

# The Hysterical Search for the Historical Jesus

by Don and Joy Veinot

We live in an increasingly postmodern age. Our leading universities are the setting for a revolutionary change in the manner in which we view past events. The history of the ancient world and even the history of our own century are being rewritten, “deconstructed,” interpreted in new ways. For example, columnist George Will writes,

“Without an intellectual anchor, cultural institutions are carried along by prevailing winds, which blow from the left. Familiar exhibits of this process are universities, where various subjects are enveloped in fogs of politics and abstractions. The Holocaust is being exploited by academic entrepreneurs and factions with political agendas . . . [it] is being hijacked, turned into an empty flask to be filled up with academic obscurantism and trendy political advocacy masquerading as scholarship.”<sup>1</sup>

Liberal professors and scholars are “politicizing” history, rewriting it to reflect their late-20<sup>th</sup>-century liberal political worldview. Says Will,

“Comparing Nazi misogyny and the exploitation of Jewish women by Jewish men, Ringelheim has stressed the extent to which ‘the sexism of Nazi ideology and the sexism of the Jewish community met in tragic and involuntary alliance.’”  
 “So,” remarks Will, tongue-in-cheek, “the Holocaust was a serious episode of sexual harrassment.”<sup>2</sup>

## History in the Re-making

As important as we feel it is that our university students are taught real history rather than bogus “deconstructions,” we feel that there is a far more dangerous (in a spiritual sense) rewriting of history that’s afoot and gaining momentum in our culture. Christianity and the Jesus of the Bible

are being “deconstructed” right before our eyes. One would have to be living in a cave not to have noticed the articles that have appeared in our newspapers, magazines, and on public and cable television these past few years giving us the “real” scoop about Jesus and the Bible.

This historical rewrite is being led by a group calling themselves the *Jesus Seminar*. Robert Funk, a retired professor from the University of Montana who was joined in 1985 by John Dominic Crossan, started this group. Bishop John Shelby Spong from New Jersey is also a *Seminar* member. Like those who are reinterpreting the significance of the Holocaust in secular history, these religiously liberal professors and scholars are “politicizing” religious history, rewriting it to reflect their late-20<sup>th</sup>-century liberal religious-political worldview. According to these scholarly revisionists, the New

Testament is really not *history* but religious myth and faith “stories.”

The scholars of the *Jesus Seminar* begin from a perspective of denying the literal understanding of the Scriptures, and they seek alternative, metaphorical meanings behind the words and phrases of the gospel writers. The “explanations” they offer are often very far-fetched, and sometimes quite humorous to anyone who knows the Bible well. It is, indeed, a hysterical search for the “historical” Jesus.

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*"Search" (Continued from page 1)*

In the layman-friendly book by John Dominic Crossan, *Who Is Jesus?* he tells us that the *Jesus Seminar* meets twice a year for four days and involves 40-50 scholars.<sup>3</sup> He admits they have received a lot of public attention.<sup>4</sup> We would agree. In fact, there hasn't been an Easter in recent memory which hasn't brought about a number of stories in the major newspapers, radio and television with interviews featuring Dr. Crossan, Bishop Spong and others.

Crossan<sup>5</sup> is a very likable scholar, indeed. He is a very grandfatherly individual with an even temper and a wonderful Irish accent. He taught at DePaul University in Chicago from 1969 until 1995, at which time he retired and was made Professor Emeritus. The media in our culture greatly favors the anti-supernatural explanations offered by Crossan and his liberal colleagues and grants Crossan a fawning respect it would *never* accord to conservative, Bible-believing scholars. Surely, such a learned voice, affiliated with such an august body as the *Jesus Seminar*, is one that should be listened to, trusted, and quoted often.

**Democracy in Action**

We must ask, how do the liberal theologians of the *Jesus Seminar* arrive at their novel conclusions? They discuss the text in question and, as Dr. Crossan writes, "we decide."<sup>6</sup> *What* do they decide? They decide what words Jesus actually spoke and which are myths, faith fables, and layers on the "Jesus Tradition." This is done through a very literary, scientific, and irrefutable method. They

"vote in secret, using colored beads to indicate [their] views about how likely it is that the particular words actually came from the historical Jesus. A red bead means that the saying 'most likely' came from Jesus, a pink bead means 'likely,' a gray bead means 'not likely,' and a black bead means 'very unlikely.'" <sup>7</sup>

By employing such an up-to-date,

sophisticated methodology, is it any wonder they have "voted" that Jesus only spoke about 18% of the words attributed to Him in the New Testament?

They do not allow the New Testament text to govern their understanding of who Jesus was and is. Rather, they have a predetermined view of what Jesus was like based on their anti-supernatural and politically liberal bias, and *they judge the text* by their own preconceptions! Ask yourself, how could they vote on what Jesus did or did not say, unless they had already decided what kind of person He was and what He taught? It is a ridiculously circular process, guaranteed to "find" the Jesus *they put there themselves*, by ignoring the contrary evidence. It's like a court trial where the guilt of the defendant has been predetermined, and all the overwhelming evidence suggesting his innocence is summarily removed from the record, based upon presumption of guilt. How fair would that be? We might see a hanging, but justice and truth would not be served.

**Tools and Searchlights**

Crossan tells us there are a number of tools available to scholars in their work, and he admits that the tool one uses will determine what sort of Jesus is "found." "Clearly, everything depends upon the methods used to uncover the facts about Jesus."<sup>8</sup>

Dr. Crossan refers to the three tools he uses in order to "deconstruct" Jesus as "searchlights." The first of the three is "cross-cultural study." With this "tool," Crossan attempts to understand the social setting in which Jesus lived by comparing it with other Mediterranean cultures of the time.

"What can scholars tell me about societies that, like the one in which Jesus lived, have elites and peasants, colonial subjects and imperial rulers? To take an example: If I am tempted to picture Jesus as a literate, middle class carpenter, cross cultural study reminds me that no middle class existed in ancient societies and that the peasant class from

which he came is largely illiterate. So I am kept from imagining a Jesus who could not possibly have existed at his time and in his situation.”<sup>9</sup>

Crossan asserts that Jesus and most of His followers were illiterate, and that the disciples who wrote the gospels were far better educated than Jesus possibly could have been. These writers supposedly took it upon themselves to “fix” this problem by elaborating on what Jesus said and did, even though the writers of the New Testament explicitly deny doing this. John says,

“*This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true*” (John 21:24, NIV).

Of course, in our postmodern world, we could argue about the meanings of John’s words. For example, the truth of John’s statement might depend on what our definition of “is” is. Does the statement mean that the testimony *is* true for all time and under all circumstances? Or *is* the testimony true only on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, during March, April and May, and only in a leap year? We insist that John means his testimony *IS* true in the generally accepted sense of the word. Webster defines “*is*” as “third-person singular, present indicative of ‘be.’” John’s testimony *be* true, it is not some made-up story. That’s the sense here.

Yet, we are asked to believe Crossan, rather than the eyewitnesses of the events, without any proof whatsoever that the gospel writers fudged their report in any detail. Crossan’s cross-cultural suppositions are not convincing. It was common practice for young men in Israel to be taught to read the scrolls, memorize Jewish history, and participate in discussions with the men in the synagogue. Luke reports that Jesus read from the scrolls in the temple (Luke 4:16), and we will believe Luke until proof is forthcoming that he lied about this. Nevertheless, the issue of Jesus’ literacy is a moot point to a person who believes the biblical text. In the Bible, Jesus is presented as being God incarnate, a unique person who has the very mind of God. A secular education will neither make nor break such a person.

### Deconstructing a Deconstruction

Let’s turn the tables on Crossan. He says it is impossible to imagine an illiterate Jesus saying and doing the things that Jesus is portrayed as saying and doing in the New Testament. How possible is it to imagine an illiterate peasant doing and saying the things that *Crossan* asserts that He did? Crossan’s Jesus is a political-social revolutionary. Historically, social revolutions such as Crossan envisions are fomented by the university-educated elites of society such as Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, and their ideas make their way down to the peasantry and working class, as well as to

successive generations of student radicals. Crossan has Jesus going about announcing a divine social revolution,<sup>10</sup> speaking out against colonial imperialism,<sup>11</sup> domestic violence, and systemic abuse of power.<sup>12</sup> His “illiterate” Jesus fully understands the nuances and recognizes the injustices of the political and economic structure,<sup>13</sup> and he exposes the evils of institutionalized racism and sexism.<sup>14</sup> Crossan can imagine *this* Jesus, but not the Jesus of the Bible??? This highly imaginative picture of Jesus as a “power-to-the-people anti-establishment radical” would indeed be hysterical if it were not deceiving so many people.

### Searchlight #2

The second “searchlight” Crossan utilizes is “historical study.” He looks at the dealings between the Jews and the Greco-Romans. How did the two groups get along? We must agree that historical study is a very valuable tool. Conservative biblical scholars use the historical, grammatical method of study to place texts into their proper context. The difference is that they look at the historical setting *as a whole*,

whereas Dr. Crossan limits his “study” to the political atmosphere. A plain reading of the biblical text gives *no* indication that Jesus was the least bit interested in politics other than to teach obedience to the laws of the land. But, unfortunately, an apolitical Jesus is not the kind of Jesus that Crossan wants to “imagine.” In order to “imagine” the type of Jesus he wants, he dismisses truly relevant historical information concerning the miraculous events of Jesus’ ministry, and he reimagines Jesus only as a fully human, political revolutionary. Crossan mentions the first century historian Josephus’ words

about Jesus, that He “was a wise man ‘who wrought surprising feats,’”<sup>15</sup> but, amazingly, Crossan does not allow those words to suggest to him that perhaps Jesus truly *did* perform supernatural miracles.

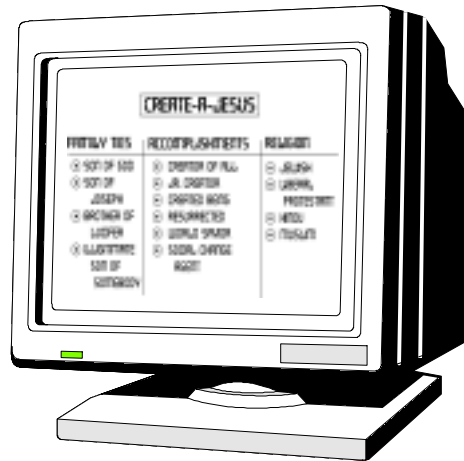
It is incumbent upon Crossan, I would think, to apply his “historical study” “searchlight” to his own version of events. He claims that the disciples of Jesus continued His mission after His death. Surely we should be able to find *some* historical verification of the first-century socialist revolution initiated by the radical of Nazareth! Was His failure and theirs so complete that every scrap of evidence was eradicated?

### Searchlight #3

Crossan’s third “searchlight” is so-called “textual study.”<sup>16</sup> This is, according to him, the most difficult task.

“I have to distinguish between three levels of literary tradition. At the first level the tradition retains sayings and happenings that go back to the historical Jesus. At the second level those retained

(Continued on next page)



*“Search” (Continued from page 3)*

materials are developed — for example, by weaving stories around originally isolated sayings. The third level involves creating totally new stories and sayings which are then put in the mouth of Jesus.”<sup>17</sup>

We can appreciate Crossan’s arduous work here: it is always a difficult task to draw imaginary distinctions and make your conclusions appear reasonable to those who may not share your prejudice. Is there any *real evidence* that Crossan’s distinctions are based in reality? We all know that “tools” are only as good as the craftsman who employs them. Searchlights have their limitations. The most powerful beam on earth will do nothing to illuminate the path of a blind man. In fact, I think it is safe to say that the odds of Crossan finding the *real* Jesus using his “searchlights” is about the same as Janet Reno finding evidence of campaign finance abuse!

According to Crossan, the entire truth of the Christian faith has been misunderstood by the vast majority of its adherents. The Bible does not *really* teach what it has been

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understood to teach for the last 1900+ years. Jesus may have said that the poor will inherit the earth, but the disciples made up all that miraculous “Son of God” stuff. Jesus was only “resurrected” in the sense that his followers “experienced Jesus as continuing with them after he died,”<sup>18</sup> not that His body actually and factually came out of that tomb. When Crossan’s Jesus performed allegorical “exorcisms,” He was “engaging in symbolic revolution against the occupying power.”<sup>19</sup>

These conclusions come from no textual study at all, but are the result of Crossan’s fanciful application of his 20<sup>th</sup>-century liberal worldview to the texts in question. Anyone could take the teachings of Jesus, and twist them to support their own political worldview! In fact, it could be *fun!* Jesus said in Matthew 12:43-45, NIV:

*“When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes*

*and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.”*

What does this text *mean*? Well, isn’t it *obvious* that Jesus was speaking allegorically here against leftist, social experimentation? He was clearly warning us of the inevitably negative outcome of humanistic, utopian “solutions” to poverty, wage disparity, etc. He was illustrating for us the irony that every social problem (evil spirit) seemingly “fixed” by liberal activism will be soon replaced by seven worse problems (spirits more wicked), leaving society worse off than it was before the “cure.” Now some may object that *nothing in the text* indicates that Jesus meant this, but hey . . . text, schmext!!! The foregoing interpretation of Jesus’ words is ridiculous, of course, but no more ridiculous than Crossan’s rendering of the gospel texts which he interprets for us, reflecting his political/naturalistic bias.

The issue comes down to this: we must choose whether to believe Crossan or the writers of the gospels themselves. Crossan says,

“The Hebrew prophets did not predict the event’s of Jesus’ last week; rather, many of those Christian stories were created to fit the ancient prophecies . . .”<sup>20</sup>

But Peter said,

*“We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation”* (2 Peter 1:16, 20, NIV).

And Luke, although not an eyewitness to the events in question, assured us he had *“carefully investigated everything”* so that we could be **certain** of the veracity of his account (Luke 1:1-4).

Meanwhile, disputing the disciple’s words without wishing to disparage them *personally*, Crossan generously assures us that we need not be judgmental toward the disciples who have misled us all these centuries by “[elaborating] upon actual events or even [creating] stories and sayings about Jesus from scratch.” We need to understand that the disciples didn’t “lie;” it’s just

“that sense of continued presence gave the transmitters of the Jesus tradition a creative freedom . . . they were unembarrassed to restate the words and deeds of Jesus in ways that met the particular needs of their own times and communities.”<sup>21</sup>

It is not the disciples, but Crossan who is “unembarrassed to restate the words and deeds of Jesus” in ways that he feels will meet the needs of his own time and community. The “Jesus story” is a classic, all right, but desperately in need of an “update,” and Crossan considers himself just the man for the job.

## The Search for the Historical Huckleberry

Just for fun, let's put Crossan's method to work on Mark Twain's book, *Huckleberry Finn*. If we merely read the book at face value, we will easily understand that it is the story of a boy that floats down the Mississippi River on a raft with a runaway slave named Jim. But once Crossan illumines Twain's book with his postmodernist "searchlights," *Huckleberry Finn* becomes the tale of a Japanese automaker who goes on an African Safari. Which story line would you think the *author* intended? The one that comes by a plain reading, or the convoluted, deconstructed one that comes out of an overactive imagination? If you believe the "Safari tale," it certainly wouldn't be Mark Twain's fault, but your own, for putting some other person's interpretation above the book itself. We might shorten it up a bit and call it a "fari tale." "Fari tales" are for children . . . adults should just read the book for themselves.

### Of Material Importance

In Dr. Crossan's book, we find an attitude which places personal opinion above serious research and study based on known bibliographic tests and principles. Dr. Crossan regards all the available written material from the first and second century, whether of Christian or Gnostic origin, to be equally valid. And so we see that Crossan ignores such "incidentals" as authenticity, time of writing, authoritativeness, etc. This would be like attempting to take a trip from Chicago to Paris, IL, and in an attempt to find the "real" route to my destination, I obtained every available map with the name "Paris" on it. I then put them all together regardless of authenticity (maybe a child drew it), originating country (France or USA) and purpose (airline map vs. road map), and planned my route by flipping a coin for each leg of my journey. It may be an interesting trip, but I likely will never get to my destination.

He writes,

"In order to paint a picture of the real Jesus, I pay most attention to the earliest layers of tradition-materials dating between the years 30 and 60 of the first century . . ."<sup>22</sup>

If that really were true, his primary material would be the gospels as they are written. In order for his method to work, he must assume that the gospels were written after 70 AD, but his assumption is in grave error.

The Book of Acts *closes* with the Apostle Paul under house arrest in his first imprisonment. Why is that important? This would mean that Acts had to be written *before* Paul was released from this particular imprisonment, *before* Paul traveled on his next missionary journey, and *before* he was re-arrested under Nero's persecution and beheaded. Therefore, it is most likely that the book of Acts, authored by Luke, was written about 61 AD. Why is this important? Because Acts was the *second* book which Luke wrote. The *first* was the gospel of Luke, which Luke asserts is a faithful account of the life of Jesus. Luke certainly wrote his first book *before* his second, which would date Luke at 60 AD. Most scholars, even liberal ones, agree that Mark was the

earliest of the gospels, written sometime in the 50's or earlier.

Furthermore, based on recent textual discovery, a good case can be made that Mark was written *even earlier* than has been assumed and that most, if not *all*, of the New Testament was written prior to 70 AD. A discovery of a fragment of a Dead Sea Scroll in cave seven was dated at 45 AD prior to figuring out what was written on it. There were about 20 letters that the researchers could not match up with any of the Hebrew Scriptures or other writings of antiquity. As it turned out, they were looking in the wrong material. This fragment was a copy of a section of the gospel of Mark. If it is a *copy*, the original had to have been written earlier and had time to circulate and be copied. The gospel of Mark, then, was most likely written about 40 AD.

So, if Dr. Crossan truly favored material written between 30-60 AD, this would be the material of choice. There simply is not enough time for myth and layers of tradition to have developed. But, instead, he "chooses" (elects, votes,

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*Why did Crossan feel the need to make up his own Jesus? Very simple — he didn't like the politically incorrect, intolerant, hell-fire spouting, judgmental Jesus he found on the pages of Scripture!*

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prefers) to create "his Jesus" out of the Gnostic (secret knowledge) writings of the second century, while discounting the truly historical accounts of the life of Jesus found in the gospels.

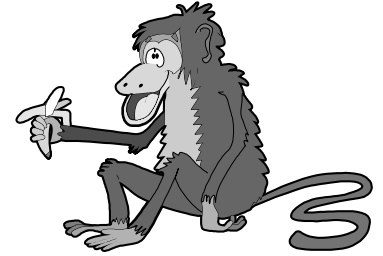
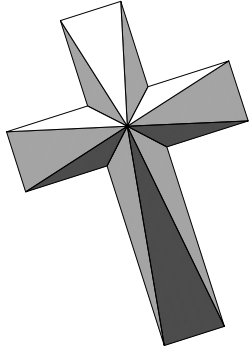
### Who is Crossan's Jesus?

Crossan's Jesus is just a man. He was not born of a virgin. He fulfilled none of the Old Testament prophecies. He performed no "miracles" and, certainly, never raised anyone from the dead. His ministry was announcing a "divine social revolution,"<sup>23</sup> promoting gender and class equality, which threatened the oppressors of Rome and the patriarchal social hierarchy. *That* was why he was put to death. He "died for me" only in the sense that Martin Luther King died for African-Americans, or Ghandi died for Hindu "untouchables."<sup>24</sup> Jesus' message is the "empowerment and liberation" of the oppressed classes of society.<sup>25</sup> In short, Crossan's Jesus turns out to believe and teach very much like a 20<sup>th</sup>-century liberal Protestant!!! Well, SURPRISE,

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# Creation vs. Evolution



## The War of the Worldviews

by Dave Johnson

**T**here are those who think that the debate over origins is just so much petty bickering among academics. They could not be more wrong. The creation/evolution controversy is, in reality, a war between two fundamentally different and opposing worldviews. The outcome of this war will determine the direction of our society in virtually every area of life.

Are these statements a bit dramatic? Are they exaggerations? I think not. It is my contention that evolutionary thinking has had significant, detrimental effects on our culture, and if the evolutionists have their way, things can only become worse.

There are evolutionary scientists who believe that religion in general and Christianity in particular is “the opiate of the masses.” The self-appointed role and duty of clear-thinking evolutionists are to save this society which has been deluded and led astray for decades by the superstitious ideas of the Church.

Let’s examine some of the ways the teaching of evolution has had an impact on our daily lives. What really is at stake in this debate?

### Truth

Prior to the popularization of Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution in the 1830’s, most people in the Western world believed the Bible was true and the source of truth revealed to man by God. The understanding that man and the universe were created by an omnipotent Being was commonly held.

But today the Bible is ridiculed by many evolutionists, while science has displaced the Word of God as the source of truth. Consider this statement by Harvard genetics professor Richard Lewontin on the goal of modern scientists:

“The primary problem is not to provide the public with the knowledge of how far it is to the nearest star and what genes are made of . . . Rather, **the problem is to get them to reject irrational and supernatural explanations of the world, the demons that exist only in their imaginations, and**

**to accept a social and intellectual apparatus, Science, as the only begetter of truth.”<sup>1</sup>**

So, in the mind of Mr. Lewontin and others of his ilk, the fool places his faith in the Bible, but the wise man places his faith in “Science” alone as the foundation for truth. Why? Because of evidence, of course. As Oxford zoologist Richard Dawkins puts it, “Scientific beliefs are supported by evidence, and they get results. Myths and faiths are not and do not.”<sup>2</sup> (An aside: if ever a statement demonstrated the need for teaching evidential apologetics in our churches, this is it.)

The Christian worldview, however, is radically different. The Bible speaks of God as both the revealer of truth and truth itself. Moses said, “He is *the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He*” (Deut. 32:4). David prayed, “*Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O LORD God of truth*” (Psalm 31:5). God speaks of Himself as “*the God of truth*” twice in Isaiah 65:15. Jesus said that those who desire to worship God must worship Him in truth (John 4:24), and He said of Himself, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life*” (John 14:6).

The realization that Christians must be committed to truth from God is so essential that Paul reminds his readers “*the church of the living God*” is “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Tim. 3:15). In this battle of worldviews, both the source of truth and the definition of truth are up for grabs.

### Purpose

Not only is truth affected by this debate, but so too is the purpose of life. One of the great questions man has wrestled with for thousands of years is “Why are we here?” Atheistic evolutionists are ready with an answer — there is no purpose to our existence, we are just here.

Harvard paleontologist George Gaylord Simpson asserts, “Man is the result of a **purposeless and natural process** that did not have him in mind.”<sup>3</sup>

Douglas Futuyma, author of a college evolutionary biology textbook, declares,

“Some shrink from the conclusion that the hu-

man species was not designed, has no purpose, and is the product of mere mechanical mechanisms – but this seems to be the message of evolution.”<sup>4</sup>

Once again, the Christian outlook on life is diametrically opposed to the naturalistic worldview. David tells us in Psalm 139 that we are not just the result of some fortuitous series of events, but we are the creation of a caring and masterful Designer:

*For You formed my inward parts;*

*You covered me in my mother’s womb.*

*I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;*

*Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.*

*My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret,*

*And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.*

*Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.*

*And in Your book they all were written,*

*The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.*

*How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!*

*How great is the sum of them!*

*If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand;*

*When I awake, I am still with You.*(Psalm 139:13-18)

## Meaning of Life

Is there meaning in life without a Creator? In reviewing a recent book, *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea* by evolutionist Daniel Dennett, Patti Clayton observes:

“Darwin did not set out to explain the meaning of life, of course, but his revolutionary theories posed deep and difficult challenges to the assumptions about human beings and about God that had long served to ground meaning. Thus the ‘danger’ of the idea: It ‘cuts [deeply] into the fabric of our most fundamental beliefs.’ **We are terrified that if Darwin is correct and if we apply his thinking to ourselves, there can be nothing sacred, there can be no point to our existence,** there is no assurance that everything will ‘be all right,’ and **there is no content to ‘goodness’ or even any reason to think that goodness matters.**”<sup>5</sup>

It is true that without God, without an ultimate standard of right and wrong, there is no such thing as “goodness.” Good and evil, as objective concepts concerning events in the real world, are obliterated. In an atheistic, materialistic world where morality is meaningless and preference reigns supreme, it is proper to say “**I don’t want** you to steal my car,” but anathema to assert “**It is wrong** for you to steal my car.”

But this is counter-intuitive. Everyone has an inherent concept of right and wrong which is inescapable, since God has written this on the human heart (Rom. 2:15). Christianity explains the unavoidable reality of moral consciousness, while naturalism is at a total loss.

## Meaning of Christianity

If naturalistic evolution is true, then obviously, Christianity is false. But some Christians don’t seem to grasp this, believing that Darwinism and the Bible are compatible.

Atheist G. Richard Bonarth understood the foundational importance of the creation account to Christianity when he wrote,

“It becomes clear now that the whole justification of Jesus’ life and death is predicated on the existence of Adam and the forbidden fruit he and Eve ate. Without the original sin, who needs to be redeemed? Without Adam’s fall in a life of constant sin terminated by death, what purpose is there to Christianity? None.”<sup>6</sup>

This message should be preached from every pulpit in the land.

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The good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ ONLY makes sense when the bad news of the fall of man and consequent separation from God is understood.

## The Influence of Evolutionary Thinking

What has evolutionary thinking affected? Just about everything. Professor Daniel Dennett has summed this up well in commenting on the results of Darwinism:

“Universal acid is a liquid so corrosive it will eat through *anything!* . . . Little did I realize that in a few years I would encounter an idea – **Darwin’s idea – bearing an unmistakable likeness to universal acid: it eats through just about every traditional concept, and leaves in its wake a revolutionized world-view,** with most of the old landmarks still recognizable, but transformed in fundamental ways.”<sup>7</sup>

*(Continued on next page)*

*"Creation" (Continued from page 7)*

Dennett's description is quite apt, but I think he inadvertently points out one of the detrimental effects of evolutionary thinking — it is highly corrosive, not merely transforming but greatly damaging everything it comes in contact with.

### **Bible Interpretation**

For example, consider the effect of evolution on the interpretation of the Bible. German scholar and theologian Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) caused great damage to the notion of the reliability of the Scriptures in the minds of many with his theory that they were written as a result, not of divine revelation, but of an evolutionary process. Paul

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*Abortion is now looked at by many as a "fundamental constitutional right" because of Roe vs. Wade and other equally misguided court decisions. But a new perverted argument was recently introduced which gives further support for abortion, linking the killing of newborn babies by their mothers to evolution.*

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Heinisch described this view:

"Scholars who will not admit divine revelation **seek to explain Old Testament belief in God in terms of evolution.** They would have Old Testament monotheism be the resultant from lower stages, or from polytheism, or regard it as peculiar instinct of the Semites, or as borrowed from neighboring nations."<sup>8</sup>

This inevitably led to the religious liberalism concerning the Bible that we encounter today in the *Jesus Seminar* and in liberal churches,<sup>9</sup> but evolutionary thinking is completely inconsistent with the Christian view of the Bible. Jesus said:

*"For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"*  
(John 5:46-47).

If the writings of Moses in the Old Testament are undermined, then the claims of Christ in the New Testament are dubious at best and deceptive at worst.

### **Public Schools**

How has evolution affected teaching in the public

schools? Evolutionary instruction has been the reigning doctrine in government schools for decades. When a teacher or a school district has tried to balance the teaching of origins by informing students of creation alternatives, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) usually slaps them with a lawsuit, charging that such actions are unconstitutional. To my knowledge, there is no school system in the country that gives a fair presentation of intelligent design. And yet, the dominance of evolutionary teaching in our schools is not complete enough, say the evolutionists, because too many students are not being sufficiently indoctrinated in Darwinist dogma.

This past spring, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) issued a guidebook aimed at providing teachers, administrators, and parents with tools to help students understand that evolution is essential to explaining some fundamental concepts in science. In an article decrying the need for such a guidebook, sympathetic columnist Tom Teepen explained why the NAS felt it must act:

"The academy of sciences found — anecdotally, for these things are hard to quantify — that school boards are under increasing political pressure to require equal time for creationism if evolution is taught. NO one has a handle on how many school districts, or how many teachers on their own, have given up teaching evolution to avoid having to mislead students by giving comparable weight to pseudo-science."<sup>10</sup>

Some evolutionists are so upset at this state of affairs that they turn college lectures into revivals for evolutionary irreligion. Harvard biologist Stephen Jay Gould gave a lecture at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, May 8, 1997 during which he lamented,

"We won in the courts but lost in the classroom. Teachers do not have the courage to teach evolution. They must become more aggressive."<sup>11</sup>

One very aggressive advocate of evolution, Professor Dennett, is so angered by the influence of religion in the arena of science (i.e. evolution) that he proposes that theistic religion should continue to exist only in "cultural zoos." Note well the warning he gives to Christian parents:

"Is there a conflict between science and religion here? There most certainly is . . .

Save the Baptists! Yes, of course, but not by *all means*. **Not if it means tolerating the deliberate misinforming of children about the natural world . . .** Should evolution be taught in schools? Should arithmetic be taught? Should history? **Misinforming a child is a terrible offense . . .**

. . . those whose visions dictate that they cannot peacefully coexist with the rest of us **we will have to quarantine as best we can**, minimizing the pain and damage, trying always to leave open a path or two that may come to seem acceptable. . .

**If you insist on teaching your children false-**



**hoods** – that the Earth is flat, **that ‘Man’ is not a product of evolution by natural selection** – then you must expect, at the very least, that those of us who have freedom of speech will feel free to **describe your teachings as the spreading of falsehoods**, and will **attempt to demonstrate this to your children at our earliest opportunity**. Our future well-being – **the well-being of all of us on this planet – depends on the education of our descendants.**<sup>12</sup>

Contrast this with the Christian worldview. The Lord instructed Joshua in the essentials for the well being of society:

*“Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, **that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success**”* (Joshua: 7-8).

God also gave instruction to Moses on what parents should teach their children:

*“Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you—‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’*

*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!*

***You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.***

*And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.*

***You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up”*** (Deut. 6:3-7).

## Morality

Basic morality in our society has been profoundly affected by the evolution worldview.

Sexual morality has been assaulted by those who believe that people are born with a certain sexual orientation, and to act according to this orientation is proper and just. So homosexuality must not be condemned because it is the “natural” behavior for those who have evolved in that way. If there is no God and evolution is true, who can effectively argue against this? And how can anyone condemn adultery, promiscuity, or even child molestation since these are just the acting out of man’s basic survival instincts?

Euthanasia (the right to be killed) and assisted suicide

(the right to kill yourself) are trumpeted throughout our nation today as wonderful and liberating advances in our society. If man is not the creation of God but the accident of chance, why not simply end your life when it becomes too bothersome?

Abortion is now looked at by many as a “fundamental constitutional right” because of *Roe vs. Wade* and other equally misguided court decisions. But a new perverted argument was recently introduced which gives further support for abortion, linking the killing of newborn babies by their mothers to evolution. According to Steven Pinker, professor of psychology at MIT, because of evolution there should not be harsh penalties meted out to mothers who commit “neonaticide.” This is not a moral horror but a genetically encoded evolutionary adaptation. Besides, says Pinker, these newborns are not really persons with a recognizable right to life because **“the right to life must come, the moral philosophers say, from morally significant traits that we humans happen to possess.”**<sup>13</sup>

## The Descent of Society

From the lofty ideals upon which this nation was founded, based on the belief in a divine Creator, evolutionary thinking has brought us down to the current cesspool of immorality in which we find ourselves. From the White House to the schoolhouse, evolution has had a universally corrosive effect on our culture. But this does not have to continue.

The Declaration of Independence, the founding document of the United States, says:

**“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed . . .**

. . . And for the support of this Declaration, **with**

*(Continued on page 14)*

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## A Note, About Finances

We typically do not discuss the financial needs of the ministry in this publication.

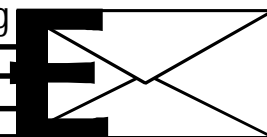
But that does not mean that we have none (needs that is).

If you would like to contribute to Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc., please feel free to do so.

Thank you.

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# Conversations with *Which* God?

Looking at Neale Donald Walsch's  
*Conversations with God, book 1*

by Marcia Montenegro

The title of the best-selling book *Conversations with God* means what it says: the author, Neale Donald Walsch, claims to have written down conversations held between him and a being he calls God. I first heard of this book in 1997 while discussing spiritual beliefs with a woman working in a New Age bookstore. She kept quoting from this book as though it was a sacred source of truth, finally urging me to read it. Since it seemed to have had such a strong influence on her worldview, I purchased and read it. It covers a wide range of topics, which cannot all be discussed here, so only the most striking points will be addressed.

In 1992, Walsch says he was unhappy and full of angry questions about why life seemed to be a failure, so he wrote a letter to God with his questions. As he finished writing the last question, Walsch claims the pen moved on its own and he found himself writing words as though taking dictation. Walsch claims he knew this was God dictating the responses, although he does not explain how he knew this. It is only natural, then, that we examine this book to see what God has to say and what kind of God he is. There is no obligation on the reader's part to take Walsch's word that this is God, especially since Walsch offers absolutely no evidence for it. He just asserts it as though the reader should accept it without question.

## Words Are Not Truth

The very first point this God makes is that he communicates with everyone but not by words alone. In fact, his main form of communication is through feeling (3). Interestingly, God (for the sake of convenience, I will call Walsch's God "God," though I am not agreeing that this is the one true and living God of the universe) immediately attacks words:

"Words are really the least effective communicator . . . merely utterances: noises that stand for feelings, thoughts, experience . . . They are not Truth. They are not the real thing" (3, 4).

If this is true, then this statement by Walsch's God, which is comprised of words, cannot be true, which would mean that maybe then words are truth after all. This statement de-

feats its own assertion.

Also, why is God using a book of words to communicate to us through Walsch? Why should we believe anything in this book if words are so useless and mere "noises?" If one wanted to be rigidly logical, one could say that this statement renders the book meaningless, and therefore, there is no reason to read it. God, who should be more clever than this, is using words to say words mean nothing. This is the first clue that this might not be the God of the Bible who is speaking.

In addition to this, God totally contradicts his attack on words later in the book, when the reader may have forgotten what God initially said about words. God explains the process of creation as operating through three levels: thought, word, and action. Words are described here as "thought expressed" which "sends forth creative energy into the universe" (74). This idea is repeated on page 164, where words are described as a vehicle for bringing thought into concrete reality. God also advises the author to re-program his thinking by:

"reading and re-reading this book. Over and over again, read it. Until you understand every passage" (120).

What happened to words being mere noises?

The purpose behind the attack on words so early in the book becomes apparent. God tells the author (and us) that we have placed too much importance on "*the Word of God and so little on the experience*" and that we should put experience over words (4). A few pages later, God blatantly states that the Bible is not an authoritative source (and neither are ministers, rabbis or priests) (8).

Walsch, surprised by this, then asks God what should be considered an authoritative source. God responds,

"Listen to your feelings. Listen to your Highest Thoughts . . . Words are the least reliable purveyor of Truth" (8).

Once again, if words are such an unreliable "purveyor of Truth," then why should we believe this statement, since it is expressed with words? This statement invalidates itself and

the entire book.

### God Does Not Care What We Do

Walsch's God acknowledges himself as the creator of life, but then adds that he created us in his image so that we could be creators as well (13). God has no special will for us:

“. . . your will for you is God's will for you . . . I have no preference in the matter . . . I do not care what you do . . .” (13).

God continues on, saying that we are not here to learn lessons but only “To remember, and re-create, Who You Are” (21, 28, 203). This came about because God, who originally existed all alone, longed “to know what it felt like to be so magnificent” and was not satisfied unless there was a reference point through which God could know his magnificence (22). This reference point had to be within God, because there was no outside reference point; God calls this the “Is-Not Is,” sort of an opposite to “All That Is,” which is God. To use this reference point within, God divided “Itself” and “this” became “that,” thus enabling him to know himself “experientially” (23, 25). God's purpose in creating us was

“for Me to know Myself as God . . . through you . . . My purpose for you is that you should know yourself as Me” (26, 65).

However, an infinite entity, the “All That Is,” cannot divide itself, for then it would no longer be infinite.

This explanation is really just another way to try to promote monism (all is one and one is all) and pantheism (all is God and God is all). According to this God, we are the same stuff as God, and this is what being made in the image of God means (26). God tells Walsch that in the act of dividing himself, God created relativity and polarity (24). Through this polarity, humans are able to conceive of opposites such as love and fear. Therefore, humans created mythologies around fear, such as “the rebellion of Satan” and our desire to personify fear as the devil (24-25). We need this polarity for our “gross relationships,” but in our “sublime relationships” there is no opposite, for “All Is One” (31). Basically, what is being said is that opposites are illusions, created for us to experience certain things we otherwise could not experience.

### Quoting the Bible Out of Context

Many phrases and quotes from the Bible are mixed in with statements made by Walsch's God, usually without any quotation marks and only once with any biblical reference. Speaking of Christ, God says that he was crucified to show man what man could do. God then says:

“And know that these things, and more, shall you also do. For have I not said, ye are gods?” (52).

Jesus' statement to the Jews preparing to stone him in John 10:34 (“*Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods?'*”) is a rebuke because Jesus is quoting Psalm 82:6 where God has reprimanded the judges on earth who did not dispense God's justice. The judges, called gods, were to be God's representatives on earth, but they had become

corrupt. After a stinging rebuke to these judges/gods in verses 2-5, God tells them that they were gods, i.e., God's representatives, but

“*you will die like mere men; you will fall like every other ruler*” (Psalm 82:7).

Neither Walsch nor his God is aware that this quote is an insult, not a compliment. This is another big clue that this is not the true God speaking to Walsch.

After reprimanding humanity for its onslaught against the ecosystem and for having wars, God tells us,

“I will do nothing for you that you will not do for your Self. *That is the law and the prophets*” (50).

This would come as a surprise to Jesus, who said, quoting God in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18,

“*‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind . . . Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments*” (Matt. 22:37-39).

God's words to Moses in Exodus 3:14, “*I AM THAT I AM,*” are repeated frequently by Walsch's God to signify supposedly that God is all that is and so are we. At one point, God follows this statement by saying, “*YOU ARE THAT YOU ARE. You cannot not be,*” indicating humanity's supposed equality with God (200).

This phrase, “I am that I am,” is frequently used in New Age teachings. In New Age spirituality classes taken by this writer prior to salvation in Christ, this phrase was used to teach the idea that we are all one with God. We were also advised to meditate using this phrase as a mantra.

Perhaps the most outrageous misuse of the Bible is the recasting of the Ten Commandments into the Ten Commitments. These commitments include the idea that taking God's name in vain means that we don't understand the power of words; we are to honor the Mother/Father God and “*all life forms;*” and that coveting your neighbor's spouse makes no sense because we know that “*all others are your spouse.*” God adds benevolently that these are ten freedoms, because he does not order us around. He just tells us that these commitments are “*signs*” indicating we have found God (96-97).

There are several more examples of biblical phrases and quotes taken out of context and misused, but space limitations prevent a discussion of them all.

### Anti-body

If we all are one and we really are God, and if our separateness is a temporary illusion, then it follows that our bod-  
(Continued on next page)



*"Conversations" (Continued from page 11)*

ies are part of the illusion, merely being temporary containers for our souls. Walsch promotes this classic New Age and Gnostic thinking.

According to this book, the soul knows that its purpose is "evolution," and there is no trauma about leaving the body. As God says, "In many ways, the tragedy is being *in* the body" (82). The body is merely a "tool" of the soul (172), and the physical body is a lower vibration of the "ethereal body" (181-182). As we reincarnate, our soul and ethereal (non-physical) body slow down their vibrations into the denser matter of a physical body being formed according to how the mind is creating it (181-182).

Why this denigration of the body? Believing that the material body is an illusion or a temporary tool allows one to minimize death. If we are really just a soul, then dying is merely shedding an illusion or a tool; we are not really leaving anything behind. In fact, being released from the body is spiritual freedom and a goal according to many New Age teachings. This idea can be used to support euthanasia, suicide and even murder, such as abortion. If release from the body is good and the soul is all that matters, then can killing really be bad?

Another result of this view is the debasing of the body. Contrary to the biblical promise of the physical resurrection of our bodies, Walsch's God (in accordance with New Age principles) views the body as a "lower" vibration, a temporary form with less value than the non-material soul. This view could justify sexual perversion or self-mutilation, since there is no New Age teaching that man should honor God (or the Universe, the Oneness, or whomever) with the body. Indeed, in several places throughout the book, God inexplicably chides us for our taboos and restraints on sexuality, as though society were shy in this area!

The implications of this anti-body bias should not be underestimated.

### **Self Above All**

If we really are God, then what could be more important than ourselves?

Talking about relationships, God says that each person should not worry about anyone else, "but only, only, only about Self" (124). There is only one purpose for relationships, and that is for us to "be and decide Who You Really Are" (122).

After the author has asked about family responsibilities versus his spiritual needs, God advises him that he has a right to his joy,

"children or no children; spouse or no spouse . . .  
And if they aren't joyful, and they get up and leave you, then release them with love to seek *their* joy."

The brutal truth here is that seeking your joy is the priority, and if it results in a broken family, then so be it. It is justified by believing that both you and they will be happier apart, even if the price is destruction of the marriage and the family.

In case the point is missed, it is repeated more explicitly in other places, such as on page 132:

"God suggests — *recommends* — that you put yourself first."

Advising the author to stop focusing on the other person in the relationship, God tells him,

"The most loving person is the person who is Self-centered" (124).

The self is always the emphasis and focus in a philosophy that teaches we all are part of God and are evolving back to that state. It can be no other way, because in this view we are equal to God. Naturally, a totally self-centered belief system will destroy relationships, or at least cause great pain in them, since relationships are based on mutual respect and responsibility.

### **Jesus the Sorcerer**

Jesus is held out as a "Master" and example of one who understood laws of manipulating matter and energy (55). He also practiced the science of affirmations, which Walsch's God explains is a way to manipulate energy so that you will bring into existence what you want. The best affirmation is one of gratitude, and God tells us that before each miracle, Jesus "thanked Me in advance for its deliverance" because he was practicing confidence in the results of his thinking (180).

God explains the principle of mastering energy this way:

"Now, whatever follows the word 'I' (which calls forth the Great I Am) tends to manifest in physical reality" (178).

Reality is created by the "Holy Trinity" of energies — thought, word and action (72-74; 164). This process brings the non-material thought into concrete reality (179).

The principle is actually a basis of sorcery and ritual magic, and these abilities of Jesus are described as the powers of a sorcerer. As sorcerer Donald Tyson says,

"the underlying premise of magical ritual is that if you represent a circumstance, or act out an event in your mind, it will come to pass in the world."<sup>1</sup>

In *The Magician's Companion*, author Bill Whitcomb gives as one of the axioms of the magical worldview "the Law of Words (Symbols) of Power." He states that

"There are words (symbols) that are able to change the inner and/or outer realities of those using/perceiving them."<sup>2</sup>

Walsch's God says that whatever we think or say after the words "I am" will set in motion what we have thought or said. Since the words "I am" are "the strongest creative statement in the universe," these words will call forth what we want.

"The universe responds to 'I am' as would a genie in a bottle."<sup>3</sup>

In fact, many of the magical axioms listed by Whitcomb line up nicely with the principles taught by Walsch's God: we are separate in the perceived world by one in reality (axiom one); we create our own world (axiom two); truth is relative (axiom four); what works is true (axiom five); no

one worldview is right (axiom six); we are all one (axiom seven); the microcosm is the macrocosm (axiom eight); like attracts like (axiom nine) (expressed by Walsch in the idea that we attract what we fear and must believe we are successful to be successful); every action is an energy exchange (axiom ten); duality exists to understand opposites (axiom twelve); words have power (axiom fifteen).<sup>4</sup>

The fact that so many of these axioms of sorcery show up as teachings in Walsch's book shows his God to be rather unoriginal. This is yet another clue that either this is not God talking, or it is a clever magician who hypnotized Walsch into thinking he was talking to God.

There is a sneering ridicule of salvation by grace through faith in Christ. God tells Walsch that this doctrine exists because people have been told they were made inherently unworthy by God himself (136). These comments conclude with heavy sarcasm. No scriptural references that humanity chooses to sin and rebel against God are mentioned (cf. John 3:18-20; Rom. 3:23). There is a final attack on Jesus, delivered with pure derision. God gives Walsch an anti-liquor lecture and Walsch disagrees, bringing up Jesus' miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding as an endorsement of drinking wine. God replies,

"So who said Jesus was perfect?" (192).

This God cannot hide for long his deep hostility toward the Bible or Jesus Christ.

### **No Sin, No Evil, No Hell, No Pain**

Walsch's God is very emotional about the concept of sin, telling Walsch that the disobedience of Adam and Eve was not a sin but a "first blessing" because, in their disobedience, they made it possible for humanity to have a choice (56). God tells us that we "should thank them from the bottom of [our] hearts."

The devil and hell do not exist (51, 115, 201). Pain "is a result of wrong thought" (37), and "all illness is first created in the mind" (188). Yet even to say pain comes from wrong thinking is not accurate since "there is no such thing as that which is wrong" (40).

It seems rather complicated that if there is no evil, we must pretend it exists in order to define good; even though all is one, we must have relativity to think we're separate before we remember that we are really one with this God who divided himself into us. And God needs us to remember who we are since he is experiencing himself in us.

Taking away evil, sin and hell does not make life simpler. It only gives a new twist on reality that puts us at a disadvantage since that which we think is reality is not, we are not who we think we are, and though we *experience* evil, evil is not real. This contradicts one of the book's major assertions — that experience is the indicator of truth. Yet, if we *experience* pain, evil or illness, we are to put experience aside having been told that these experiences do not reflect reality. So experience is reality except when the *words* of Walsch's God say it isn't!

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### **No Judgment, or Is There?**

Though this God constantly states there is no judgment, no right or wrong, and that he does not care what humanity does (8, 38-42, 51, 64, 79-109, 119-120, 135, 183, 208), there *is* judgment in this book. It is masked by other ideas.

According to this God, we only need to remember "Who We Are," but there is no rush for we will all get there (51). We are to cease making value judgments (79). Yet, standards are held out before the reader in many ways. One way is through God's constant reference to "the Masters," whom he never defines. He states that these Masters have realized that the relative world is not reality, and they have chosen only love every single moment — even when being murdered (57). God goes on to tell Walsch that this is hard for him to understand "much less emulate." But, God says, "this example and this lesson has been laid out so clearly for you . . . over and over . . ." suggesting that Walsch and, by implication, the reader are being a little slow in catching on. It is as though God is saying, "Come on people, get with it already! You are so far from the Masters!"

The Masters are used as examples again on page 129, where God claims that they always come up with the same answer, which is "always the *highest choice*." Further chiding the reader, God states that the Master is predictable in this area while

"the student is completely unpredictable. One can tell how one is doing on the road to mastery by simply noticing how predictably one makes the highest choice . . ."

Of course, God does not tell us how to make the highest choice. Nonetheless, it is clear that we should be on this "road to mastery" making the highest choices, and we better get with it.

Similarly, there is reference to a "highest" thought on page 4, where God states that his thoughts, words and feelings are always our "Highest Thought . . . Clearest Word . . . Grandest Feeling." The way to discern these, given on the next page, is that the "Highest Thought" always contains joy, the "Clearest Word" contains truth, and the "Grandest Feeling" is what we call love. Once again, this no-judgment, no-value God has just given us values, and we know that we are lacking if we do not achieve the highest, clearest or grandest.

Walsch's God is rather sloppy, however, with his terminology. Truth is not defined and neither is love. If these are


*"Conversations" (Continued from page 13)*

the measuring sticks, then anyone's subjective impression of joy, truth and love could define their highest thought, clearest word and grandest feeling. Could not one's highest thought conceivably be to lie, to cheat, or to murder if the person derived joy from this? Nothing in this book refutes any of these as a highest thought, especially if one is basing their messages from God on feelings.

**So, Who is This God?**


Many of this book's messages do line up consistently and completely with the messages of someone we know from Genesis chapter 3 — someone who questioned God's Word, called God a liar, told Adam and Eve that they could be like God, and that they would not die. This someone was the serpent, also known as Satan. In fact, the attacks on Christ, on salvation by grace, on marriage and the family, on God's Word, on the body, on absolute truth, on the reality of heaven, hell and the devil, and the promotion of sorcery and Gnostic philosophies are a perfect picture of what Satan would say and would want us to believe.

If truly dictated by a spiritual being, this book is a thinly veiled attempt by Satan to sound like God, misquoting Scripture and twisting everything around. Typical of Satan, the ideas are complicated, contradictory and open-ended, and the answers are often evasive. Preaching love and the "highest" choices and thoughts — this is an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14) sweet-talking us into believing we are God and can do anything we want to do. However, Satan tips his hand too often; his hostility to Christ and his constant attacks on God's Word give him away.

Conversations with God? Actually, this book is just the opposite. 









**Endnotes:**

- 1.) Donald Tyson, *The Truth About Ritual Magic* (St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1994), 29. 2.) Bill Whitcomb, *The Magician's Companion* (St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1994), 15. 3.) *Ibid.*, 93. 4.) *Ibid.*, 12-15.

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*"Creation" (Continued from page 9)*

**a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence**, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."

I firmly believe the solution to the ills of our society is for us to return to the worldview of the Founding Fathers, to again embrace a Christian worldview as "one nation under God." The Bible speaks clearly on the proper relationship between God and nations:


*Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, The people He has chosen as His own inheritance* (Psalm 33:12).

*The wicked shall be turned into hell, And all the nations that forget God* (Psalm 9:17).

*If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?* (Psalm 11:3).

*Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty* (2 Corinthians 3:17).

If we want to survive and prosper as a people, we must return to the foundational principles laid out in the Scriptures and embraced by our founders. The words of Thomas Jefferson, etched into the marble on his monument in Washington, are a sober warning to America to reject the false religion of evolution before it is too late:

**"GOD WHO GAVE US LIFE GAVE US LIBERTY. CAN THE LIBERTIES OF A NATION BE SECURE WHEN WE HAVE REMOVED A CONVICTION THAT THESE LIBERTIES ARE THE GIFT OF GOD? I TREMBLE FOR MY COUNTRY WHEN I REFLECT THAT GOD IS JUST, THAT HIS JUSTICE CANNOT SLEEP FOREVER."** 

**Endnotes:**

- 1 Phillip E. Johnson, "The Unraveling of Scientific Materialism," *First Things* 77 (November 1997): 22-25. Internet address for this article is "www.origins.org/ftissues/ft9711/johnson.html".
- 2 Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life* (New York: BasicBooks, 1995), 33.
- 3 Phillip Johnson, *Reason in the Balance* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 8-9.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 9.
- 5 Patti H. Clayton, "A Promise Rather Than a Threat," *American Scientist* 84, no. 3 (May-June 1996): 289.
- 6 G. Richard Bonarh, "The Meaning of Evolution," *American Atheist Magazine*, 20 September 1979.
- 7 Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 63.
- 8 Dave Breese, *Seven Men Who Rule the World From the Grave* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), 93.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 98-99.
- 10 Tom Teeppen, "Creation of a Scandal," *The Charlotte Observer*, 14 April 1998, 13A.
- 11 Norris Anderson, "The Science of Evolution and the Politics of Creation," *Origins & Design* 18, no. 2 (Fall 1997), 7.
- 12 Dennett, 515-19.
- 13 Steven Pinker, "Why they Kill Their Newborns," *New York Times Magazine*, November 2, 1997, 56.



"Search" (Continued from page 5)

SURPRISE, as Gomer Pyle might say. Crossan didn't need a "searchlight" to find the *real* Jesus! All he needed was a mirror!

### The WHY

Why did Crossan feel the need to make up his own Jesus? Very simple — he didn't *like* the politically incorrect, intolerant (any Jesus going around saying that He is *the only way* to God is just *begging* to be reimagined!), hell-fire spouting, judgmental Jesus he found on the pages of Scripture! He prefers the mythical Jesus of the Gnostics, because their *theology* is preferable to him.

Gushes Crossan,

"The Q community (the early Gnostics) regarded Jesus as the Wisdom of God. Their theology would be: the world's powers destroyed Jesus, but he has returned to God, and he is with us despite his death, as God's Wisdom. They could speak of the meaning of Jesus' death without any sacrificial metaphors at all . . . My problem is this: language of blood sacrifice was appropriate to people used to the sacrifices that were part of ancient temple worship, but is totally alien to our world . . . Moreover, an atonement theology that says God sacrificed his own son in place of humans who needed to be punished for their sins might make some Christians love Jesus, but it is an obscene picture of God. It is almost heavenly child abuse, and may infect our imaginations at more earthly levels as well."<sup>26</sup>

Then Crossan gets to the heart of the matter:

"I do not **want** to express **my** faith through a theology that pictures God demanding blood sacrifices in order to be reconciled to us."<sup>27</sup>

It all comes down to personal preference. That's the beauty of the create-a-Jesus plan. Go through the scriptures, take what you like, leave what you don't like! It's so simple. That way, we can express *our* faith the way we *want* to! Truth is whatever we WANT it to be! That's a fool's paradise, my friends. The truth is the truth, whether we like it or not. Our faith may turn out to be warm and fuzzy, but alas, it won't be TRUE. And the faith that such people create will not save them for eternity.

Dr. Crossan's searchlights and imaginings have caused him and those who read and follow his and the *Jesus Seminar's* teachings to reach false conclusions. They have shown themselves to be myth-taken in their hysterical search for a mythical Jesus of their own imaginations. Jesus said,


"Unless you believe that I AM, you shall die in your sins."<sup>28</sup>

In claiming to be the "I AM," Jesus is identifying Himself as YHWH, the LORD of the Old Testament; to blatantly reject His claim for ideological reasons is to reject the forgiveness that Jesus freely offers to helpless sinners. What a tragedy!

There is nothing wrong with speaking out against racism, oppression, material greed, etc. In fact, it is right and

proper to do so. But religious liberals have made social action their *gospel* and have left the true gospel far behind. So far behind that liberals like Crossan state that Jesus' death was not necessary for us, and His resurrection didn't happen!

Meanwhile, on the other side of the aisle where I sit, I fear we are in danger of making social *reaction* our gospel. We're circling the wagons, and keeping our love largely within the circle. Let's not do that! Again, it is right, proper, and our Christian duty to speak out against the moral wrongs in our culture. It is right and proper to argue in the public arena against gay marriage, abortion, and all sinful practices. But, we must not forget our most important duty and calling: to reach out in love to those who are violating God's standards, and tell them that they are in great danger, and need to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Every day — homosexuals and "straight" libertines, racists of every color, abortionists and abortion clinic bombers, animal-rights activists and research scientists, poor young sinners and rich old sinners, left- and right-wing "conspirators," radical feminists and male chauvinists, environmental activists and industrial polluters, conservatives and liberals, the unrighteous and the self-righteous, and the good, the bad, and the ugly — all are dying without Jesus. No Jesus, no forgiveness of personal sins . . . dark desolation and regret forever. Jesus still is the friend of sinners, so we should make it our business to introduce Him to them! Friends, we need to be bringing the gospel of peace to the lost. That is our calling. 

*Don & Joy*

### Endnotes

- 1.) *Academics diluting and distorting Holocaust*, syndicated columnist George Will, June 18, 1998. 2.) Ibid. 3.) John Dominic Crossan, *Who is Jesus?* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), xv. 4.) Ibid. 5.) Crossan doesn't fit neatly into the category of "postmodernist," but then, few people do. Postmodernism is still a fledgling movement that only recently began coalescing around a few central doctrines. Even settling on one basic definition of what postmodernism "is" can cause arguments among postmodernists. On the other hand, Crossan's approach to the life of Jesus is compatible with various postmodernist approaches. Many practitioners of "deconstruction," after all, focus on exposing hidden political agendas lurking in both the text and its readers. And the postmodern emphasis on multiple, equally valid "perspectives" on the text has created an atmosphere congenial to the *Jesus Seminar*. 6.) Ibid., xv. 7.) Ibid. 8.) Ibid., 5. 9.) Ibid., 6. 10.) Ibid., 55. 11.) Ibid., 65. 12.) Ibid., 59-61. 13.) Ibid., 65. 14.) Ibid., 64. 15.) Ibid., 155. 16.) Ibid., 7. 17.) Ibid. 18.) Ibid., 8. 19.) Ibid., 92-93. 20.) Ibid., 136. 21.) Ibid., 8. 22.) Ibid. 23.) Ibid., 55. 24.) Ibid., 144. 25.) Ibid., 27. 26.) Ibid., 145. 27.) Ibid., 145-46. 28.) John 8:24, NASB.

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