

## Qx20 – Summary of Biblical Balderdash

Dear: The famous American writer Kurt Vonnegut wrote:

How on earth can religious people believe in so much arbitrary, clearly invented balderdash?... The acceptance of a creed, any creed, entitles the acceptor to membership in the sort of artificial extended family we call a congregation. It is a way to fight loneliness. Any time I see a person fleeing from reason and into religion, I think to myself, “There goes a person who simply cannot stand being so goddamned lonely anymore.”

In later chapters (**X2** and **X3**), I’ll investigate some of the many reasons why people are religious; I agree that one of the reasons is as Vonnegut identified in the above quote: to fight loneliness. But in this chapter, I want to show you why I also agree with him that, in particular, the Bible is “clearly invented balderdash.” Later in this **Qx**, I’ll show you that a similar assessment is appropriate for the “holy books” of Mormonism and Islam.

Already, in earlier chapters in this **Qx**, I’ve tried to show you some of the many stupidities and associated horrible policies promoted in the Bible, both in the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT). The total number of such stupidities and horrible policies depends, of course, on definitions, and I don’t intend to verify someone else’s assessments, but to get some idea of the extent of them in the Bible, consider the following list, which I gleaned from [www.skepticsannotatedbible.com](http://www.skepticsannotatedbible.com) (where you can find the specific references within the Bible as well as reasons for the assessments).

Policy Characteristic	Total Number of Occurrences	
	In the NT	In the Bible
Contradictions	489	1085
Absurdities	232	750
Advocating Injustice	199	827
Advocating Intolerance	106	254
Advocating Cruelty	97	675
Insulting Women	41	243

And the “Holy Bible” is called God’s “revealed truth”?! More accurately, it’s “Biblical Balderdash”, where by ‘balderdash’ I mean as in my dictionary: “senseless or pointless talk or writing.” Yet, maybe I shouldn’t call it ‘balderdash’: the ~1800 contradictions and absurdities (roughly one per page!) are balderdash, but the instances of insulting women and advocating injustice, intolerance, and cruelty are far worse than ‘pointless’.

Now, Dear, although in prior chapters I've tried to point out many such inadequacies in the Bible, please read the following essay, in part because it's written so well, in part because it might refresh your memory of some of the "Biblical Balderdash" that I tried to show you in earlier chapters, and in part because maybe you'll find that it's not just your "weird old grandfather" who has concluded that the Bible should be trashed! The author of the essay (to which I've added a few notes in "square brackets") is Joseph C. Sommers, who is (or "was" when he wrote it) president of the Humanist Community of Central Ohio, a chapter of the American Humanist Association. I expect that he has copyrighted this essay, but have found no such notice – although on the web page where the essay is easy to find, there is the notice: "Copyright © 2002 American Humanist Association".<sup>1</sup>

## Some Reasons Why Humanists Reject The Bible

by Joseph C. Sommers

### Introduction

Humanists [Dear: in this essay, Sommers apparently means "secular humanists" or "scientific humanists" when he writes 'Humanists'] reject the claim that the Bible is the word of God. They are convinced the book was written solely by humans in an ignorant, superstitious, and cruel age. They believe that, because the writers of the Bible lived in an unenlightened era, the book contains many errors and harmful teachings.

Humanists receive much criticism due to their position on the Bible. Some critics even accuse them of being evil. This article attempts to clarify the reasons why Humanists hold negative views about the Bible.

### Importance of the Subject

In the United States, the Bible is often hailed as a divinely inspired book. Television and radio carry religious programs praising the Bible as the holy and infallible word of God. Religious groups also distribute vast amounts of books, magazines, tapes, pamphlets, and other items. The materials promote the idea that, as televangelist Pat Robertson has said, "The Bible... is a workable guidebook for politics, business, families and all the affairs of mankind." [1]<sup>2</sup>

The Bible is also extolled by many politicians. For instance, President Ronald Reagan signed into law an Act of Congress proclaiming 1983 to be the "Year of the

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<sup>1</sup> At <http://www.americanhumanist.org/humanism/thebible.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Dear: Sommer's "endnotes" are at the end of what I've copied.

Bible.” The law described the Bible as the “Word of God” and said there is “a national need to study and apply its teachings.”[2]

Thousands of other religious and political leaders throughout the U.S. promote the Bible. In most communities, an opposing view is rarely, if ever, heard.

The massive and incessant promotion of the Bible significantly influences the beliefs of millions. A Gallup poll showed that over 30% of Americans believe that the Bible is the word of God and its teachings should be taken literally.[3] Gallup identified an additional 25% of Americans who consider the Bible as inspired by God, but think some verses should be interpreted symbolically rather than literally.[4]

Gallup says many other people, while having doubts about whether the entire Bible is the word of God, still consider the book to be a source of moral truths and regard its teachings as deserving great respect.[5]

Such views about the Bible are surely responsible, at least in part, for Gallup’s finding that over two-thirds of Americans belong to churches or synagogues, and 40% attend services on a weekly basis.[6]

If the Humanist view of the Bible is correct, millions of Bible-believers and churchgoers are wasting much time, money, and energy. Humanity’s condition could be greatly improved if those resources were used for solving the world’s problems instead of worshipping a nonexistent God.

Moreover, because so many people have been told the Bible is the “Good Book,” biblical teachings shape the attitudes of millions on numerous subjects. When the subjects involve governmental issues, all of society can be affected when Bible-believers express their views in the political arena.

Anyone who becomes politically active can soon discover that Bible teachings influence the opinions of many Americans on issues involving nuclear war, overpopulation, conservation, women’s rights, gay rights, racial equality, corporal punishment of children, church-state separation, sex education, science, abortion, contraception, censorship, capital punishment, and other subjects.

When people view the Bible as the word of a just and omniscient God, and attempt to have society’s laws and social practices reflect biblical teachings, serious error and harm will occur if the Bible was actually written by fallible humans who lived in an unenlightened era.

In that case, the Bible would not be a guidebook for attaining human happiness and well-being. It would instead perpetuate the ideas of an ignorant and superstitious past – and prevent humanity from rising to a higher level.

## Contradictions

The Bible is an unreliable authority because it contains numerous contradictions. Logically, if two statements are contradictory, at least one of them is false. The biblical contradictions therefore prove that the book has many false statements and is not infallible.

### *Examples of Old Testament Contradictions*

The contradictions start in the opening chapters of the Bible, where inconsistent creation stories are told. Genesis chapter 1 says the first man and woman were made at the same time, and after the animals. But Genesis chapter 2 gives a different order of creation: man, then the animals, and then woman.

Genesis chapter 1 lists six days of creation, whereas chapter 2 refers to the “day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.” Genesis 1:2-3 claims that God created light and divided it from darkness on the first day; but Genesis 1:14-19 tells us the sun, moon, and stars weren’t made until the fourth day.

Chapter 1 reports that the fruit trees were created before the man, while chapter 2 indicates they were made after him. Genesis 1:20 says the fowl were created out of the waters; Genesis 2:19 alleges they were formed from the ground.

Contradictions are also seen in the biblical story of a worldwide flood. According to Genesis 6:19-22, God ordered Noah to bring “of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort . . . into the ark.” Nevertheless, Genesis 7:2-3 relates that the Lord ordered Noah to take into the ark the clean beasts and the birds by sevens, and only the unclean beasts by twos.

Genesis 8:4 reports that, as the waters of the flood receded, Noah’s ark rested on the mountains of Ararat in the seventh month. The very next verse, however, says the mountaintops could not be seen until the tenth month.

Genesis 8:13 describes the earth as being dry on the first day of the first month. But Genesis 8:14 informs us the earth was not dry until the twenty-seventh day of the second month.

The Old Testament contains an interesting contradiction in the story of the census taken by King David and the resulting punishment of the Israelites. God was so angered by the census that he sent a plague that killed 70,000 men. According to II Samuel 24:1, the Lord had caused David to take the census – which makes the punishment appear even more nonsensical. But an attempt was later made, at I Chronicles 21:1, to improve God’s image by claiming that Satan incited the census.

Further, the Old Testament is contradictory as to whether the Lord commanded the Israelites to sacrifice animals to him. At Jeremiah 7:22, God denies he ever gave the Israelites commandments about animal sacrifices. In contrast, Exodus 29:38-42 and many other verses depict God as requiring the Israelites to offer animal sacrifices.

*Examples of New Testament Contradictions*

In the New Testament, there are contradictions between the genealogies of Jesus given in the first chapter of Matthew and the third chapter of Luke.

Both genealogies begin with Jesus' father, who is identified as Joseph (which is curious, given that Mary was supposedly impregnated by the Holy Ghost). But Matthew says Joseph's father was Jacob, while Luke claims he was Heli. Matthew lists 26 generations between Jesus and King David, whereas Luke records 41. Matthew runs Jesus' line of descent through David's son Solomon, while Luke has it going through David's son Nathan.

The story of Jesus' birth is also contradictory. Matthew 2:13-15 depicts Joseph and Mary as fleeing to Egypt with the baby Jesus immediately after the wise men from the east had brought gifts.

But Luke 2:22-40 claims that after the birth of Jesus, his parents remained in Bethlehem for the time of Mary's purification (which was 40 days, under the Mosaic law). Afterwards, they brought Jesus to Jerusalem "to present him to the Lord," and then returned to their home in Nazareth. Luke mentions no journey into Egypt or visit by wise men from the east.

Concerning the death of Judas, the disloyal disciple, Matthew 27:5 states he took the money he had received for betraying Jesus, threw it down in the temple, and "went and hanged himself." To the contrary, Acts 1:18 claims Judas used the money to purchase a field and "falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out."

In describing Jesus being led to his execution, John 19:17 recounts that he carried his own cross. But Mark 15:21-23 disagrees by saying a man called Simon carried the cross.

As for the crucifixion, Matthew 27:44 tells us Jesus was taunted by both criminals who were being crucified with him. But Luke 23:39-43 relates that only one of the criminals taunted Jesus, the other criminal rebuked the one who was doing the taunting, and Jesus told the criminal who was defending him, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Regarding the last words of Jesus while on the cross, Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34 quote Jesus as crying with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Luke 23:46 gives his final words as, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." John 19:30 alleges the last words were, "It is finished."

There are even contradictions in the accounts of the resurrection – the supposed event that is the very foundation of the Christian religion. Mark 16:2 states that on the day of the resurrection, certain women arrived at the tomb at the rising of the sun. But

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John 20:1 informs us they arrived when it was yet dark. Luke 24:2 describes the tomb as open when the women arrived, whereas Matthew 28:1-2 indicates it was closed. Mark 16:5 declares that the women saw a young man at the tomb, Luke 24:4 says they saw two men, Matthew 28:2 reports they saw an angel, and John 20:11-12 claims they saw two angels.

Also in the resurrection stories, there are contradictions as to the identity of the women who came to the tomb,[7] whether the men or angels the women saw were inside or outside the tomb,[8] whether the men or angels were standing or sitting,[9] and whether Mary Magdalene recognized the risen Jesus when he first appeared to her.[10]

As a final example of a New Testament contradiction, the conflicting accounts of Paul's conversion can be cited. Acts 9:7 states that when Jesus called Paul to preach the gospel, the men who were with Paul heard a voice but saw no man. According to Acts 22:9, however, the men saw a light but didn't hear the voice speaking to Paul.

The foregoing examples are just a few of the hundreds of contradictions contained in the Old and New Testaments. Each contradiction is an instance where at least one of the verses is wrong. Thus, hundreds of contradictions mean there are at least hundreds of incorrect statements in the Bible.

### **Cruelties**

Humanists also reject the Bible because it approves of outrageous cruelty and injustice. In civilized legal systems, a fundamental principle is that the suffering of the innocent is the essence of injustice. Yet the Bible teaches that God repeatedly violated this moral precept by harming innocent people.

#### *Cruelty in Basic Christian Teachings*

Instances of cruel and unjust behavior by the biblical God are seen in the most basic Christian doctrines. Some of God's acts that harmed the innocent are as follows.

He damned the whole human race and cursed the entire creation because of the acts of two people (Genesis 3:16-23; Romans 5:18); he drowned pregnant women and innocent children and animals at the time of the Flood (Genesis 7:20-23); he tormented the Egyptians and their animals with hail and disease because pharaoh refused to let the Israelites leave Egypt (Exodus 9:8-11,25); and he killed Egyptian babies at the time of the Passover (Exodus 12:29-30).

After the Exodus he ordered the Israelites to exterminate the men, women, and children of seven nations and steal their land (Deuteronomy 7:1-2); he killed King David's baby because of David's adultery with Bathsheba (II Samuel 12:13-18); he required the torture and murder of his own son (e.g., Romans 3:24-25); and he promised to send non-Christians to eternal torture (e.g., Revelation 21:8).

*More Slaughters Ordered by the Lord*

Besides the unfairness and heartlessness contained in many well-known Christian teachings, the Bible has other violent tales that are opposed to civilized standards of morality. Among the most shocking Bible passages are those that portray God as ordering or approving the extermination of various people, including children and the elderly. Here are examples:

- At I Samuel 15:3, the prophet Samuel gives King Saul this commandment from the Lord: “Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.”
- Ezekiel 9:4-7 has this harrowing account: “And the Lord said unto him, Go through... the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark...”
- Hosea 13:16 describes a punishment from the Lord: “Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.”
- Deuteronomy 32:23-25 says that after the Israelites incited God’s jealousy by worshiping other gods, he vowed: “I will spend mine arrows upon them... The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs.”
- In Numbers chapter 31, the Lord approves of these instructions that Moses gave to the Israelite soldiers about how to treat certain women and children captured in war: “Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.”
- Isaiah 13:9,15-18 contains this message from God: “Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger... Every one that is found shall be thrust through... Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes... and their wives ravished. Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them... [T]hey shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eyes will not spare children.”

These verses expose the biblical God as having the morals of a sociopathic mass murderer.

*Examples of God's Other Cruel Methods*

The God of the Bible displayed his sadistic tendencies by employing a variety of other means to torment and kill people.

He caused the earth to open and swallow entire families (Numbers 16:37-32); he used fire to devour people (e.g., Leviticus 10:1-2; Numbers 11:1-2); and he punished the Israelites with wars, famines, and pestilences (e.g., Ezekiel 5:11-17).

He sent wild animals such as bears (II Kings 2:23-24), lions (II Kings 17:24-25), and serpents (Numbers 21:6) to attack people; he sanctioned slavery (e.g., Leviticus 25:44-46); he ordered religious persecution (e.g., Deuteronomy 13:12-16); and he caused cannibalism (Jeremiah 19:9).

*Disproportionate Punishments by the Lord*

The biblical God is also guilty of inflicting punishments that are grossly disproportionate to the acts committed. In the American legal system, such disproportion violates the U.S. Constitution's Eighth Amendment, which prohibits cruel and unusual punishments.

Obviously, to punish people who are completely innocent, as seen in the preceding Bible verses, constitutes punishment that is horribly disproportionate to the moral culpability of the recipients. And there are other instances where the biblical God's punishments are shockingly harsh compared to the acts committed.

For example, the Old Testament says the Lord prescribed execution for the "crimes" of working on the Sabbath (Exodus 31:15); cursing one's parents (Leviticus 20:9); worshiping other gods (Deuteronomy 17:2-5); enticing a friend or family member to worship other gods (Deuteronomy 13:6-10); being a witch, medium, or wizard (Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 20:27); engaging in homosexual acts (Leviticus 20:13); and not being a virgin on one's wedding night (Deuteronomy 22:20-21).

In the New Testament, God became far worse in regard to imposing excessively severe punishments. It would be hard to imagine anything more cruel and disproportionate than punishing people with eternal torture for mere disbelief that Jesus was the son of God.

The inability to believe that proposition harms no one, and it has been disbelieved by some of the greatest benefactors of humanity. Nonetheless, God promises to punish them and all other nonbelievers with the most horrible pain conceivable.

*God's Violence Incites Human Violence*

A serious problem with the violence and injustice in the Bible is that, all too often, the teachings and example of the biblical God have incited cruel acts by his followers.

Many of them reasoned that since God, who is considered just and loving, committed or approved of the most brutal acts, good Christians need not have qualms about

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behaving likewise. Such logic led the American patriot Thomas Paine to say, “The belief in a cruel god makes a cruel man.”[11]

Joseph McCabe’s treatise *The History of Torture* illustrates the reasoning process. McCabe reports that during the Middle Ages, there was more torture used in Christian Europe than in any society in history.[12]

The main cause of this cruelty was the Christian doctrine of eternal punishment. McCabe explains: “If, it was natural to reason, God punishes men with eternal torment, it is surely lawful for men to use doses of it in a good cause.”[13]

Other historical examples of violent and unjust acts supported by biblical teachings include: the Inquisition; the Crusades; the burning of witches; religious wars; pogroms against Jews; persecution of homosexuals; forceful conversions of heathens; slavery; beatings of children; brutal treatment of the mentally ill; suppression of scientists; and whippings, mutilations, and violent executions of persons convicted of crimes. Those acts were a regular part of the Christian world for centuries.

Thomas Paine was entirely justified in saying about the Bible: “It is a history of wickedness that has served to corrupt and brutalize mankind; and, for my part, I sincerely detest it as I detest everything that is cruel.”[14]

### **Teachings Inconsistent with the Laws of Nature**

Many of the Bible’s claims are inconsistent with the laws of nature. Humanists believe that those claims are both wrong and harmful.

#### *Science and the Laws of Nature*

As a result of human observation and experience, a fundamental principle of science is that the laws of nature do not change, cannot be violated, and have acted uniformly over time. According to paleontologist Stephen J. Gould, this uniformity or constancy of natural laws is the “methodological assumption” making science practicable.[15]

Indeed, without the assumption that the physical world operates according to unchanging natural laws, there would be no use studying the world, conducting experiments, or otherwise learning from experience.

In a world not operating under unvarying natural laws, those acts would be useless because knowledge of past events would not provide guidance about what will happen in similar situations in the future. There would always be the possibility of supernatural forces intervening to alter outcomes from what would otherwise be expected to occur based on past experience.

Overwhelming evidence shows that physical events occur according to immutable natural laws. And an increasing knowledge of those laws enhances humankind’s ability to predict future events and control human destiny.

### *The Bible and Supernatural Events*

By claiming that supernatural beings intervene in the world, the Bible opposes the scientific principle of natural laws operating uniformly and unvaryingly. As a result, the Bible discourages a scientific approach to problems.

The Bible has stories about a talking snake (Genesis 3:4-5); a tree bearing fruit which, when eaten, gives knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17; 3:5-7); another tree whose fruit bestows immortality (Genesis 3:22); a voice coming from a burning bush (Exodus 3:4); a talking donkey (Numbers 22:28); rods turning into serpents (Exodus 7:10-12); water changing into blood (Exodus 7:19-22); water coming from a rock (Numbers 20:11); a dead man reviving when his corpse touched the bones of a prophet (II Kings 13:21); and other people rising from the dead (e.g., I Kings 17:21-22; II Kings 4:32-35; Acts 9:37-40).

There are also accounts of the sun standing still (Joshua 10:13); the parting of a sea (Exodus 14:21-22); iron floating (II Kings 6:5-6); the sun's shadow going back ten degrees (II Kings 20:9-11); a witch bringing the ghost of Samuel back from the dead (I Samuel 28:3-15); disembodied fingers writing on a wall (Daniel 5:5); a man living for three days and nights in the belly of a fish (Jonah 1:17); people walking on water (Matthew 14:26-29); a virgin impregnated by God (Matthew 1:20); a pool of water that can cure ailments of those who dip in it (John 5:2-4); and angels and demons influencing earthly affairs (e.g., Acts 5:19; Luke 11:24-26).

These biblical myths support the belief, which has been held by primitive and illiterate people throughout history, that supernatural beings frequently and arbitrarily intervene in this world.

When examined in the light of experience and reason, the Bible's claims about supernatural occurrences do not warrant belief. Our experience is that the natural world operates according to principles of regularity – which are never violated. We also know from experience that many people are often mistaken or dishonest. Thus, it's far more likely the Bible writers either erred or lied than the laws of nature were violated.

### *Harms of the Supernatural Outlook*

Because of believing that supernatural beings control the world, people have often misdirected their energies in attempting to solve problems. Instead of studying the world to discover scientific solutions to problems, they performed religious activities in an effort to obtain the assistance of benevolent supernatural beings or thwart the influence of malicious ones.

This misdirection of energies is seen, for instance, in the history of the attempts to prevent the outbreak and spread of diseases in Europe. The historian Andrew White relates that, during many centuries in the Middle Ages, the filthiness of European cities repeatedly caused great plagues that sent multitudes to their graves.[16]

Based on biblical teachings, Christian theologians during those centuries thought the plagues were caused by the anger of God or the malevolence of Satan.[17] The Bible gave them ample support for their belief. It contains numerous instances of God punishing people by means of pestilence (e.g., Exodus 32:35; Numbers 16:44-49; Jeremiah 21:6). And in describing Jesus' healing miracles, the New Testament attributes the following afflictions to demons: blindness (Matthew 12:22); muteness (Matthew 9:32-33); lameness (Luke 13:11,16); epilepsy (Matthew 17:14-18); and insanity (Mark 5:1-13).

Those teachings led the early church leaders to promote the idea that demonic activity is the primary cause of disease. For example, St. Augustine, whose views strongly influenced Western thought for over a thousand years, said in the fourth century: "All diseases of Christians are to be ascribed to these demons..."[18]

With the coming of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, there was little change in the Christian attitude toward the causes of disease. Martin Luther, the founder of Protestantism, repeatedly attributed his own illnesses to "devils' spells." He also stated: "Satan produces all the maladies which afflict mankind, for he is the prince of death."[19]

As a result of believing in supernatural causes of disease, theologians taught that plagues could be averted or stopped by seeking supernatural assistance. And the way to obtain God's help, they thought, was to perform religious acts. These included repenting from sin;[20] providing gifts to churches, monasteries, and shrines;[21] participating in religious processions;[22] attending church services (which often only increased the spread of disease);[23] and killing Jews and witches (since it was thought Satan used them as his agents in causing illness).[24] Religious leaders largely ignored the possibility of physical causes and cures of diseases.[25]

### *Science Bests Supernaturalism*

White states that despite all the prayers, rituals, and other religious activities performed throughout the centuries, the frequency and severity of plagues did not diminish until scientific hygiene made its appearance. In regard to the hygienic improvements instituted during the second half of the nineteenth century, White explains: "[T]he sanitary authorities have in half a century done far more to reduce the rate of disease and death than has been done in fifteen hundred years by all the fetishes which theological reasoning could devise or ecclesiastical power enforce."[26]

The superior results of using science instead of religion can be seen in many other fields. Humanists therefore accept the scientific view that this world operates under unvarying natural laws that cannot be suspended by religious rituals or other means.

And Humanists esteem highly those who study this world and provide a better understanding of it. Unlike the theologians who focus on influencing supposed

supernatural powers, persons using a scientific outlook have enabled great progress to be made in reducing misery and increasing happiness.

### **Incorrect Ideas About the Structure of the Physical World**

Humanists also repudiate the Bible because of its mistaken ideas about the structure of the physical world. As is the case with the Bible's statements opposing the laws of nature, the book's views on this subject are similar to beliefs held by primitive and illiterate people throughout history.

#### *Stationary Earth as the Center of the Universe*

An erroneous Bible teaching caused Christian theologians to oppose Galileo's proof that the earth rotates on its axis and revolves around the sun. In the sixteenth century, Copernicus proposed this theory about the double motion of the earth. In the following century, Galileo's telescope proved that Copernicus had been right.

To oppose the Copernican doctrine and show that the earth remains stationary while the sun moves around it, the Catholic Church pointed to the tenth chapter of the book of Joshua.[27] There we are told that Joshua, in order to have a longer period of daylight in which to carry out the Lord's command to slaughter the Amorites, ordered the sun to stand still – not the earth.

Other passages demonstrating that the earth remains stationary include Psalm 93:1 ("The world is[e]stablished, that it cannot be moved."); I Chronicles 16:30 ("[T]he world also shall be stable, that it be not moved."); and Psalm 104:5 (The Lord "laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed forever.").

Because of Galileo's support for the Copernican doctrine, the Inquisition threatened him with torture, forced him to recant, and subjected him to imprisonment.[28] Additionally, for nearly 200 years the Catholic Church's Index of Forbidden Books condemned all writings that affirmed the double motion of the earth.[29]

Protestants weren't much better. For generations the major branches of Protestantism – Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican – denounced the Copernican doctrine as contrary to scripture.[30]

#### *A Flat Earth Resting on Pillars*

The Bible supports the primitive notion of a flat earth. In the sixth century, a Christian monk named Cosmas wrote a book, titled *Topographia Christiana*, describing the structure of the physical world. Basing his views on the Bible, Cosmas said the earth is flat and surrounded by four seas.[31]

The prophecy at Revelation 1:7 was a basis for his conclusion. It states that when Christ returns, "every eye shall see him." Cosmas reasoned that if the earth were round, people on the other side would not see Christ's second coming.[32]

Further support for the idea of a flat earth is contained in the verses mentioning the “four corners of the earth” (e.g., Isaiah 11:12; Revelation 7:1) and the “ends of the earth” (e.g., Jeremiah 16:19; Acts 13:47).

Because of such Bible teachings, most of the early church fathers thought the earth is flat.[33] In fact, the view of the world contained in Cosmas’ book was accepted for several centuries as orthodox Christian doctrine.[34] Even in the fifteenth century, when Christopher Columbus proposed to sail west from Spain to reach the East Indies, the biblical notion of a flat earth was a major source of opposition to him.[35]

As for the question of what holds the flat earth in place, the Bible indicates the answer is “pillars.” The pillars of the earth are mentioned in several verses in the Old Testament (I Samuel 2:8; Psalm 75:3; Job 9:6). These verses reflect the belief of the ancient Hebrews that the earth rests upon pillars.[36]

#### *Sky a Solid Dome Containing Windows*

The Bible promotes the idea that the sky is a solid dome covering the earth. In the creation account given in the first chapter of Genesis, verse 17 says the Lord set the sun and moon “in the firmament” to provide light for the earth. The Hebrew word translated as firmament is *raqia*, which means “hammered metal.”[37]

More support for the notion of a domed earth is found at Job 37:18 (where the sky is described as like a “molten looking-glass”); Isaiah 40:22 (God “stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in”); and Revelation 6:14 (“And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together.”).

This concept of the sky was common in the ancient Near East and taken for granted by the Bible writers.[38] Based on the Bible, most of the early church fathers accepted the notion of the firmament.[39] The same position was supported by Cosmas, and thus was part of orthodox Christian doctrine for several centuries.[40]

Orthodox doctrine also contained the related idea that the firmament has windows – which are opened by angels when God wants to send rain upon the earth. Cosmas believed that when the windows are opened, some of the waters contained above the firmament (which are mentioned at Genesis 1:17) fall to the earth. Cosmas’ basis for this belief was the statement, at Genesis 7:11-12, that at the time of the Noachian flood the “windows of heaven were opened” and the rain fell.[41]

#### *Supernatural Signs in the Heavens*

Bible stories led the Christian world to believe – for centuries – that God sends humankind signs in the heavens.

Christians thought comets warn of divine anger and imminent punishment;[42] stars and meteors portend beneficial events such as the birth of heroes and great men;[43] eclipses signify divine distress in response to events on earth;[44] and storms and other destructive weather result from the anger of God or the malice of Satan.[45]

*Additional Errors About the Physical World*

The Bible has verses mentioning dragons (Jeremiah 51:34), unicorns (Isaiah 34:7), and cockatrices (Isaiah 11:8). These passages led many naturalists in the Middle Ages to think such mythical creatures actually exist.[46]

The Bible is also incorrect in saying the bat is a bird (Leviticus 11:13,19), the hare and rock badger chew the cud (Leviticus 11:5-6), and the mustard seed “is the smallest of all seeds” (Matthew 13:32).

Finally, it’s inconsistent with science – and ludicrous – to believe that God confounded the language of humans because he was afraid they would build a tower high enough to reach heaven (Genesis 11:1-9).

*Overall Effect of Bible Science*

White summarizes the historical results of relying on the Bible for answers about the physical world. It’s not a pretty sight: “[T]here were developed, in every field, theological views of science which have never led to a single truth – which, without exception, have forced mankind away from the truth, and have caused Christendom to stumble for centuries into abysses of error and sorrow.”[47]

In view of the Bible’s numerous mistaken beliefs about the physical world, there’s no reason to think its writers were any more correct about unseen and abstract matters. Being so greatly in error regarding the tangible and observable universe, the Bible cannot be considered a reliable guide for spiritual and ethical issues.

**False Prophecies**

Prophecies in the Bible further strengthen the Humanist view. Because many of the prophecies turned out to be false, they prove the Bible is not inerrant.

The Bible itself contains a test for determining whether a prophecy was inspired by God. Deuteronomy 18:22 explains: “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.”

Applying this test to the Bible leads to one conclusion: the book contains many statements that were not inspired by God.

*Old Testament Prophecies*

Genesis 2:17 says the Lord warned Adam and Eve about the fruit contained on the tree of knowledge. He stated: “[I]n the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” According to Genesis chapter 3, however, Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and didn’t die on that day.

Genesis 35:10 claims that God told Jacob: “[T]hy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name...” But 11 chapters later, the Lord’s own act proved his prediction to be wrong. Genesis 46:2 relates: “God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I.”

At II Chronicles 1:12, God promised Solomon: “Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honor, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.”

As Robert Ingersoll pointed out in the nineteenth century, there were several kings in Solomon’s day who could have thrown away the value of Palestine without missing the amount.[48] And the wealth of Solomon has been exceeded by many later kings and is small by today’s standards.[49]

Isaiah 17:1-2 prophecies that Damascus would cease to be a city, become a heap of ruins, and remain forever desolate. Yet some 27 centuries after the prediction was made, Damascus is one of the oldest cities in the world and is still going strong.

Jeremiah 25:11 predicts the Jews would be captives in Babylon for 70 years and II Chronicles 36:20-21 views the prophecy as fulfilled, but the Jews were taken into captivity by the Chaldeans when Jerusalem fell in 586 BCE and Cyrus of Persia issued an order in 538 BCE allowing them to return from Babylon to Judah. Thus, the Babylonian captivity lasted about 48 years.[50]

Examples of other unfulfilled Old Testament prophecies include the following: the Jews will occupy the land from the Nile to the Euphrates (Genesis 15:18); they shall never lose their land and shall be disturbed no more (II Samuel 7:10); King David’s throne and kingdom shall be established forever (II Samuel 7:16); no uncircumcised person will ever enter Jerusalem (Isaiah 52:1); and the waters of Egypt will dry up (Isaiah 19:5-7).

#### *New Testament Prophecies*

In applying the Bible’s test for identifying false prophets, the conclusion is inescapable that Jesus was one of them. For example, he was wrong in predicting the world would end within the lifetime of his followers.

At Matthew 16:28, Jesus tells his disciples: “There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.” The people who were standing there all died eventually, and they never saw Jesus return to establish a kingdom.

Similarly, Jesus is depicted at Mark 13:24-30 as listing signs that shall accompany the end of the world. These include the sun becoming darkened, the moon not giving any light, the stars of heaven falling, the son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory, and angels gathering the elect. Then Jesus announces: “Verily I

say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.” His generation passed away long ago without the predicted events occurring.

Jesus also erred in predicting the amount of time he would be in the tomb. At Matthew 12:40 he teaches: “For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Mark 15:42-45 shows that Jesus died on a Friday afternoon. But Mark 16:9 and Matthew 28:1 tell us he left the tomb sometime on Saturday night or Sunday morning. Either way, the amount of time was less than three nights.

Another significant false prophecy is at John 14:13-14. Jesus promises: “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son . If ye ask any thing in my name, I will do it.” Everyone knows there have been millions of instances where Jesus failed to respond to Christians who asked for things in his name. And the graveyards are full of people who prayed to him for health.

As is the case with other incorrect statements in the Bible, false prophecies cast doubt on all biblical claims . If one verse in the Bible is wrong, it’s possible for many verses to be wrong.

### **Inaccurate Statements About History**

The Bible’s false statements about history also bolster the Humanist position. Historians and other scholars have exposed many of the Bible’s claims as historically inaccurate.

#### *History and the Old Testament*

Historians have long known that the biblical story of a worldwide flood is a myth. For instance, Andrew White says nineteenth-century Egyptologists found that Egypt had a flourishing civilization long before Noah, and no flood had ever interrupted it.[51]

The book of Exodus claims to contain a historical record of the escape of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. But historians and archaeologists have been unable to verify any of the events described in the book. No known Egyptian records refer to the biblical Moses, the devastating plagues God supposedly inflicted on the country, the escape of the Hebrew slaves, or the drowning of the Egyptian army.[52] Further, White tells us the records contained on Egyptian monuments show that the pharaoh ruling at the time of the alleged escape of the Jews was certainly not overwhelmed in the Red Sea.[53]

The book of Esther purports to describe how a young Jewish girl named Esther was chosen by the Persian king Xerxes I to be queen after he had divorced Vashti. Although historians know a great deal about Xerxes I, there is no record that he had a Jewish queen named Esther or was married to Vashti.[54]

Additionally, the book of Esther describes the Persian empire as having 127 provinces, but historians maintain there was no such division of the empire.[55] Also contrary to the book of Esther, historians assure us Xerxes did not order Jews in his territories to attack his Persian subjects.[56]

The book of Daniel describes events that supposedly happened during the Babylonian captivity of the Jews. The fifth chapter states that Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, was succeeded on the throne by his son Belshazzar. But historians tell us Belshazzar was not the son of Nebuchadnezzar and was never king.[57]

The book of Daniel also says one “Darius the Mede” captured Babylon in the sixth century BCE. In contrast, historians know that Cyrus of Persia took Babylon.[58]

#### *History and the New Testament*

In the New Testament, the second chapter of Luke asserts that shortly before the birth of Jesus, the emperor Augustus ordered a census throughout the Roman world. Luke claims that every person had to travel to the town of his ancestors for the census to be taken. He identifies the census as the reason for Joseph and Mary traveling from Nazareth to Bethlehem, where Jesus is said to have been born.

In his book *Gospel Fictions*, Randall Helms says this type of census was never taken in the history of the Roman Empire. He points out it’s ridiculous to think the practical Romans would require millions of people to travel enormous distances – to towns of long-deceased ancestors – merely to sign a tax form.[59] Likewise, in *Asimov’s Guide to the Bible*, Isaac Asimov affirms that the Romans would certainly arrange no such census.[60]

The third chapter of Luke contains a genealogy tracing Christ’s ancestry back only 76 generations to Adam. According to Genesis chapter 1, Adam was created along with the rest of the universe during the course of one week.

The Bible thus views the human race and the universe as having existed for a relatively short period, probably no more than several thousand years. In fact, for many centuries the orthodox Christian position – to doubt which was to risk damnation – was that the creation took place sometime between four and six thousand years before Christ’s birth.[61]

Historians and scientists give a much longer historical record. They say the universe is between 10 and 20 billion years old,[62] the earth’s age is approximately 4.6 billion years,[63] and humans evolved from ape-like ancestors during the last few million years.[64]

Matthew chapter 2 avers that shortly after the birth of Jesus, King Herod ordered the massacre of all male children two years of age or under in Bethlehem and its vicinity. In the book of Luke, which contains the only other New Testament story of Jesus’ birth, there is no mention of this horribly cruel order. It’s also not recorded in any

secular histories from the time – not even by writers who carefully described many far less wicked deeds of Herod.[65] The lack of corroboration means Matthew’s account was fabricated.

Matthew 27:45 alleges that while Jesus was on the cross, there fell over the whole land a darkness lasting from midday until three in the afternoon. Andrew White explains that although Romans such as Seneca and Pliny carefully described much less striking occurrences of the same sort in more remote regions, they failed to note any such darkness occurring even in Judea.[66]

Robert Ingersoll wondered why the first-century Jewish historian Josephus, “the best historian the Hebrews produced, said nothing about the life or death of Christ; nothing about the massacre of the infants by Herod; not one word about the wonderful star that visited the sky at the birth of Christ; nothing about the darkness that fell upon the world for several hours in the midst of day; and failed entirely to mention that hundreds of graves were opened, and that multitudes of Jews rose from the dead, and visited the Holy City”. Ingersoll also asked, “Is it not wonderful that no historian ever mentioned any of these prodigies?”[67]

Ingersoll’s questions are even more forceful when one considers that there still exist at least some of the works of more than 60 historians or chroniclers who lived in the period from 10 CE to 100 CE.[68] Those writers were contemporaries of Jesus, if in fact he ever lived.

Finally, the previously discussed contradictions can be cited as examples of historical inaccuracies . In each instance where the Bible contains a contradiction about an alleged historical event, at least one of the accounts is wrong.

The Bible writers were poor historians, let alone conveyers of messages from an infallible God.

### **Other Problems with the Bible**

There are other reasons why the Bible should not be considered the word of God. They include, but are not limited to: the fact that we don’t know who wrote most of it;[69] the fact that much of it was written many years – and in some cases many centuries – after the events it purports to describe;[70] its obscene passages; and its promises of eternal rewards for the ignorant and credulous and everlasting punishment for skeptics and investigators.

Finally, the harm that the Bible causes in people’s personal lives should be mentioned as a reason for rejecting the book. It’s not uncommon to see media reports about Bible believers committing bizarre, injurious, and sometimes deadly acts.

Some people use Bible verses to justify beating children, withholding medical treatment, handling snakes, drinking poison, chopping off body parts, plucking out

eyes, driving out demons, withdrawing from the affairs of this world, renouncing the pleasures of life, and expecting the world to end.

If the Bible were not viewed as God's word, these acts would occur much less often.

### Conclusion

Many compelling and morally sound reasons support the Humanist position that the Bible is not divinely inspired. Instead of being inerrant, the Bible has far more errors and immoral teachings than most other books.

By treating this mistake-ridden book as the word of God, humanity has been led down many paths of error and misery throughout history. In too many ways, the Bible continues to produce such results.

But in some cases, the errors caused by the Bible have been corrected and the harms have been stopped. This happened when a scientific approach was applied to problems. Science involves relying on reason, observation, experience, and compassion – rather than blindly accepting religious or secular dogma.

We should reject the views of those who say the Bible has infallible answers to today's problems. As Humanists know, science has proved to be a much better source for answers.

### Endnotes:

1 Ostling, Richard N., "Jerry Falwell's Crusade," *Time* (September 2, 1985), p. 50. Similarly, Jerry Falwell has said: "The Bible is the inerrant word of the living God. It is absolutely infallible, without error in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as well as in areas such as geography, science, history, etc." McWilliams, Peter, *Ain't Nobody's Business If You Do: The Absurdity of Consensual Crimes in a Free Society* (Los Angeles: Prelude Press, 1993), p. 322.

2 "Interrogatories Served in Gaylor vs. Reagan," *Freethought Today* (September 1983), p. 1.

3 George Gallop Jr. and Jim Castelli, *The People's Religion: American Faith in the 90's* (New York: MacMillan, 1989), pp. 60, 61.

4 Gallup and Castelli, p. 61.

5 Gallup and Castelli, p. 60.

6 Gallup and Castelli, p. 16.

7 Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10; and John 20:1

8 Matthew 28:2 (outside) vs. Mark 16:5; Luke 24:3-4; and John 20:11-12 (inside)

9 Luke 24:4 (standing) vs. Matthew 28:2; Mark 16:5; and John 20:12 (sitting)

10 Matthew 28:9 and John 20:14

11 Ingersoll, Robert G., "Vindication of Thomas Paine," *The Works of Ingersoll*, Vol. V (New York: Dresden, 1901), p. 483.

12 McCabe, Joseph, *The History of Torture* (Austin: American Atheist Press, Reprinted 1982), pp. 12, 23.

13 McCabe, pp. 20, 21.

14 Paine, Thomas, *The Age of Reason* (New Jersey: Citadel Press, 1974), p. 60.

15 Berggen, W.A., and Van Couvering, John A., *Catastrophes and Earth History: The New Uniformitarianism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 11.

16 White, Andrew D., *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, Vol. II (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1910), pp. 67, 68.

17 White, Vol. II, p. 70.

18 White, Vol. II, p. 27.

- 19 White, Vol. II, p. 45.
- 20 White, Vol. II, p. 68.
- 21 White, Vol. II, p. 71.
- 22 White, Vol., II, p. 71.
- 23 White, Vol. II, pp. 86-88.
- 24 White, Vol. II, pp. 72-75.
- 25 White, Vol. II, p. 70.
- 26 White, Vol. II, p. 92.
- 27 White, Vol. I, p. 132.
- 28 White, Vol. I, p. 142.
- 29 White, Vol. I, p. 160.
- 30 White, Vol. I, p. 126.
- 31 White, Vol. I, p. 93.
- 32 "The Ghosts," Ingersoll, Vol. I, pp. 301, 302
- 33 White, Vol. I, p. 91. See also Draper, John W., *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science* (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1919), pp. 62, 63, 161.
- 34 White Vol. I, pp. 325, 326. See also Draper, pp. 163, 294.
- 35 Draper, pp. 163, 164.
- 36 *The New English Bible with the Apocrypha*, Oxford Study Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 1002.
- 37 Ecker, Ronald L., *Dictionary of Science and Creationism* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1990), p. 56.
- 38 Ecker, pp. 69, 70.
- 39 White, Vol. I, pp. 114-115. See also Draper, pp. 62, 63.
- 40 White, Vol. I, pp. 325, 326. See also Draper, p. 294.
- 41 White, Vol. I, p. 325.
- 42 White, Vol. I, pp. 174, 175.
- 43 White, Vol. I, pp. 171-173, 176.
- 44 White, Vol. I, pp. 172, 173.
- 45 White, Vol. I, pp. 331, 337.
- 46 White, Vol. I, pp. 33-35.
- 47 White, Vol. I, p. 325.
- 48 "Interviews," Ingersoll, Vol. V, p. 261.
- 49 McKinsey, C. Dennis, *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Errancy* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1995), p. 295.
- 50 Callahan, Tim, *Bible Prophecy: Failure or Fulfillment?* (Altadena, California: Millennium Press, 1997), pp. 84-85.
- 51 White, Vol. I, p. 257.
- 52 Harris, Stephen L., *Understanding the Bible*, 2d ed. (Palo Alto and London: Mayfield Publishing, 1985), p. 61.
- 53 White, Vol. II, p. 375.
- 54 Harris, p. 178.
- 55 Harris, p. 178.
- 56 Harris, p. 178.
- 57 Harris, p. 184.
- 58 McKay, John; Hill, Bennett; and Buckler, John; *A History of Western Society*, Vol. I (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983), p. 61.
- 59 Helms, Randal, *Gospel Fictions* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1989), pp. 59, 60.
- 60 Asimov, Isaac, *Asimov's Guide to the Bible* (New York: Avenel Books, 1981), p. 929.
- 61 White, Vol. I, p. 249-256.
- 62 Ecker, pp. 31, 199.
- 63 Ecker, p. 106.
- 64 Ecker, pp. 122, 129-131.
- 65 Asimov, p. 796, and Harris, p. 275.
- 66 White, Vol. I, p. 173.
- 67 "The Christian Religion," Ingersoll, Vol. VI, p. 84.

68 Stein, Gordon, *An Anthology of Atheism and Rationalism* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1980), p. 178.

69 Harris, p. 2.

70 Harris, p. 2.

Moreover, Dear, there is something else in the Bible that's extremely evil – not so evil as all the killings that are allegedly sanctioned by “God”, but something that strikes at the best of what it is to be human, namely, our willingness to learn. And although many times in earlier chapters in this Qx I've harped on this topic, too, yet I hope that you'll read the following essay by Gene Kasmar,<sup>3</sup> in part so that again you might conclude that someone else (besides your weird old grandfather) has come to the same conclusion. This essay contains the copyright notice: “This article is Copyright © 1997 by Gene Kasmar, the author of *ALL the Obscenities in the Bible*. So long as profit is not the motive, and this copyright notice is always included, this material may be reproduced and distributed widely in electronic and printout form.” Thank you Gene!

## THE BIBLE AND HUMANITY'S SEARCH FOR KNOWLEDGE

by Gene Kasmar

A number of bills in various state legislatures and the United States Congress seek to help increase and facilitate the knowledge of our young students through education funding increases and other teaching improvements. However, these lawmakers, and the general public as well, aren't always aware that the pursuit of knowledge is CONTRARY to Biblical teachings.

The “Holy” Bible cautions AGAINST knowledge throughout. Some typical warnings (emphasis added) include: “For what hath the wise more than the FOOL...?” (Eccl 6:8); and “...If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a FOOL, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God...” (1 Cor 3:18-19 and Job 5:12-13); and “...Knowledge PUFFETH up...And if any man think that he knoweth ANY thing, he knoweth NOTHING yet as he ought to know.” (1 Cor 8:1-2); and “Beware lest any man SPOIL you through philosophy...after the tradition of men and the rudiments of the world...” (Col 2:8).

The Bible tells us that increased knowledge just brings grief and anguish, as in, “For in much wisdom is much GRIEF: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.” (Eccl 1:17-18); and “...how dieth the wise man? as the FOOL.” (Eccl 2:16); and “...thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath PERVERTED thee...” (Isaiah 47:10).

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<sup>3</sup> Available at <http://www.americanhumanist.org/humanism/bible-humanity.html>.

The Bible would have readers believe that FEAR of the Lord was the proper path to knowledge. Passages that attest to this include: “The FEAR of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...” (Psalms 111:10 & Job 28:28) and “The FEAR of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge...” (Proverbs 1:7 & 9:10).

The Biblical god FRUSTRATES the gathering of knowledge in: “I shall destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau.” (Obadiah 1:8); and “He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness...” (Job 5:12-13); and “God leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges FOOLS... He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged... He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to WANDER in a wilderness where there is NO way... They grope in the dark without light, and he MAKETH them to stagger like a drunken man.” (Job 12:17-25).

Knowledge is hindered in: “...the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be HID.” (Isaiah 29:14); and “I will make DRUNK her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake...” (Jeremiah 51:57).

Knowledge is punished in: “For it is written, I will DESTROY the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe?... hath not God made FOOLISH the wisdom of this world?... wisdom knew not God... Because the foolishness of God is WISER than men... not many wise men... are called: God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to CONFOUND the wise...” (1 Cor 1:19-27).

The Biblical God also takes pains to limit knowledge in: “For the priest’s lips should KEEP knowledge, and others should seek the law at HIS mouth: for he is God’s messenger.” (Malachi 2:7).

Paul admits to secrets and hidden wisdom in: “But we speak the wisdom of God in a MYSTERY, even the HIDDEN wisdom... Which NONE of the princes of this world knew...” (1 Cor 2:6-8); and “...we speak, NOT in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth...the natural man receiveth NOT the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor 2:13-16).

Anti-intellectualism reaches new heights when we read that religious “faith” is superior to knowledge or wisdom. Typical Bible passages that promote that view include: “For it is written, I will DESTROY the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent... hath not God made FOOLISH the wisdom of this world?...” (1 Cor 1:17-23); and “...when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom... your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” (1 Cor 2:1-5).

“Faith” is the very antithesis of knowledge, yet the Bible elevates it ABOVE knowledge in: “For I know nothing by myself... the Lord... will bring to light the hidden things of darkness... We are FOOLS for Christ’s sake, but ye are wise in Christ...” (1 Cor 4:4-10); and “...in simplicity and godly sincerity, NOT with fleshly wisdom, but by the whim of God...” (2 Cor 1:12); and “Now faith is the substance of things HOPED for, the evidence of things NOT seen.” (Hebrews 11:1).

Interestingly, although the word “faith” occurs several hundred times in the New Testament, it only occurs twice in the whole Old Testament. The reader might also wonder concerning the efficacy of “faith” over knowledge after reading: “...though a man say he hath faith, and have not works, can faith save him?... faith without works is DEAD... Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and NOT by faith... so faith without works is DEAD also.” (James 2:14-26).

According to the creation accounts in the Book of Genesis, the desire for knowledge proved to be Adam and Eve’s downfall. That little tale begins when God tells Adam (Eve had NOT been created yet!), “...of the tree of the KNOWLEDGE of good and evil, thou shalt NOT eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Genesis 2:16-17). After eating of the fruit, “...the eyes of them both were opened...” (Genesis 3:7). They did NOT die as God threatened, but they frightened God into realizing “...Behold, the man is become as one of US, to KNOW good and evil: and now, LEST he put forth his hand, and take ALSO of the tree of life, and EAT, and live for ever...” (Genesis 3:22-23).

Besides restricting knowledge from people, Jehovah also constantly DECEIVES people as in: “O Lord, why hast thou MADE us to ERR from thy ways?” (Isaiah 63:17); and “...Hear ye indeed, but understand NOT; and see ye indeed, but perceive NOT. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; LEST they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.” (Isaiah 6:9-10); and “Then said I, Ah, Lord God! surely THOU hast greatly DECEIVED this people and Jerusalem... saying, Ye shall have peace...” (Jeremiah 4:10); and “...wilt God be altogether unto me as a LIAR, and as waters that fail?” (Jeremiah 15:18); and “O Lord, thou hast DECEIVED me, and I was DECEIVED...” (Jeremiah 20:7); and “If the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have DECEIVED that prophet...” (Ezekiel 14:9); and “Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were NOT good, and judgments whereby they should NOT live; And I POLLUTED them in their own gifts...” (Ezekiel 20:25-26).

The deceptive biblical God continues to confound and frustrate the search for knowledge in the New Testament also. Examples include: “...Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast HID these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” (Matt 11:25-26 and Luke 10:21); and “...unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and NOT perceive; and hearing they may hear,

and NOT understand..." (Mark 4:11-12); and "...Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were HOLDEN that they should NOT know him." (Luke 24:15-16, and the similar John 20:14 and 21:4); and "He hath BLINDED their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should NOT see with their eyes, NOR understand with their heart..." (John 12:40, Matt 13:14-15, and Acts 28:25-27); and "For this cause God shall send them strong DELUSION, that they should believe a LIE..." (2 Thess 2:11-12).

Should ANY "Bible Believing" American citizen or lawmaker even think about countermanding the mandate and decrees found throughout the "Holy" Bible on this issue? Or should they, instead, take a common sense and rational stance on the otherwise grave risks associated with NOT facilitating and increasing our youths' knowledge and wisdom?

From the above two essays, Dear, maybe you see why, so many times while trying to show you the stupidities in the Bible, I became quite discouraged. As an example of what I mean, let me relay a little story – and yes, Dear, grandfathers have a tendency to do that sort of thing – but if it's any consolation, the story is true!

Anyway, on one of those days of discouragement, I was sitting in a motel room with little to do and picked up the "Gideon Bible" that was in the room (similar to the way it pollutes a huge number of hotel and motel rooms in this country). On the inside front cover of this Bible was a list of "Practical Precepts" suggested by the Gideons, proposed to guide "troubled souls". Going through this "Gideon Guide", I saw another way that I might show you some of the balderdash in the Bible, namely, by showing you my responses to the Gideons' suggestions – which I'll show you soon and which I scribbled out on some computer printout that I had with me.

First, though, maybe I should mention something about the Gideons. I've copied the following from a web page by Wayne R. Paulson.<sup>4</sup>

The Gideon Society places Bibles into motels and hotels across America. One would assume Gideon lived as a person of exemplary character and great worth to have a worldwide society named after him. Below describes some of Gideon's accomplishments:

- Gideon slaughtered thousands in battle by plotting with the "Lord" to use treachery

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<sup>4</sup> Dear: The source page for the quotation seems no longer to be available, but I would encourage you to visit Paulson's site at <http://waynepaulson.topcities.com/Index.htm>.

- Gideon murdered thousands more for worshipping “false Gods”
- Gideon tortured and killed still more for daring to taunt him
- Gideon plundered the bodies of his victims (to fashion a jeweled priestly vestment)
- Gideon fathered an offspring who killed 69 of his stepbrothers.

Read the story of Gideon in *Judges*, chapters 6-9. The tale of Gideon describes just one of the many horror stories in the Bible, a book that glorifies behavior abysmal to modern society...

Now, with that “introduction” out of the way, let me get on with reviewing the Gideon’s “Practical Precepts” or “Gideon’s Guide” pasted on the inside front cover of the “Gideon Bible” in my motel room.

These “Practical Precepts” list various topics and then give references to each topic from within the Bible. I dutifully followed the Gideon’s guide, making notes as I went. In what follows, I’ll first quote what the Gideons recommend, then display the reference [generally as given in the New English Bible, and in many cases, within the referenced text, I’ll add comments in brackets such as these], and then in some cases, I’ll add additional comments outside the referenced text. And at the outset, Dear, maybe I should warn you that this “Gideon’s Guide” goes on and on and on – and my anger grew and grew and grew!

## 1. The Way of Salvation

[Suggested by the Goofy Gideons]

- 1.1 *John 14, 6*: “Thomas said, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?’ Jesus replied, ‘I am the way; I am the truth, and I am life; no one comes to the Father except by me.’”

Well, Jesus, when you say you’re the way; I say your way is a dead end. When you say that you are the truth; I say not only that you don’t know what ‘truth’ means but also that you’re lying. And when you say that you’re life, I say that you have a way of stringing words together so that they’re meaningless: by “life” the rest of us mean molecules that can reproduce themselves. When you say “no one comes to the Father except by me”, I say that, whereas your “Father” is a figment of your imagination, who in his right mind wants to enter your dream world?

- 1.2 *Acts 16, 31*: “The jailer called for lights, rushed in, and threw himself down before Paul and Silas, trembling with fear. He then escorted them out and said,

\* Go to other chapters *via*

‘Masters, what must I do to be saved?’ They said, ‘Put your trust in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household’.”

The poor jailer, “trembling with fear”, struggling to survive, hooked by still another pair of con artists. And their response? The same as is used by all con artists: massage the victim’s fears; sell your victim gobbledygook.

- 1.3 *Romans 10, 9*: “If on your lips is the confession ‘Jesus is Lord’, and in your heart the faith that God raised him from the dead, then you will find salvation.”

Well, I agree: the clerics’ Jesus was lord – of the con artists. As for god raising him from the dead, which god would this be: the Israelite’s racist god? Zeus? Isis? One of the 200 million gods of the Hindus? And as for anybody rising from the dead, why not grow up and learn that death is what gives life meaning. Let the dead lie peacefully; celebrate the accomplishments of those who achieved something to celebrate; try to learn from the mistakes made by those who accomplished little; try to eliminate the evil done during the lives of such horrible con artists as Moses, Paul, Muhammad, and Joseph Smith, evil that lives after them.

## 2. **Comfort in Time of Loneliness**

[According to the Lunatic Gideons]

- 2.1 *Psalms 23*: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall want nothing. [Your shepherd? What are you, a sheep? And what do you mean you “want nothing”? Don’t you want to survive? Don’t you want your family to survive? Don’t you want humanity to survive? Don’t you want to promote some values? Don’t you want to accomplish something, to pay back your society for all it provided you?]

“He makes me lie down in green pastures, and leads me beside the waters of peace; [That’s cute wording, but unless you’re tired, never mind the lying down in green pastures: get up and accomplish something. If it’s peace you want, then work at it.]

“He renews life within me, and for his name’s sake guides me in the right path. [If any renewing is needed, do it yourself; if you’ve lost your way, figure out a better way; following the path set by someone else is the way of the Nazis.]

“Even though I walk through a valley dark as death, I fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy staff and thy crook are my comfort. [I strongly recommend that you start fearing some evil, because the evil of this religious crap is killing you – its comforting “staff” and “crook” are booby traps for your mind.]

“Thou spreadest a table for me in the sight of my enemies [No, fellow, other humans did it; if you want to thank someone, thank them]; thou has richly bathed my head with oil [that’s not oil, it’s a mind-warping drug, designed to stop you from thinking]; and my cup runs over [Yes: because of the accomplishments of humans who went before you and worked, rather than just dreamed as you are doing]. Goodness and love unfailing, these will follow me all the days of my life [not if you keep loafing and dreaming], and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long [if so, may you get the misery you deserve].”

- 2.2 *Isaiah 41, 10* (which is rather strange, for it starts in the middle of a sentence, so I’ll start at 8): “But you, Israel my servant, you, Jacob whom I have chosen, race of Abraham my friend, I have taken you up, have fetched you from the ends of the earth, and summoned you from its farthest corners, I have called you my servant, have chosen you and not cast you off: fear nothing, for I am with you; be not afraid, for I am your God. I strengthen you, I help you, I support you with my victorious right hand.”

Maybe the Gideons have a misprint here, because this looks like the same racist stuff that the Israelites had their warrior god say innumerable other times – except for the new (?) information, here, that their god’s right hand is victorious (over what? his left hand?). What incredible stupidity!

- 2.3 *Hebrews 13, 5, 6*: “Do not live for money [Personally, I’ve never met anyone who lives for money. But people do work to earn money for what it can purchase (in fair trade for their own work), in particular, freedom – such as freedom from the fools who perpetrate the crap that’s in the Bible], be content with what you have [well, “content” is a poorly chosen word; we should be pleased with what we have accomplished, but contentment can lead to stupefaction. Push on: if you’ve climbed Mount Everest, then learn how to fly!]; for God himself [herself?] has said, ‘I will never leave you or desert you’ [Yes, figments of one’s imagination have a way of hanging on, especially if the damnable clerics brainwashed you as a child]; and so we can take courage and say, ‘The Lord is my helper, I will not fear; what can man do to me?’” [Well, actually, fear can be good (it’s an instinct to protect us from harm) and unfortunately, we should fear some humans (for they can do substantial harm) – for example, the harm done by those who sell false courage, concocted in their dream worlds.]

### 3. **Comfort in Time of Sorrow** [As Conveyed by the Stupid Gideons]

- 3.1 *2 Corinthians 1, 3-5*: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ [“Praise”? How about a pox on him?], the all-merciful Father [“Merciful”? Tell it to the graves of all those he helped exterminate!], the god whose consolation never fails us! [Since when did a god ever really “console” anyone? – except for the racists who invented him and used him to slaughter other humans whose only

“crime” was to have different ideas. The only “consolation” is the “consolation prize” people get after giving up their volition (and their money) to the con-artist clerics: permission to dream that they’ve not been had!] He comforts us in all our troubles [Well, he seems to be giving you little help with the trouble that you’re having with thinking clearly], so that we in turn may be able to comfort others in any trouble of theirs [The only thing worse than the blind leading the blind and the dumb leading the dumb is someone who has fallen for a con game trying to con someone else!], and to share with them the consolation we ourselves receive from God [or from some other drug, such as cocaine - and actually, I would prefer if you were on cocaine, for then your warped ideas probably wouldn’t pollute the rest of us so badly.]”

- 3.2 *Romans 8, 26-28*: “In the same way the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness. [Who wants their weakness aided?! My weaknesses manage quite adequately by themselves, thank you very much. How about aiding our strengths?!] We do not even know how we ought to pray [Hint: don’t!], but through our inarticulate groans the Spirit himself is pleading for us [It’s wonderful how you, Paul, can interpret “inarticulate groans”, but are you sure the person didn’t break his leg?], and God who searches our inmost being [exactly what is one’s “inmost being”, and exactly which of the millions of gods you idiots have invented are you referring to?] knows what the Spirit means [Well, it makes a great story, but what data are available to support your dream-like musings, or is this just one more fanciful concoction of still another con artist], because he pleads for God’s people in God’s own way [God’s people? Oh, yah, you must mean the “chosen ones” – the racists; God’s own way? Oh, yah, you mean slaughter everyone who thinks differently (or rather should I say just “thinks”, in contrast to your dreaming)]; and in everything, as we know [nice try, Paul, but you’re not going to be successful trying to link your dreams with what I know], he co-operates for good [as in ‘good’ that they murdered all those people?] with those who love God [what’s to love?] and are called according to his purpose.” [Which is what? Multiply like animals? Rob people of their land and then kill them? Turn people into mindless drones?]

#### 4. Relief in Time of Suffering

[According to the Insufferable Gideons]

- 4.1 *2 Corinthians 12, 8-10*: “Three times I begged the Lord to rid me of it [“a sharp physical pain”], but his answer was: ‘My grace is all you need [the ultimate placebo!]; power comes to its full strength in weakness.’ [Well, there is some truth to that: at least those putting words into God’s mouth are finally beginning to see the connectedness of opposites.] I shall therefore find my joy and pride in the very things that are my weakness [Well, now, don’t get carried away: if you have the weakness of intolerance and racism, it would be better if you’d try to find the cause of your stupidity]; and then the power of Christ will come and rest upon me [Well, I’m sorry to have to tell you this, Paul, but this “power” is a placebo; it’s fake; it’s a dream world you’re living in]. Hence I am well content,

for Christ's sake [for Christ's sake would you get over this stupid "contentment" kick; get up and see if you can build a better mouse trap; do something useful for your fellow humans], with weakness, contempt [Well, I'm glad for you that you're content with contempt, cause you've got mine], persecution [Oh, sure, the derelicts among us are always the persecuted; it's not your fault that you're on humanity's trash heap], hardship [Oh, woe is you; how could the world treat you so badly], and frustration [What's the matter, little boy, your mother won't let you have another candy]; for when I am weak, then I am strong." [No, you didn't quite get that connectedness of opposites correctly: to be strong you must know weakness – when you're weak in the head, you're just weak in the head.]

- 4.2 *Hebrews 12, 3-13*: "Think of him [Christ] who submitted to such opposition from sinners: that will help you not to lose heart and grow faint. [You've got to be kidding: of what help to me will it be to contemplate the fate of a schizophrenic such as your Jesus.] In your struggle against sin [Do you mean the sin of worshipping the supernatural – or 'sins' as defined by the clerics? I hope not the latter, cause the clerics designed their 'sins' so that people would sin (e.g., you're to hate yourself and your life). That way, the clerics get to collect booty from all the sinners. That's the essence of their con game!], you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. [True; I give blood to the Red Cross, to help fellow humans.] You have forgotten the text of Scripture [Nice touch, to capitalize scripture, but I don't buy it], which addresses you as sons and appeals to you in these words: 'My son, do not think lightly of the Lord's discipline [Does this mean the 'discipline' he demands for his warriors, preparing them to slaughter innocent people?], nor lose heart when he corrects you [For someone who makes errors as large as his, he's got his nerve correcting others!]; for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves [Yah, we heard that: his chosen race, the purebreds]; he lays the rod on every son whom he acknowledges. [Thank you very much, but I'd sooner be a bastard than a son of that bastard.] You must endure it as discipline: God is treating you as sons. [What pathetic crap!] Can anyone be a son who is not disciplined by his father?" [The strict answer to your question is "Yes"; but besides that, who do you think is stupid enough to fall for this lame trick of introducing unrelated facts? Does  $1 + 1 = 2$ ? The point is: your god is fictitious. Got it?]

I'm sorry, Dear, this goes on and on; it's absolute garbage, not worth the paper it's written on. Therefore, let me move on to the next one.

## 5. Guidance in Time of Decision

[According to the Despicable Gideons]

- 5.1 *James 1, 5,6*: "If any of you falls short in wisdom [and lord knows, there's an awful lot of religious people who fall short in wisdom!], he should ask God for it ["Hey, god, where is it?"], and it will be given him ["It's over there under the table."], for God is a generous giver ["Hey, god, there's nothing here but dog

doo”], who neither refuses nor reproaches anyone.” [“I know its dog doo; that’s what the clerics call ‘wisdom’.”]

Alternatively, Dear, here is some ‘wisdom’ from the Zen Buddhist Huang-Po (or, in Japanese, Obaku) who died in ~850 CE: “The foolish reject what they see and not what they think; the wise reject what they think and not what they see.”

5.2 *Proverbs 3, 5,6*: “Put all your trust in the Lord and do not rely on your own understanding.”

What a hideous suggestion! Ignore the best of what separates you from the animals: your ability to evaluate. And no doubt this suggestion is given by those who just happen to have direct communication with god – and certainly would be glad to make a connection for you, for only a slight charge... Damn you horrible religious power mongers! Damn you to the fictitious hell you concocted!

## 6. **Protection in Time of Danger** [According to the Damnable Gideons]

6.1 *Psalm 91*: “You that live in the shelter of the Most High and lodge under the shadow of the Almighty, who say, ‘The Lord is my safe retreat, my God the fastness in which I trust’ [blah, blah, blah... have rocks in your heads].”

6.2 *Psalm 121*: “If I lift up my eyes to the hills, where shall I find help?” [You guessed it: they suggest that you’ll find ‘help’ in the world’s longest running con game!]

Alternatively, Dear, here’s a suggestion from the poet William Wordsworth (1770-1850):

One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.

## 7. **Courage in Time of Fear** [According to the Frightened Gideons]

7.1 *Hebrews 13, 5,6*: “God himself has said, ‘I will never leave you or desert you’.” [Unless, of course, we humans can finally rid ourselves of this pollution that deranged humans created.]

7.2 *Ephesians 6, 10-18*: “Finally then, find your strength in the Lord, in his mighty power [to warp our minds with twisted use of words]. Put on all the armor which God provides [to protect you against thinking for yourself], so that you may be able to stand firm against the devices of the devil [such as killing innocents, warping the minds of children, and getting people not to use their own minds]. For our fight is not against human foes [too much for you?], but against cosmic powers [Cosmic powers indeed! Well, now, let’s see: one powerful “cosmic power” is gravity. Let’s see you float away against gravity. Oh! Is that your purpose in blowing all this hot air?!], against the authorities and potentates [potentates!] of this dark world [Oh, afraid of the dark are we? Then light a candle, you fool], against the superhuman [!] forces of evil in the heavens. [My god, Paul, you’ve lost it: “good” and “evil” (and all grades between these extremes) are judgments of actions and events that bear on your objectives. What’s your objective? To get rid of the boogeyman?].

“Therefore, take up God’s armor; then you will be able to stand your ground when things are at their worst, to complete every task and still to stand [frozen, without thinking, in a trance, a mindless automaton]. Stand firm, I say [even if a train is bearing down on you!]. Fasten on the belt of truth [that this and all gods are figments of the imaginations of dreamers and power mongers], for coat of mail, put on integrity [to think for yourself and act as you decide]; let the shoes on your feet be the gospel of peace [no doubt he’s advocating “peace at any price”], to give you firm footing [on an escalator going down to a hell-on-earth even worse than the hell you imagine]; and, with all these, take up the great shield of faith [not in some fictitious god, but in your own abilities], with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. [Well, fellow, it’s clear that you love stringing meaningless words together, but that string is really rather crummy: how does a shield “quench” (or is that you see that this whole construction of god is all wet?) And “the evil one...” [I thought you said you were fighting “against the authorities and potentates...” What’s the matter? Can’t your schizophrenic mind remember what you said just a few sentences ago?] Take salvation for helmet [Well, I suppose that’s not bad: people who accept this salvation junk must have rocks in their heads.]; for sword, take that which the Spirit gives you [Oh, yes: please do tell me what the spirit (whoops, Spirit) gives me]: the words that come from God.” [Oh, great, God’s meaningless string of words, like: “Duh, lemme see now; I promised somebody somethin’; oh yah, now I remember; I tied this rainbow around my finger to remember; duh, I wonder what I promised. Maybe I promised not to kill any more children. Nah, it couldn’t be that; killing kids is too much fun. I think I’ll go kill some more. Where are those people that are supposed to do the killing for me. Oh Israelites?...”] I’m sorry, Dear, I can’t take any more of this garbage.

## 8. **Peace in Time of Turmoil** [As Given by the Turgid Gideons]

- 8.1 *Isaiah 26, 3,4*: “Thou dost keep in peace [all] men of constant mind [If anyone’s mind is “constant”, watch out: the person is dead, or totally dumb, or locked into a thought process that doesn’t permit thinking, commonly called turgid (viz., “pompous, boring, and overcomplicated”) sermons! People who are alive and can think, need to be continuously revising their ideas. That some hypnotic, turgid scheme, which doesn’t permit you to think, can give you “peace” is a perversion of the word “peace”. State what it is: a numbness, brought on by a mind-numbing drug. That’s the “peace” of the walking dead.], in peace because they trust in thee [a figment of someone else’s imagination]. Trust in the Lord forever [unless you would, perchance, prefer to live the only life you’re gonna get] for the Lord himself is an everlasting rock [similar to the “rock” in your head].”
- 8.2 *Philippians 4, 6,7*: “Of one thing I am certain [Great! Paul finally has some data that have been reproduced!]: the One who started the good work in you [Great: whoever he’s talking to has had a mentor who has helped him obtain the data] will bring it to completion [I should hope so! Do you mean the experiment isn’t finished?] by the Day of Christ Jesus. [Hey, Paul, how about using a more useful calendar: when are the data to be delivered?] It is indeed only right that I should feel like this about you all [Well, Paul, never mind the touchy-feely stuff: where are the data?], because you hold me in such affection [Come on, Paul, you’re drifting into gobbledygook], and because, when I lie in prison or appear in the dock to vouch for the truth of the Gospel [Gospel be damned: where are the data?], you all share in the privilege that is mine.” [Yes: each of us chooses as best our minds advise us, with the dumbest and/or mentally imbalanced among us following the gobbledygook of con artists such as you, and the rest of us trying to figure stuff out as best we can, living our own lives on our own terms, scorning all schizophrenic con artists such as you.]

## 9. Rest in Time of Weariness

[From Responding to the Wacky Gideons]

- 9.1 *Matthew 11, 28,29*: “[At that time, Jesus spoke these words:] ‘Come to me, all whose work is hard, whose load is heavy; and I will give you relief [For today I just happen to have the most amazing snake-oil medicine ever invented.]. Bend your necks to my yoke [Well, you didn’t think I was passing out this snake-oil medicine for free, did you? All you need do is sign here to affirm that you’ll no longer think for yourself], and learn from me [From here on out, I and my followers will do the thinking for you: you do what we say, and don’t you worry your little heads at all; things will go just fine for you], for I am gentle and humble-hearted [I ain’t like my nasty daddy who kills little kids; I’m humble; all I want is your life – your freedom to think for yourself]; and your souls will find relief [Cause this snake oil that I’m selling is the most astounding stuff. Why, once I...]. For my yoke is good to bear [and my snake oil is so soothing], my load is light [and all I ask is for you to give up your ability to evaluate].”

- 9.2 *Psalm 23*: “The lord is my shepherd...” [Hey: I already went through this sheep dung! What’s the matter, Gideons: can’t you find any additional “new” ideas in all these ~1800 pages of biblical balderdash?]

## 10. Strength in Time of Temptation

[According to the Gideon Tempters (i.e., ‘devils’)]

- 10.1 *James 1, 12-16*: “Happy the man who [owns a puppy dog! Sorry, Dear, I get carried away; I’m getting very weary of this stupid junk. And I guess I was tempted... So, “Happy the man who] remains steadfast under trial [Well, no, James boy, that usually ain’t so: it’s usually damn hard to remain steadfast, even when you’ve done your best thinking, usually there are doubts, and it can be damn hard to persevere. To say this is a “happy” state is kinda weird], for having passed that test [Well now, that’s different: once you’ve overcome the obstacle, then by all means celebrate!] he will receive for his prize [Oh, great: you get a prize for passing the test!] the gift of life [Hello? It was assumed that the person was already alive!] promised to those who love God. [Hey: how did this garbage get in here? You were doin’ fairly well there, for a little while. What’s with this god garbage? Weird!]

“No one under trial or temptation should say, ‘I am being tempted by God’ [Right on!] for God is untouched by evil [Sorry: you blew it. But, just for fun, why don’t you consider the possibility that your god is just a figment of some old storyteller’s imagination. Now think about good and evil, and how they relate to real-world goals. Now, read your sentence again. Weird, huh? Lost it, huh? Care to check-in for some psychiatric help? Or did you mean by “God is untouched by evil” that he doesn’t give a damn how many people he kills? Hmmm, maybe you have something there], and does not himself [herself?] tempt anyone [Well, at least that’s true: fictitious characters don’t do a hell of a lot of anything]. Temptation arises when a man is enticed and lured away [Well, come on now: temptation is the enticement; if you get into the “luring away” then you’ve gone beyond temptation!] by his own lust; [No, that’s poor. Your use of words leaves a lot to be desired. Look: most people can be tempted to steal some food if they haven’t eaten in a week and can’t see any other way to eat. To call that “lust” is poor]; then lust conceives [Oh, cute; what’s up, James, do you have sex on your mind?], and gives birth to sin [Why do I have the sinking feeling that you’re gonna start preaching your platitudes about sin. You don’t seem to understand either the goals (survival of oneself, one’s family, and one’s values) or how ‘good’ and ‘evil’ relate to achievement of these goals]; and sin full-grown breeds death [Yuk! James, why not check with Paul; I already suggested a psychiatrist for him; maybe you...]. Make no mistake, my friends [Oh B.S.! Friends: never be afraid of mistakes. Keep trying. Learn from your mistakes, and try again]. All good giving, every perfect gift, comes from above, from the Father of the lights of heaven.” [Excuse me while I throw up. This James fellow is bonkers.]

10.2 *I Corinthians 10*, 6-13: “These events [all the “supernatural” crap with which the power-mongering Moses conned the Israelites] happened as symbols [Hello? Symbols? Well, maybe: they sure in hell didn’t happen for real!] to warn us [“warn us”; how about “trick us”] not to set our desires on evil things, as they did. [Gees: all they wanted was to get out of slavery? Oh, I see your point Paul: you want similar people to be your slaves; so, you get to say what is good and what is evil. Yah, I get it. Good con, Paul. You and your henchmen should be able to make a fortune peddling this one.] Do not be idolaters, like some of them [Well, there’s some truth to that. I remember the line (roughly): tell me who your heroes are, and I’ll tell you your weaknesses. But there’s the other side: if you idolize the intelligence of Aristotle or Spinoza or Einstein, or the perseverance of Bertrand Russell, or the creativity of Beethoven, and so on, then I say good: try to emulate them]; as Scripture [scripture!] has it, ‘the people sat down to feast and rose up to revel’ [Well, I don’t remember this, but it sounds good. At times we should celebrate our lives. As it says in *Ecclesiastes*: “eat, drink, and be merry” – when it’s appropriate].

“Let us not commit fornication [You certainly seem to love the word ‘fornication’, for which Webster gives the definitions: **1.** “voluntary sexual intercourse, generally forbidden by law, between an unmarried woman and a man, especially an unmarried man; **2.** Bible a) any unlawful sexual intercourse, including adultery, b) worship of idols (that’s weird that they’re coupled like that!). Well, Paul, assuming that you’re taking about the sex aspect of fornication, and even though you’re probably hung up on sex as badly as James, generally I would agree with you, unless precautions are taken. Of course there’s absolutely nothing wrong with sex – it’s a totally natural function; it’s the essence of how the DNA molecules continue. Besides, it’s a source of tremendous pleasure. But care is needed: not only can horrible diseases be transmitted but when you create an child, you must take on tremendous responsibility. Further, care is needed if the emotions of other people are involved. So then, how about weakening your statement a bit, say to: “Let us take care when we fornicate”?], as some of them did – and 23,000 died in one day. [Ah, come of it, Pully-boy: even your fictitious god said he wiped them out because he was jealous (he said he was jealous of the other gods – which alone, is interesting – but maybe he was jealous of the fornicators! Which could lead to some other comments...]

“Let us not put the power of the Lord to the test [Ha! Why not? I’m all for it! By all means put him/her to the test. Putting ideas to “the test” is the essence of the scientific method. So, let me put your idea of “the power of god” through some tests: Hey, you stupid god, this is a test; I say your power is zilch; I say you don’t exist, you never existed, and besides, all the other gods are better than you. Na-na-na-na-na: you’re a chicken god. Na-na-na-na-na: you’re a stupid god. Na-na-na-na-na: you’re a useless nothing. Na-na-na-na-na: your son is as stupid as you are. Na-na-na-na-na: you both have rocks in your head. Na-na-na-na-na: I’m gonna tell everybody that it’s all a con game. Na-na-na-na-na: your mother wears army boots. Na-na-na-na-na... How about that, Paul, nothin’ happened.

Hmmm...], as some of them did – and were destroyed by serpents [Okay, Paul, I'll be on the look out for all serpents and sea monsters.]. Do not grumble against God [“Grumble”? Grumble is nothing compared to what I would do against this evil concept of god (and I know what I mean when I say evil)], as some of them did – and were destroyed by the Destroyer. [Well, I sure would agree with your capitalization of the word Destroyer, for this god of yours – purely an idea – has destroyed more human lives than anything else we humans have encountered. So now, let's destroy the Destroyer!]

“All these things that happened to them were symbolic [Well, the killings were real and the wasted lives were real, but I agree they were symbolic: symbols of the greatest stupidity the world has ever known], and were recorded for our benefit as a warning. [Maybe so, but more likely they were ‘recorded’ to promote the clerics’ con game. But just in case they were a ‘warning’, then let's heed the warning of what harm can be done by creating fictitious gods and then, let's purge humanity of such evil concoctions.] For upon us the fulfillment of the ages has come. [Agreed: we are to continue to help these human genes go on.] If you feel sure that you are standing firm, beware! [Agreed: there's no telling when another con artist like you will pop up in our midst to pollute humanity.] You may fall! [You know, if you had been exposed to a better editor, I think that the whole sentence would have been scratched.] So far, you have faced no trial beyond what man can bear. [Well, if by that you mean that the listener is still alive, then that sentence, too, seems rather useless.] God keeps faith [Joy: “God (meaningless) keeps faith (meaningless)” seems rather meaningless!], and he [she?] will not allow you to be tested above your powers [What about the little children whose heads the Israelites chopped off? Just exactly what power did the children have? Oh, but I guess the children were not of the holy race. Sorry, I forgot. Yes, by all means, God keeps faith], but when the test comes he will at the same time prove a way out, by enabling you to sustain it.” [Sorry: but exactly what is this “it”? Life? So you mean the little children that the Israelites slew under their god's orders just had to... Sorry. I guess I missed something. Are you quite sure your brain is functioning?]

## 11. Warning in Times of Indifference

[According to the Indoctrinated, Indiscriminate Gideons]

- 11.1 *Galatians* 5, 19-21: “Anyone can see the kind of behavior that belongs to the lower nature: fornication [there's Paul, once again, hung-up on the sexual exploits of others. Too bad he never had any of his own], impurity [What, pray tell, is impurity (besides not being pure)? I know what impure chemicals are: the chemicals that you didn't want. Oh, do you mean purity as in “racial purity”? Are we back on that kick again, you racist pig. What stupidity], and indecency [Oh, so you're just gonna give us a huge list. Okay, ramble on:]; idolatry and sorcery [as in the creation of fictitious gods]; quarrels, a contentious temper [well, fellow, you sure would find that with me, because of your stupidity], envy, fits of rage [Yah, I know that one], selfish ambitions [that, Paul-me-boy, seems to fit you

perfectly], dissensions, party intrigues [I'm intrigued to know what you're thinking about here: are there troubles among you power mongers?], and jealousies [really?]; drinking bouts, orgies, and the like [Really? Is that what you religious guys get into?]. I warn you, as I warned you before [so, your boys just won't stop partying huh?!], that those who behave in such ways will never inherit the kingdom of God."

Oh, neat! I never thought of that before. Paul seems to be writing to his fellow con artists. I overlooked the obvious – that all these con artists know that all this business about “god the father, and the son, and the holy ghost” is a ruse, so what the con artists do (after collecting the mark's money) is party! And here's old Paul, trying to keep his troops in line! Give it up, Paul! You can't use the threat of never inheriting the kingdom of God. They know it's a ruse! You can't con the con artists! And no wonder there have been so many horrors in the priesthoods of the world, with the nuns burying their babies in the back forty and the other fat priests (fat from their food and liquor) luring choir boys into sex, polluting their entire lives. I have an idea, Paul, why don't you recommend that all priesthoods be abolished? Shucks, don't mention it. And then, why don't you stand up like a man (although I know that would be asking a lot from you) and proclaim the truth: that the entire package is a ruse. Oh, you say you're too much of a weasel to do that. I understand. Then, why don't you crawl back into your hole?

11.2 *Hebrews 10, 26-31*: “For if we willfully persist in sin [such as creating a fictitious god to gain power over frightened, greedy, unthinking humans], after receiving the knowledge of the truth [that there is no “supernatural”], no sacrifice for sins remains [whatever that means; I suppose you're talking about some of your stupid dance-around-the-fire rites, or whatever you call them]: only a terrifying expectation of judgment and a fierce fire which will consume God's enemies [Well, I have no doubt that you con artists can create real terror in children and in people of low intellect; but as for there being a fierce fire: sorry, that's all in your imagination.]

“If a man disregards the Law of Moses [I do; I do – especially the ones about how to beat my slaves to death and how to sell my daughter into slavery], he is put to death without pity on the evidence of two or three witnesses. [Yah, I know: the Ayatollahs will try to do that. That's why I haven't put my name on this book. Sure they're crazy (as are all religious perverts, such as you), but they know enough to try to protect their power. Eventually they'll fail, as will all you religious fools.] Think how much more severe a penalty that man will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was consecrated, and affronted God's gracious Spirit! [Well, if I could figure out how to do all those things more than I have already done, then I'd

do them. As for the “penalty” I deserve: sorry, you and all religious devils like you are the ones who deserve the penalty, for trampling on the best of what is human: our minds! A pox on all your houses; may you find your just deserts in the everlasting hell that you concocted in your own deranged minds.]

“For we know [You ‘know’! You don’t even know what knowledge is! Really, you really don’t have a clue, do you? Here’s a hint: what’s the Latin word for ‘knowledge’? Right, ‘science’. And now, what’s the essence of science? You know, what method do scientists use? Can’t see it, huh? Well...] who it is that has said, ‘Justice is mine: I will repay’ [Well, no, actually: I don’t know what kook cooked up such crap – and pretended that an invented god said it]; and again, ‘The Lord will judge his people.’ [You mean the pure-breds?] It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God [and even more terrible to fall into the hands of living religious kooks, who belong in insane asylums, and you power mongers, who will cling onto power at any cost. Pity you didn’t practice some of the stuff you preach, like being kind to one another; pity that you’re a bunch of horrible hypocrites.]”

## 12. Forgiveness in Time of Conviction [From the Self-incriminated Gideons]

12.1 *Isaiah 1*, 18: “Come now, let us argue it out, says the Lord [or still another huckster, who claims to speak for the Lord and who will do you the honor of accepting your donations...]. Though your sins are scarlet [Hello? Scarlet?], they may become white as snow [Great! Happiness is having scarlet sins turn into sins as white as snow. Any time you want to start conveying meaning for your words, let me know.]; though they are dyed crimson, they may yet be like wool [Oh joy! I’ll get all my crimson ones out of the closet, and you’ll turn them into white wool... but watch out for the slithy toves [that] gyre and gimble in the wabe]...”

12.2 *I John 1*, 7-9: “[I]f we walk in the light, as he himself [Jesus] is in the light, then we share together a common life [it would be closer to the truth if you’d drop an “f”, there: it’s not so much a ‘common life’ as it is a ‘common lie’], and we are being cleansed from every sin [Sorry, Bozo, sins aren’t cleansed: sins are mistakes made in the methods used to pursue your objectives, subject to some general constraint such as “everyone has an equal right to claim one’s own existence.” If you made mistakes, then learn from them; maybe you’ll have to pay for them, but then move on, trying to make fewer mistakes in the future], [cleansed] by the blood of Jesus his Son. [That’s got nothing to do with anything of any importance; it’s a great pitch-line in one of the world’s longest running con games.]

“If we claim to be sinless [That’s me: Mistakes, sure; Sins, never!], we are self-deceived and strangers to the truth. [Well, better to be “self deceived” than deceived by a bunch of con-artist clerics who concocted and promoted the crazy idea of sins!] If we confess our sins [To whom?! In most cases, just confess to

yourself that you made a mistake; sometimes in addition, confession and retribution to others is needed], he is just [by “he” I assume you mean your figure-head Christ, the schizophrenic. Screw him. Thankfully he’s dead and buried.], and may be trusted to forgive our sins and cleanse us from every kind of wrong [No, John, you’ve blown it again: his ‘forgiveness’ ain’t worth a tinker’s damn; he’s dead and gone; he ain’t cleansing nobody’s nothing, unless part of his body has found it’s way into somebody’s soap bar or toilet paper]; but if we say we have committed no sin [I’ve already gone through that], we make him out to be a liar [whatever – there’s absolutely no doubt that he was a liar – except insofar as he was so bananas he probably shouldn’t be held accountable for any of his mindless dribble], and then his word has no place in us.” [Bingo! That’s it! You got it! It was all garbage – and worse: pollution that has poisoned humanity for thousands of years!]

Well, Dear, that’s all I can take of the Gideon garbage and, for that matter, the entire Bible. To summarize, I’ll say this. Although I am strongly opposed to the banning of any book (because we all eventually profit from learning how others think), I’d agree to the banning of the Bible for anyone who is younger than 16 and for everyone whose IQ is below 100, because such people seem to be especially susceptible to superstition and the dream world of mysticism. And I’d have the Bible banned not only because of its mind-numbing balderdash but also because it’s racist “hate literature” and pornography. Further, I call the Bible ‘pornographic’ in the common sense of the word: the Bible not only contains much that is erotic (which probably is its principal appeal to many men) but also contains some of the worst examples of degradation of women that I’ve ever encountered.

Enough of the damn Bible – and I wish of all religions. But then, there’s the unfortunate matter of your indoctrination in Mormonism. As a result, Dear, what I strongly recommend that you do, next, is exactly what all the Mormon leaders (aka “con artists”) have recommended that you do, namely, read the Book of Mormon (and the Mormon’s Doctrine and Covenants plus their other “holy scripture” such as the Book of Abraham). Specifically what I recommend is that you set yourself the goal of reading all the Mormon “holy books” during the next month. Meanwhile, for the next four chapters, my plan is to show you some of my reactions to my reading of the same “junk”. For reasons that I trust will become clear, I don’t plan to go through “chapter and verse” with you; so, please “plow ahead” on your own, reading all that the Mormon “leaders” (and your mother) have been urging you to read. Before you start, however, how about getting some exercise?!