



The God Who Wasn't There, Part 2

Mike Licona

A Review of Brian Flemming's DVD "The God Who Wasn't There"

The God Who Wasn't There

by Brian Flemming

Beyond Belief Media, 2005

Click here for the official movie website, and here for a clip.

Movie running time: 62 minutes; including special features: 259 minutes.

Reviewed by Mike Licona.

This is Part Two of Mike's review. Read Part One.

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Sections 1 to 3 are in Part 1 of this review.

4. Parallelmania!

Throughout the DVD, Price, Carrier, and Doherty are preoccupied with parallels, seeing them everywhere. Most scholars have abandoned the *religionsgeschichtliche* or what was known as the "history of religions" school that regarded parallels

as conclusive signs that Christianity was cut from the same cloth as ancient myth. Further research has revealed that many of the parallels to which they refer postdate the Gospels. Thus, it is most likely that those parallels were the result of other religions who copied the Christian story rather than the other way around. Second, no examples cited exhibit all of the points we find in the Gospels. Hence, a number of the parallel accounts must be combined in order to mirror Jesus. Third, no miracle-worker *per se* existed within two hundred years on either side of Jesus. [49] Fourth, many of the parallels cited are weak. Fifth, parallels can be seen in just about anything. In less than an hour, I was able to put together two lists of parallels more numerous and exhibiting a closer similarity than those listed by Price, Carrier, and Doherty. Consider the following parallels between ancient Rome and the U.S.:

<ol type="1"> § Both nations were founded by rebelling against ruling nations.

§ The peoples of the ruling nations began with an "E" (Etruscans, Englanders).

§ Both Rome and the U.S. went to war with them...

§ ...and won.

§ Both had an early and very prominent leader who was a male (Julius Caesar, George Washington),...

§ ...each of whom were generals.

§ Both of these leaders crossed a river with their armies (Rubicon, Delaware)...

§ ...before being victorious.

§ Both were beloved by the people they ruled.

§ Both nations employed a Senate that had great power.

§ Both Senates forced one of its later leaders to step down from power.

§ Both of whose names began with the letter "N" (Nero, Nixon).

§ Both nations allowed their citizens to vote.

§ Both nations had capital punishment.

It would not take much effort to create a document filled with these parallels. Perhaps a thousand years from now someone will claim that a bulk of U.S. history was created to parallel the Roman Empire. But they would be grossly mistaken. One can likewise see striking parallels between the lives of Jesus and John F. Kennedy.

<ol type="1"> § Both had followers who adored them.

- § Both were leaders of a kingdom.
- § Both were opposed.
- § Both were killed publicly...
- § ...in a dramatic fashion...
- § ...at the pinnacle of their careers...
- § ...in the presence of the woman closest to them.
- § Both received head wounds. A crown of thorns was placed on the head of Jesus. JFK was shot in the head.
- § Both were pronounced dead by authorities (soldier, physician).
- § Both were mourned.
- § Both were buried in a tomb.
- § Both had names beginning with the letter "J."
- § Both were interested in freedom.
- § Both had a father named Joseph...
- § ...who was self-employed.
- § Both families had a prominent and immediate member who provided wine.
- § Both Jesus and JFK had brothers who were murdered...
- § ...after their prominent brothers were murdered (James, RFK).

Here are eighteen parallels between Jesus and JFK that are more striking than those cited by Carrier. Some even seem too bizarre to be mere coincidence. Nevertheless, the entire comparison is true and no would conclude that it is too much to be a coincidence. Neither are we compelled to conclude that JFK was a myth, invented to embody Christian ideology in the 20th-century!

Consider the following often-cited parallels between Lincoln and Kennedy:

- § Abraham Lincoln was elected to Congress in 1846. John F. Kennedy was elected to Congress in 1946.
- § Abraham Lincoln was elected President in 1860. John F. Kennedy was elected President in 1960.
- § The names Lincoln and Kennedy each contain seven letters.
- § Both of their wives lost their children while living in the White House.
- § Both Presidents were shot on a Friday.
- § Both were shot in the head.
- § Both were assassinated by Southerners.
- § Both were succeeded by Southerners.
- § Both successors were named Johnson.
- § Andrew Johnson, who succeeded Lincoln, was born in 1808. Lyndon Johnson, who succeeded Kennedy, was born in 1908.

§ John Wilkes Booth was born in 1839. Lee Harvey Oswald was born in 1939.

§ Both assassins were known by their three names.

§ Both names are comprised of fifteen letters.

§ Booth ran from the theater and was caught in a warehouse. Oswald ran from a warehouse and was caught in a theater.

§ Booth and Oswald were assassinated before their trials.

§ Before Lincoln was assassinated, he visited Monroe, Maryland.

§ Before Kennedy was assassinated, he visited Marilyn Monroe.

Barbara and David Mikkelson of Snopes.com, whom Flemming interviews in his video, explain on their web site that these "coincidences are easily explained as the simple product of mere chance. *It's not difficult to find patterns and similarities between any two marginally-related sets of data*" [italics mine].

One can begin to understand why parallels have not persuaded the majority of today's scholars. It is not that parallels could not expose Christianity as a myth. On the contrary, if a number of religions contemporary with Christianity (and especially if they preceded it) had clear reports of their leaders experiencing a phenomenal birth, being miracle workers and exorcists, providing similar teachings, dying by crucifixion, and rising from the dead, we may have to give serious consideration to these parallels. However, such parallels are imaginary. They exist only in the minds of Jesus mythers.

Robert Price contends otherwise. He says that the idea that the son of a high God came down to earth happened many times in antiquity.

Alexander the Great, Augustus, and others were said to have been conceived miraculously; if not via a virgin birth, the husband was not involved. Then there is the child prodigy story, ancient and modern, where the child is a god and already knows everything. Asclepius was a major healer and Apollonius of Tyana did a lot of exorcisms.

Price appeals to Dennis MacDonald who suggests that Jesus' 'messianic secret' could be taken from the Odyssey when Odysseus comes home and tells everyone to keep it quiet.

Reversals as noted by Dundes where they hail Jesus on Palm Sunday then turn on him. The persecution of an infant by a tyrant is seen with Caesar Augustus, Moses, Krishna, Zoroaster. The Passion is like other stories of dying and rising gods. Standing before the authorities is like the story of Apollonius who stands before the emperor Domitian and miraculously gets out of it. Romulus disappears in battle and then reappears again as a god. Apollonius appears in a doubting Thomas story. Apollonius appears to him, though no one else sees him.

I have addressed MacDonald earlier.[50] The story of Apollonius is interesting. But it is far from convincing. For Apollonius is thought to have died at the close of the first-century. The only account we have of him was written by Philostratus 120 years after his death and more than 200 years after the death of Jesus. Many believe that it was written in answer to Christianity. It is written in the genre of a romantic novel rather than biography. The story ends with the death of Apollonius. Then Philostratus adds a section he calls "stories." The story which a few like Price call a 'resurrection' is found in a single report of an appearance in a vision to a sleeping man that occurred 175 years after the death of Apollonius! And it isn't even a bodily appearance. So, it cannot be called a resurrection, which involved the corpse. Moreover, the report came from a man whose birthplace was supposedly Nineveh – a city that had not existed for 300 years! When we consider that Apollonius is normally showcased as the chief parallel in the case for the mythic Jesus, we see how weak the case actually is.

Price continues that "[t]here are other similar savior figures in the same neighborhood at the same time in history: Mithras, Attis, Adonis, Osiris, Tamuz, and so forth and nobody thinks that these characters are anything but mythical and their stories are so similar, most of them in fact having some kind of resurrection or other, sometimes even with celebrations after three days and so forth that it just seems like special pleading to say 'Oh, well, in this one case it really happened.'" At this point a quote from Justin Martyr appears that reads, "When we say that Jesus Christ was produced without sexual union, was crucified and died, and rose again, and ascended to heaven, we propound nothing new or different

from what you believe regarding those whom you call the sons of Jupiter."

The screen then says, "*Some Attributes of Previous Saviors: born of a virgin on December 25; Stars Appeared at Their Birth; Visited by Magi from the East; Turned Water into Wine; Healed the Sick; Cast out Demons; Performed Miracles; Transfigured Before Followers; Rode Donkeys into the City; Betrayed for 30 Pieces of Silver; Celebrated Communal Meal with Bread and Wine; Which Represented the Savior's Flesh and Blood; Killed on a Cross or Tree; Descended into Hell; Resurrected on Third Day; Ascended into Heaven; To Forever Sit beside Father God And Become Divine Judge."*

No evidence is provided to show that these stories have a dating any earlier than 100 years after Jesus. No other savior stories contain all of the examples provided. Some of the points are dubious. For example, regarding crucified saviors, even the hyperskeptics of Infidels.org, several of whom appear in this video, have made the following comments:

Note: the scholarship of Kersey Graves has been questioned by numerous theists and nontheists alike; the inclusion of his The World's Sixteen Crucified Saviors in the Secular Web's Historical Library does not constitute endorsement by Internet Infidels, Inc. This document was included for historical purposes; readers should be extremely cautious in trusting anything in this book.[51]

The World's Sixteen Crucified Saviors: Or Christianity Before Christ is unreliable, but no comprehensive critique exists. Most scholars immediately recognize many of his findings as unsupported and dismiss Graves as useless.... In general, even when the evidence is real, it often only appears many years after Christianity began, and thus might be evidence of diffusion in the other direction. Another typical problem is that Graves draws far too much from what often amounts to rather vague evidence. In general, there are ten kinds of problems that crop up in Graves' work here and there...[52]

Notwithstanding, Flemming just drops the parallel on his viewers without support or caveat.

Doherty speaks of would-be messiahs and miracle workers “that plagued Palestine throughout the first-century.” But there is a major problem with Doherty’s statement: Other than Jesus, there were no messiahs or miracle workers in the first-century. Raymond Brown writes, “One encounters the affirmation that there were many would-be messiahs in Palestine at this time. In fact there is no evidence that any Jew claimed or was said to be the Messiah before Jesus of Nazareth (or until a century after his death).”[53] Graham Twelftree, who is regarded by many to be the foremost authority on the miracles of Jesus, writes, “In the period of two hundred years on each side of the life of the historical Jesus the number of miracle stories attached to any historical figure is astonishingly small.”[54] To be certain, there are figures who may perform a single miracle or two during their lifetime. But there are no workers of multiple miracles within that 400-year period. Citing Werner Kahl’s research, Twelftree states that:

of approximately 150 miracle stories from antiquity that we know of, only one other case in the entire miracle story tradition before Philostratus’ Life of Apollonius (written after A.D. 217) of an immanent bearer of numinous or preternatural power (and then in only a singular version of his miracle) – Melampous, according to Diodorus of Sicily (writing c. 60–30 B.C.).[55]

Doherty is, therefore, grossly mistaken in his assertion.

Regarding resurrections, there are no clear parallels of a resurrection that predate Christianity. One may cite the account of Aristeas as a possible parallel. But the differences involved make it look little like what we see with Jesus. The first clear parallel does not appear until long after the life of Jesus, probably Adonis around AD 150. If imitation is occurring, it appears that it is pagans who are imitating the Christian accounts.

The statement by Justin is interesting. But when we note the weakness of the parallels Justin cites, and the context of his writing, which is to address the specific problem of Christian persecution, then his comments on parallels present no historical difficulty whatsoever. In our book *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, Gary Habermas and I write,

... since the details of the stories are vague and unlike Jesus’ resurrection, today’s scholars would not regard the stories as parallels. Justin mentions the deaths and risings of the sons of Jupiter: Aesculapius was struck by lightning and ascended to heaven; after dying violent deaths, Baccus, Hercules, and a few other sons rose to heaven on the horse Pegasus. Justin then mentions Ariadne and others like her, though unnamed, who “have been declared to be set among the stars.” Finally, he mentions the account of the cremation of the Roman emperor Augustus, during which someone swore that he saw Augustus’ spirit in the flames ascend toward heaven. [56]

Consider the context in which Justin writes. His *First Apology* was written to the Roman emperor entreating him to investigate the false charges of impiety and wickedness made against Christians. In chapter 11, he says Christians are not a threat to Rome because they are not looking for a human kingdom. In fact, Jesus taught civil obedience (ch. 17). Jesus taught a higher level of morality than other religions. For example, not only our works but even our thoughts are open to God (ch. 15). Christians are taught to love their enemies and pray for them (chs. 7–8). In chapter 20 Justin contends that many Christian teachings reflect the teachings of those whom the emperor honors. Accordingly, if on some points Christians teach the same things and on other points present an even higher morality, “and if we alone afford proof of what we assert, why are we unjustly hated more than all others?” Justin’s objective is to demonstrate to the emperor that Christianity has a lot in common with other religions that enjoy Rome’s approval. Therefore, the persecution of Christians should cease.[57] These comments by Justin fail to support Price’s contention that Justin recognized the problem of parallels. To the contrary, he attempted to make parallels by straining his examples in order to stop the persecution of Christians.

Price provides another argument in support of his point, a portion of which is not as easily answered. He says,

The early Church fathers understood [parallels] as a problem because they were already getting the same objections from pagans. They said, “What

you say about Jesus we've been saying about Dionysus and Hercules all the time." What's the big deal? I mean they didn't believe in them either anymore. And so the Christian apologists the defenders of the faith would say, "Well, yea, but this one is true. And you see Satan counterfeited it in advance because he knew this day would come." Boy, I'll tell you that tells you two things right there that even they didn't even deny that these other Jesus like characters were before Jesus or they never would have resorted to something like that Satan knew it would happen and counterfeit it in advance?

The passage to which Price refers comes from Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* (70):

"Be well assured, then, Trypho," I continued, "that I am established in the knowledge of and faith in the Scriptures by those counterfeits which he who is called the devil is said to have performed among the Greeks; just as some were wrought by the Magi in Egypt, and others by the false prophets in Elijah's days. For when they tell that Bacchus, son of Jupiter, was begotten by [Jupiter's] intercourse with Semele, and that he was the discoverer of the vine; and when they relate, that being torn in pieces, and having died, he rose again, and ascended to heaven; and when they introduce wine into his mysteries, do I not perceive that [the devil] has imitated the prophecy announced by the patriarch Jacob, and recorded by Moses? And when they tell that Hercules was strong, and travelled over all the world, and was begotten by Jove of Alcmene, and ascended to heaven when he died, do I not perceive that the Scripture which speaks of Christ, 'strong as a giant to run his race,' [58] has been in like manner imitated? And when he [the devil] brings forward Aesculapius as the raiser of the dead and healer of all diseases, may I not say that in this matter likewise he has imitated the prophecies about Christ? [59]

We may first note that the parallels cited by Justin are weak:

Jupiter's son Bacchus was the result of Jupiter's sexual intercourse with Semele. The story is that Jupiter (i.e., Zeus) cheated on his wife by having sex with Semele who is later destroyed.

Bacchus was torn in pieces, died, rose again, and

ascended to heaven. The rising and ascending to heaven does not resemble what happened to Jesus. Bacchus was escorted to heaven on the horse Pegasus. There was probably the beginning of a disembodied existence for Bacchus, since this is the type of post-mortem existence that was believed by pagans. There is no indication that a resurrection of the body was being described.

Wine was involved in the Jupiter cult. But what about a parallel with Jacob as recorded by Moses? I could only find a few references to which Price could refer, none of which come close to being a parallel.[60]

Hercules, another son of Jupiter, was strong, traveled the world, died, and ascended to heaven on the horse Pegasus. Again, the parallels with Jesus are very weak. Justin notes a parallel with Jesus in Psalm 19:5: "*Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.*" Justin has to strain hard to get a parallel from this. For Psalm 19 is not speaking of Jesus.

*The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.*

*Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.
There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard.
Their line has gone out through all the earth,
And their utterances to the end of the world.
In them He has placed a tent for the sun,
Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;
It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.
Its rising is from one end of the heavens,
And its circuit to the other end of them;
And there is nothing hidden from its heat. (Psalm 19:1-6; NASB)*

The psalmist David is writing poetically that the sky speaks of God's glory. God has made the sky a tent for the sun, which is glorious, runs a course from one end of the sky to the other and impacts everyone. This is not a parallel to Jesus by any reasonable assessment.

Who was Aesculapius, "raiser of the dead and healer of all diseases"? He was believed to be the

son of Apollo who had great skills in practicing medicine. His first teacher was a centaur named Chiron. He became so skilled that he could raise the dead. Hades, the god of the dead, became so concerned over this that he had Aesculapius killed with a lightening bolt. This story occurs in the foggy past with no marks of historicity. Is there a historical core of a man who was a skilled practitioner of medicine whose life was cut short when he was struck by lightening? We may never know. But this is hardly a strong parallel to Jesus. This example cited by Price is very poor.

Carrier says that many aspects of the story of Jesus' appearance to the Emmaeus disciples is almost an exact inversion of the Romulus story, the founding myth of Rome. Romulus was a god who became a man and was torn apart (executed) by the Senate, rose from the dead and appeared to his friend Proculus on the road to Albalonga from Rome. He says that it seems like Luke got this story from someone telling the Romulus story but placing Jesus in his place. Instead of a worldly empire, he's preaching a kingdom of God. The problem with Carrier's thesis is that the story of the appearance of Romulus was not a resurrection. There are significant differences of what occurred. For example, another story is that Romulus disappeared in battle then reappeared at a later date. There is no ambiguity in the story that he has returned from the afterlife. But is this a resurrection? I am not attempting to split hairs. 'Resurrection' meant that the corpse that had died was returned to life and transformed into an immortal body. If we view every story of a post-mortem appearance as a parallel to Jesus, then we have to include every ghost story and grief hallucination, from past to present.

All of this eliminates the claim that the early Christian reports of Jesus' resurrection were cut from the same cloth as other stories of the period. Why? Because stories of post-mortem appearances are not limited to the Greco-Roman era. They have never stopped and continue today. If one of my sisters claimed that our dead grandfather appeared to her last night, I would not consider that as a parallel to the resurrection reports of Jesus. That there is a similarity cannot be denied. But is the similarity enough to demonstrate that resurrection reports and grief hallucinations and dreams are cut from the same

cloth? And when one has to postulate inversions and alterations in order to hide the parallel, as MacDonald does, the impressiveness of purported examples declines even further. We are not surprised to find that the large majority of today's scholars do not use alleged parallels as a reason for rejecting the ancient reports of the resurrection of Jesus.

5. Folklore and Urban Legend

Closely related to supposed parallels is the claim that the stories of Jesus are folklore. Flemming interviews the late Alan Dundes, Professor of Folklore at UC Berkeley to make his point. Dundes says,

There are these other Gospels and there are the Apocrypha after all. There are apocryphal New Testament and apocryphal Old Testament stories that were frankly too folkloristic and they got thrown out because people thought these couldn't have happened and therefore we got rid of them. But, of course, some of the apocryphal stories are as interesting as the regular Bible... If you take away the folklore from the Bible, you don't have a heck of a lot left except beget, beget, beget, beget.

In support, Dundes notes twenty-two points common to ancient hero traditions. He does not say how many points match with Jesus. However, he comments on remembering that Jesus shared a lot of them. Flemming then provides a chart on which he lists the twenty-two points of interest mentioned by Dundes, after which Flemming notes either a match or a no match.

<ol type="1"> § His mother is a royal virgin. Flemming's evaluation: Match. My evaluation: Virgin, yes. Royal, no. (0.5 match)

§ His father is a king. Flemming: Match. My evaluation: Joseph was a carpenter, not a king. It has to be noted that the Gospels report Jesus calling God his father. But this is not similar to the hero tradition. But I'll be generous. (0.5 match)

§ His father is a relative of his mother. Flemming: Match. My evaluation: We wonder how Flemming sees in this a match. Perhaps Joseph and Mary are distant relatives as Jews. But this is unimpressive and a strain at best. Moreover, if Joseph is regarded as the father of Jesus, he was no king. So, there would be no match in number two. (No match)

§ Circumstances of his conception are unusual.

Flemming: Match. My evaluation: This seems to be a bit of an overlap with the first point. However, I'll be generous: (1.0 match)

§ He's reputed to be the son of a god. Flemming: Match. My evaluation: Match (1.0 match)

§ At birth, an attempt is made by his father to kill him. Flemming: Match. My evaluation: Herod was not the father of Jesus. Notice that Flemming employs three different fathers for Jesus in order to find his matches (God, Joseph, Herod). Nevertheless, an attempt was made to kill Jesus. (0.5 match)

§ He is spirited away and saved. Flemming: Match. My evaluation: I don't know what Dundes means by "spirited away." Although there was no ethereal escape, Jesus' parents fled with him to Egypt. (1.0 match)

§ Foster parented in a foreign country. Flemming: No match. My evaluation: (No match)

§ We're told nothing of his childhood. Flemming: Match. My evaluation: Although Luke's Gospel mentions little of Jesus' childhood, the amount is insignificant compared to his adulthood. This is easily explained given that the genre of the Gospels is ancient biography, which typically only spoke of the subject's adulthood. Thus, this attempt is unimpressive. (No match)

§ Upon reaching manhood, he returns to his future kingdom. Flemming: Match. My evaluation: Although Jesus spoke of God's kingdom being in the present, he realized that the kingdom in which he would reign was in the future and not of this world. (No match)

§ He has a victory over a king, giant, or dragon. Flemming: No match. Jesus did resist Satan and Paul later speaks of Jesus' having defeated Satan. My evaluation: (1.0 match)

§ He marries a princess. Flemming: No match. My evaluation: (No match)

§ He becomes king. Flemming: Match. My evaluation: Heroes become king on earth during their lifetime. This is not the case with Jesus. Nevertheless, since he was considered at least a king by his disciples, I'll be generous and assign it a full match (1.0 match).

§ Reigns uneventfully. Flemming: Match. My evaluation: The life of Jesus was filled with conflict, which led to his execution. (No match)

§ Prescribes laws. Flemming: Match. My evaluation: Match. (1.0 match)

§ He later loses favor with his subjects. Flemming: Match. My evaluation: Jesus was not king on earth. Thus, it is difficult to lose favor with

subjects you do not have. Granted, early in Jesus' ministry his hard teachings led many to abandon him. But this is not a parallel to a king who loses favor with his subjects, having reigned for a while. One may point to Jesus' positive reception in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday followed by those who called for his crucifixion on Good Friday as being a loss of favor. (1.0 match)

§ He is driven from the throne of the city. Flemming: Match. My evaluation: Jesus was not driven off of his throne to a place outside of Jerusalem. (No match)

§ He meets with a mysterious death. Flemming: Match. My evaluation: Death, yes. Mysterious, no. (0.5 match)

§ His death is often at the top of a hill. Flemming: Match. My evaluation: Match. (1.0 match)

§ His children, if any, do not succeed him. Flemming: Match. My evaluation: Jesus had no children, unless you believe *The Da Vinci Code*. That this is a match is a strain at best. (No match)

§ His body is not buried. Flemming: Match. My evaluation: All accounts, from the early creed in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 through all four Gospel accounts report Jesus' burial. (No match)

§ Nevertheless, he has one or more holy sepulchers. Flemming: Match. My evaluation: Today there are two sepulchers thought to have belonged to Jesus. But the garden tomb was not discovered and thought to be the possible tomb of Jesus until the late 1800s. Most archaeologists believe that Jesus' actual tomb is located in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. (No match)

Flemming adds up 19 matches out of a possible 22 and lists Jesus as coming in third place. My evaluation, given 2.5 matches out of generosity plus granting a match that Flemming did not, reveals only ten matches. Are ten matches of 22 enough to note a definite parallel? Greg Boyd has noted that William Wallace meets nearly every characteristic of a folk hero and yet we know Wallace was a historical person and that most of the points are true. Caesar Augustus was a historical person and a contemporary of Jesus. He has ten matches.[61] That's the same as Jesus. But no one questions the existence of Augustus as a result.

Dundes provides a few examples of folktales such as the story of William Tell and claims these derive from the tale of Oedipus, who saw himself in competition with his father for his mother's

attention. Is there any hint of this in the Gospels? Are the Father and Son vying for the attention of Mary? Such would seem to be a stretch.

Flemming also interviews Barbara and David Mikkelson, who run the aforementioned web site on urban legends: Snopes.com. Flemming asks them for an example of a story that started as fiction and then came to be regarded as real. Barbara responds that there are what are called “glurge” stories on snopes.com. “Glurge” is a term coined by one of their viewers. These are stories that were written and posted as fiction, only to be referred to later by others as factual accounts. Now, of course, no one would deny that glurges and urban legends occur. But merely showing that they exist does nothing to establish that Jesus is the product of the making of an urban legend. A similar argument to what Flemming proposes is the following: Fiction movies exist. “The God Who Wasn’t There” is a movie. Therefore, “The God Who Wasn’t There” is a fiction movie.

6. Flemming Interviews Earl Doherty

Flemming refers to Doherty as a “*historian and classical historian*” and “*one of the most important figures writing on the Jesus myth.*” As the interview progresses, the viewer becomes increasingly aware that Flemming’s presentation has been largely influenced by Doherty’s work. Notice the following statements by Doherty seen earlier in this review:

The first Gospel wasn’t written until almost the end of the first century.... The others follow over the next several decades.

It’s almost impossible to believe that they were writing what they were presenting as accurate history. And we can tell by the fact that Matthew, Luke, and John; they rework Mark in ways which are just a wholesale change of the situation. The words that were supposed to have been spoken by Jesus. They wouldn’t feel that they have the right to do that if they were presenting it to their readers as strict historically accurate accounts.

Paul never places Jesus’ death and resurrection in an historical setting. He never identifies a time or a place.

I explained earlier in my critique of Carrier that it is not uncommon for scholars to see all sorts of interpretations about what biblical authors really

meant, rather than what seems plain on the surface. Doherty shows he has creative skills in this area, too. Of the story of Jesus’ multiplying of the loaves and fishes, he writes, “*These are direct reworkings of the miracles of Elijah and Elisha.*” Doherty thinks of the New Testament as Midrash, a new way of seeing spiritual truth. He claims that the Evangelists went to the Old Testament and created a Jesus based on certain Old Testament passages. Thus, they were using Old Testament passages to create the story. Most scholars see things differently. They recognize that the New Testament writers attempted to make sense of Jesus by going back to the Old Testament to see what it may have said about him. Midrash was an attempt to take old stories and make them relevant to the people of the writer’s own time and culture. But we can note that those writing the midrash believed the stories they were adding to. When we consider that a number of ancient non-Christian sources mention a historical Jesus, it is easy to know which option to prefer. No doubt Doherty will claim that these are all interpolations by later Christian editors or that their sources for this data were Christians. But the majority of Josephus scholars see good reasons for holding that Josephus knew of and mentioned Jesus in his writings and it is unlikely that a Roman historian such as Tacitus who had no respect for Christians would rely on their reports about Jesus for his own writing of history.

Doherty questions whether the apostles died as martyrs: “*... there is no evidence in the early record that any of the apostles were actually martyred. Paul makes no mention of any of the ones that he knew as being killed, even when he speaks about the hardships that he and others had to endure. That’s a much later Church tradition and it was a popular myth in itself.*” He says that Paul was not aware of any of the disciples who had died. But this seems unlikely. Paul said that he had consented to the executions of Christians. Luke reports that Paul consented to the death of Stephen (Acts 7:57-8:3; 9:1). The speeches attributed to Paul by Luke very clearly say that Paul was aware of Christians who had been martyred and was involved in the process (Acts 22:4; 26:10). Scholars are divided as to whether Paul uttered these speeches or if Luke is reporting early Church tradition in narrative format by placing these traditions about Paul in the mouth of Paul himself. Few believe that the

content of the speeches was invented by Luke. Either way, we have early tradition about Paul.

What does Paul himself say? In two of Paul's undisputed letters, he makes statements that are compatible with what Luke reports he said (1 Corinthians 15:9; Philippians 3:6). Moreover, Paul may have been one of the first apostles to die. In this case, he would not have reported the deaths of other apostles. His martyrdom is attested by no less than seven ancient sources, the earliest of which is Clement of Rome (c. AD 95) who was most likely a disciple of Peter who died around the same time as Paul.[62]

That Christians were being executed by the middle of the first century is certain. The Roman historian Tacitus reports that in the time of Nero, a "multitude"[63] of Christians suffered martyrdom: "Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired" (Annals 15:44). Many scholars believe that Peter and Paul suffered martyrdom during the Neronian persecution.

The reports concerning the individual martyrdoms of most of the disciples are late. However, in the case of Peter, Paul, and James, they are not. And we have multiple reports regarding the willingness of the disciples to suffer continuously and even die for their conviction that Jesus had been raised. Only the hyperskeptics to whom we are responding question the sincerity of the apostles' claim to have seen the risen Jesus. After all, if you do not believe that Jesus ever existed, you must likewise deny that a historical Jesus had apostles who saw him die and who were transformed when they saw him alive again.

Doherty attempts to dismiss the dual passages in Josephus that mention Jesus by claiming they are both interpolations. But this is not as easy as Doherty imagines. I have answered a similar attempt by an amateur scholar to dismiss Josephus as an authentic first century source who mentions the historical Jesus. (See both critiques of the book by Acharya S, *The Christ Conspiracy: The Greatest Story Ever Sold* at <http://www.answeringinfidels.com/content/category/5/73/49/>.) By far, most scholars hold that Josephus knew of Jesus and mentioned him

twice in his works.

Doherty believes there was a Q community that did not believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Jesus in Q is not considered a Savior figure, but bears a strong resemblance to the Greek cynics of the period. Doherty thinks the documentary record shows that today's Christianity is a combination of the Christianities of both the Q community and Paul and that this combination took place in the Gospel of Mark. It is not a mix of oral tradition that Mark has tied together.

In Larry Hurtado's recent work on Christology, which is quickly becoming the major work on the topic, he interacts with John Kloppenborg's work on Q. Kloppenborg seems to agree with Doherty that Q's failure to note any passion narratives or redemptive interpretations of the death of Jesus indicates that Q does not know them. But Hurtado points out that it is "not credible to imagine these Q people as somehow remaining ignorant, while all about them interpretations of Jesus' death as redemptive, and belief in Jesus' resurrection as well, were circulating among followers of Jesus." [64] Paul is clear that what he preaches is essentially in agreement with what was coming out of Jerusalem (Galatians 2:1-10). Moreover, the Semitisms in some of the oral traditions found in his letters likewise seem to point to a Jerusalem origin. We know that the Jerusalem apostles and Paul were preaching the death and resurrection of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:11). Thus, if there was a Q community, and this is questioned today,[65] we must ask why this document, if it was a document rather than an oral tradition, did not mention the death and resurrection of Jesus. We may postulate a few options. First, it could be that, for reasons unknown to us, Matthew and Luke preferred to use other sources when it came to these stories. Second, it could be that Q was composed during the lifetime of Jesus. In this case, we would not expect passion and resurrection narratives. The bottom line is that Q may or may not have existed and there is far more skepticism over the "Q community", to which Doherty refers to as fact, than there is for a Q source. If Q indeed existed, the absence of a passion and resurrection narrative is curious. But I have presented two possibilities for why this may be so. Moreover, if Mark used Q as one of his sources, we must ask

how we may detect this in his Gospel. After all, scholars identify Q by tradition common to Matthew and Luke but not found in Mark! Thus, Doherty's argument that Mark combined Q and Paul does not make much sense.

Doherty says he has two "smoking guns" when it comes to shooting down the position that Jesus was a historical person. His first is comprised of two passages in Hebrews (8:4; 10:37). Hebrews 8:4 reads, "If Jesus had been on earth, he would not even have been a priest" (Doherty's translation). Doherty comments, "if Jesus had been on earth' ... Now those words in the context convey the clear implication that he never was." He then cites a scholar who says that the normal interpretation of those words allow this interpretation. But since this would mean that Jesus never existed, we should prefer other options. "This shows you the kind of thinking and interpretation of texts that goes into regular New Testament scholarship. It just doesn't allow you to see what the texts are actually saying."

Does the text actually imply that Jesus never existed? Let's look at how it fits into its context. In Hebrews 7:14 the author says that Jesus came from the tribe of Judah and then offered himself as a sacrifice (7:27). Being from the tribe of Judah ties Jesus to an earthly life. In 8:1 he says that Jesus is a high priest who took his seat at the right hand of God. In 8:4, the verse under consideration, he says Jesus would not have been a priest if he had been on earth. In 8:6 he says, "But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises".[66]

In context, the author of Hebrews is saying that if Jesus had continued to be on earth rather than going to heaven, he would not be serving as a priest as he now does. Instead, he sacrificed his life in order to inaugurate the new and heavenly covenant and serves as our priest in heaven.

When this verse (8:6) is considered in its context, Doherty's interpretation is very awkward. But there is another reason for rejecting Doherty's interpretation that weighs even more heavily. Elsewhere, Hebrews presents Jesus as one who lived on earth (2:9, 14, 17; 5:7; 7:14; 10:5, 10; 12:2-3; 13:12). Thus, it seems very unlikely that

he would speak of the earthly existence of Jesus on a number of occasions, then contradict himself by speaking of his non-existence on two other occasions. This is why New Testament scholarship will never adopt Doherty's interpretation.

Doherty mentions a second passage in Hebrews as part of his first smoking gun: 10:37. He translates it, "the one who is to come will come and soon," then comments:

by saying that the Messiah is coming soon, this shows very clearly that the writer has no knowledge of him already having been here in the person of Jesus. Now Christian commentators have to do a bit of twisting to deny the same meaning of that passage. But they do that all the time. They've developed a real proficiency in obscuring what the texts are really saying.

Once again, it is very clear that Doherty does not bother to read the context. Nor does he seem familiar with the ancient Christian belief that Jesus would return from heaven very soon. In context, the author is encouraging Jewish Christians, who have begun to be persecuted by imprisonment and were having their property confiscated. He encourages them to remain steady in their faith and that they will be rewarded. It is in this immediate context that he then writes, "For in a very little time, the one coming will come and will not delay." It is just like encouraging an injured car accident victim by saying, "Hang in there! The ambulance will be here very soon!" Doherty has totally missed the meaning of these verses. As we saw, the author of Hebrews is familiar with a historical Jesus. Thus, Doherty's two bullets in his first 'smoking gun' have backfired.

His second smoking gun is found in an apology by Minucius Felix, which is a debate between a pagan named Octavius and a Christian Minucius. The *Anchor Bible Dictionary* dates this work sometime between the late second and early third-centuries.[67] Octavius provides a list of accusations he has heard about the Christians, such as, they adore the head of a donkey, have secret and nocturnal rituals, worship the genitals of their priests, are incestuous, worship a wicked and crucified man and his cross, kill an infant, lick its blood and divide its limbs, etc.[68] He thinks there is probably some truth to the accusations

but does not know. Felix denies it all and says that Christians are not even allowed to hear of such horrible things, much less do them. He adds, *“For in that you attribute to our religion the worship of a criminal and his cross, you wander far from the neighbourhood of the truth, in thinking either that a criminal deserved, or that an earthly being was able, to be believed God.”*[69] In other words, Felix says that Christians neither worship a criminal nor his cross. For a criminal is unworthy of worship and an earthly being cannot be thought of as God. By no means is Felix saying that Christians believe Jesus was a criminal or that he was merely a human – or that he never existed.

These are Doherty’s two “*smoking guns*.” But they are nothing more than a child’s capgun. It makes noise, but it cannot deliver what it threatens. I strongly recommend that Doherty stay away from gunfights.

Flemming compares Doherty’s work with that of Galileo. Galileo presented evidence that the earth revolves around the sun rather than the other way around, yet others refused to look into the telescope. In a similar manner, Flemming claims that people won’t look at Doherty’s work because it will destroy the assumptions of biblical scholarship over the past 1900 years. Doherty says the idea has been around for 200 years and that he has contributed only a few new ideas to it. He adds that avant-garde scholarship is perhaps 10-15 years away from giving serious consideration to the idea.

He also says he is not the only one writing on the subject. There are others. But he admits that these writings are found on the internet by amateur scholars, a community with which he identifies himself. He defines an amateur scholar as one who has not come up through the established ranks but has done private research. Flemming butts in and says this is not a problem, since Galileo was an amateur. (Flemming is mistaken. Galileo received formal education in physics and mathematics. He made a number of notable inventions, including the pump and the telescope. Anyone with a grandfather clock in their home can also thank Galileo. He was appointed Professor of Mathematics at the University of Padua.)

When Flemmings asks Doherty if there have been

any attempts to refute *The Jesus Puzzle*, Doherty answers that there have not been any attempts to refute his work on the internet by recognized scholars. While he is correct that recognized scholars have not given his work any attention, he and Flemming are incorrect that no attempts have been made. A number of good critiques are posted online.[70] While it is true that Doherty would label most if not all of these as “amateur scholars,” why should he or Flemming balk at that? Just a few minutes earlier they attempted to justify Doherty’s status as an amateur scholar. This is doubletalk on the part of Doherty and Flemming. They seek recognition for the work of amateur scholars while refusing to recognize the work of amateur scholars who offer critiques of Doherty’s work.

While professional scholars have paid no attention to Doherty’s work, they have certainly responded to the hypothesis he proposes, namely, the idea that Jesus never existed.

Günther Bornkamm: *“to doubt the historical existence of Jesus at all ... was reserved for an unrestrained, tendentious criticism of modern times into which it is not worth while to enter here.”*[71]

Rudolf Bultmann: *“Of course the doubt as to whether Jesus really existed is unfounded and not worth refutation. No sane person can doubt that Jesus stands as founder behind the historical movement.”*[72]

Michael Grant: *“To sum up, modern critical methods fail to support the Christ-myth theory. It has ‘again and again been answered and annihilated by first-rank scholars’. In recent years ‘no serious scholar has ventured to postulate the non-historicity of Jesus’—or at any rate very few, and they have not succeeded in disposing of the much stronger, indeed very abundant, evidence to the contrary.”*[73]

Paul Maier: *“the total evidence [for the existence of Jesus] is so overpowering, so absolute that only the shallowest of intellects would dare to deny Jesus’ existence. And yet this pathetic denial is still parroted by “the village atheist”, bloggers on the internet, or such organizations as the Freedom from Religion Foundation.”*[74]

Michael Martin: "Well's thesis [that Jesus never existed] is controversial and not widely accepted." [75]

Robert Van Voorst: "Contemporary New Testament scholars have typically viewed their [i.e., Jesus mythers] arguments as so weak or bizarre that they relegate them to footnotes, or often ignore them completely." [76]

Flemming and Doherty need to realize that professional scholars spend their lifetime in research. This involves interacting with the works of other professional scholars who both agree and disagree. Interacting with amateur scholars is not a good use of their time, unless a particular work has become influential. This is not at all to claim that amateur scholars do not produce good work. To the contrary, several amateur scholars have distinguished themselves as very sharp thinkers. However, unless an amateur scholar or one or more of their contributions have become influential to a wide audience, why should professional scholars feel obligated to interact, especially if an adequate reply has been provided by another amateur scholar?

There comes a point when a conspiracy theory has been investigated and rejected so many times that one cannot be expected to open a new investigation every time someone cries 'conspiracy,' unless there is a good amount of new information that accompanies that claim. Doherty himself says that the hypothesis that Jesus never existed has been around for 200 years and that he has only contributed only a few new ideas to it. Thus, since scholars have totally rejected the Jesus myth hypothesis again and again and little new information is offered, we are under no obligation to give it new consideration.

This ends Flemming's case for the non-existence of Jesus.

7. From Village Christian to Village Atheist

Flemming goes further than merely attempting to make a case against the existence of a historical Jesus of Nazareth. He also attacks religion in general. "For thousands of years, humanity has been obsessed with blood sacrifices. Is it an accident that the story of the crucifixion of Jesus gave Christians a suffering hero whose flesh they

could eat and whose blood they could drink? Of course Christians today aren't obsessed with blood sacrificing. Except that they are." Clips from Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion of the Christ* are then shown. "For many Christians, The Passion of the Christ was the single most powerful experience of their lives." He notes that this movie made "\$370 million and still counting."

Flemming turns to Carrier and says, "Let me propose something: Religion does no harm at all." Carrier laughs then comments,

Well of course the evidence of history and even contemporary events refutes that. Even if we set aside the obvious conflict violence that has always plagued society and has gotten particularly worse under the Judeo-Christian religions, even if we set that aside, we have ordinary everyday things that are gone wrong. The sort of dehumanization and mistreatment of homosexuals for example is a prominent example and it's getting worse in this country actually. It was getting better for a while but now there's this backlash and that's bad, that's bad for humanity. And religion that encourages or even allows that is wrong.

Later he says,

I do have serious concerns.... I'm seeing more and more the attitude of Christians toward secular humanists and atheists is very, very similar to the attitudes of pre-war Nazis to Jews. And it's almost as if atheists are the new Jews. And the classic example of this is this book by Benjamin Wiker called Moral Darwinism, that is essentially Mein Kampf, except he just took out 'Jew' and put 'atheism' in its place.... What's going to happen when we have like another depression, like we had right before World War II in Germany where the economy collapsed. Who's gonna get blamed? When we have these Christians in power, who really think atheists are responsible for everything that's wrong, persuasion doesn't fix the problem, society is going south, the economy is going south ... Who are ya gonna kill? Well, the same people that Hitler killed, which is the Jews.... If we get into a situation where Christians like Bush basically gain a permanent foothold in power in society like they have now... if that stays that way and then something really bad happens ... what's going to happen is that atheists are going to end

up on the \$@!# end of the stick.

Carrier seems to forget that the greatest slaughters in our world's history came from atheist regimes. They were not religious wars. Consider Stalin, Mao, and the killing fields of Cambodia.[77] These alone add up to more than 80 million people killed by atheists in the twentieth century, when they came into power for the first time. This does not include those killed by the aggressive governments of North Korea and North Vietnam who were actually attempting to eliminate religion and even now continue to work toward that end. Thus, it seems that if anyone should be concerned for their safety, it is those who maintain religious beliefs, rather than atheists. In his interview with fellow radical atheist Richard Dawkins, Flemming himself comments, "*Often what atheists are after is an intolerance of religion and it's very hard to get across.*"

I like Richard Carrier, respect him, and regard him a friend. But he appears paranoid here. During the Great Depression or the recession of the 70s or even our very recent recession, was there a serious effort to blame atheists for the economic problems in the U.S.? Has Bush, whom Carrier fears, hinted that atheists are to blame for our country's woes? There are certainly a few Christians who say that God is trying to get our attention and is, thus, responsible for disasters like 9/11 and Katrina. But these are a minority and most Christians are rightly embarrassed by them. So, let us stop with the alarmist rhetoric.

Carrier finds Lee Smolin's arguments persuasive that there are multiple universes and that we happen to live in the one where everything is in place for life. (See David Wood's decisive critique of Carrier's use of Smolin: A Carriocentric Universe.) He then says that if the design argument employed by theists works, it would actually prove that God built the universe for black holes, not for humans. He continues by arguing that if Christianity were true, the universe would be as Paul and other early Christians believed: only one solar system, not zillions of galaxies billions of years old. There would be tons of evidence that the universe was created 6,000-10,000 years ago. We wouldn't have any evidence for evolution. We wouldn't need all the physical constants or subatomic particles. We would only need the five particles which Paul and Aristotle

thought there were. The earth would be the center of the universe, since it is the center of God's attention and the purpose for which everything else was created. Why would he make it any other way? Thus, the universe we have is not the universe we would expect if Christianity is true.

Even if Paul believed that the sun revolves around the earth, that there is only one solar system rather than the nearly one trillion galaxies now thought to exist, and that the universe is only 6,000-10,000 years old instead of around 15 billion years old, why would this disprove Christianity? Paul is, in fact, silent on these matters. Today's Christians debate the age of the universe and earth. Many, if not most, of today's Christian philosophers and scientists have no problem holding that the universe is 12-15 billion years old and that the earth is probably 4.5 billion years old, and they see no tension with the biblical record. So, one does not need to be committed to a certain age of the universe in order to be a Christian.

Carrier says that if Christianity is true, then we would not have any evidence for evolution. As we noticed previously with interpretations, data can be interpreted in a number of ways and evolutionary theory is no different. I am not at all persuaded by arguments for macroevolution. Not only do I find them highly problematic, but also the crusades by evolutionary activists like Richard Dawkins have persuaded me that the issue is more related to one's worldview than to the scientific data. Dembski, Behe, Gonzalez / Richards, and others have provided a compelling case based on science that an intelligent Designer is the best explanation for the observable data. Atheists like Carrier apparently recognize the strength of their case. Otherwise, there would be no need to postulate undetectable multiverses. It is the appearance of design and the extreme unlikelihood of life in the only universe known to us that forces this sort of hypothesis.

Carrier then argues that the human brain has to be large in order to perform the function of consciousness. In fact, it is so large that, without modern medicine, it has to kill one in five women who give birth to children. (I cannot understand how this relates.) The brain is very inefficient and very vulnerable to injury. It's not what a god would

design. God could have just given us a mind without a body, since he is a mind without a body. Thus, if a god exists, we would not need a brain that kills its mothers and requires so much energy and be so vulnerable to injury. If it is impossible for a mind to exist without a brain, then it follows necessarily that the only way to have a conscious being is to have a brain. Thus, if we assume that there is no disembodied mind, it necessarily predicts that the only way that we could have a mind is to have a brain. We need brains if atheism is true. Thus, *“the existence of large brains is positive proof that atheism is true, because the Christian God would build something differently.”*

Let's dissect Carrier's argument and see what it looks like:

- § If we have large brains, atheism is true.
- § We have large brains.
- § Therefore, atheism is true.

This is a standard *modus ponens* argument. The logic is valid. Thus, if Carrier's premises are true, we have an airtight deductive argument for atheism. Having stated his argument, Carrier says that it may not be *“proof or settle the issue, but it is evidence for the truth of atheism.”* However, since this is a deductive argument, if any of his premises are incorrect, his argument fails.

Let's look, then, at Richard's premises. According to his first premise, if we have large brains, atheism is true. In order to support his view, he argues that the brain is very inefficient and very vulnerable to injury. It's not what a god would design. God could have just given us a mind without a body, since he is a mind without a body. Thus, his supporting argument can be stated as follows:

- § Necessarily, a perfect being creates a perfect product.
- § The brain is not a perfect product. (It is large, inefficient, and vulnerable to injury.)
- § Therefore, the brain was not created by a perfect being.

The problem with Carrier's argument is that there is no reason for holding his first premise, that a perfect being must always create a perfect product. We might imagine a number of reasons why this may not be the case. For example, when a restaurant prepares a meal for a patron, it does not prepare it for a long shelf life. The cook has

no intention of making the food so that it lasts past the night. What if a perfect being, for reasons unknown to us, did not want for humans to live forever? Or what if he had originally intended for humans with free will to live forever but allowed sin to result in eventual death for our benefit? Such a possibility is implicit in the Christian view and, thus, is not *ad hoc*. Let's also suppose that God had created us with far greater abilities. Would we use them wisely or would we strip the planet by now? Imagine a world with an eternal Hitler, Stalin, and Mao. Given a world of free beings, there may have been very good reasons for why God imposed time-limits on our lives.

Accordingly, there are no sound reasons for accepting Carrier's first premise and, thus, his argument falls to pieces, even apart from considering whether his second premise holds. Remember that if Carrier's argument fails, then his evidence for atheism fails.

Flemming turns to the Inquisition:

If the Bible is right, aren't the stakes as high as they can be? If a little suffering here on earth saves more souls for all eternity, isn't that a good thing? The Inquisition was not a perversion of Christian doctrine. The Inquisition was an expression of Christian doctrine.... Imagine if you killed your own child like the father and the people you [sic] that you did it for didn't recognize your sacrifice. Of course you wouldn't hear their prayers. Mel Gibson was right to portray the Jews as evil. These must be the most despicable people on earth unless this book [the Bible] is wrong. And if this book is wrong, what the hell is moderate Christianity? Jesus was only sort of the son of God? He only somewhat rose from the dead? Your eternal soul is at stake but you shouldn't make a big deal out of it? Moderate Christianity makes no sense. Is it any wonder that so many people choose the Christian leaders who actually have the courage of their convictions?

Here is Fleming's argument broken down:

- § If the Bible is right, then the Inquisition & Christianity are just.
- § The Inquisition and Christianity are unjust.
- § Therefore, the Bible is wrong.

This is a *modus tollens* argument and follows the same logic of the moral argument for the

existence of God.

§ If God does not exist, then objective moral values do not exist.

§ Objective moral values exist.

§ Therefore, God exists.

In both arguments, the logic is valid. Thus, the strength of the premises determines the strength of the argument. The weakness of the moral argument lies in the difficulty of proving the second premise: objective moral values exist. Most people believe that there is something intrinsically wrong with rape and torturing babies for the fun of it. Yet, we cannot prove this to be true. Thus, to the extent that one believes that morals are objective, i.e. that some things are really wrong irrespective of what others or a society thinks, one will find the moral argument persuasive.

What about Flemming's argument? His logic is valid. But once again, his first premise is incorrect, since a great strain is required in order to interpret Jesus' teachings in a manner that is compatible with the Inquisition. It was Catholic leadership that had gone way off track that brought about the Inquisition and the Crusades. One cannot find any teaching of Jesus stating that torturing a person atones for their denial of Christ. Accordingly, since the teachings of the Bible would not support the Inquisition or the Crusades, there is no reason to believe that if the Bible is correct that the Inquisition and Crusades were justified. Thus, Flemming's argument from the Inquisition fails.

Flemming turns to a discussion of issues of eschatology. He interviews Scott Butcher of RaptureLetters.com who describes his beliefs in a pretribulation view of the return of Christ and adds that he believes this will occur during his lifetime. Atheist Sam Harris says this interpretation is "*maladaptive*" regarding avoiding global conflict, which is the precursor to the return of Christ. It is a "*terribly dangerous state of affairs*" when Christians of this conviction are electing our state officials.

Throughout the video, Flemming exhibits immense sarcasm that makes his work seem more like an impassioned justification of his atheism than a documentary about Jesus. One such statement appears in his interview with Sam

Harris when he says, "*When people stop believing in God, they tend to have sex with sheep.*" Harris presents some sobering thoughts that relate to problems caused by Muslims who desire to be martyred. He asks how we can be neighbors with this mentality? Flemming asks Harris if we are doomed. Harris answers that "*It's hard to see a basis for real optimism.*" This concludes Flemming's case that religion is bad for society.

He then provides a short account of his past as a fundamentalist Christian in a Christian school named Village Christian School. He states that for the Christian, hell is a real place where you really go if you do not have salvation from Jesus. Jesus will forgive you from anything, except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the unforgivable sin (Luke 12:10; Mark 3:29).

And as luck would have it, the Holy Spirit is the easiest thing in the entire doctrine to doubt. God is out of your reach. Jesus was two thousand years ago. But the Holy Spirit is with you right here, right now. So, you better really actually feel the Holy Spirit. You can't deny it in your thoughts, because Jesus is in your thoughts. And if your mind starts to wander to the fact that there's no more evidence for the existence of this Holy Spirit than there is for the existence of unicorns, guess what you may have done? The greatest crime in fundamentalist Christianity is to think. And when I was at Village Christian I was terrified that I had actually done this.

Flemming's definition of blaspheming the Holy Spirit is bizarre. For him, if I question in my mind the existence of the Holy Spirit, I have committed the unpardonable sin. Most exegetes recognize that Mark 3:30 provides clarity of what it is to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. The scribes who came to destroy Jesus were attributing to Satan the works of the Holy Spirit done through Jesus. Thus, in essence they were insulting the Holy Spirit by calling him Satan. It is not the mechanical words by which the sin is committed. It is because they come from a heart that has hardened itself to the authority of Jesus, a complete rejection that caused people to want to destroy him. This is the precise opposite of the statement that "*Jesus is Lord*" that results in salvation (1 Corinthians 12:3). The words are not a magical formula that results in salvation by its mere recitation. It is only when they are the result

of a heart that has submitted to Christ as Lord that the words carry meaning.

Flemming goes back to Village Christian School and asks the current school superintendent Ronald Sipus some questions. He reads a few of the school's doctrinal statements. The infallibility of the Bible, the nature of God's existence in three persons, and the belief in the resurrection of believers to eternal life and nonbelievers to eternal judgment are stated. Flemming then asks, *"Tell me, what hard scientific evidence do you have that the world works this way?"* Sipus answers that there is good evidence for the truth of Christianity, such as the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. But ultimately it is a matter of faith. Flemming jumps on him for the *"faith"* part and exhibits a misunderstanding of the matter as his interview with Sipus continues. Sipus is clear throughout that he thinks there is good historical evidence for the truth of Christianity. Flemming replies that earlier he said there was no evidence for it and that it was a matter of faith. Sipus says, no, he thinks there is evidence.[78] But Flemming replies that he had said when it comes to matters of the future resurrection and judgment of the dead that it's a matter of faith. Sipus answers that he agrees. But Flemming asks why he is then teaching that this is the way the world operates. Let's look at it another way:

& Flemming: Do you think there is any scientific evidence for your theological statements?

& Sipus: There is scientific evidence for the truth of Christianity. But theological statements are a matter of faith.

& Flemming: Then why are you teaching that Christianity is scientifically true, when you say it is a matter of faith?

& Sipus: You misunderstood what I said. I'm not saying that I have scientific proof for theological statements.

& Flemming: But you said a moment ago that it's (the "it" is where the switch occurs) a matter of faith. So why are you teaching theological statements as the way the world operates?

& Sipus: I'm not.

Sipus is claiming that theological matters, such as the triune nature of God and future resurrection and judgment cannot be tested scientifically and are accepted on faith. I agree with him. We can

examine the scientific evidence for an Intelligent Designer and the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus and many of his sayings. But scientific arguments do not apply to matters of doctrine. Sam Harris, who is another of Flemming's authorities, answers by saying that if one cannot provide justification for one's convictions, you're laughed out of the room. I agree. But this would be a misunderstanding of Sipus' statement. If you were to ask him for a justification of his convictions, he would answer that Christianity has some very good scientific and historical evidence in its favor, which establishes the truth of Christianity. The Bible is a trustworthy source and, thus, the Christian is rationally justified in accepting truths of faith precisely because there are truths of reason.[79]

Flemming then asks Sipus if he believes the Bible should be interpreted literally. He answers that there are certain parts of the Bible that may not be taken literally. Nearly all Christians would agree with him. Jesus taught in parables. Were the stories and persons mentioned in the parables meant to be understood as historical figures? We may almost certainly answer "no." The personification of wisdom in the book of Proverbs is an obvious rhetorical device. Sipus notes that there are a number of interpretations of Genesis, ranging from a creation of everything within six, 24-hour days to believing that these days represent very long periods of time. He says that these are things upon which Christians debate and he is correct. The ages of the universe and the earth are not fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

In an interesting turn of events, Sipus graciously requests to ask Flemming a question off camera. Flemming refuses. Sipus charges Flemming with being dishonest in setting up the interview because Flemming was not discussing what he had originally communicated to Sipus. Instead, Sipus seems to believe that Flemming is there to make himself feel better about the discipline Flemming underwent while attending the school, perhaps trying to get some payback. It becomes apparent that Sipus wants to discuss this privately with Flemming, rather than to present it to Flemming's viewers. Flemming refuses, and Sipus ends the interview.

Flemming goes to the chapel where he says he

received Jesus three times, holds the camera up and says *"Here in this chapel where I first accepted Jesus as my personal savior, I just want to say one thing: I deny the Holy Spirit."* The main video ends on this note.

8. An Interview with Richard Dawkins

In an interview with Richard Dawkins in his second commentary, Dawkins makes the following statement:

Science, scientific reason, the Enlightenment, rationalism, are in their way powerful weapons against religion and all other forms of superstition. Those people who are well enough educated to understand science and reason tend to be the ones who have dropped religion. And so, by spreading science and rationality we would be combating religion and all other forms of superstition.... it's worth noticing that if you take the elite of American scientists, and one measure of that that's [sic] being taken as those being elected to the National Academy of Sciences, these are the cream American scientists, more than 90% of them do not hold any supernatural religious belief. So, among the best American scientists, religion is almost dead. And that's a very encouraging sign.

This is strong rhetoric from Dawkins who is on a crusade against non-atheistic science. Elsewhere Dawkins comments, *"It is absolutely safe to say that if you meet somebody who claims not to believe in evolution, that person is ignorant, stupid, or insane (or wicked, but I'd rather not consider that)."*[80]

The facts speak contrary to Dawkins' grandstanding. Evolution is in a period of serious crisis and it is becoming apparent to all who remain informed of the issues that there is a closed-mindedness, even an anti-intellectual climate,[81] embedded in the communities in which Dawkins roams. Evolution is not the self-evident axiom that Dawkins and others like him preach. Consider the following small sampling from a plethora of comments by prominent scientists:

"[There] is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all. The impression of design is overwhelming."[82]

Paul Davies, Ph.D., Templeton Laureate

"Astronomy leads us to a unique event. A universe which was created out of nothing, and delicately balanced to provide exactly the conditions required to support life. In the absence of an absurdly-improbable accident, the observations of modern science seem to suggest an underlying, one might say, supernatural plan."[83]

Arno Penzias, Ph.D., Nobel Laureate who confirmed the Big Bang Theory

"An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have to be satisfied to get it going."[84]

Francis Crick, Ph.D., Nobel Laureate who discovered DNA

"I'm a person who says in this book [Human Diversity] that we don't know anything about the ancestors of the human species. All the fossils which have been dug up and are claimed to be ancestors – we haven't the faintest idea whether they are ancestors....[85] Despite the excited and optimistic claims that have been made by some paleontologists, no fossil hominid species can be established as our direct ancestor"[86]

Richard Lewontin, Distinguished Prof of Zoology, Harvard Former President of the Society for the Study of Evolution, Geneticist, Marxist, Atheist

"We paleontologists have said that the history of life supports [the story of gradual adaptive change], all the while really knowing that it does not."[87] *"No wonder paleontologists shied away from evolution for so long. It never seems to happen.... Evolution cannot forever be going on somewhere else. Yet that's how the fossil record has struck many a forlorn paleontologist looking to learn something about evolution."*[88]

Niles Eldridge, PhD, Paleontologist, American Museum of Natural History

"Indeed, again and so far as I know, no one has yet produced a plausible conjecture as to how any of these complex molecules might have evolved

from simple entities.”[89]

Antony Flew, Ph.D. Philosopher and Former Atheist

“Is Archaeopteryx the ancestor of all birds? Perhaps yes, perhaps no: there is no way of answering the question. It is easy enough to make up stories of how one form gave rise to another, and to find reasons why the stages should be favoured by natural selection. But such stories are not part of science for there is no way of putting them to the test.”[90]

Colin Patterson, Senior Paleontologist, British Museum of Natural History.

“The known fossil record fails to document a single example of phyletic [gradual] evolution accomplishing a major morphologic transition and hence offers no evidence that the gradualistic model can be valid.”[91]

Steven M. Stanley, Ph.D., Professor of Paleobiology, Johns Hopkins University

“We conclude – unexpectedly – that there is little evidence for the neo-Darwinian view: its theoretical foundations and the experimental evidence supporting it are weak.”[92]

Richard Coyne, Ph.D., Dept. of Ecology and Evolution, University of Chicago

Michael Behe, Ph.D., Dept. of Biochemistry, Lehigh University, points out that the *Journal of Molecular Evolution* is run by a board of more than fifty prominent scientists in the field, a dozen of them members of the National Academy of Sciences. Over 2,500 papers have been written on various aspects of molecular evolution since the journal was started in 1971. Behe writes,

none of the papers published in JME over the entire course of its life as a journal has ever proposed a detailed model by which a complex biochemical system might have been produced in a gradual, step-by-step Darwinian fashion.[93]

Physicists Dyson, Kleban, and Susskind of Stanford and MIT wrote a paper in 2002 titled “Disturbing Implications of a Cosmological Constant.” In it, the scientists discuss the extreme

difficulties of having life anywhere in our universe aside from a miracle. They conclude that our understanding of physics must be wrong.

The Discovery Institute has a list of more than 400 scientists who maintain serious doubts over evolutionary theory. It is clear that attempts by Dawkins and others to state simply that educated people accept evolution and reject religion are unfounded.

9. More Failed Accusations

Robert Price falls short of saying that Jesus never existed. But he comes very close when he says, “*Jesus may not have existed.*” He also comments,

The hidden assumption is they [i.e., Christians] say that we might be dealing with a God who is an ornery theology professor and one day when you die and go up there, you’re called to the office of the professor, he says, ‘Well, I got your test back for you and I’m afraid you got an F. You’re going to hell because your opinions were incorrect.’ And that’s what they think God is. You don’t have the right answers? You’re damned. And so they don’t dare think for themselves, because they might make mistakes.... That seems to me an obviously silly and childish view of God.

I agree with Price that his perception of the Christian view of God is “*silly and childish.*” But I don’t think that he presents the Christian view of God. Price’s view is that if you don’t have the right answers, you’re going to hell. This seems to me to be a distortion of the Christian view. The Christian view is that man is in a state of estrangement from God, and that this will inevitably result in eternal separation from God. God does not want this and did what was necessary in order to make it possible to have a relationship with him. This relationship is made available to all. Thus, if one rejects this relationship, God gives him what he wishes. C.S. Lewis said that God honors the choices of individuals. A famous statement in his book *The Great Divorce* is,

There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’ All that are in Hell chose it.[94]

Two issues arise in reply: What about those who

have never heard and what about those who want evidence but just do not think it is there?

What about those who have never heard? This is a fair question that has a number of possibilities. For what I consider to be a sufficient answer, please see my article (forthcoming).

What about those who require evidence but do not think a sufficient amount is there for belief? I think this is also a fair question. Atheists should be prepared to answer how much proof is required for belief and whether their burden of proof is reasonable. Few have thought through these questions, much less justified their answers to them. Of course, this failure is not limited to hyperskeptics. Few professional historians have thought through the process of how they come to know something (i.e., hermeneutics) and the mechanics by which they get there (i.e., historiography).

David Wood has demonstrated quite convincingly that the burden of proof held by many hyperskeptics is unreasonable. See his comments on "Shermer's Last Law." Shermer renders belief impossible by the criteria he provides. What this line of thinking does is to rule out *a priori* the possibility of having evidence that would overthrow metaphysical naturalism. This is not reasonable scholarship. It is hyperskepticism.

The Secular Web is filled with examples that reflect the view that all that is needed to reject a supernatural explanation is a possible natural one, no matter how unlikely. In other words, a possible natural explanation, even if unreasonable is to be preferred over a supernatural one. This would be reasonable if we knew that God does not exist or that deism is true. However, this is not the case. As a result, we see all sorts of liberties taken in order to explain away data. For example, note what Doherty does to explain the multiple reports that Jesus had brothers:

§ Josephus' mention of James the brother of Jesus (Antiquities 20:200) is a Christian interpolation.[95]

§ "*brothers of the Lord*" referred to a "*Jewish 'brotherhood' of apostles of the spiritual Christ, located in Jerusalem, the one referred to in 1 Corinthians 9 and 15. As a sect they may have been known as 'brothers of the Lord'*"[96]

Regarding the first, that this passage is a Christian interpolation is a fringe position. This is not the place for a detailed discussion of this passage. May it suffice to say at the moment that today's leading Josephus scholar Louis Feldman writes, "*The passage about James [Antiquities Book 20, Sections 197-200] has generally been accepted as authentic.*"[97] Elsewhere he mentions this text and "*the authenticity of which has been almost universally acknowledged.*"[98] Another Jewish scholar, Zvi Baras, states that this passage "*is considered authentic by most scholars.*"[99] Edwin Yamauchi comments, "*Few scholars have questioned the genuineness of this passage.*"[100] Robert Van Voorst writes, "*The overwhelming majority of scholars holds that the words 'the brother of Jesus called Christ' are authentic, as is the entire passage in which it is found.*"[101]

Regarding Doherty's interpretation of "*brothers of the Lord*", this seems to me an example of amphiboly, where one exploits a slight ambiguity. Take for example a man smoking a cigarette in front of a sign that says "*No Smoking Allowed.*" When asked why he is not respecting the order, he answers, "*I am respecting it. If someone does not want to smoke, that is allowed here. But that does not forbid me from smoking. I'm justified in interpreting the sign as I have because if they were really concerned about forbidding people to smoke here, they would have made it clear.*" The same is occurring with Doherty's "*brother(s) of the Lord*" explanation. He takes an interpretation that seems obvious, finds a small loophole and exploits it in order to form a different hypothesis that is anything but obvious.

However, when making historical decisions, the historian looks for the best explanation for the facts. This is determined by a number of criteria, such as:

- § Which explanation accounts for all of the facts?
- § Which explanation accounts for all of the facts without having to strain them?
- § Given a particular explanation, would we expect to see all the knowable facts?
- § Which explanation is the simplest?

All four Gospels and Acts report that Jesus had brothers and sisters and Josephus reports that Jesus had a brother. Consider the following

passages:

Matthew 12:46-50 (cf. Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21): Notice that Jesus here contrasts father, mother, brother, and sister by birth with those by spiritual association. Matthew is very clear here that Jesus had brothers.

Matthew 13:55-57: That his mother, brothers, and sisters were part of his own household is interesting.

John 2:12: Here his brothers are distinguished from his disciples. So, the explanation that Paul's reference to James as a "*brother of the Lord*" and the phrase "*brothers of the Lord*" in 1 Corinthians 9:5 refer to a group of disciples will not do.

John 7:3-22: Here again the brothers of Jesus are distinguished from his disciples. Moreover, it is difficult to call the "*brothers of the Lord*" disciples when it says that they didn't believe in him! They would have to be a group of pious Jews waiting for Messiah. But then it is curious that they are not mentioned anywhere else, such as by Josephus.

Acts 1:13-14: Those present include the closest disciples of Jesus, the women disciples, his mother Mary, and his brothers.

Also see 1 Corinthians 9:5 where the "*brothers of the Lord*" are distinguished from the apostles and Peter. Thus, the explanation that "brothers" is here used as the equivalent "Christians" is mistaken.

It is also a strain to define the Greek word *adelphos* as "cousin," since the Greek word is not employed in this manner. In fact, "cousin" is not listed as a possible meaning in either of the two major Greek lexicons (BDAG, LS). Moreover, elsewhere Paul uses *anepsios* (cousin), not *adelphos*. Chances are pretty good that he would use *anepsios* when speaking of James in Galatians 1:19 and 1 Corinthians 9:5 instead of the typical *adelphos* (brother), if James was Jesus' cousin. Furthermore, there is no evidence anywhere of a group referred to as "*brothers of the Lord*." The theory that Jesus had brothers better explains all of the references to Jesus having a brother in all four Gospels, Galatians 1:19, 1 Corinthians 9:5, and in Josephus (Antiquities 20:200). The "cousin" theory has to

strain and come up with a number of subtheories in order to explain it. So, it's not the simplest. Therefore, the "brother theory" passes all four criteria easily while the "cousin theory" fails criterion 2, 3, and 4. Granted, the "brother" position is not airtight. Few historical positions are. But the historian should embrace the best historical position rather than one that is merely possible. It is clear that the best historical position is that James was the brother of Jesus.

I want to issue a call to realism. Christians have been so spoiled by the good evidence for the truth of Christianity that it is easy to be drawn into accepting the burden of proof demanded by hyperskeptics: "*Unless Christians can prove it beyond all doubt and without any other explanation having even the slightest possibility, I won't believe.*" If Flemming, Doherty, Carrier and others in their camp want to embrace this sort of burden of proof, they are free to do so. But this does not obligate those of us who are more prudent in our thinking to embrace their burden of proof. As responsible historians we are looking for the best explanation.

This unreasonable burden of proof on the part of hyperskeptics seems to me an act of the heart that says "*I don't want to believe*" rather than a critical mind willing to consider the extant data with integrity. God values free will and is not required to go beyond reasonable evidence. If a hyperskeptic wants to find a reason for rejecting the data, he will, even if it means distorting data and forming logically flawed arguments in order to do it. The DVD we are here considering is a prime example of this attitude and the method that accompanies it.

10. Conclusion

This film is a rehashing of the same hypercritical skepticism that has failed to convince even most skeptical scholars for decades. The Jesus mythers wonder why no scholars want to interact with their work. It is because little new material in terms of data or arguments is being presented in their case, a case that has been decisively refuted time and again. It is far weaker than the conspiracy theory concerning who shot Kennedy. As mentioned earlier, there comes a time when conspiracy theorists no longer command an audience when they rehash the same old

arguments. The few new arguments presented in this DVD are unconvincing. Bultmann and others had no respect for the arguments of Jesus mythers and neither should we. These arguments strain data and historical method to the extent that scholarly discussion with Jesus mythers becomes impossible.

(Earl Doherty wrote a Rebuttal to this review to which Mike Licona Replied.)

Other resources by Mike Licona are available from his website risenjesus.com.

References

[49] Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus: The Miracle Worker* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 247.

[50] See note 15 above.

[51] http://www.infidels.org/library/historical/kersey_graves/16/preface.html.

[52] http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/richard_carrier/graves.html.

[53] Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 820n6.

[54] Twelftree, 247.

[55] Twelftree, 247.

[56] Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 90.

[57] See Habermas and Licona (2004), 296n18.

[58] Psalm 19:5.

[59] Roberts, A., Donaldson, J., & Coxe, A. C. 1997. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. I : Translations of the writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325. The apostolic fathers with Justin Martyr*

and Irenaeus. Logos Research Systems: Oak Harbor.

[60] Genesis 27:25-28; Deuteronomy 33:28.

[61] According to Suetonius, the circumstances of Augustus' conception were very unusual. His mother Atia was in the temple of Apollo at midnight and fell asleep. Apollo took the form of a snake, crawled into Atia and impregnated her (1.0 match). Thus, as Son of Apollo, Augustus is thought to be a Son of a god (1.0). He was foster parented in another country in the sense that his great uncle Julius Caesar made him his heir probably in his mid-teens and took him to war with him (0.5 match). We are told little of his childhood (1.0 match). Upon obtaining manhood, he returns to his future kingdom (1.0 match). Although he did not have a victory over a king, giant, or dragon, his victory over Mark Antony was huge. Antony was a much stronger opponent with the authority and backing of the Senate behind him (0.5 match). He became king (1.0 match). He reigned uneventfully. The Pax Romanos or glory days of Rome occurred during the reign of Augustus (1.0 match). He prescribed laws (1.0 match). His child was not his successor. Rather his son-in-law Tiberius succeeded him (1.0 match). His body was cremated rather than buried (1.0 match).

[62] For details and documentation on the fate of the disciples, see Habermas and Licona (2004), 56-62; 65-69.

[63] Latin *multitudo*.

[64] Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 230.

[65] Mark Goodacre and Nicholas Perrin, *Questioning Q: A Multidimensional Critique* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004).

[66] These biblical citations are from the NASB.

[67] *Anchor Bible Dictionary, Volume 4*, page 842.

[68] 'The Octavius of Minucius Felix' in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume IV*, chapter IX.

[69] 'The Octavius of Minucius Felix', chapter XXIX.

[70] See (in alphabetical order) Bede and Christopher Price: <http://www.bede.org.uk/jesusindex.htm>; Bernard Muller: <http://www.christianorigins.com/doherty-muller.html> (no longer available as of Sep 08); Christopher Price: http://www.christiancadre.org/member_contrib/cp_doherty.html; Doxa website: http://www.geocities.com/metacrock2000/Myth/Jp_uzzell1.htm; J. P. Holding: <http://www.tektonics.org/doherty/dohertyhub.html>; Patrick Narkinsky: http://www.theism.net/authors/pnarkinsky/jesusmo_saic.html; <http://www.preventingtruthdecay.org/jesuspuzzle2.shtml>. At least the last of these reviews was unavailable at the production time of Fleming's video.

[71] *Jesus of Nazareth*, 28.

[72] *Jesus and the Word*, 13.

[73] Michael Grant, *Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels* (New York: Collier Books, 1992), 200.

[74] "Did Jesus Really Exist," an article on www.4Truth.net.

[75] *The Case Against Christianity*, 67.

[76] *Jesus Outside the New Testament*, 16.

[77] That Hitler was an atheist is debatable. For an interesting article that can be viewed online that has a number of interesting quotes from Hitler, see http://homepages.paradise.net.nz/mischedj/ca_hitler.html.

[78] At the end of the video, Sipus rightly notes that evolutionists share the same problem. While scientific evidence exists for microevolution, evolutionists make a metaphysical leap when they claim that all life is the result of macroevolution. In other words, microevolution plus a lot of time will produce macroevolutionary changes. As many have pointed out, there is a paucity of scientific evidence in support of macroevolution, which is defended with a vengeance.

[79] Craig's description of Aquinas' bifurcation between truths of reason and truths of faith is helpful. See William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994), 20-22.

[80] New York Times, 4/9/89, sec. 7, p. 34.

[81] For a good example of censorship of a peer-reviewed scientific journal article written by a Cambridge educated biologist, see <http://www.4truth.net/site/apps/nl/content3.asp?c=hiKXLbPNLrF&b=784461&ct=982987>.

[82] Paul Davies, *The Cosmic Blueprint: New Discoveries in Nature's Creative Ability to Order the Universe* (New Jersey: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 203.

[83] H. Margenau and R.A. Varghese, eds., *Cosmos, Bios, and Theos* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1992), 83.

[84] Francis Crick, *Life Itself: Its Origin and Nature* (New Jersey: Simon & Schuster, 1981), 88.

[85] Harper's, 2/85, 61.

[86] Richard Lewontin, *Human Diversity* (New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1995), 163.

[87] *Time Frames: The Rethinking of Darwinian Evolution and the Theory of Punctuated Equilibria* (New Jersey: Simon & Schuster, 1985), Appendix.

[88] Niles Eldridge, *Reinventing Darwin: The Great Debate at the High Table of Evolutionary Theory* (Wiley, 1995), 95.

[89] Antony Flew, In a personal letter to Gary Habermas.

[90] Harper's, 2/85, 49.

[91] Steven Stanley, *Macroevolution, Pattern and Process* (W. H. Freeman & Co., 1980), 39.

[92] H. A. Orr and J. A. Coyne, "The Genetics of Adaptation: A Reassessment," in *American Naturalist*, 140, 726.

[93] Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 176.

[94] C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (New York: MacMillan, 1946), 72.

[95] See Doherty's comments: <http://pages.ca.inter.net/~oblio/supp10.htm#Here%20in%20summary>. [No longer available as of Sep 08]

[96] See Doherty's comments: <http://pages.ca.inter.net/~oblio/supp10.htm>. [No longer available as of Sep 08]

[97] Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata, eds., *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 434.

[98] *Ibid.*, 56.

[99] *Ibid.*, 341.

[100] Edwin Yamacuhi, "Jesus and the Scriptures", 53.

[101] Robert Van Voorst. *Jesus Outside the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 83.

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