though he was not, he still has "perfect understanding of all things from the very first."

Therefore this is only a letter from one person to another, neither of whom knew Jesus (peace be upon him) nor were eyewitnesses to any of what had taken place.

[Y. Estes]

If you compare that to one of the four accounts of the life of Jesus, Luke begins by saying: "many people have written about this man, it seems fitting for me to do so too". That is all... no claim of saying "these words were given to me by God here they are for you it is a revelation", there is no mention of this.

"Bible" is NOT in the Bible

The Bible does not contain self-reference, that is, the word 'Bible' is not in the Bible. Nowhere does the Bible talk about itself. Some scriptures are sometimes pointed to in the Bible, say: Here where it talks about itself, but we have to look closely. 2nd Timothy 3:16 is the favorite which reads: "All scripture is inspired of God" and there are those who would say, here is where the Bible it talks about itself, it says it is inspired of God, all of it. But if you read the whole sentence, you read that this was a letter wrote by Paul to Timothy and the entire sentence says to Timothy: "Since you were a young man you have studied the holy scriptures, all scriptures inspired by God" and so on... When Timothy was a young man the New Testament did not exist, the only thing that stems he was talking about are scriptures – which are only a portion of the Bible - from before that time. It could not have meant the whole Bible.

Bible Curses Church Fathers Who REMOVED Book of Revelations

There is at the end of the Bible a verse which says:

"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book (Revelations): if anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book:

And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, god shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

[Y. Estes]

“Let anyone who takes away from this book or adds to this book be cursed”. This too is sometimes pointed to me saying: Here is where it sums itself as a whole. But look again and you will see that when it says: Let no one change this book, it is talking about that last book, #66 (*or is it #73 in the Catholic Bible?*), the Book of Revelation. It has too, because any reference will tell you that the Book of Revelation was written before certain other parts of the Bible were written. It happens today to be stacked at the end, but there are other parts that came after, so it can not be referring to the entire book.

(Incidentally, according to different manuscripts much older than the King James Version, there are different words at the end of the Book of Revelation, so how would we resolve that matter? - Y.E.)

Note: The Book of Revelation was taken out of the Bible several times and then replaced and then taken out and replaced according to various Church Councils throughout Church history. Guess the Church Fathers didn't read the curse at the end of the book?

Whose Word Is It?

It is an extreme position held only by some Christian groups that the Bible – in its entirety - cover to cover is the revealed word of God in every word, but they do a clever thing when they mention this, or make this claim. They will say that the Bible in its entirety is the word of God; inerrant (no mistakes) in the original writings.

So if you go to the Bible and point out some mistakes that are in it you are going to be told: Those mistakes were not there in the original manuscript, they have crept in so that we see them there today.

They are going on problem in that position. There is a verse in the Bible Isaiah 40:8 which in fact is so well known that some Bibles printed it on the inside front cover as an introduction and it says : “ The grass weathers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever”. Here is a claim in the Bible that the word of God will stand forever, it will not be corrupted, it won't be lost. So if today you find a mistake in the Bible you have two choices. Either that promise was false that when God said my word wont fade away, he was mistaken, or the portion which has the mistake in it was not a part of the word of God in the first place, because the promise was that it would be safeguarded, it would not be corrupted.

Are There Mistakes?

I have suggested many times that there are mistakes in the Bible and the accusation comes back very quickly: Show me one. Well there are hundreds. If you want to be specific I can mention few. You have for example at 2nd Samuel 10:18 a description of a war fought by David saying that he killed 7000 men and that he also killed 40000 men on horsebacks. In 1st Chronicles 19 it mentions the same episode saying that he killed 70000 men and the 40000 men were not on horsebacks, they were on foot. The point is what is the difference between the pedestrian and not is very fundamental.

How Did Judas Die?

Matthew 27:5 says that Judas Iscariot when he died he hung himself. Acts 1 says that, no he jumped off a cliff head first. If you study Logic very soon you will come in your course to what they call an “undecidable propositions” or “meaningless sentences” or statements that can not be decided because there is no contextual false. One of the classic examples sited is something called the Effeminate paradox. This man was Cretan and he said “Cretans always lie”, now was that statement true or false? If he was a Cretan and he says that they always lie is he lying? If he is not lying then he is telling the truth then the Cretans don’t always lie ! You see it can not be true and it can not be false, the statement turns back on itself. It is like saying “What I am telling you right now is a lie” would you believe that or not? You see the statement has no true content. It can not be true and it can not be false. If it is true it is always false. If it is false it is also true.

Well in the Bible at Titus 1:12 the writer is Paul and he is talking about the Cretans. He says that one of their own men – a prophet - said “Cretans always lie” and he says that what this man says is true. It is a small mistake, but the point is that it is a human mistake, you don’t find that if you carefully examine the true content of that statement. It can not be a true statement.

Who is the Author?

Now I come back to the Quran, and as I mentioned the speaker in the Quran is - in the first person - is God. The book claims throughout that it is the word of God. It names itself 70 times as the Quran. It talks about its own contents. It has self-reference. The Quran states in the first Surah after Fatiha that “This is the book, there is no doubt in it, it is a guidance for those who are conscious of God” and so on and so on... It begins that way and continues that way stressing that. And there is one very amazing statement in the Quran when you come to the fourth Surah 82nd Ayah which says to those who say Quran is something else than the word of God. It challenges them saying: “Have they not considered the Quran, if it came from someone other than God they will find in it many mistakes”. Some of you are students, would you dare to hand in a paper after you completed a research work or something at the bottom you put down there “You won't find mistakes in this”. Would you dare to challenge your professor that way? Well the Quran does that. It is telling: If you really think you know where this came from then starts looking for mistakes because you won't find any. Another interesting thing the Quran does is that it quotes all its critics. There has never - in hundreds of years - ever been some suggestion as to where that book came from but that the Quran does not already mention that objection and reply to it. Many times you will find the Ayah saying something like: Do they say such and such and so, say to them such and such and so. In every case there is a reply. More than that the Quran claims that the evidence of its origin is in itself, and that if you look at this book you will be convinced.

Difference of Authority

So the difference in Christianity and Islam comes down to a difference of authority and appeal to authority. The Christian wants to appeal to the Bible and the Muslim wants to appeal to the Quran. You can not stop by saying: This is true because me book say it is, and somebody else would say something else is true because my book says differently, you can not stop at that point, and the Quran does not. The Christians may point to some words that it is recorded Jesus said and say this proves my point. But the Muslim does not simply open his book and say: No, no the Quran says this, because the Quran does not simply deny something the Bible says and say something else instead. The Quran takes the form of a rebuttal, it is a guidance as the opening says (Huda lil mutakeen). So that for every suggestion that the Christian may say: My

Bible say such and such, the Quran will not simply say: No that is not true, it will say: Do they say such and such then ask them such and such. You have for example the Ayah that compares Jesus and Adam. There are those who may say that Jesus must have been God (Son of God) because he had no father. He had a woman who was his mother, but there was no human father. It was God that gave him life, so he must have been God's son. The Quran reminds the Christian in one short sentence to remember Adam - who was his father ? - and in fact, who was his mother ? He did not have a father either and in fact he did not have a mother, but what does that make him? So that the likeness of Adam is the likeness of Jesus, they were nothing and then they became something; that they worship God.

Quran Invites - Not Demands

So that the Quran does not demand belief - the Quran invites belief, and here is the fundamental difference. It is not simply delivered as: Here is what you are to believe, but throughout the Quran the statements are always: Have you O man thought of such and such, have you considered so and so. It is always an invitation for you to look at the evidence; now what do you believe?

Special Pleading of the Bible

The citation of the Bible very often takes the form of what is called in Argumentation: Special Pleading. Special Pleading is when implications are not consistent. When you take something and you say: Well that must mean this, but you don't use the same argument to apply it to something else. To give an example, I have seen it in publications many times, stating that Jesus must have been God because he worked miracles. In other hand we know very well that there is no miracle ever worked by Jesus that is not also recorded in the Old Testament as worked by one of the prophets. You had amongst others, Elijah, who is reported to have cured the leper, raise the dead boy to life and to have multiplied bread for the people to eat - three of the most favorite miracles cited by Jesus. If the miracles worked by Jesus proved he was God, why don't they prove Elijah was God ? This is Special Pleading, if you see what I mean. The implications are not consistent. If this implies that then in that case it must also imply the same thing. We have those who would say Jesus was God because he was taken up in the heaven. But the Bible also says a certain Elnah did not die he was taken up into the heaven by God. Whether it is true or not, who knows, but the point is if Jesus being taken up proves he is God, why does not it prove Elnah was God? The same thing happened to him.

Clear Parts & Difficult Parts of Bible

I wrote to a man one time, who wrote a book about Christianity and I had some of the objections I mentioned to you now. And his reply to me was that I am making matters difficult to myself, that there are portions in the Bible that are crystal clear and that there are portions that are difficult, and that my problem was that I am looking at the difficult part instead of the clear parts. The problem is that this is an exercise in self deception - why are some parts clear and some parts difficult? It is because somebody decided what this clearly means, now that makes this very difficult. To give you an example, John Chapter 14 a certain man said to Jesus: Show us God, and Jesus said: If you have seen me you have seen God. Now without reading on the Christian will say: See Jesus claimed to be God, he said if you have seen me you have seen God. If that is crystal clear then you have a difficult portion when you go back just a few pages to Chapter 5 when another man came to Jesus and said show us God and he said you have never seen God you have never heard his voice. Now what did he mean there if on the other occasion he meant that he was God? Obviously you have made matters difficult by deciding what the first one meant. If you read on in Chapter 14 you will see what he went on to say. He was saying the

closest you are going to seeing God are the works you see me doing.

Bible Does Not Claim Jesus Claimed to Be Son of God

It is a fact that the words “son of God” are not found on the lips of Jesus anywhere in the first three Gospel accounts, he was always calling himself the Son of Man. And it is a curious form of reasoning that I have seen so often that it is established from Bible that he claimed to be God because - look how the Jews reacted. They will say for example he said such and such and the Jews said he is blaspheming, he claimed to be God and they tried to stone him. So they argue that he must have been claiming to be God because look ! - the Jews tried to kill him. They said that’s what he was claiming. But the interesting thing is that all the evidence is then built on the fact that a person is saying: I believed that Jesus was the son of God because the Jews who killed him said that’s what he used to say ! His enemies used to say that, so he must have said it, this is what it amounts to. In other hand we have the words of Jesus saying he would keep the law, the law of Moses and we have the statement in the Bible, why did the Jews kill him ? Because he broke the law of Moses. Obviously the Jews misunderstood him, if he promised he would keep the law, but they killed him because he broke the law, they must have misunderstood him, or lied about him.

Writers of Bible - Out of Context

When I talk about the Bible and quote various verses here and there I am often accused of putting things out of context, to say you have lifted something out of what it was talking about and given it a meaning. I don’t want to respond to the accusation as such, but it doesn’t seem to occur to many people that perhaps those who wrote portions of the Bible in the first place were guilty of the same thing. Maybe they – some of those writers - believed a certain thing and in order to prove it quoted from their scriptures – the Old Testament, the Hebrew writings - quoted out of context to prove their point. There are examples of that kind of thing. In Matthew 2 it said that a king wanted to kill the young child Jesus so he with his family went to Egypt, and they stayed there until that king died, and then they came back.

When the writer of Matthew, whoever he was, because the name Matthew won't be found in the book of Matthew; when he described this event saying that he came back out of Egypt, he said: “This was to fulfill a prophecy which is written” and then he quotes Hosea Chapter 11 “Out of Egypt I called my Son”. So he said because Jesus went to Egypt and then came back out of Egypt and we have this passage in the Hebrew scriptures “out of Egypt I called my son” Jesus must have been the son of God. If you look and see what he was quoting, Hosea 11:1 he quotes the second half of a complete sentence, the complete sentence reads: “When Israel was young I loved him and out of Egypt I called my son”. Israel the nation was considered as the son of God. Moses was told to go to Pharaoh and say to him: If you touch that nation of people, you touch my son; warning him, warning Pharaoh: don’t touch that nation, calling the nation “the son of God”. So that this is the only thing talked about in Hosea 11:1. “Out of Egypt I called my son” can only refer to the nation of Israel. I mentioned this point some months ago here in another talk, to which a young lady with us objected that Israel is a symbolic name for Jesus. You will have a hard time finding that anywhere in the Bible because it isn’t there. You can take an index of the Bible and lookup the word “Israel” everywhere the word occurs and you will find no where in any place that you can connect the word Israel with Jesus. But never mind - suppose it is true, read on, the second verse says “and after that he kept on worshipping Bal”, because this is what the Israelites were guilty of, very often they kept falling back into Idol worshipping. So if that “Israel” really meant Jesus and it means that Jesus is the son of God that came out of Egypt they must also mean that Jesus from time to time used to bow down to that idol Bal. You have to be consistent, and follow through on what it says. So the point is whoever wrote Matthew and

Chapter 2 was trying to prove a point by quoting something out of context, and he undid himself, because if you follow through on it, it can not be so.

Quran Has Internal Evidences

Now I can come back to the claim the Quran makes that it has internal evidence of its origin. There are many ways that you can look at this. As one example, if I single out somebody here and say: You know, I know your father - he is going to doubt that, he has never seen me with his father. He would say, how does he look like, is he tall short does he wear glasses? And so on, and if I give him the right answers pretty soon he will get convinced, "Oh yes, you did meet him". If you apply the same kind of thinking when you look at the Quran, here is a book that says it came from the one who was there when the universe began. So you should be asking that one: So tell me something that proves it. Tell me something that shows me you must have been there when the universe was beginning. You will find in two different Ayahs the statement that all the creation began from a single point, and from this point it is expanding. In 1978 they gave the Noble prize to two people who proved that that's the case. It is the big bang origin of the universe. It was determined by the large radio receivers that they have for the telephone companies which were sensitive enough to pick up the transmissions from satellites and it kept finding background noise that they could not account for. Until the only explanation came to be, it is the left over energy from that original explosion which fits in exactly as would be predicted by the mathematical calculation of what would be this thing if the universe began from a single point and exploded outwards. So they confirmed that, but in 1978. Centuries before that here is the Quran saying the heavens and the earth in the beginning they were one piece and split and says in another Ayah : *"of the heavens we are expanding it"*.

Quran Has Exact Accuracy

Let me tell you about a personal investigation, it occurred to me that there are a number of things you can find in the Quran that give evidence to its origin – internal evidence. If the Quran is dictated from a perfect individual; it originates with God, then there should not be any wasted space, it should be very meaningful. There should be nothing that we don't need that you can cut off, and it should not be missing anything. And so that everything in there should really be there for a specific purpose. And I got to thinking about the Ayah which I mentioned before, it says, the likeness of Jesus is the likeness of Adam. It is an equation, it uses the Arabic word (mithel), it says Jesus, Adam, equal. You go to the index of the Quran, you look up the name ISA it is in the Quran 25 times, you lookup the name Adam it is there 25 times. They are equal, through scattered references but 25 of each. Follow that through and you will find that in the Quran there are 8 places where an Ayah says something is like something else, using this (Mithel), you will find in every case and take both sides of it whatever that word is look it up in the index and it will be let's say 110 times and lookup the other word and it will be said to be equal to the same 110. That is quite a project of co-ordination if you try to write a book that way yourself. So that everywhere you happened to mention that such and such is like such and such that then you check your index, filing system, or your IBM punch cards or whatever, to make sure that in this whole book you mentioned them both the same number of times. But that's what you will find in the Quran.

Quran Provides Reason

What I am talking about is built on a thing that is called in Logic: Use and Mention of a Word. When you use a word, you are using its meaning. When you mention a word, you are talking about the symbol without the meaning. For example, if I say Toronto is a big city - I used the word Toronto as I meant this place Toronto is a big city. But if I say to you Toronto has 7 letters,

I am not talking about this place Toronto, I am talking about this word - Toronto. So, the revelation is above reasoning, but it is not above reason. That is to say we are more apt not to find in the Quran something that is unreasonable, but we may find something that we would have never figured out for ourselves.

Unique Word Refers to Itself in Quran

The author of this sentence said if this book came from someone besides God then you will find in it many Ikhtalafan (inconsistencies). The word Ikhtilaf is found many times in the Quran. But the word Ikhtalafan is only found once in the Quran. So there are not many Ikhtilafan in the Quran, there is only one - where the sentence is mentioned. So you see how things are put together perfectly. It has been suggested to mankind: Find a mistake. Man could not get hold of a mistake, and he is very clever, because this sentence could also mean: Find many Ikhtilafan and so he quickly goes to the index to see if he can find many of them and there is only one... Sorry clever person.

[end of Dr. Gary Miller and Yusuf Estes]

Bible And Quran - Originally Both From Allah

Conclusion: Both the Bible and the Quran have come to us by way of Almighty God, then through His angel Gabriel and then to the prophets (peace be upon them). However, when the next step comes into play (that of the human beings faithfully transmitting it on to others and future generations) we find out that Allah has only preserved His Last and Final Revelation for all times. And He certainly did not need the humans to do that.

Respect For Holy Books

Muslims should respect the Bible because it does still contain some of the original teachings of Allah. But there is no need to go to Bible classes or purchase one to read to try to learn about what our purpose is here in this life. The Quran makes it clear that Allah has indeed, perfected our "way of life" for us and has conferred on us His favor and has chosen for us to submit to Him in Islam.

We would like to suggest to the non-Muslims to consider obtaining a Quran (order one free through our site if you like) and then investigate for themselves what the Quran is really all about and what it might mean to them in their lives.

[Free Quran available at: www.AllahsQuran.com]

Final comment from Yusuf Estes:

I would like to state that after years of studying the Bible and then learning the Arabic language to read the Quran as it was originally recited to Muhammad (peace be upon him) by the angel Gabriel, I have come to an amazing conclusion. It seems to me that the Bible and the Quran are most definitely from the exact same source and they compliment each other very nicely. In fact, it appears that the Bible does not contradict the Quran, except in the very same places where the Bible contradicts itself.

WHO WROTE THE BIBLE

Friedman, Richard Elliott
Summit Books (Simon & Schuster, Inc.) 1987
[We begin our quote from page 232-233]

Artistry Upon Artistry

The redactor[1], whom I identify as Ezra, has been the least appreciated of the contributors to the Five Books of Moses. Usually, more credit is given to the authors of the stories and the laws. That may be an error.

The redactor was as much an artist, in his own way, as the authors of J, E, P and, D were in theirs. His contribution was certainly as significant as theirs.

His task was not merely difficult, it was creative. It called for wisdom and literary sensitivity at each step, as well as a skill that is no less an art than storytelling.

In the end, he was the one who created the work that we have read all these years. He assembled the final form of the stories and laws that, in thousands of ways, have influenced millions.

Is that his influence? Or is it the influence of the authors of the sources? Or would it be better to speak of a literary partnership of all these contributors, a partnership that most of them never even knew would take place? How many ironies are contained in this partnership that was spread over centuries? How many new developments and ideas resulted from the combination of all their contributions?

In short, the question for the last chapter of this book is: is the Bible more than the sum of its parts?

[end of quote]

Pentateuch [First five books appearing in the Old Testament]:

Moses is the major figure through most of these books, and early Jewish and Christian tradition held that Moses himself wrote them, though nowhere in the Five Books of Moses themselves does the text say that he was the author.

[Deut. 31:9,24-26 describes Moses as writing a scroll of the torah - but no claim that the scroll included all five books. Only later did torah come to mean the Pentateuch]

But the tradition that one person, Moses, alone wrote these books presented problems. People observed contradictions in the text. It would report events in a particular order, and later it would say that those same events happened in a different order. It would say that there were two of something, and elsewhere it would say that there was fourteen of that same thing. It would say that the Moabites did something, and later it would say that it was the Midianites who did it. It would describe Moses as going to a Tabernacle in a chapter before Moses builds the Tabernacle.

People also noticed that the Five Books of Moses included things that Moses could not have known or was not likely to have said. The text, after all, gave an account of Moses' death. It also said that Moses was the humblest man on earth; and normally one would not expect the humblest man on earth to point out that he is the humblest man on earth. (17f.)

Objections largely met through various forms of explanation (including midrash). But in the medieval period, the objections began to be met with an acknowledgment that Moses may not have been the sole author:

In the eleventh century, Isaac ibn Yashush, a Jewish court physician of a ruler in Muslim Spain, pointed out that a list of Edomite kings that appears in Genesis 36 named kings who lived long after Moses was dead. Ibn Yashush suggested that the list was written by someone who lived after Moses. The response to his conclusion was that he was called "Isaac the blunderer." [19]

But the man who called him this, 12th century Spanish rabbi Ibn Ezra added:

Several passages that appeared not to be from Moses' own hand: passages that referred to Moses in the third person, used terms that Moses would not have known, described places where Moses had never been, and used language that reflected another time and locale from those of Moses. [19-20]

Friedman suggests that Ibn Ezra recognized that these passages confirmed ibn Yashush's claim - but advised silence.

The silence was broken in the 14th ct. by Bonfils in Damascus. Bonfils wrote

"And this is evidence that this verse was written in the Torah later, and Moses did not write it; rather one of the later prophets wrote it." Bonfils was not denying the revealed character of the text. He still thought that the passages in question were written by "one of the later prophets." He was only concluding that they were not written by Moses. Still, three and a half centuries later, his work was reprinted with the references to the subject deleted. [19]

[contrary to the old tradition that Joshua wrote the account of Moses' death] ...in the sixteenth century, Carlstadt, a contemporary of Luther, commented that the account of Moses' death is written in the same style as texts that precede it. This makes it difficult to claim that Joshua or anyone else merely added a few lines to an otherwise Mosaic manuscript.

In a second stage of the process, investigators suggested that Moses wrote the Five Books but that editors when over them later, adding an occasional word or phrase of their own. In the sixteenth century, Andreas van Maes, who was a Flemish Catholic, and two Jesuit scholars, Benedict Pereira and Jacques Bonfrere, thus pictured an original text from the hand of Moses upon which later writers expanded. Van Maes suggested that a later editor inserted phrases or changed the name of a place to its more current name so that readers would understand it better. Van Maes' book was placed on the Catholic Index of Prohibited Books. [19-20]

In the third stage of the investigation, investigators concluded outright that Moses did not write the majority of the Pentateuch.

Hobbes (17th ct.) - example: the use of the phrase "to this day," which is not a phrase used by someone describing a contemporary situation

Four years later, Isaac de la Peyrère (French Calvinist) - "across the Jordan" (Deut 1:1), which would place Moses in Israel, which otherwise contradicts the claim that Moses never entered

Israel. (book was banned and burned; de la Peyrère was arrested, forced to become a Catholic.)

Roughly contemporary, Spinoza published a unified critical analysis demonstrating the problematic passages pervaded the text:

There were the third-person accounts of Moses, the statements that Moses was unlikely to have made (e.g., "humblest man on earth"), the report of Moses' death, the expression "to this day," the references to geographical locales by names that they acquired after Moses' lifetime, the treatment of matters that were subsequent to Moses (e.g., the list of Edomite kings), and various contradictions and problems in the text of the sort that earlier investigators had observed. He also noted that the text says in Deuteronomy 34, "There never arose another prophet in Israel like Moses...." Spinoza remarked that these sound like the words of someone who live a long time after Moses and had the opportunity to see other prophets and thus make the comparison. (They also do not sound like the words of the humblest man on earth.) Spinoza wrote, "It is...clearer than the sun at noon that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, but by someone who lived long after Moses." Spinoza was excommunicated from Judaism. Now his work was condemned by Catholics and Protestants as well. His book was placed on the Catholic Index, within six years thirty-seven edicts were issued against it, and an attempt was made on his life.[20-21]

(Richard Simon, a Catholic priest who converted from Protestantism, wrote what he intended to be a critique of Spinoza, claimed that:

The core of the Pentateuch (the laws) was Mosaic but that there were some additions. The additions, he said, were by scribes who collected, arranged, and elaborated upon the old texts. These scribes, according to Simon, were prophets, guided by the divine spirit, and so he regarded his work as a defense of the sanctity of the biblical text.[21]

But his contemporaries were not ready - he was attacked by Catholic clergy, expelled from his order, and his books were placed on the Index. Protestants wrote 40 refutations of his work. 1294 copies of his book were burned - 6 survived. An English translation landed the translator in the tower. [21]

Eighteenth ct. - in response to doublets:

A doublet is a case of the same story being told twice. Even in translation it is easy to observe that biblical stories often appear with variations of detail in two different places in the bible. There are two different stories of the creation of the world. There are two stories of the covenant between God and the patriarch Abraham, two stories of the naming of Abraham's son Isaac, two stories of Abraham's claiming to a foreign king that his wife Sarah is his sister, two stories of Isaac's son Jacob making a journey to Mesopotamia, two stories of a revelation to Jacob at Beth-el, two stories of God's changing Jacob's name to Israel, two stories of Moses' getting water from a rock at a place called Meribah, and more.[22]

- Three independent investigators (H. B. Witter, a German minister; Jean Astruc, a French medical doctor, and J. G. Eichhorn, a German professor) arrived at the same conclusion: two different sources for these stories, from writers who lived after Moses.[23]

The sources:

J -- Yahweh/Jehovah as the name of God

E -- Elohim as the name of God

P -- The largest: includes most of the legal sections, priestly matters

D -- Only found in the book of Deuteronomy

opposition to the Documentary hypothesis in the 19th ct. - but in the 20th ct., major turning point with the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, Pope Pius XII, 1943, "the Magna Carta for biblical progress."

The Pope encouraged scholars to pursue knowledge about the biblical writers, for those writers were "the living and reasonable instrument of the Holy Spirit..." He concluded:

Let the interpreter then, with all care and without neglecting any light derived from recent research endeavor to determine the peculiar character and circumstances of the sacred writer, the age in which he lived, the sources written or oral to which he had recourse and the forms of expression he employed. [27]

Eventually accepted by Protestant and Jewish scholars as well. In the current generation of Biblical scholars, the Documentary Hypothesis "continues to be the starting point of research, no serious student of the Bible can fail to study it, and no other explanation of the evidence has come close to challenging it." [28]

It is, in my terms, the equivalent of quantum mechanics in physics.

The World that Produced the Bible: 1200-722 B.C.E.

Little historical information about the patriarchs, their experiences as slaves in Egypt, the wandering in the Sinai. Evidence for accurate picture of life of biblical only from about 12th ct. B.C.E., as the Israelites become established in this region.

Tribal - thirteen, "with considerable differences in size and population from the smallest to the largest. Twelve of the tribes each had a distinct geographical territory. The thirteenth, the tribe of Levi, was identified as a priestly group. Its members lived in cities in the other tribes' territories. Each tribe had its own chosen leaders."

Judges, priests: judges both heard disputes and provided military leadership. Priests served at religious ceremonies - first of all, sacrifices (receiving a portion of the sacrificed animal, produce).

Prophets - from any occupation: Ezekiel was a priest; Amos was a cowboy. "The word in Hebrew for prophet is nabi, which is understood to mean 'called.'" [36]

Who is Richard Elliott Friedman?

"Friedman, one of our brightest young biblical scholars, adroitly combines the history of scholarship with an autobiographical account of his own search and findings. A fascinating and brilliant book, full of new insights and fresh discoveries. Reads like a detective story."

-- Frank Moore Cross, Hancock Professor of Hebrew and Other Oriental Languages, Harvard University

"Achieves that rare combination of serious scholarship and an eminently readable, even racy style. The finest book of its kind that I have read in years."

-- David Noel Freedman, Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of Biblical Studies, University of Michigan, and Editor, Anchor Bible Series

"A new paradigm for understanding the composition of the Bible. Novel, stimulating, a breath of fresh air, and a desideratum for Hebrew Bible research."

-- Abraham Malamat, Professor of the Bible, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

"Fascinating, full of suspense and surprises, a well written detective story,"

-- Richard J. Clifford, S. J., Dean and Professor of Old Testament, Weston School of Theology

"I ran through the manuscript in the space of a day, much as one might pick compulsively at a box of chocolates. It was simply too provocative to put down. Has the potential of being highly influential inside the field and among an informed public."

-- Baruch Halpern, Professor of Bible, York University, Toronto

"Not just another book about the Bible. One is amazed how much new data and how many intriguing ideas emerge from this newly published research."

-- Yigal Shiloh, Professor of Biblical Archeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

"Conveys a freshness and excitement of discovery that the old discipline has lacked for many decades. I find Friedman's account especially sympathetic, as will any other Bible reader who has ever stopped to wonder just whose text they are reading."

-- Alan Cooper, Professor of Bible, Hebrew Union College

REFERENCE:

[1] Redactor; someone who 'rewrites' or 'revises' text

SONS OF GOD.

Son

The word "son" appears many times throughout the Old and New Testament of the Bible. However, there are a number of different words in the Bible that have been translated into other languages and then finally into English as the word son. Some of them include the Hebrew words "bar" and "ben". When the term "*son*" is used in Scripture language it can imply almost any kind of descent or succession, as *Ben Shanah*, "son of a year," i.e. a year old; Ben Kesheth, "*son of a bow*," i.e. an arrow. The word *bar* is often found in the New Testament in composition, as Bar-timaeus.

I have referred to a number of different scholarly works for findings of the words "son" and "sons" and "children" and the intended meanings considering their position and usage in the context of the way the words appear. One such reference is the Strong's Concordance of the Bible and another is The Companion Bible. Here in particular, I have used the appendix number 23 for some explanation as to the usage and intention behind these words.

Looking in to the 23rd Appendix of the Companion Bible, we find an attempt to explain away these words:

This why angels are called "**sons of God**" in every other place where the expression is used in the Old Testament. Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7. Psalms 29:1; 89:6. Daniel 3:25. (no article). 2 We have no authority or right to take the expression in Genesis 6:2,4 in any other sense. Moreover, in Genesis 6:2 the Septuagint renders it "angels".

The word "offspring" in Acts 17:28 is quite different. It is (genos), which means merely kin or kind, our genus as being originated by God.

In Hosea 1:10, it is not *beni-ha-Elohim*, as here, but *beni-el-chai*.

Now let's take a look for ourselves into the Bible to help us determine how these terms should be understood. On the left side of the table I have placed the Old Testament references and on the right side, I have placed the New Testament references.

Old Testament	New Testament
<p>Genesis 6: 1-4 1 And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born unto them, 2 that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all that they chose. 3 And Jehovah said, My spirit shall not strive with man for ever, for that he also is flesh: yet shall his days be a hundred and twenty years. 4 The Nephilim were in the earth in those days, and also after that, when the sons of God came unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them: the same were the mighty men</p>	<p>Luke 3:38 38 Enos is the son of Seth and Set is the son of Adam and Adam is the son of God. We read in the Appendix 23 From <i>The Companion Bible</i>: It is only by the Divine specific act of creation that any created being can be called "a son of God". For that which is "born of the flesh is flesh". God is spirit, and that which is "born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). Hence Adam is called a "son of God" in Luke 3:38. Those "in Christ" having "the new nature" which is by the</p>

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that were of old, the men of renown.

The Companion Bible tells us:

Angels are called "**sons of God**" in every other place where the expression is used in the Old Testament. Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7. Psalms 29:1; 89:6. Daniel 3:25

direct creation of God (2 Corinthians 5:17. Ephesians 2:10) can be, and are called "**Sons of God**" (John 1:13. Romans 8:14,15. 1John 3:1).

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Job 1:6

6 Now it came to pass on the day when the **sons of God** came to present themselves before Jehovah, that Satan also came among them.

Job 2:1

1 Again it came to pass on the day when the **sons of God** came to present themselves before Jehovah, that Satan came also among them to present himself before Jehovah.

Job 38:7

7 When the morning stars sang together, And all the **sons of God** shouted for joy?

Psalms 29:1

1 Ascribe unto Jehovah, O ye **sons of the Almighty**, Ascribe unto Jehovah glory and strength.

Psalms 89:6

For who in the skies can be compared unto Jehovah? Who among the **sons of God** is like unto Jehovah, Angels are called "**spirits**" (Psalm 104:4. Hebrews 1:7,14), for **spirits** are created by God.

John 1:12-13

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become **children of God**, [even] to them that believe on his name:

13 **who were born**, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but **of God**.

God is spirit, and that which is "born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6)

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Daniel 3:25

He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the aspect of the fourth is like a **sons of Gods**.

"*sons of God*" (John 1:13. Romans 8:14,15. 1John 3:1).1

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It is only by the Divine specific act of creation that any created being can be called "*sons of God*". For that which is "born of the flesh is flesh". God is spirit, and that which is "born of

That there was a fall of the angels is certain from Jude 6. The nature of their fall is clearly stated in the same verse. They left their own (oiketerion). This word occurs only in 2Corinthians 5:2. Jude 6, where it is used of the spiritual (or resurrection) body.

The nature of their sin is stated to be "in like manner" to that of the subsequent sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, Jude 7. The time of their fall is given as having taken place "in the days of Noah" (1Peter 3:20. 2Peter 2:7), though there may have been a prior fall which caused the end of "the world that then was" (Genesis 1:1,2. 2Peter 3:6).

For this sin they are "reserved unto judgment", 2Peter 2:4, and are "in prison", 1Peter 3:19. Their progeny, called Nephilim (translated "giants" for the Bible but may be similar to the "jinn" of the Quran, compare to the story of the giant size of jinn who spoke to Suleman in Surah An-Naml 27:39), were monsters of iniquity; and being superhuman in size and character, had to be destroyed (see Appendix 25). This was the one and only object of the Flood.

Only Noah and his family had preserved their pedigree pure from Adam (Genesis 6:9 see note). All the rest had become "corrupt" (shachath) destroyed [as Adamites]. The only remedy was to destroy it (de facto), as it had become destroyed (de jure). (It is the same word in verse 17 as in verses 11,12.) See further under Appendix 25 on the Nephilim.

This irruption of fallen angels was Satan's first attempt to prevent the coming of the Seed of the woman foretold in Genesis 3:15. If this could be accomplished, God's Word would have failed, and his own doom would be averted.

As soon as it was made known that the Seed of the woman was to come through ABRAHAM, there must have been another irruption, as recorded in Genesis 6:4, "and also after that" (that is to say, after the days of Noah, more than 500 years after the first irruption). The aim of the enemy was to occupy Canaan in advance of Abraham, and so to contest its occupation by his seed. For, when Abraham entered Canaan, we read (Genesis 12:6) "the Canaanite was then (that is to say, already) in the land."

In the same chapter (Genesis 12:10-20) we see Satan's next attempt to interfere with Abraham's seed, and frustrate the purpose of God that it should be in "Isaac". This attempt was repeated in 20:1-18.

This great conflict may be seen throughout the Bible, and it forms a great and important subject of Biblical study. In each case the human instrument had his own personal interest to serve, while Satan had his own great object in view. Hence God had, in each case, to interfere and avert the evil and the danger, of which His servants and people were wholly ignorant. The following assaults of the great Enemy stand out prominently:-

The destruction of the chosen family by famine, Genesis 50:20.

The destruction of the male line in Israel, Exodus 1:10,15, etc. Compare to Exodus 2:5. Hebrews 11:23.

The destruction of the whole nation in Pharaoh's pursuit, Exodus 14.

After David's line was singled out (2Samuel 7), that was the next selected for assault. Satan's first assault was in the union of Jehoram and Athaliah by Jehoshaphat, notwithstanding

2Chronicles 17:1. Jehoram killed off all his brothers (2Chronicles 21:4).

The Arabians slew all his children, except Ahaziah (2Chronicles 21:17; 22:1).

When Ahaziah died, Athaliah killed "all the seed royal" (2Chronicles 22:10). The babe Joash alone was rescued; and, for six years, the faithfulness of Jehovah's word was at stake (2Chronicles 23:3).

Hezekiah was childless, when a double assault was made by the King of Assyria and the King of Terrors (Isaiah 36:1; 38:1). God's faithfulness was appealed to and relied on (Psalm 136).

In Captivity, Haman was used to attempt the destruction of the whole nation (Esther 3:6,12,13. Compare 6:1).

Joseph's fear was worked on (Matthew 1:18-20). Notwithstanding the fact that he was "a just man", and kept the Law, he did not wish to have Mary stoned to death (Deuteronomy 24:1); hence Joseph determined to divorce her. But God intervened: "Fear not".

Herod sought the young Child's life (Matthew 2).

At the Temptation, "Cast Thyself down" was Satan's temptation.

At Nazareth, again (Luke 4), there was another attempt to cast Him down and destroy Him.

The two storms on the Lake were other attempts.

At length the cross was reached, and the sepulcher closed; the watch set; and the stone sealed. But "God raised Him from the dead." And now, like another Joash, He is seated and expecting (Hebrews 10:12,13), hidden in the house of God on high; and the members of "the one body" are hidden there "in Him" (Colossians 3:1-3), like another Jehoshaba; and going forth to witness of His coming, like another Jehoiada (2Chronicles 23:3).

The irruption of "the fallen angels" ("sons of God") was the first attempt; and was directed against the whole human race.

When Abraham was called, then he and his seed were attacked.

When David was enthroned, then the royal line was assailed.

And when "the Seed of the woman" Himself came, then the storm burst upon Him.

NOTES:

The word "offspring" in Acts 17:28 is quite different. It is (genos), which means merely kin or kind, our genus as being originated by God.

In Hosea 1:10, it is not beni-ha-Elohim, as here, but beni-el-chai.

BIBLICAL CONTRADICTIONS.

A List of Biblical Contradictions

Subject: A List of Biblical Contradictions

By: Jim Meritt

Date: 1992-07-24

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Contradictions

The Bible is riddled with repetitions and contradictions, things that the Bible bangers would be quick to point out in anything that they want to criticize. For instance, Genesis 1 and 2 disagree about the order in which things are created, and how satisfied God is about the results of his labors. The flood story is really two interwoven stories that contradict each other on how many of each kind of animal are to be brought into the Ark--is it one pair each or seven pairs each of the "clean" ones? The Gospel of John disagrees with the other three Gospels on the activities of Jesus Christ (how long had he stayed in Jerusalem--a couple of days or a whole year?) and all four Gospels contradict each other on the details of Jesus Christ's last moments and resurrection. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke contradict each other on the genealogy of Jesus Christ' father; though both agree that Joseph was not his real father. Repetitions and contradictions are understandable for a hodgepodge collection of documents, but not for some carefully constructed treatise, reflecting a well-thought-out plan.

Of the various methods I've seen to "explain" these:

"That is to be taken metaphorically" In other words, what is written is not what is meant. I find this entertaining, especially for those who decide what ISN'T to be taken as other than the absolute WORD OF GOD--which just happens to agree with the particular thing they happen to want..

"There was more there than..." This is used when one verse says "there was a" and another says "there was b", so they decide there was "a" AND "b"--which is said nowhere. This makes them happy, since it doesn't say there WASN'T "a+b". But it doesn't say there was "a+b+little green Martians". This is often the same crowd that insists theirs is the ONLY possible interpretation (i.e. only "a") and the only way. I find it entertaining that they don't mind adding to verses.

"It has to be understood in context" I find this amusing because it comes from the same crowd that likes to push likewise extracted verses that support their particular view. Often it is just one of the verses in the contradictory set is suppose to be taken as THE TRUTH when if you add more to it, it suddenly becomes "out of context". How many of you have gotten JUST [John 3:16] (taken out of all context) thrown up at you?

"There was just a copying/writing error" This is sometimes called a "transcription error", as in where one number was meant and an incorrect one was copied down. Or that what was "quoted" wasn't really what was said, but just what the author thought was said when he thought it was said. And that's right--I'm not disagreeing with events, I'm disagreeing with what is WRITTEN. Which is apparently agreed that it is incorrect. This is an amusing misdirection to the problem

that the bible itself is wrong.

☞ "That is a miracle". Naturally. That is why it is stated as fact.

☞ "God works in mysterious ways" A useful dodge when the speaker doesn't understand the conflict between what the Bible SAYS and what they WISH it said.

God good to all, or just a few?

✦

The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

[PSA 145:9]

✦

And I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, saith the LORD: I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them.

[JER 13:14]

War or Peace?

✦

The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.

[EXO 15:3]

✦

Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen

[ROM 15:33]

Who is the father of Joseph?



And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

[MAT 1:16]



And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli.

[LUK 3:23]



Who was at the Empty Tomb? Is it:



In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.

[MAT 28:1]



And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

[MAR 16:1]



The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

[JOH 20:1]



Is Jesus equal to or lesser than?

✦

I and my Father are one

[JOH 10:30]

✦

Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

[JOH 14:28]

Which first--beasts or man?

✦

And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

✦

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

[GEN 1:25-26]

✦

And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

✦

And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

[GEN 2:18-19]

The number of beasts in the ark



Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.

[GEN 7:2]



Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth. There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.

[GEN 7:8-9]

How many stalls and horsemen?



And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.

[KI1 4:26]



And Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen; whom he bestowed in the chariot cities, and with the king at Jerusalem.

[CH2 9:25]

Is it folly to be wise or not?



Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.

[PRO 4:7]



For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

[ECC 1:18]



For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

[1 Cor.1:19:]

Human vs. ghostly impregnation



Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

[ACT 2:30]



Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

[MAT 1:18]

The sins of the father



Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers; that they do not rise, nor possess the land, nor fill the face of the world with cities.

[ISA 14:21]



The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

[DEU 24:16]

The bat is not a bird



And these are they which ye shall have in abomination among the fowls; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the osprey,



And the vulture, and the kite after his kind



Every raven after his kind;



And the owl, and the night hawk, and the cuckow, and the hawk after his kind,



And the little owl, and the cormorant, and the great owl,

✦

And the swan, and the pelican, and the gier eagle,

✦

And the stork, the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the bat.

[LEV 11:13-19]

✦

Of all clean birds ye shall eat.

✦

But these are they of which ye shall not eat: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the osprey,

✦

And the glede, and the kite, and the vulture after his kind,

✦

And every raven after his kind,

✦

And the owl, and the night hawk, and the cuckow, and the hawk after his kind,

✦

The little owl, and the great owl, and the swan,

✦

And the pelican, and the gier eagle, and the cormorant,

✦

And the stork, and the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the bat.

[DEU 14:11-18]

Rabbits do not chew their cud

✦

And the hare, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.

[LEV 11:6]

✦

'Gerah', the term which appears in the MT means (chewed) cud, and also perhaps grain, or berry (also a 20th of a shekel, but I think that we can agree that that is irrelevant here). It does *not* mean dung, and there is a perfectly adequate Hebrew word for that, which could have been used. Furthermore, the phrase translated 'chew the cud' in the KJV is more exactly 'bring up the cud'. Rabbits do not bring up anything; they let it go all the way through, then eat it again. The description given in Leviticus is inaccurate, and that's that. Rabbits do eat their own dung; they do not bring anything up and chew on it.

Insects do NOT have four feet

✦

Yet these may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all four, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth;

✦

Even these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind.

✦

But all other flying creeping things, which have four feet, shall be an abomination unto you

[LEV 11:21-23]

Snails do not melt



As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away: like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun.

[PSA 58:8]

Fowl from waters or ground?



And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.



And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

[GEN 1:20-21]



And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

[GEN 2:19]

Odd genetic engineering



And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled, and spotted.

[GEN 30:39]

The shape of the earth

✦

It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:

[ISA 40:22]

✦

Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them

[MAT 4:8]

Astronomical bodies are spherical, and you cannot see the entire exterior surface from anyplace. The kingdoms of Egypt, China, Greece, Crete, sections of Asia Minor, India, Maya (in Mexico), Carthage (North Africa), Rome (Italy), Korea, and other settlements from these kingdoms of the world were widely distributed.

Snakes, while built low, do not eat dirt

✦

And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

[GEN 3:14]

Earth supported?



He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing

[JOB 26:7]



Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.

[JOB 38:4]

Heaven supported too



The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof.

[JOB 26:11]

The hydrological cycle



All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.

[ECC 1:7]



Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? Or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail,

[JOB 38:22]

Storehouses are not part of the cycle

Order of creation

Here is the order in the first (Genesis 1), the Priestly tradition:

Day 1: Sky, Earth, light

Day 2: Water, both in ocean basins and above the sky(!)

Day 3: Plants

Day 4: Sun, Moon, stars (as calendrical and navigational aids)

Day 5: Sea monsters (whales), fish, birds, land animals, creepy-crawlies (reptiles, insects, etc.)

Day 6: Humans (apparently both sexes at the same time)

Day 7: Nothing (the Gods took the first day off anyone ever did)

Note that there are "days", "evenings", and "mornings" before the Sun was created. Here, the Deity is referred to as "Elohim", which is a plural, thus the literal translation, "the Gods". In this tale, the Gods seem satisfied with what they have done, saying after each step that "it was good".

The second one (Genesis 2), the Yahwist tradition, goes:

Earth and heavens (misty)

Adam, the first man (on a desolate Earth)

Plants

Animals

Eve, the first woman (from Adam's rib)

How orderly were things created?

Step-by-step. The only discrepancy is that there is no Sun or Moon or stars on the first three "days".

God fixes things up as he goes. The first man is lonely, and is not satisfied with animals. God finally creates a woman for him. (funny thing that an omniscient god would forget things)

How satisfied with creation was he?

God says "it was good" after each of his labors, and rests on the seventh day, evidently very satisfied.

God has to fix up his creation as he goes, and he would certainly not be very satisfied with the disobedience of that primordial couple. (funny thing that an omniscient god would forget things)

Moses' personality

✦

"Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth."

[Num.12:3]

✦

"And Moses was wroth...And Moses said unto them, "Have ye saved all the women alive? ... Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman, ... But all the women children ... keep alive for yourselves."

[Num.31:14, 17, 18]

Righteous live?



"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree."

[Ps.92:12]



"The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart."

[Isa.57:1]



"Now this man (Judas) purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out."

[Acts 1:18]



"And he (Judas) cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests...bought with them the potter's field."

[Matt. 27:5-7]

Jesus' first sermon plain or mount?



"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying...."

[Matt.5:1,2]



"And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people... came to hear him.. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples and said..."

[Luke6:17,20]



Jesus' last words



"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, eli, lama sabachthani?" that is to say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" ...Jesus, when he cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost."

[Matt.27:46,50]



And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, "Father, unto thy hands I commend my spirit:" and having said thus, he gave up the ghost

[Luke23:46]



When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished:" and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

[John19:30]



Years of famine



So God came to David, and told him, and said unto him, shall SEVEN YEARS OF FAMINE come unto thee in thy land? Or will thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue. thee?

[II SAMUEL 24:13]



SO God came to David, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Choose thee. Either THREE YEARS OF FAMINE or three months to be destroyed before thy foes, while that the sword of thine enemies overtaketh thee;

[I CHRONICLES 21:11]



Moved David to anger?



And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Isreal and Judah.

[II SAMUEL 24]



And SATAN stood up against Isreal, and provoked David to number Israel

[I CHRONICLES 21]



The GENEALOGY OF JESUS?

In two places in the New Testament the genealogy of Jesus son of Mary (peace be upon him) is mentioned. [Matthew 1:6-16] and [Luke 3:23-31]. Each gives the ancestors of Joseph the CLAIMED husband of Mary and Step father of Jesus (peace be upon him). The first one starts from Abraham (verse 2) all the way down to Jesus. The second one from Jesus all the way back to Adam. The only common name to these two lists between David and Jesus is JOSEPH, How can this be true? And also, How can Jesus have a genealogy when all Muslims and most Christians believe that Jesus had/has no father.



God be seen?

[Exod. 24:9,10; Amos 9:1; Gen. 26:2; and John 14:9]

God CAN be seen:

✦

"And I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my backparts."

[Ex. 33:23]

✦

"And the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend."

[Ex. 33:11]

✦

"For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

[Gen. 32:30]

God CANNOT be seen

✦

"No man hath seen God at any time."

[John 1:18]

✦

"And he said, Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live."

[Ex. 33:20]

✦

"Whom no man hath seen nor can see"

[1 Tim. 6:16]

CRUEL, UNMERCIFUL, DESTRUCTIVE, and FEROCIOUS or KIND, MERCIFUL, and GOOD:

✦

"I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy."

[Jer. 13:14]

✦

"Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling."

[1 Samuel 15:3]

✦

"The Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."

[James 5:11]

✦

"For his mercy endureth forever."

[1 Chron. 16:34]

✦

"The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." (Ps. 145:9) "God is love."

[1 John 4:16]

Tempts?

✦

"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham."

[Gen 22:1]

✦

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man."

[James 1:13]

Judas died how?

✦

"And he cast down the pieces of silver into the temple and departed, and went out and hanged himself."

[Matt. 27:5]

✦

"And falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all of his bowels gushed out."

[Acts 1:18]

Ascend to heaven

✦

"And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven"

[2 Kings 2:11]



"No man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, ... the Son of Man."

[John 3:13]



What was Jesus' prediction regarding Peter's denial?



Before the cock crow

[Matthew 26:34]



Before the cock crow twice

[Mark 14:30]



How many times did the cock crow?



And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

[MAR 14:72]



Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.



And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

[MAT 26:74-75]



And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spoke, the cock crew.



And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

[LUK 22:60-61]



Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, still thou hast denied me thrice.

[JOH 13:38]



Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.

[JOH 18:27]



Who killed Saul



Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.



And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him.



So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armourbearer, and all his men, that same day together.

[SA1 31:4-6]



And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, and fall upon him. And he smote him that he died.

[SA2 1:15]

How many beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount



Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.



Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.



Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth



Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled



Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.



Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God



Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.



Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.



Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

[MAT 5:3-11]



And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.



Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.



Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.



Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

[LUK 6:20-23]

Does every man sin?

✦

If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near;

[KI1 8:46]

✦

If they sin against thee, (for there is no man which sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or near;

[CH2 6:36]

✦

Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?

[PRO 20:9]

✦

For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

[ECC 7:20]

✦

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us



If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.



If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

[JO1 1:8-10]



Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

[JO1 3:9]

Who bought potter's field



Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.



And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

[ACT 1:18-19]



And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.



And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.



Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.

[MAT 27:6-8]

Who prophesied the potter's field?



[Matthew 27:9-10]

(mentions Jeremy but no such verse in Jeremiah) is in

[Zechariah 11:12-13]

Who bears guilt?



Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ

[GAL 6:2]



For every man shall bear his own burden.

[GAL 6:5]

Do you answer a fool?



Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him

[PRO 26:4]



Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.

[PRO 26:5]

How many children did Michael, the daughter of Saul, have?



Therefore Michael the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death.

[SA2 6:23]



But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michael the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite:

[SA2 21:8]

How old was Jehoiachin when he began to reign?



Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. And his mother's name was Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem

[KI2 24:8]



Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem: and he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.

[CH2 36:9]

Marriage?

[Proverbs 18:22]

[1 Corinthians 7] (whole book. See 1,2,27,39,40)

Did those with Saul/Paul at his conversion hear a voice?



And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

[ACT 9:7]



And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spoke to me

[ACT 22:9]

Where was Jesus three days after his baptism?



And immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness

[MAR 1:12]



Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;

[JOH 1:35]

(various trappings)

How many apostles were in office between the resurrection and ascent ion?

✦

12

[1 Corinthians 15:5]

✦

minus one from 12

[Matthew 27:3-5]

✦

Mathias not elected until after resurrection

[Acts 1:9-26]

✦

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them

[MAT 28:16]

Judging

✦

The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment:" (NIV)

[1 Cor 3:15 "]



Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God."

[1 Cor 4:5]



Good deeds



"In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (NIV)

[Matt 5:16]



But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." (NIV)

[Matt 6:3-4]



For or against?



He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. (default is against)

[MAT 12:30]



For he that is not against us is on our part. (default is for)

[MAR 9:40]

✦

And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us. (default is for)

[LUK 9:50]

Whom did they see at the tomb?

✦

And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

✦

His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

✦

And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men

✦

And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

[MAT 28:2-5]

✦

And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

[MAR 16:5]



And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

[LUK 24:4]



And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

[JOH 20:12]

God change?

[Malachi 3:6]

[James 1:17]

[1 Samuel 15:29]

[Jonah 3:10]

[Genesis 6:6]

Destruction of cities (what said was Jeremiah was Zechariah)

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;

[MAT 27:9]

nothing in Jeremiah remotely like) [Zechariah 11:11-13]

Who's sepulchers

[Acts 7:16]

[Genesis 23:17,18]

Strong drink?

[Proverbs 31:6,7]

[John 2:11-11]

When second coming?

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

[MAT 24:34]

Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.

[MAR 13:30]

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.

[LUK 21:32]

[1 Thessalonians 4:15-18]

Solomon's overseers

[550 in I Kings 9:23]

[250 in II Chron 8:10]

The mother of Abijah:

Maachah the daughter of Absalom

[2 Chron 9:20]

Michaiah the daughter of Uriel

[2 Chron 13:2]

When did Baasha die?

26th year of the reign of Asa I

[Kings 16:6-8]

36th year of the reign of Asa I

[2 Chron 16:1]

How old was Ahaziah when he began to reign?

22

[2 Kings 8:26]

42

[2 Chron 22:2]

Who was Josiah's successor?

Jehoahaz

[2 Chron 36:1]

Shallum

[Jeremiah 22:11]

The differences in the census figures of Ezra and Nehemiah.

What was the color of the robe placed on Jesus during his trial?

scarlet

[Matthew 27:28]

purple

[John 19:2]

What did they give him to drink?

vinegar

[Matthew 27:34]

wine with myrrh

[Mark 15:23]

How long was Jesus in the tomb?

✦

Depends where you look; [Matthew 12:40] gives Jesus prophesying that he will spend "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth", and [Mark 10:34] has "after three days (meta treis emeras) he will rise again". As far as I can see from a quick look, the prophecies have "after three days", but the post-Resurrection narratives have "on the third day".

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A good source of literal Biblical self-contradictions is (surprise) "Self-Contradictions of the Bible", written by William Henry Burr in 1859 as a response to fundamentalism. It is currently published by Prometheus Books, 700 East Amherst St., Buffalo, NY 14215. P. B. also publishes a large number of books on religious inquiry and biblical critiques, the majority of which have a humanistic/atheistic slant. As far as "Self-Contradictions ..." goes, it contains about 140 textual inconsistencies, classified under "Theological Doctrines", "Moral Precepts", "Historical Facts", and "Speculative Doctrines."

"The Bible Handbook" is a compilation of several previous works by several authors, including W P Ball, G W Foote, and John Bowden. Also, the writing by Mr. Foote is dated 1900, so we see that this is not a new endeavor. The Bible Handbook by W.P. Ball, et al., available for nine dollars from the American Atheist Press, P.O. Box 2117, Austin TX 78768-2117. It's a collection of biblical contradictions, absurdities, atrocities, immoralities, indecencies, obscenities, unfulfilled prophecies and broken promises. This 372-page volume will give the atheist tons of scriptural ammunition for shooting down the flimsy arguments of the reality impaired.

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CHRISTAINTY AND ISLAM.

ISLAMIC BELIEFS

CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

Allah (God Almighty) is the only Creator of all that exists.

God Almighty is the only Creator of all that exists. (Gen. 1:1)

There is one God (Allah). Jesus is the Christ, miracle birth- and Muhammad (peace be upon him) is his last prophet, both of them said, "God is One and you have to serve Him with all your heart, mind and strength.

There is one God. He exists eternally in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (There is no "Trinity" in the Bible)

Allah reveals His 99 Divine Attributes and does not compare Himself to any of His creation.

God has revealed Himself as "One God" and "One Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:3; Mark 12:29)

Allah created man from dirt and "in His image" and of "His spirit," yet God has no likeness of anything in creation.

God created man from dirt and the image of God (Genesis 1)

Adam & Eve sinned, then repented and were forgiven, with no continuing effects on their children.

Adam and Eve sinned and thus brought sin into the world and their sins passed on to their children. (Genesis 3:1-7)

God Forgives Adam and Eve after they repent. Then He makes Adam his deputy (caliph) and the first prophet.

Original Sin - all of Adam's posterity are born with a sin nature and are sinful from birth (Romans 3:22-23, 1st John 1:10)

Man is basically good but prone to mistakes. Muslims who repent and submit to God are forgiven without intercession from Christ (or anyone) needed.

Man is by nature sinful and has need for redemption by the atonement of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:6, 8:32, Colossians 1:19-20, Hebrews 7:26-27, 9:26, 10:12, 1st John 4:10)

Through submission to the Will of God in peace, anyone, anytime, any place becomes a servant of Allah and draw closer to Him.

Through the work of Christ, God adopts Christians into His family and calls them His children (Romans 8:14-15, Ephesians 1:5, Galatians 4:5)

Allah is not like His creation. He is neither male nor female, nor is creation like Him.

Bible says; "God is not a man... not the son of man.." (Numbers 23:19) Other places contradict this(?)