

# JOURNAL

MIDWEST CHRISTIAN OUTREACH

*"Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?"*  
Galatians 4:16

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## Now More Than Ever

By L.L. (Don) Veinot, Jr. and Joy A. Veinot

A few years ago, John Morehead (currently with the "Evangelical Chapter of the Foundation for Religious Diplomacy") leveled a criticism at Apologetics/Discernment ministries, claiming that these ministries are involved in mere **"boundary maintenance."** He would prefer that Apologetics ministries be more **"missional."**

What Morehead may have meant by this, we are not quite sure. We would answer that, perhaps, our most important mission is to successfully accomplish **"boundary maintenance."** Apologetics/Discernment ministries are primarily interested in carrying out the biblical mandate to maintain secure borders—keeping watch for false teachers and/or exposing false teachings and claims—in order to protect the Church:

*But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. (2 Pet. 2:1, NKJV)*

In so doing, we strive to help those *inside* the Church to appreciate the dangers of the various groups and teachers outside of the Church, as well to alert the Body to false teachers who have managed to worm their way *inside* the church doors and already are exercising influence over the flock. The shepherds—pastors and elders—are charged by the Lord with the responsibility to protect those in their care, and we strive to help them do this. This aspect of Apologetics ministries is outlined by the

Apostle Paul in the book of Acts. As he made his way to Jerusalem, Paul sent for and met with the Ephesian Elders in Miletus (Acts 20:17-18); and after spending time with them, issued this challenge:

*Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. (Acts 20:28-30, ESV)*

This is the very definition of **"boundary maintenance."** Vicious wolves are going to be coming *into the church*, and your job is to keep them *out*! A great deal of the New Testament was written to correct false

teaching, expose false teachers, address bad behavior, lay out sound doctrine, comfort the downhearted, and encourage the faithful. It is directed to the Church—the community of believers. However, this necessary boundary maintenance work did not stop with the passing of the Apostles. In fact, after the Apostles died, and the Church got further and further away from the time when Christ walked the earth, the situation got worse. Therefore, down through the centuries, the Church has had to keep on the watch, because the wolves continued their attacks. The Ante-Nicene Fathers (church leaders prior to the Council of Nicea in 325AD) wrote extensively, refuting heresies

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#### **"Now More Than Ever" Continued from page 1**

that were invading the Church in their day. They strove heroically to make a clear distinction—between what was heretical and what was orthodox—to those inside and outside the Church. They ultimately formalized the creeds in writing to *define the boundaries* between sound biblical teaching and heretical claims.

I am well aware that today, even within the Church, the exposure of false teachers and teachings is considered "negative and divisive;" and so it can be quite unpopular. For some time now, the prevailing idea in the Church Growth Movement is that the church needs to become non-offensive to unbelievers, have a focus on the positive, and reject any perceived "negative aspects" of Christianity. Hell? Negative! Sin? Negative! Jesus is the only Way of salvation? Bigoted! Doctrine? Divisive! The result has been the downplay of the importance of doctrine,\* along with eliminating practices (i.e. calling sin, "sin"? ) and or symbols (i.e. cross) which may be foreign or in any way offensive to a non-Christian. To those of us in Discernment/Apologetics ministries, this only indicates the extent to which the Church has already been infiltrated by false teachings. We have largely bought into the view that the liberals' definition of "**tolerance**" is the highest virtue. Nevertheless, this view of tolerance is not true tolerance at all. True tolerance involves forbearance of others—who hold views, etc. with which we disagree—with a view to peaceful coexistence. The liberals' "**tolerance**" only tolerates views with which they *agree*, while seeking to completely *eliminate* disagreement with *their* views—or at least *silence* it.

Why has the Church accepted the liberal view of tolerance? It is not the job of the Church to shut up, to go along, or to get along with everyone about everything, and it has never been so. A quote attributed to theologian John Calvin takes a full frontal assault at this thinking:

**The pastor ought to have two voices: one for gathering the sheep, and another for warding off and driving away wolves and thieves. The Scripture supplies him with the means of doing both; for he who is deeply skilled in it will be able both to govern those who are teachable, and to refute the enemies of the truth."**<sup>2</sup>

Of course, this thought was not new or original with John Calvin, the Ante-Nicene Fathers, or even the Apostles. God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah who wrote:

***An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction; my people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?*** (Jer. 5:30-31, ESV)

A great deal of the work of the Old Testament prophets was to expose and stand against false teachers and false prophets in Israel. In so doing, they called God's people to repent of following false prophets and reject the practices they had embraced under their influences.

#### **The Ministry of the Church**

Pastors have a very difficult job in the best of circumstances, and there are a great many demands on their time. One of the expectations in more recent decades is that the pastor will "grow" the church, meaning primarily that the pastor will increase the church's size numerically and financially. With that as the primary goal and job description, figuring out ways to get unchurched or unbelieving people in the doors occupies more and more time, while the essential responsibility of guarding the flock gets lost in the shuffle.

The ministry of the Church as presented in the Bible—protecting, encouraging, comforting, *teaching* and *equipping the believing flock to take the Gospel to outsiders*—cannot be done effectively if the pastors and elders have to avoid all possible "controversial" subjects. To the contrary, it is regarding the controversial subjects that people most often need biblical guidance to understand. If pastors and leaders have to concentrate on not offending unbelievers, how will the congregation learn biblical truth? Christian truth with its exclusive claims about Jesus Christ—that He is the only way to the Father and that no one can be saved outside of knowing Him—has to be the most controversial issue of our time! It is not politically correct, nor very tolerant. However, it is TRUE, and it is exactly what Christians are called to declare. Christians also must understand the moral issues of our time, and our youth must be able to identify the lies and refute the propaganda with which they are being deluged *even in elementary school* and the all-pervasive culture. But, if the pastor speaks to these issues, may he not offend someone? The unfortunate result of the Church Growth Movement as practiced today is a weaker Church with less ability to carry out either its ministry or its mission. It also leads to pastor burnout, for how can

a pastor teach the truth and *avoid telling the truth* at the same time? If he is faithful to his true mission, he may not be able to “succeed” in the eyes of the world if “success” is measured primarily in numerical growth. No, it is not the pastor’s job to lure unbelievers into the church, it is his job to protect, teach and equip the flock in his care.

### The Gifts to the Church

*And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.* (Eph. 4:11-14, ESV)

In a sense, the Apostles in the first century had a dual mission. The Twelve originally carried the Gospel to unbelieving Jews and established communities of believers in their particular towns and cities. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, did a similar thing among the Gentiles. In simplified terms, they were church planters. Of course, they were also establishing doctrine and writing the New Testament, but a modern-day equivalent to their essential work is that of a church planter. They spent a great deal of their time with non-believers preaching the Gospel that converted them to the faith and laying down the essential teachings of the faith. They would establish a church, choose and equip leaders to care for the flock, and very often move to another area to repeat the process.

Prophets in the Old and New Testaments primarily were sent to God’s people. Most often it was to correct bad teaching and bad behavior, remind the people to reject the practices of the false religions around them, and purge the false teachers/false prophets from among them. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Malachi and most of the rest carried this work out, and it was *all about* “**boundary maintenance**.” From time to time, they were sent to warn unbelievers of impending judgment as in the case of Jonah.

The evangelist is almost exclusively a gift to the Church to fulfill the mission of the Church. Evangelists carry the *evangelion* (Greek)—the Gospel—to non-believers. Sometimes this is a one-on-one ministry similar to what we find with Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:26-40. Once evangelized, the new believer was sent to a local church and turned over to the care of pastors and teachers. It is the pastors and teachers who are there on a day-to-day basis investing themselves in the people under their care. They are the ones who spend their time studying, preparing, week-in and week-out, to teach and to demonstrate how to live the faith out in the face of the grind of daily life.

### Why Are People Leaving the Church?

On May 12, 2015 the Pew Forum released their study, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape; *Christians Decline Sharply as a Share of Population; Unaffiliated and Other Faiths Continue to Grow*.”<sup>3</sup> This poll result caused consternation among the faithful, as well as considerable head scratching as they were trying to figure out exactly what this means concerning Evangelical churches. On the one hand, Evangelicals can console themselves by noting the highest percentage of those leaving church are those leaving *liberal* churches and denominations—the very churches that have done the most to accommodate the whims of culture. This would indicate, among other things, that throwing doctrine to the wind and adopting an ultra-tolerant worldview to appease and lure unbelievers *does not work as a church growth strategy*! Most liberal churches have thrown out everything but the choir robes, and they would throw those out too if anyone objected to them! They are ever so careful not to offend anyone, the results of which is absolute truth being the first casualty.

Of less consolation to Evangelicals, a smaller decline is reported in Evangelical churches—from 21% of the population to 19%. Fred Butler, graduate of Master’s Seminary and blogger at “Hip and Thigh” (a blog), in his article “The Real Reasons Why Youth Are Leaving Church”<sup>4</sup> suggests that the shepherds are mostly to blame:

**4. Church leadership intentionally avoids difficult subjects. They won’t talk about those subjects that supposedly clothesline the young person when he gets out in the real world.**

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HAVE  
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~EPHESIANS 5:11~

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### ***“Now More Than Ever” Continued from page 3***

After expanding on this, he gives the next reason:

**5. Church leadership is lazy. If they don’t intentionally avoid difficult subjects, they won’t even take the time to educate themselves on those topics that will challenge their young people.**

I have certainly talked to many individuals who have left church and gravitated to Agnosticism, or to a false world religion or cult because they had difficult questions that were brushed off or even ridiculed. **“Just have faith”** is not a satisfactory answer for honest questions. However, before going further, we have to say these criticisms certainly do not apply to all pastors. There are very solid pastors and church leaders who invest themselves in study and research to address important issues of the day in order to present God’s truth on those issues. Moreover, as stated earlier, pastors and other church leaders have many demands on their time and energy. So, although Butler’s points may be true of some—perhaps, even many—pastors and church leaders, they certainly are not true of all.

We would also point out that the folks in the pews have a good share of responsibility in this as well. In countless churches, the people have been heavily influenced by the culture, and so they will not tolerate hearing the unvarnished truth from the pulpit. Many simply do not want to hear truth spoken with clarity. In 2 Timothy 4:1-4, Paul instructed Timothy and, by extension, all future pastors:

***I give you a command in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, the One who will judge the living and the dead, and by his coming and his kingdom: Be ready at all times, and tell people what they need to do. Tell them when they are wrong. Encourage them with great patience and careful teaching, because the time will come when people will not listen to the true teachings, but will stop listening to the truth and will begin to follow false stories.*** (New Century Version)

We were introduced to this truth ourselves some years ago when we hosted a radio program that addressed Apologetics issues on a Chicago-area Christian radio station. What we learned is instructive. We found when we were speaking about groups such as Jehovah’s Witnesses\*\* or Mormons,\*\*\* the vast majority of the calls we got were supportive and open to what we had to say. However, when we addressed topics concerning popular false teachers or false teachings *within the church*, we often got some very angry calls from Christians who did not want to hear *anything* critical of popular TV preachers or the ideas they had already accepted. Keep in mind this was almost 20-years ago, subsequently, it seems safe to assume that many—far too many—Christians have accepted much of what the culture has been peddling since that time. Accordingly, besides pastors willing to teach God’s truth, we need Christians in the pews willing to hear it, willing to open their minds to the idea that some pop culture ideals—which they have accepted as good and/or right—are neither good nor right.

### **Leaving it to the Professionals**

Another issue may be that both lay people and clergy have an expectation that the pastor and staff are the “paid professional” Christians. It falls to the “professionals” to keep the church up and running and, most importantly to many, growing. The expectation of the average person in the pew is, well,

to fill the pew and to attend existing church programs. Yet, the biblical view seems to be we are all to be using our unique gifts for the benefit of all. The pastor should not necessarily be expected to possess every spiritual gift. Notice what the Apostle wrote about the purpose of the gifts:

***...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God...*** (Eph. 4:12-13a, ESV)

The people in the pews have the obligation to exercise their gifts as well. They need to discover their place in the Body of Christ, where their interests and passions lie, doing what God has equipped them to do. Some are gifted to teach children, some to teach adults, some to make meals for the sick or disabled, and so on. There is no spiritual gift that is more honorable or important in God’s purpose. Some people’s gifts may not match up with what is considered a “traditional” way to use their gift in the Church, and they are called to use their gift in a different and helpful way. Joy’s aunt had a passionate calling to minister to the elderly in nursing homes (mercy! Rom. 12:8). She and her husband faithfully fulfilled this ministry until they were too feeble to continue. Years ago, Joy and I realized we had a calling to reach out to people caught up in cults and false religions where there is a spirit of error in their teachings (discerning of spirits at 1 Cor.12:10, cf. 1 John4:6). Cultists are not often found in your average church on Sunday mornings (hopefully, neither are errors in teaching)! ☺ However, we learned that if we are available, God brings them to us! This type of ministry is commonly known as Apologetics, which does not mean we go around apologizing all the time, but rather involves making a well-thought-out defense for the Christian faith.

### **A Brief History**

This certainly is not a new calling for our day. Jude speaks of being prepared to:

***...contend earnestly [make a defense] for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.*** (Jude 3, NASV)

One must realize that in order to ***“contend for the faith ... handed down,”*** you have *to know* what that original faith was and *to stand up* for it. That requires study and research.

As we previously noted, Apologetics was central to the Church in the first few centuries in order to refute heresy and to establish defensive arguments and explanations of Christian doctrine. Moreover, as we already said, there were many heresies in the first few centuries of the Church. One of the earliest was Gnosticism—the belief that matter is evil—therefore, God did not incarnate in the flesh. Later on in the fourth century, the Arian heresy reared its ugly head. Arius taught Jesus was a created being and not equal to the Father. Most of these heretical beliefs of the first few centuries have been recycled—repackaged and presented as something new—over and over again throughout the centuries. For example, the Jehovah’s Witnesses and many other cults have embraced and teach Arianism today.

Apologetics resurfaced again in the tenth and eleventh centuries as an essential tool in combatting Islam and its intellectual advances and arguments.

By the twentieth century in America, at least, Apologetics was not seen as a priority, perhaps because the America of those days was at least culturally a “Christian Nation” and so we felt “safe.”

Safe sheep do not feel the need for a watchful shepherd. Although some pastors had a smattering of exposure to Apologetics, there just was not much thought given to teaching Christians how to defend their faith. Yes, JW's, Mormons and others would *deceive* a certain percentage of Christians within their own homes, but perhaps that did not occur in numbers large enough that anyone worried too much, unless one of the *"lost sheep"* happened to be a family member. Christians just were not taught to defend their faith ... at all! I (Joy) was raised in the Church and was taught to read the Bible, for which I am grateful; but I certainly had no idea of how to defend the Deity of Christ or other very important doctrines, and I did not even know *why it might be important to know*. Sadly, our ignorance only leads cultists like JW's to believe they *must* have the truth in their twisted beliefs, because no one at the door can refute them.

## What Can Be Done?

All Christians *are not called* to understand all the ins-and-outs of every cultic group or doctrine; but according to Peter, all Christians *are called to*:

**...always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect... (1 Peter 3:15, ESV)**

In our darkening day, now more than ever, all Christians must be Apologists to a certain extent. The only question is whether or not they are prepared *when* they are challenged (and they *will be*). Are they well informed or uninformed? Today, the opposition is not just a cultist with a book bag at our door at home; but it is a howling tsunami of error in cultural immorality and unbelief pounding on the door of the Church, and it is demanding entrance and demanding our acquiescence to their ideas.

Those in Apologetics ministries, like MCOI, equip believers to live in and challenge a culture that is in greater-than-ever opposition to their beliefs. Apologetics is a tool that is useful in many areas of giftedness. For example, someone with the gift of evangelism may very often find themselves fielding difficult objections to the Gospel they are presenting. If unprepared, they will often give up on their calling. Someone with the gift of teaching children and teens, perhaps more than anyone else, needs to be able to impart to these young charges the ammunition they will need to fight off the challenges they *will absolutely face* in the world outside the Church, and against the cultural propaganda that seeks to shipwreck their faith. Thousands of kids raised in Christian homes and the Church go off to college and come back Agnostic after being exposed to a sneering critique of their faith for which they not been shown the answers. Currently, this problem no longer lies just with Christian kids going off to college—our children are being propagandized in elementary school to reject Christian teaching and morality. Because of this, perhaps most vital of all, the Church needs to *prepare parents to prepare their kids* for the challenges they will certainly face.

If all this were not bad enough, we have many false teachers and teachings *within* the church as well as without. Consequently, we must test all ideas against Scripture. Give your support to pastors and teachers who are faithfully and patiently teaching the flock in their care, and also love and encourage one another as the day of our Redemption draws near.

The days are evil. We most certainly live in perilous times. Let us not surrender "the faith of our fathers" with only a whim-

per, but prepare ourselves to fight the good fight of faith, not with physical weapons, but with the Word of God. ☐

\**Doctrine* is the essence of the teachings of our faith.

\*\*Jehovah's Witnesses a.k.a. JW's, members of Watchtower Bible & Tract Society

\*\*\*Mormons a.k.a. LDS, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

**L.L. (Don) and Joy Veinot** are co-founder and president of Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc., a national Apologetics ministry and mission to new religious movements, based in Wonder Lake, IL. He and Joy, his wife of 45 years, have been involved in Discernment ministry as missionaries to New Religious Movements since 1987.



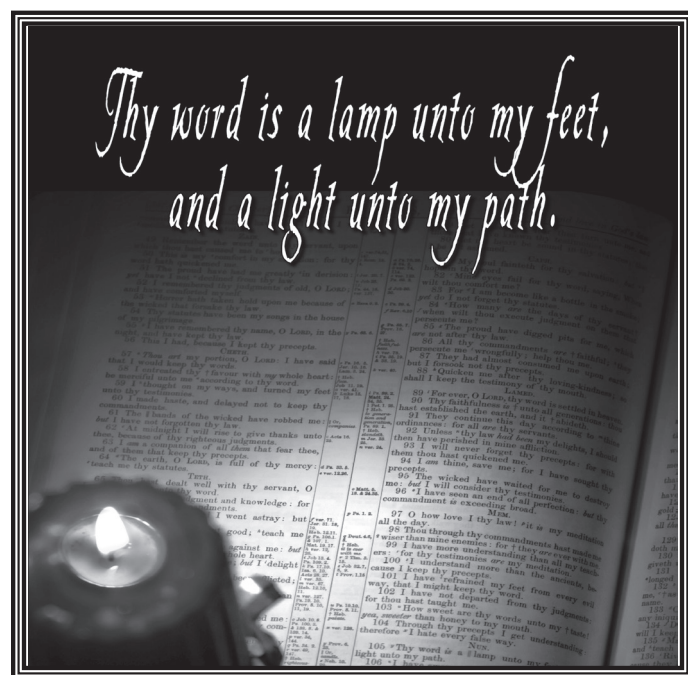
Don is a frequent guest on various radio and television broadcasts including *The John Ankerberg Show* as well as being a staff researcher and writer for the *Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. Journal* and is co-author of *A Matter of Basic Principles: Bill Gothard and the Christian Life*. Don is also contributing author of *Preserving Evangelical Unity: Welcoming Diversity in Non-Essentials*. He has articles appearing in the *CRI Journal*, *PFO Quarterly Journal*, *Campus Life Magazine*, *Journal of the International Society of Christian Apologetics*, *Midwestern Journal of Theology* and other periodicals.



He was ordained to the ministry by West Suburban Community Church of Lombard, IL at the Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem, Israel in March of 1997. Don is a charter member of ISCA (International Society of Christian Apologetics) and is also the current President of Evangelical Ministries to New Religions (EMNR), a consortium of Counter-cult, Apologetic and Discernment ministries from around the country.

## ENDNOTES:

- 1 <http://www.evangelicalfrd.org/>
- 2 Ritzema, E., *300 Quotations for Preachers from the Reformation*. (Lexham Press, Bellingham, WA: 2013)
- 3 Pew Research Center, May 12, 2015, "America's Changing Religious Landscape"; <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2015/05/RLS-05-08-full-report.pdf>
- 4 Fred Butler, "The Real Reasons Why Youth Are Leaving Church," *Hip and Thigh Blog*; <https://hipandthigh.wordpress.com/2015/05/26/the-real-reasons-why-youth-are-leaving-church/>





# CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM:

## A COMPARISON OF TWO GREAT RELIGIONS

By Pablo Herrera

### Introduction

It's often been said the God of Christianity (Christians) and Islam (Muslims) is one in the same. Living in a pluralistic/relativistic culture as we are today, it is no surprise that one would hear such a phrase. To disagree with this dogma would be tantamount to heresy of the worst kind to many. In our day, the question of whether or not Christians and Muslims worship the same god is not just one of theological significance, but it is also a political one. Since the events of 9/11, Islam and some of its beliefs have been put on display with many "theologians" weighing-in on what they believe about the god they proclaim, and whether or not Christians are just splitting hairs when it comes to the god each of us worship. A lot more is at stake than just theological agreement, but of peace.

For example, Yale Divinity School Theologian Miroslav Volf wrote the following in the introduction to the book, *Do We Worship the Same God? Jews, Christians, and Muslims In Dialogue*:

**To ask: "Do we have a common God?" is, among other things, to worry: "Can we live together?" That's why whether or not a given community worships the same god as does another community has always been a crucial cultural and political question and not just a theological one.<sup>1</sup>**

This is a true statement and one that does have theological and political implications. However, it seems that our political figures also have become quite vocal when it comes to their own views on the subject. Whether they make statements to appease the masses or if they are their true convictions is unknown, but they make statements that affect our culture, laws, free speech and, eventually, the Church.

In the world of politics, President George W. Bush took the side of unity when it came to the question of whether or not Christians and Muslims worship the same god. President Bush told Al Arabiya television:

**I believe there is a universal God. I believe the God that the Muslim prays to is the same God that I pray to. After all, we all came from Abraham. I believe in that universality.<sup>2</sup>**

It's no wonder why many people in our country and around the world have begun to embrace these ideas as truth. If someone of influence says it, then it must be true. It is one thing when a *political* leader such as the President of the United States makes a theological claim about religion; it is a completely different thing when the *religious* leader of the Roman Catholic Church makes one. In 1985, giving a speech to Muslims in Morocco, Pope John Paul II said the following:

**We believe in the same God, the one God, the living God, the God who created the world and brings his creatures to their perfection.<sup>3</sup>**

Here is a leader within Christendom that has also made the theological claim that the God of the Christians and Muslims is one in the same (also see Catholic Catechism, 1994, #841 pg. 223). This statement was made many years before the 9/11 attacks, hence the Pope had no motive to try and bridge gaps or make statements to keep the peace. This has been the spirit of ecumenism at work.

But how should Christians answer the questions: Is the God of the Christians' Holy Bible the same one that is described in the Muslims' Quran? Does the god of Islam love? Does he pursue and redeem? Does he interact in the affairs of His people? Does he enter into covenant relationship with his people? In order to get to the answers, we need to look at what the writings of these major religions say about God and His people. What we will find is that the God of Christianity and the god of Islam are very different—different in nature, function and power.

### The God Of Islam

In his book, *What Every Christian Needs to Know About the Quran*, Dr. James White, founder of Alpha Omega Ministries, explains the central tenant of the Islamic faith. He writes:

**Ask any sincere follower what defines Islam, and they will answer quickly. *Tawhid*, the glorious monotheistic truth, the heart of Islamic faith, is to the Muslim what the Trinity is to the Christian: the touchstone, the non-negotiable, the definitional. *Tawhid* defines Islamic worship and proclamation. You must embrace it to**

enter into the faith, for Islam's great confession, the *Shahada*, begins with the words "I profess that there is only one God worthy of worship." The faithful Muslim father whispers those words in the ear of his infant son at birth. These often are the Muslim's last words on earth. Without *tawhid*, you have no Islam.<sup>4</sup>

Islam affirms that there is one God (monotheism) as does Christianity and Judaism for that matter. However, the difference becomes apparent when one digs into the ideas of who God is according to each religion's theological framework. Christianity does not deny Islam's claim of God being one, but rather it shows it fulfilled in the incarnation of Jesus, the Son of God, and in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup> We will explore the Christian view later, but it is important to understand what Islam *means* when it professes monotheism, the implications of such a belief, and how Christianity compares to it.

To understand Islam's concept of monotheism, we must become familiar with how the Quran uses the two words to describe the oneness of God: *ahad* and *wahid*. Apologist Dr. Norman Geisler and former Muslim Abdul Saleeb explain it this way:

**Ahad is used as an adjective. It is employed in two suras\* to deny that God has any partner or companion associated with him.<sup>6</sup>**

In Arabic, this form means the negation of any other number.<sup>7</sup> This concept of monotheism removes any possibility of a plurality within God as Christianity would affirm.

The word *wahid*, can carry the same meaning as *ahad*, however it has also has another use: **"the One, same God for all."<sup>8</sup>**

According to this, there is only one god for Muslims, and he is the same god for all people. God's singularity and universality are implied in the Muslim concept of God's oneness.<sup>9</sup>

The Islamic doctrine of *shirk* is equal to blasphemy in that when someone ascribes to Allah (the god of Islam) an attribute or a characteristic that does not belong to him, that person would be committing *shirk*. Due to the fact that Muslims do not understand the composite unity/oneness of God, Muslims would regard Christians as committing *shirk*, because we believe God is singular in nature, but coequal and coexists in three persons. Although God is One, He is also *triune*. The Quran says this about *shirk*:

**God forgiveth not [the sin of] joining other gods with Him; but He forgiveth Whom he pleaseth other sins Than this: one who joins Other gods with God, Hath strayed far, far away [from the right].<sup>10</sup>**

While Christians do not believe God is joined with other gods, Muslims, nonetheless, would put the Christian view of God into that category. Islam believes it has the purest form of monotheism over the other two monotheistic religions: Christianity and Judaism. Here is how one Muslim writer describes the unity of the god of Islam:

The unity of Allah is the distinguishing characteristic of Islam. This is the purest form of monotheism, that is the worship of Allah Who was neither begotten nor beget nor had any associations with Him in His Godhead. Islam teaches this in the most unequivocal terms.<sup>11</sup>

This particular view of god has its logical conclusions; and while Islam ascribes many characteristics to Allah, to view Allah as solely singular brings about implications of how this god acts towards his people. One of the attributes of god that is not emphasized regarding the god of Islam, but is highly emphasized regarding the God of Christianity is that attribute of love. The concept of the perfect love of God is manifest throughout the Old and New Testament Scriptures. The very fact that God sent His Son to die in our place is love on display.

**For God so loved the world, that he gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.** (Jn. 3:16)

Love is what motivates the God of Christianity, not an authoritarian *submission*, which is what the word *Islam* means.

Islam may claim that Allah loves, but Allah does not seek out people. There is no atoning work/removal of sin in Islam, but rather one is submitting to a capricious deity who may or may not approve of you even if you do keep the five pillars of Islam. So, even if you do, you have no assurance of his love or approval.

The differences, when looked at closely, are *vastly* different. Whereas the god of Islam cannot have a son,<sup>12</sup> the Eternal God of the Bible has an Eternal Son named Jesus (John 3:16). The god of the Quran is not a "spirit," the God of the Bible is (John 4:24). Allah is wholly transcendent; the God of the Bible is both transcendent and immanent

(2 Chron.2:6, Ps. 139:7-12). Allah is not a father (Sura 19:88-92; 112:3), the God of the Bible is specifically called **"Father"** by our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 10:32). While Allah desires to afflict people for their sins (Sura 5:49), the God of the Christian Scriptures has the opposite desire:

**... not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance"** (2 Pet. 3:9b).

It is obvious and clear that Allah of Islam and the God of the Bible are different in nature and character. The absolute singleness of god, while seemingly logical at the outset, is actually a deterrent to the Islamic deity. Because of the plurality of the God of the Christians, we understand that God is a relational God. Throughout eternity, God was never lonely but in *perfect* fellowship and love with the other members of the Godhead. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit — distinct *persons* with different functions and roles — are all fully God. Yet, because of His great

**—Continued on page 8**

### ***“Christianity and Islam” Continued from page 7***

love for us, Jesus left the unrestricted fellowship He enjoyed in order to incarnate, take on human nature, and become one of us. The purpose was to pursue the rebellious human race and, at the same time, bear the wrath of His Father in our place to provide redemption. Conversely, the god of Islam does not provide for the redemption of his followers. The god of Islam is devoid of knowing true love for his people. Could that be because he has never experienced it himself?

### **The God Of Christianity**

In contrast to the god of Islam, the Christian God is One Who can be known intimately even though He is highly exalted above all creatures. Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck writes:

**However little we may know about God, even the slightest notion concerning him represents him as being exalted infinitely high above the creature.**<sup>13</sup>

The fullness of God is beyond our comprehension, and we acknowledge that; yet, the Bible tells us we can *know* God and *know* Him personally (Ps. 89:15; Is. 11:9, Jn. 17:3). Early Church Father Augustine said:

**I desire to know God and my soul. Nothing more? No, nothing at all.**<sup>14</sup>

One of the comforts of Christianity is that when God rescues us from our fallen condition, when we place our faith in Him alone, He provides us access to Him through His chosen fully divine/fully human mediator: Jesus Christ. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ made it possible to find peace with God:

**Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.** (Rom. 5:1)

Allah does not provide this. Instead, for the Muslim, salvation\*\*\* is achieved only through submission to the teachings of Islam (in the Quran and Hadith). Salvation in Islam requires that one must be a member of the Islamic faith.

**Whoso desires another religion than Islam, it shall not be accepted of him; in the next world he shall be among the losers.**<sup>15</sup>

To obtain salvation in Islam, one must perform good works. Sura 3:161 says:

**...Every soul shall be paid in full what it has earned...**

Furthermore, in Sura 2:222 it says:

**...God loves those who cleanse themselves.**

Salvation in Islam is clearly not based on faith in *god's* ability alone, but on *one's own* ability to keep the commands of Allah and to cleanse oneself. Hence, there is no assurance in salvation whatsoever.

In his book, *Sharing Your Faith with a Muslim*, Adbiyah Akbar Abdul-Haqq writes the following on how someone obtains salvation in Islam:

**There are conditions to the forgiveness of God, such as: 1) Following the prophet (Sura 3:29; 57:28; 46:30; 71:14). 2) Conversion to Islam (Sura 9:5; 49:14; 9:12). 3) Forsaking polytheism (Sura 5:78; 33:73). 4) Making expiation of breaking the ceremonial law (Sura 5:96-98; 58:3). 5) Reward of good actions (Sura 64:17; 9:100; 30:27).**<sup>16</sup>

He goes on further to explain the implications of such a plan of salvation and the nature of the god that provides this way of salvation.

**When all these conditions are fulfilled, even then forgiveness remains as eschatological hope. All major sins can be forgiven only in the hereafter. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the forgiveness of God depends entirely on His arbitrary will. It is not rooted in His nature nor in the condition of the sinner, ultimately.**<sup>17</sup>

This is where we get to the real heart of the matter. The very nature of the god of Islam does not allow for a substitute who is fully God and fully man to die in the place of the sinner. It's simply not in Allah's nature. However, the nature of the God of Christianity does; and it starts with the "what" of Whom He is.

The God of the Bible is triune, meaning that He is not alone, but while He is absolutely one God, there exists *within* the Godhead, three co-equal and co-eternal members—the Trinity. Berkhof writes this about the Trinity:

**Experience teaches that where you have a person, you also have a distinct individual essence. Every person is a distinct and separate individual, in whom human nature is individualized. But in God there are not three individuals alongside of, and separate from, one another, but only personal self-distinctions within the Divine essence, which is not only generically, but also numerically, one.**<sup>18</sup>

God is One, yes. However, being One, He is not absolutely alone, but rather He is a plurality. There are personal distinctions within the Godhead, which lead us to the conclusion that from all eternity, God is relationally perfect, there is *complete harmony* among the three members of the Trinity. In addition, each member of the Trinity participated in Creation and the Redemption of God's people.

Jesus, coming to earth as fully God and fully man, experienced all of the same hardships, temptations we experience, humbling Himself to the point of death:

**and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.** (Phil. 2:8)

The implications of this truth are vast. God—Creator of the Universe (Jn. 1:3) Who sent His Son to this earth as a flesh and blood human baby in the Incarnation (Heb. 2:17) in order to live the perfect, sinless life we could never live—*loves me*. There is no greater demonstration of love that can be shown to the creature than the fact their Creator God loves them. What this does is give mankind a relational God they can relate to—Who is personal. This Son of God Who came to earth in human flesh experienced what it was like to have a close friend die. He knew what it felt like to be betrayed by those who were the closest to Him. He knew what physical pain was like. And most of all, he experienced the worst agony anyone could ever experience, the wrath of His Father poured out on Him for *our* sin. If that wasn't enough, God the Father turned His face away, and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cried out these words:

**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?** (Matt. 27:46)

Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ, belong to the One True God. He knows us personally and intimately. The god of Islam cannot provide this comfort because his very nature doesn't allow it. It's only the God of Christianity Who can offer true hope and peace.

Perhaps the biggest contrast between the Christian view of God and the Muslim god is the view of Jesus. Jn. 1:1-3 says:

**In the beginning was the word and the word was with**

**God and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.**

Furthermore, in verse 14 we find out Who the Word is:

**And the word became flesh and dwelt among us.**


God incarnate is the major difference between our views of God. Jesus possesses all the fullness of God:

**Have this in mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant...**  
(Phil. 2:5-7a)

He is a servant, yet God! Not only does this not exist in the concept of god in Islam, but also *this does not exist in any other world religion!*

## Conclusion

It may be widely agreed upon in our culture that the God of Islam and Christianity are one in the same. However, the facts paint a completely different picture. Any Muslim scholar will tell you that Allah and the Christian God are not the same. Their very natures are completely opposite of one another. Allah being an absolute isolated monotheistic god who requires submission and good works to appease him, yet not able to give assurance that one is right with him.

The God of the Christian, with Jesus Who has made His Father known, is a monotheistic God Who is triune in persons and personal. He offers to those created in His image salvation from sin based not on their own merit, but on the merit of another—Jesus Christ. This is a God Who leaves the perfect fellowship that He has always enjoyed for all eternity, to humble Himself and take on the limitations of man in order that He may save many. This God is one that man can relate to because of Who He is. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit provide for us a God Who can relate to us personally and love us with a sacrificial love that cost the life of His incarnate Son. God is good, we can say that because of Who He is, and we can know Who He is because of His perfect revealed Word. 

\*A *sura* is a section/chapter in Islam's holy book the Quran.

\*\*Allah = god of Islam, (YHVH = God of the Bible)

\*\*\**Salvation* in Islam means:

**salvation is attainable through the worship of God [Allah] alone. A person must believe in God and follow His commandments. This is the same message taught by all the Prophets including Moses and Jesus. There is only One worthy of worship. One God, alone without partners, sons, or daughters. Salvation and thus eternal happiness can be achieved by sincere worship.**

(<http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/3681/salvation-in-islam-part-1/>)

All Bible quotes are from the ESV.

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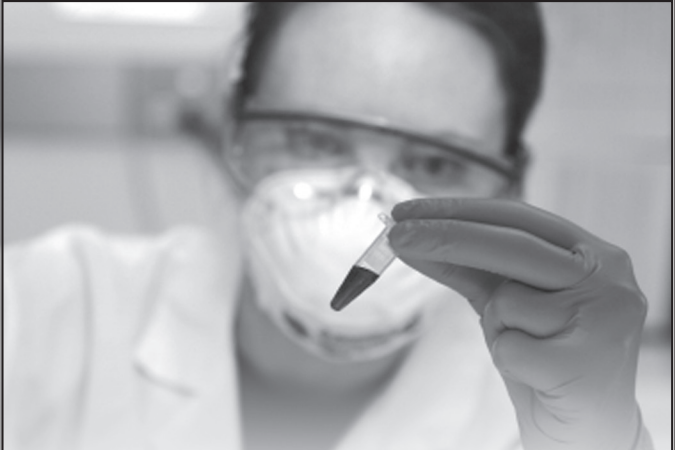
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# THE SECOND COMING OF THE GNOSTICS



By G. Richard Fisher

But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

— (the Apostle Paul, Gal. 1:8)

It seems to happen each year as we approach Easter or Christmas: Someone—identified as a “scholar”—trots out a “new manuscript discovery” that may have the word *Gospel*\* attached to it. In most cases, the manuscript discovery is written in Coptic (the Egyptian language written with Greek letters) and was composed a few hundred years after the Resurrection of Jesus and the writing of the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The scholar represents the documents as written by an early Christian group. However, along the way it comes out, the newly discovered work is the product of the early Gnostics (pronounced NOS-TIKS). Since the average person and many professed Christians have no awareness of Church history, they think Gnosticism really is something new. They do not realize it is a faded, worn-out, and retreaded heresy.

Those unfamiliar with early Church history are unaware the Gnostic’s teachings were composed of a bewildering array of heresies, myths, and bizarre beliefs. Many in the early Church were fully aware of these false teachings, and the Apostles and, later, the Ante-Nicene Fathers\*\* as Apologists wrote strongly against them. The Gnostics claimed they had secret wisdom and divine mysteries. Gnosticism was not a monolithic belief system, and there were numerous competing Gnostic groups. The core beliefs were that matter was evil and spirit was good. The particular view of how to treat matter (their physical body) often fleshed out the oddities of each particular group.

The Barbelo Gnostics<sup>1</sup> with their *Gospel of Judas* (which is

not a Gospel) tried to cast Judas in a different light and rehabilitate the fallen biblical character. In this version, Jesus conspires with Judas to get Himself crucified! In this revisionist retelling, Jesus could not wait to shed His body and get back to the spirit world. In one Gnostic writing, even Cain is given a new image. In this upside-down system, the Bible’s villains become heroes. However, the early Church was not buying any of it.

Early Church Father Irenaeus (c.180) declared:

**Valentinus adapted the principles of the heresy known as “Gnostic” to the distinctive character of his own school.**

He also wrote:

**Others of them employ outward marks, branding their disciples inside the lobe of the right ear. From among these ones there also arose Marcelina who came to Rome under [the episcopate] Anicetus. Holding these doctrines she led multitudes astray. They call themselves Gnostics.<sup>2</sup>**

Generally, Gnostics taught that God was unknowable and hidden. The Religious Tolerance website has a fairly accurate and succinct description of the Gnostic view of god:

**The Supreme Father God or Supreme God of Truth is remote from human affairs; he is unknowable and undetectable by human senses. She/he created a series of supernatural but finite beings called Aeons. One of these was Sophia, a virgin, who in turn gave birth to an [sic] defective, inferior Creator-God, also known as the Demiurge. (Demiurge means “public craftsman” in Greek.) This lower God is sometimes called Yaldabaoth or Ialdabaoth Jaldabaoth -- from Aramaic words meaning “begetter of the Heavens.” This is Jehovah, the God of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). He is portrayed as the creator of the earth and its life forms. He is viewed by Gnostics as fundamentally evil, jealous, rigid, lacking in compassion, and**

prone to genocide. The Demiurge “*thinks that he is supreme. His pride and incompetence have resulted in the sorry state of the world as we know it, and in the blind and ignorant condition of most of mankind.*”<sup>3</sup>

Irenaeus addressed the question of Creator in this way:

**This [Father] is the maker of heaven and earth, as is shown by his words. He is not the false Father who has been invented by Marcion, Valentinus, Basilides, Carpocrates, Simon or the rest of the falsely called Gnostics.**<sup>4</sup>

Other Gnostics put forth the teaching that material things, including our human bodies, are all shot through with sins and weaknesses and are basically beyond hope and, therefore, unredeemable. Sins and weaknesses they have right, but they are all wrong regarding the “unredeemable” part. If all flesh is evil and unredeemable, it would follow that Jesus did not come in the flesh and was not truly human. The Crucifixion, therefore, would have to have been a grand illusion. It also follows that there could be no Resurrection, since all that matters is spirit. These beliefs lead to extreme forms of licentiousness on one hand and a fierce asceticism on the other. In the end, according to some Gnostics, we will enjoy astral immortality—we will be able to live on our own star. (After the death of Princess Diana, there were some tributes expressing the idea that she had gone off to her own star.<sup>5</sup>) In conjunction with this, Gnostics rule out *any* resurrection since they view the body as unredeemable.

The Apostle Paul would strongly differ from this teaching, and he spends all of 1 Corinthians 15 outlining and making a defense for the physical resurrection body. Christ’s bodily Resurrection is a *guarantee* of the physical resurrection of every true believer. If Christ was not raised bodily, Paul contends, we are yet in our sins and, as a result, are worshipping a dead man (1 Cor. 15:12-18).

Dr. B. K. Kuiper, Dutch Reformed author of *The Church in History*, informs us that the formalization of the Apostles’ Creed came out of the Church’s struggle with Gnosticism and Montanism.<sup>6</sup>

The Greek word *gnosis* means *knowledge*. Gnostics believed themselves to be “in the know.” They were the all-knowing ones. The Gnostics taught their particular brand of knowledge was the only way of salvation. Knowledge saves; and in particular, *their* knowledge. In their system, they also made room for female goddesses and angel mediators (that were referred to as **aeons** or **emanations**). The combination of the unknowable God and the aeons was referred to as the **pleroma** or **fullness**. It is quite interesting the Apostle Paul says of Jesus:

**For in Him dwells all the fullness [pleroma] of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, ....**  
(Col. 2:9-10)

Gnostics would often attach the name of a Bible character to their writings and call it a “gospel” to try and give the writing the air of credibility as in the *Gospel of Thomas* or the *Gospel of Phillip*. An insidious teaching today—put forth by Karen King, Elaine Pagels, and Bart Ehrman—is that Gnosticism is just another alternative Christianity that lost out to the more powerful, dominant, mean-spirited Christianity of the Early Church Fathers who allegedly edited Gnostic writings out of the Bible. As these authors try to create a more sympathetic picture of the Gnostics, they are saying we can now give Gnosticism its rightful place—an equal place—with what is called historical orthodoxy. In their hands, Gnosticism becomes a Cinderella figure which was re-

jected by her mean step sisters. In this story, Ehrman is Prince Charming elevating Cinderella to her rightful place. The title of one of Ehrman’s books says it all: *Lost Christianities: The Battle For Scripture and The Faiths We Never Knew*.

Most (not all) of the Gnostic writings were lost and lay hidden until 1945. Two brothers working their field in Nag Hammadi Egypt made a discovery of a massive trove of Gnostic writings written in the 200’s AD and buried about 400AD. The documents are referred to as the “Gnostic Library.” There are 52 tractates written on papyrus. James M. Robinson is the General Editor of the English translation of the *Nag Hammadi Library*. He holds the Gnostic Library in high esteem and refers to the Early Church Fathers as “**heresy hunters**.” (He may have coined the term in the 1970’s, and it is often applied to Apologists and defenders of the faith today.) He is forced to admit that single copies of the Gnostic works with their many obvious errors cannot compare to the thousands of Bible manuscripts that are readily available:

**The number of unintentional errors is hard to estimate, since such a thing as a clean control copy does not exist; nor does one have, as in the case of the Bible, a quantity of manuscripts of the same text that tend to control each other when compared.**<sup>7</sup>

It is more than just errors and single copies. It is far worse than Robinson acknowledges. The so-called *Gospel of Mary* is only three pages. It is missing four pages!<sup>8</sup> Who would buy a book with more than half the pages missing and especially build an entire worldview around it?

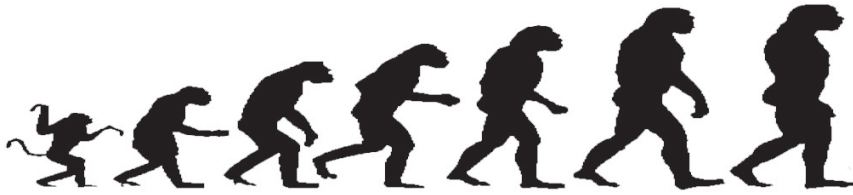
The Early Church Fathers and Apologists tackled the Gnostic invasion head on and, as a result, the Gnostics faded away. Their heretical teachings stayed in a state of hibernation for centuries. Those in what was called “**The Enlightenment**” started to paint a more sympathetic picture of the Gnostics. There was an attempt at resuscitation of a handful of the Gnostic’s writings in the 1800’s, but the world was still too Bible-oriented and conservative to take the bait. Fringe cults like the Order of the Golden Dawn and the Theosophical Society embraced the Gnostics as their esoteric and occult forerunners. Theosophist leader Madam Blavatsky promoted the Gnostics and Gnosticism in her book *Isis Unveiled*. In the early 1900’s, psychologist Carl Jung claimed to have a spirit-guide as he embraced Gnostic ideas and self deification (see *The Aryan Christ The Secret Life of Carl Jung*, Richard Noll, Random House, New York, 1997). All of this was followed by a proliferation of false “gospels” with an array of speculation regarding the early years of Jesus.

In 1992, theologian Peter Jones authored a book titled *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back*. In that book in an almost prophetic fashion, Jones talked about the return of ancient Gnosticism. It is an insightful and well-documented study. It is a warning not many at the time took seriously—viewing it as a bit far-fetched. The world had not heard yet of author Dan Brown and *The DaVinci Code*.

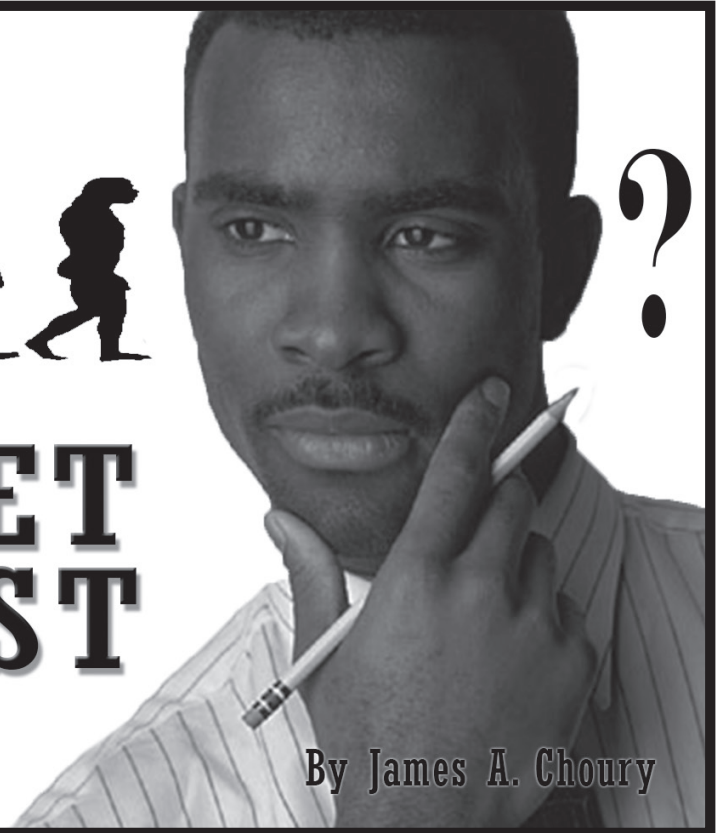
The last three decades set the stage for the second coming of Gnosticism, and the world is now ready. Our culture has become emotion-driven rather than fact-driven. People are open to the supernatural but not the biblical worldview. Our society has become politically correct, and *any* idea and/or lifestyle is to be not only accepted but also endorsed and embraced. The prevailing point of view is: If it is legal; it is, therefore, right. In some cases even if it isn’t legal, it is right; and the minority can

—Continued on page 14

# HOW TO



# INTERPRET DARWINIST CLAIMS



By James A. Choury

**T**he following is a brief overview to help one understand some of the reasoning behind Darwinist/Evolutionist claims and to offer some suggestions on how to engage them in thoughtful conversation.

## **RECOGNIZING DARWINIAN METHODS**

### **1. Darwinists tend to overstate.**

A favorite phrase they employ is “**we know**” or even better and more convincing, “**we now know.**” What that phrase really means is: Based on Darwinian assumptions, Darwinian interpretations of the data, and an enormous amount of imagination, “we firmly assert.” The list of things the Darwinist once “knew” to be “true” but were later found to be “not true” is long. A mere portion of that list includes: Haeckel’s embryos, the 1953 Miller-Urey experiment, Java man, Nebraska man, Piltdown man, Rodhocetus as a transitional fossil for whales, DNA as the “body plan” for organisms, and the existence of “**junk DNA.**” What is most revealing is that even decades after some of these alleged “evidences” for Evolution were known to be either errors or outright fakes, they were (and, in some cases, still are) being offered in lectures and textbooks as “proofs” of Evolution.

### **2. Darwinists often oversimplify.**

Oversimplification can be said to be the *Fundamental Theorem of Evolution* and can be summarized by asserting: “It’s easy.” Astronomical odds such as “one out of  $10^{50}$ ” or even “one out of  $10^{200}$ ” are not a problem to the convinced Evolutionist! Can Darwinist assertions—that life can spring spontaneously from mere chemicals and electrical sparks, meaningful proteins

can be made from amino acids without DNA, and the coding within DNA requires absolutely no explanation whatsoever—really be true? Is that because the explanation *for everything* is already known: “It’s Evolution,” and “Evolution is easy?” For the Darwinist, “it’s easy” to see how (given *enough time*) DNA—would have, might have, or most certainly—did evolve from RNA (an almost equally complicated organic macromolecule). The problem is that even the very simplest life form is a single cell, and even a single cell is incredibly complex and far beyond any mechanistic “chance-plus-necessity” type of explanation.

### **3. Darwinists are masters of “damage control.”**

Talk about damage control! Contradictory evidence is re-interpreted and actually converted into evidence *for* Evolution! *Competition* (to the death!) for resources and loving *cooperation* are both seen as evidences for Evolution. Fossils that clearly contradict the Darwinian time line are relabeled “**living fossils.**” A paucity of transitional fossils is explained away by presenting, with great fanfare and pomp, a half-dozen equivocal fossils presented in drawings where all proportion is ignored or purposefully distorted, and *no actual evidence exists connecting the said extinct animal fossils to one another except what the viewer’s imagination can supply.*

### **4. Darwinists employ circular reasoning.**

Here is an example of one way this circular reasoning technique is employed: “Fossils can be dated by the strata in which they are found; and the strata in which they are found can be dated by the fossils they contain!” No worry. “How else can we do it?” is the Darwinist’s response to doubters. They first as-

sume Evolution, and then interpret any data using Evolutionary assumptions. They then present their findings as *irrefutable evidence* for Evolution. Anyone who questions their conclusions is seen as incurably obtuse or simply obstinate.

## 5. Darwinists leap from microbe-to-man.

Keep in mind that Evolution is not about minor changes *within* a species (like differentiated beaks among finches or various breeds of dogs). It's about a microbe-to-man, unguided, chance-plus-necessity mechanism that is responsible for the creation of the millions or billions of highly complex life forms seen in the world today. (But how can necessity be perceived?) i.e. How to know the need for noses if not aware there is anything to smell? How to know the need for ears if not aware of anything to hear?) Beware of falling for the Darwinists' shell game (or "bait-and-switch" tactic). They claim to offer irrefutable evidence for changes *within* a species as "proof" for the microbe-to-man hypothesis. Nevertheless, breeding of dogs and breeding of sheep has been going on for millennia; and dogs remain dogs, and sheep remain sheep.

Thousands of generations of fruit flies have been mutated through the (*intelligent*) application of specific procedures and then selected to hopefully "evolve" into something else, but the only results have been: 1) No apparent, outward change; 2) Defective, crippled fruit flies; or 3) Dead fruit flies.

There have been no laboratory experiments (nor, apparently, can there ever be) answering the following question: How much natural selection—acting in what way, upon how much random variation—will produce what kind and how much change, with the effect of producing an overall increase in complexity in any organism? All the current evidence points rather to *stasis* or the *tendency of species to remain within the original species through thousands of generations*. And natural selection in real life always (give me one known case to the contrary) acts as a conservative force which eliminates the intermediate life form—like a half-way whale with almost-fins and almost-legs.

## 6. If Darwinists can tinker, so can Evolution.

Darwinists often offer results from experiments where "we are now able to" modify some portion of existing, fully functioning genetic material and produce a "significant modification." Never mind the fact that the modification is deleterious or even deadly to the organism. Man can now tinker and, to the Evolutionist, if man can tinker, then natural selection can tinker; and if natural selection can tinker, then natural selection did tinker; and that is proof enough that Evolution is true. The question of whether the tinkering actually gives the organism any survival advantage (a necessary part of Darwinian Theory) is unknown and probably (and conveniently) unknowable.

## 7. Darwinists current dilemma.

Unfortunately for the Darwinist biologist, astronomers and astrophysicists are now finding the "design" inference annoyingly present in the non-biological sciences. *Design* seems to be evident at the atomic and molecular level of even non-living matter. If the fundamental physical constants dealing with atomic masses, electric charges and gravity itself were to vary by one part in billions, the very chemical elements we see in the universe or even atoms would not exist as we know them today!

## 8. Darwinist motives.

Relatively few Darwinists are consciously lying. For the knowing deceivers, the lies are justified by the distorted view of the incalculable value of their final goal which Harvard geneticist Richard Lewontin has now famously stated, is: "**not allow a divine foot in the door,**" to rescue the poor deluded believer in God from his or her insanity, to make the world safe for reason and science. Most Darwinists, however, are honest, sincere followers of whomever they consider as the "in crowd," followers of those "in the know," the respected and infallible high priests of academia, politics, entertainment and education.

## ANSWERING DARWINIAN CLAIMS

### 1. Know past history of failed "proofs."

Be familiar with the many failed "proofs" of Evolution such as Haeckel's embryos, Nebraska man, Piltdown man and Rodhocetus (and ambulocetus). Ask how so many skilled, scientific Evolutionists were mistaken for so many years by such easily-detected, failed hypotheses. Admittedly, anyone can make a mistake; but to make major mistakes, so frequently repeated, reveal something more going on. Could it be over-zealous jumping-to-conclusions that these proofs simply must be true? When the Evolutionist says, "**we now know,**" ask *how* they know; ask what are their assumptions are; ask if they have considered alternative explanations, etc. Listen to their explanations (and remember, *explanations* are not arguments or evidence) and then ask for evidence—solid evidence—in support of their explanations. Darwinists like Richard Dawkins are experts at coming up with "just so" stories. Ask for the evidence.

### 2. Know problems facing darwinists.

Bring the many serious problems facing Darwinian and Neo-Darwinian Evolution to the fore. What about the incredible odds against chance-plus-necessity? How could proteins have come into being without DNA, and from where did the information in DNA come, for example? Educate yourself concerning modern Biology and the discoveries of the last 50 years. Those discoveries undermine Darwin's fundamental theorem that this is all very simple and easily brought about by natural processes. Ask what the evidence or research would tell us if it one looked at it without Darwinian presuppositions, in other words, what are the bare facts of what we are investigating?

### 3. Insist on hard evidence.

When presented with Darwinian smoke screens and damage control, insist even more on hard evidence. Ask if the sample (of fossils, nucleotides, genes, etc) represents an honest distribution of the data or was there "cherry-picking" of the data from the start in order to give support to the Darwinian conclusion being offered? This is often the case when considering genetic and fossil evidence. Watch for key Darwinian phrases such as "**could have**" and "**might have**" or "**no reason to assume not.**" Ask if people outside the Darwinist camp offer any "reasons to assume not." Demand (in a nice way, of course) all the information including opposing viewpoints and counter evidence. If they can't think of any, be prepared to help them out.

—Continued on page 15

### **"Gnostics" Continued from page 13**

force the law to change to accommodate their view and behavior. Everyone's point of view should be tolerated unless, of course, it is a Christian view. Morality is no longer defined by the Bible, it is defined by the individual; and every lifestyle is to be seen as good or, at least, acceptable. Moderns love the idea that we do not have to be freed from sin, but rather we only need to be freed from ignorance. Radical feminism is drawn to the idea of female deities. With the Bible and Christianity being rejected, there is a need to develop a religion for the new age. Moderns love to hear they possess deity within themselves. As gods, we make all the choices. *We* do it our way. *We* can either be ascetics or libertines or somewhere in the middle. So why wouldn't people be open to Gnostic ideas? Gnosticism allows people to live as they wish. The Apostle Paul warned that when one rejects truth, he or she does not then live in a vacuum; but rather they will **"... be turned aside to fables ..."** (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Some Gnostics taught that with the right knowledge, a form of perfection could be achieved in this life. Early Church Father Clement of Alexandria (c.195) thought otherwise:

**I wonder how some dare to call themselves "perfect" and "Gnostics." They are inflated and boastful, viewing themselves above the apostle. For Paul himself acknowledged about himself: "Not that I have already attained or am already perfect." [Phil. 3:12]<sup>9</sup>**

Sadly, there is a quasi Gnosticism (a soft Gnosticism) within the Protestant and Evangelical church with claims of divine revelation and inside messages from God Himself (as in "the Lord told me"). Music and messages are claimed to be directly from the throne room of the Most High. Computers and pens are moved along by the Holy Spirit, or so we are told.

Contrary to the allegations of Ehrman, Pagels and others, the Early Church Fathers were not political heavyweights with all the advantage—strong arming and picking on the poor Gnostics. The early Christians prior to Constantine (c.300) were a hunted and persecuted *minority*. They suffered for their faith as Roman rulers' systematically unleashed horrendous persecutions and pogroms. They often died for their faith. They were the suffering minority.<sup>10</sup>

... But, back to the resuscitation of the Gnostics. The latest "discovery" in 2015 is a fifth to sixth century AD (160-page) Coptic codex\*\*\* with the title: *The Gospel of the Lots of Mary*. The "Mary" referred to is supposedly Mary the mother of Jesus as seen in the opening lines. Its origin is unknown, and it was in the hands of a private collector for decades and then donated to Harvard University. The story has been covered by *Live Science Magazine*, *The Biblical Archaeological Society*, *World Net Daily*, *The Christian Post*, the *UK Daily Mail*, and many others. The text is being released in a paper back book with the hefty price of \$84.60 (on Amazon). Its title *Christian Oracles?* is an oxymoron.

*The Gospel of the Lots of Mary* is not really Christian or a "Gospel," and it has nothing in it about Jesus. The title word "*Lots*" refers to the drawing of lots. Priests in the temple cast lots to determine practical things like who would serve what duties on any given day. There was a lot cast for the burning of incense and a lot drawn for lamp-lighting. Lots simply helped in job distribution. In Acts 1, lots were used to select a successor to Judas. Drawing names out of a hat or voting with ballots would

be quite similar. Lots are not mentioned after Acts 1, because we have the Word of God to direct us and the Holy Spirit to guide us. The Word of God is sufficient for **"...doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ..."** (2 Tim. 3:16).


However *The Gospel of the Lots of Mary* presents something entirely different. It is basically a tool for occult divination. It contains 37 vague oracles to answer questions about the future and to give directions for future decisions. A person may want an answer for a concern, a business deal, an illness, or a choice he or she must make. They want to know how the future will turn out. In effect, they want to control the future and to be omniscient like God. They simply turn to a random page and read the statement on that page. The oracle might say "yes, it will happen" or "go forward immediately" or some other very general statement, and that becomes their direction—even if the direction is quite unbiblical. Divination texts are similar to the very old children's *Magic 8-Ball* game. The oracles can be likened to newspaper astrology or even a Chinese fortune cookie. To get any kind of true direction is such a gamble, they could call it "The Slots of Mary" and send it to Atlantic City.

Divination is a pagan practice condemned by the Bible (Deut. 18:10-14, 2 Kings 17: 16-17, Ez. 13:6-7). It is the idea of using oracles, tea leaves, cards, or other objects to predict the future. The practice of divination seeks knowledge of what might lie ahead through the use of omens of various sorts. However, all that we need to know about the future, God has revealed in His Word. We may not have everything we would *like to know*, but we have *all* that we *need to know* readily available in Scripture. To try to obtain secret knowledge of the future not sanctioned by the Bible is clearly wrong (see Merrill Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, Scripture Press, Wheaton Illinois, 1952, Chapter 7, "Biblical Demonology and Divination").

We should be very wary of any individual or group that claims to have insider knowledge or secret knowledge that no one else has. They claim to unlock mysteries and have insights into the spiritual world. They are the modern-day Gnostics or at least Gnostic-like. Some years ago, Pastor and Theologian Dave Breese penned a book titled *Know the Marks of Cults* (Victor Books, Wheaton, Illinois, 1975). In this informative book, Breese listed the claim of special discoveries as a mark of a cult. He pinpointed those who claim they can unlock spiritual secrets and turn their message(s) into something mysterious. They claim to have the key to spiritual mysteries and deep secrets. They assert they have a superior knowledge no one else possesses.

Conversely, at John 18:20, Jesus said:

**I spoke openly to the world ... in secret I have said nothing.**

The true Gospel is no secret, salvation is no secret, and the Bible containing all the promises of God is readily available to all who truly want it. Now you know who the Gnostics are, and why they are making a comeback. When your neighbor tells you about the latest Gnostic "gospel" covered in the daily newspaper, it opens the opportunity to share the truth about the Gnostics and their lethal stew of heresy. For an excellent introduction to Gnosticism, Gnostic beliefs and writings, along with the key players, see Randall Price's book, *Searching for the Original Bible* (Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon, 2007, Chapter 10). 

\*The word *Gospel* means *Good News*.

\*\*Ante-Nicene Fathers Church leaders who wrote prior to the Council of Nicea in 325AD.

\*\*\*Codex is an ancient book form.

All Bible quotes are from the New King James Version

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#### ENDNOTES:

1 The Gnostic term *Barbēlō* (Greek: Βαρβηλώ)[1] refers to the first emanation of God in several forms of Gnostic cosmogony. Barbēlō is often depicted as a supreme female principle, the single passive antecedent of creation in its manifoldness. This figure is also variously referred to as **Mother-Father** (hinting at her apparent androgyny), **First Human Being**, **The Triple Androgynous Name**, or **Eternal Aeon**. So prominent was her place amongst some Gnostics that some schools were designated as Barbeliote, Barbēlō worshippers or Barbēlōgnostics. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbelo>

2 *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, David Bercot, Editor, (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, Massachusetts, 1998), page 306

3 "Gnosticism: Ancient and modern: Beliefs & practices," Religious Tolerance; <http://www.religioustolerance.org/gnostic2.htm>

4 Op.Cit., David Bercot, page 307

5 N. T. Wright, *Judas and the Gospel of Jesus*, (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2006), page 57

6 *The Church in History*, (Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1973), page 18

7 James M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library*, (Harper San Francisco, 1978), page 2

8 Ibid., page 523

9 Op. Cit., David Bercot, page 307

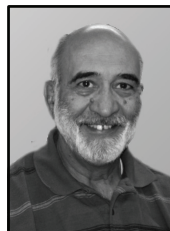
10 Op. Cit., N. T. Wright, pages 142-143



"Darwinist" Continued from page 13

#### 4. Recognize circular reasoning.

Finally, (for now) look for circular reasoning. Reasoning becomes circular when one includes part or all of what they are trying to prove in his or her assumptions. It goes something like this: "Knowing that Evolution is true (an often unstated assumption) and interpreting the data using unquestioned yet unproven Darwinian methodologies, any unbiased, intelligent person would conclude that Evolution did in fact occur 750-million years ago in just this way, right?" [Q]



**James A. Choury** is a missionary with Haven Ministries of Aurora, Colorado. However, Jim's primary ministry is with Atheists, skeptics and modernists of every stripe. As a former Atheist, Jim understands and has compassion for those trapped in the meaninglessness of the "random-chance-plus-physical-law" interpretation of reality. Jim trains others in reaching out to Atheists through reasoned dialogue and the examination of the physical evidence. He uses his background in Mathematics and Physics as well as Theology to challenge the prevalent Secular

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Jim and Barbara, his wife, were missionaries to Argentina and Brazil for 28 years before retiring to the United States and launching a new career to America's lost. They are both graduates of Denver Seminary and have worked as church planters and Bible school professors. Jim's conviction is that Atheism has dominated science, law, education and government in America since the time of the Civil War, and it must be addressed if America is to be salvaged from totalitarianism and the destruction of the family.

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