

The Discerner

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A QUARTERLY EXPOSING
UNBIBLICAL TEACHING & MOVEMENTS

Volume 35, Number 1

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*"Hereby know we the spirit of truth
and the spirit of error" 1 John 4:6*

The Discerner

Volume 35, Number 1

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RAS TEAM NOTES

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DEAR READER

Larry Sutherland

WITH THIS ISSUE

Larry Sutherland

HOW TO WIN THE CULTURAL WAR

by Peter Kreeft

Dr. Peter Kreeft has written extensively (over 25 books) in the areas of Christian apologetics. He teaches at Boston College in Boston Massachusetts. Dr. Peter Kreeft is on the Advisory Board of the Catholic Educator's Resource Center.

THE WAR WE REALLY FACE: AND HOW TO WIN

If you can't see that our entire civilization is in crisis, then you are a wounded victim of the war. We are now engaged in the most serious war that the world has ever known. What follows is a three point checklist for understanding what is *really* at stake at the most critical period of human history:

To win any war, the three most necessary things to know are (1) that you *are* at war, (2) who your enemy is, and (3) what weapons or strategies can defeat him. You cannot win a war (1) if you simply sow peace on a battlefield, (2) if you fight civil wars against your allies, or (3) if you use the wrong weapons.

Here is a three point checklist for the culture wars. I assume you would not be reading a magazine called *Crisis* if you thought all was well. If you don't know that our entire civilization is in crisis, I hope you had a nice vacation on the moon.

Many minds do seem moonstruck, however, blissfully unaware of the crisis—especially the “intellectuals,” who are supposed to be the most on top of current events. I was dumbfounded to read a cover article in *Time* devoted to the question: Why is everything getting better? Why is life so good today? Why does everybody feel so satisfied about the quality of life? *Time* never questioned the assumption, it just wondered why the music on the Titanic sounded so nice.

It turned out, on reading the article, that every single aspect of life that was mentioned, every single reason for life getting better, was economic. People are richer. End of discussion....

There is a scientific refutation of the Pig Philosophy: the statistical fact that suicide, the most in-your-face index of unhappiness, is directly proportionate to wealth. The richer you are, the richer your family is, and the richer your country is, the more likely it is that you

will find life so good that you will choose to blow your brains apart.

Suicide among pre-adults has increased 5000% since the “happy days” of the ‘50s. If suicide, especially among the coming generation, is not an index of crisis, nothing is.

Night is falling. What Chuck Colson has labeled “a new Dark Ages” is looming. And its Brave New World proved to be only a Cowardly Old Dream. We can see this now, at the end of “the century of genocide” that was christened “the Christian century” at its birth.

We’ve had prophets who warned us: Kierkegaard, 150 years ago, in *The Present Age*; and Spengler, 100 years ago, in *The Decline of the West*, and Aldous Huxley, seventy years ago, in *Brave New World*, and C. S. Lewis, forty years ago, in *The Abolition of Man*, and above all our popes: Leo XIII and Pius IX and Pius X and above all John Paul the Great, the greatest man in the world, the greatest man of the worst century. He had even more chutzpah than Ronald Reagan, who dared to call Them “the evil empire” : He called US: “the culture of death.” That’s *our* culture, and his, including Italy, with the lowest birth rate in the world, and Poland, which now wants to share in the rest of the West’s abortion holocaust.

If the God of life does not respond to this culture of death with judgment, God is not God. If God does not honor the blood of the hundreds of millions of innocent victims then the God of the Bible, the God of Israel, the God of orphans and widows, the Defender of the defenseless, is a man-made myth, a fairy tale.

But is not God forgiving?

He is, but the unrepentant refuse forgiveness. How can forgiveness be received by a moral relativist who denies that there is anything to forgive except a lack of self-esteem, nothing to judge but “judgmentalism?” How can a Pharisee or a pop psychologist be saved?

But is not God compassionate?

He is not compassionate to Moloch and Baal and Ashtaroah, and to Caananites who do their work, who “cause their children to walk through the fire.” Perhaps *your* God is—the God of your dreams, the God of your “religious preference” —but not the God revealed in the Bible.

But is not the God of the Bible revealed most fully and finally in the New Testament rather than the Old? In sweet and gentle Jesus rather than wrathful and warlike Jehovah?

The opposition is heretical: the old Gnostic-Manichaeism-Marcionite heresy, as immortal as the demons who inspired it. For “I and the Father are one.” The opposition between nice Jesus and nasty Jehovah denies the very essence of Christianity: Christ’s identity as the Son of God. Let’s remember our theology and our biology: like Father, like Son.

But is not God a lover rather than a warrior?

No, God is a lover who is a warrior. The question fails to understand what love is, what the love that God is, is. Love is at war with hate, betrayal, selfishness, and all love’s enemies. Love fights. Ask any parent. Yuppie-love, like puppy-love, may be merely “compassion” (the fashionable word today), but father-love and mother-love are war.

In fact, every page of the Bible bristles with spears, from Genesis 3 through Revelation 20. The road from Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained is soaked in blood. At the very center of the story is a cross, a symbol of conflict if there ever was one. The theme of spiritual warfare is never absent in scripture, and never absent in the life and writings of a single saint. But it is never present in the religious education of any of my “Catholic” students at Boston College. Whenever I speak of it, they are stunned and silent, as if they have suddenly entered another world. They have. They have gone past the warm fuzzies, the fur coats of psychology-disguised-as-religion, into a world where they meet Christ the King, not Christ the Kitten.

Welcome back from the moon, kids.

Where is the culture of death coming from?

Here. America is the center of the culture of death. America is the world’s one and only cultural superpower.

If I haven’t shocked you yet, I will now. Do you know what Muslims call us? They call us “The Great Satan.” And do you know what I call them? I call them right.

But America has the most just, and moral, and wise, and biblical historical and constitutional foundation in all the world. America is one of the most religious countries in the world. The Church is big and rich and free in America.

Yes. Just like ancient Israel. And if God still loves his Church in America, he will soon make it small and poor and persecuted, as he did to ancient Israel, so that he can keep it alive. If he loves us, he will prune us, and we will bleed, and the blood of the martyrs will be

the seed of the Church again, and a second spring will come—but not without blood. It never happens without blood, sacrifice, and suffering. The continuation of Christ’s work—if it is really Christ’s work and not a comfortable counterfeit—can never happen without the Cross.

I don’t mean merely that Western civilization will die. That’s a piece of trivia. I mean eternal souls will die. Billions of Ramons and Vladamirs and Janes and Tiffanies will go to Hell. That’s what’s at stake in this war: not just whether America will become a banana republic, or whether we’ll forget Shakespeare, or even whether some nuclear terrorist will incinerate half of humanity, but whether our children and our children’s children will see God forever. That’s what’s at stake in “Hollywood versus America.” That’s why we must wake up and smell the rotting souls. Knowing we are at war is the first requirement for winning it.

The next thing we must do to win a war is to know our enemy.

THE WAR WE REALLY FACE: AND HOW TO WIN (PART 2)

Who is our enemy?

Not Protestants. For almost half a millennium, many of us thought our enemies were Protestant heretics, and addressed that problem by consigning their bodies to battlefields and their souls to Hell. (Echoes of this strategy can still be heard in Northern Ireland.) Gradually, the light dawned: Protestants are not our enemies, they are our “separated brethren.” They will fight with us.

Not Jews. For almost two millennia many of us thought that, and did such Christless things to our “fathers in the faith” that we made it almost impossible for the Jews to see their God—the true God—in us.

Not Muslims, who are often more loyal to their half-Christ than we are to our whole Christ, who often live more godly lives following their fallible scriptures and their fallible prophet than we do following our infallible scriptures and our infallible prophet.

The same is true of the Mormons and the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Quakers.

Our enemies are not “the liberals.” For one thing, the term is almost meaninglessly flexible. For another, it’s a political term, not a religious one. Whatever is good or bad about political liberalism, it’s neither the cause nor the cure of our present spiritual decay. Spiritual wars are not decided by whether welfare checks increase or decrease.

Our enemies are not anti-Catholic bigots who want to crucify us. They are the ones we’re trying to save. They are our patients, not our disease. Our word for them is Christ’s: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” We say this of the Chinese communist totalitarians who imprison and persecute Catholics, and to the Sudanese Muslim terrorists who enslave and murder Catholics. They are not our enemies, they are our patients. We are Christ’s nurses. The patients think the nurses are their enemies, but the nurses know better.

Our enemies are not even the media of the culture of death, not even Ted Turner or Larry Flynt or Howard Stern or Disney or Time-Warner. They too are victims, patients, though on a rampage against the hospital, poisoning other patients. But the poisoners are our patients too. So are homosexual activists, feminist witches, and abortionists. We go into gutters and pick up the spiritually dying and kiss those who spit at us, if we are cells in our Lord’s Body. If we do not physically go into gutters, we go into spiritual gutters, for we go where the need is.

Our enemies are not heretics within the Church, “cafeteria Catholics,” “Kennedy Catholics,” “I Did It My Way” Catholics. They are also our patients, though they are Quislings. They are the victims of our enemy, not our enemy.

Our enemies are not theologians in so-called Catholic theology departments who have sold their souls for thirty pieces of scholarship and prefer the plaudits of their peers to the praise of God. They are also our patients.

Our enemy is not even the few really bad priests and bishops, candidates for Christ’s Millstone of the Month Award, the modern Pharisees. They too are victims, in need of healing.

Who, then, is our enemy?

There are two answers. All the saints and popes throughout the Church’s history have given the same two answers, for these answers come from the Word of God on paper in the New Testament and the Word of God in flesh in Jesus Christ.

Yet they are not well known. In fact, the first answer is almost never mentioned today. Not once in my life have I ever heard a homily on it, or a lecture by a Catholic theologian.

Our enemies are demons. Fallen angels. Evil spirits.

So says Jesus Christ: “Do not fear those who can kill the body and

then has no more power over you. I will tell you whom to fear. Fear him who has power to destroy both body and soul in Hell.”

So says St. Peter, the first pope: “The Devil, like a roaring lion, is going through the world seeking the ruin of souls. Resist him, steadfast in the faith.”

So says St. Paul: “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers of wickedness in high places.”

So said Pope Leo the XIII, who received a vision of the 20th century that history has proved terrifyingly true. He saw Satan, at the beginning of time, allowed one century in which to do his worst work, and he chose the 20th. This pope with the name and heart of a lion was so overcome by the terror of this vision that he fell into a trance. When he awoke, he composed a prayer for the whole Church to use to get it through the 20th century. The prayer was widely known and prayed after every Mass—until the ‘60s: exactly when the Church was struck with that incomparably swift disaster that we have not yet named (but which future historians will), the disaster that has destroyed a third of our priests, two-thirds of our nuns, and nine-tenths of our children’s theological knowledge; the disaster that has turned the faith of our fathers into the doubts of our dissenters, the wine of the Gospel into the water of psychobabble.

The restoration of the Church, and thus the world, might well begin with the restoration of the Lion’s prayer and the Lion’s vision, because this is the vision of all the popes and all the saints and our Lord himself: the vision of a real Hell, a real Satan, and real spiritual warfare.

I said there were two enemies. The second is even more terrifying than the first. There is one nightmare even more terrible than being chased and caught and tortured by the Devil. That is the nightmare of becoming a devil. The horror outside your soul is terrible enough; how can you bear to face the horror inside your soul?

What is the horror inside your soul?

Sin. All sin is the Devil’s work, though he usually uses the flesh and the world as his instruments. Sin means inviting the Devil in. And we do it. That’s the only reason why he can do his awful work; God won’t let him do it without our free consent. And that’s why the Church is weak and the world is dying: because we are not saints.

And thus we have our third Necessary Thing: the weapon that will win the war and defeat our enemy.

All it takes is saints.

Can you imagine what twelve more Mother Teresas would do for the world? Can you imagine what would happen if just twelve readers of this article offered Christ 100% of their hearts and held back nothing, absolutely nothing?

No, you can’t imagine it, any more than anyone could imagine how twelve nice Jewish boys could conquer the Roman Empire. You can’t imagine it, but you can do it. You can become a saint. Absolutely no one and nothing can stop you. It is your free choice. Here is one of the truest and most terrifying sentences I have ever read (from William Law’s *Serious Call*): “If you will look into your own heart in complete honesty, you must admit that there is one and only one reason why you are not a saint: you do not wholly want to be.”

That insight is terrifying because it is an indictment. But it is also thrillingly hopeful because it is an offer, an open door. Each of us can become a saint. We really can.

What holds us back?

Fear of paying the price.

What is the price?

The answer is simple. T.S. Eliot defines the Christian life as: “A condition of complete simplicity/ Costing not less than/ Everything.” The price is everything: 100%. A worse martyrdom than the quick noose or stake: the martyrdom of dying daily, dying to all your desires and plans, including your plans about how to become a saint. A blank check to God. Complete submission, “islam,” “fiat” —Mary’s thing. Look what that simple Mary-thing did 2000 years ago: It brought God down and saved the world.

It was meant to continue.

If we do that Mary-thing—and only if we do that—then all our apostolates will “work”: our missioning and catechizing and fathering and mothering and teaching and studying and nursing and businessing and priesting and bishoping—everything.

A bishop asked one of the priests of his diocese for recommendations on ways to increase vocations. The priest replied: The best way to attract men in this diocese to the priesthood, Your Excellency, would be your canonization.

Why not yours?

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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ELINE PAGELS: LESSONS FROM THE NEW SCHOOL

by Rev. Steve Lagoon

I am writing this article to inform the readers of *The Discerner* about a movement that is gaining ground in some circles of academia and in more liberal churches across America. It is a movement sometimes referred to as the *New School* of New Testament studies. In this article, I want to focus in on probably the most well known representative of the movement: Elaine Pagels.

One reason I want to examine her life and teachings is because of the high notoriety and visibility she has in the mainstream press. This gives her an enormous platform to spread her unbiblical and unorthodox teachings. Along with this is the concern that she is regularly a lecturer at churches across the United States.

Another reason I want to write this article is because I believe there are lessons to be learned by examining the life and writings of Ms. Pagels.

Background on Ms. Pagels

Let me begin by presenting Ms. Pagels background as presented on the About.com website:

Elaine Pagels: Born in California on February 13, 1943, as Elaine Hiesey, married to Heinz Pagels, theoretical physicist, 1969. Elaine Pagels graduated from Stanford University (B.A. 1964, M.A. 1965) and, after briefly studying dance at Martha Graham's studio, began studying for her Ph.D. at Harvard University, where she was part of a team studying the Nag Hammadi scrolls, documents found in 1945 that shed light on early Christian debates on theology and practice.

Elaine Pagels received her Ph.D. from Harvard in 1970, went to teach at Barnard College in 1970 where she became the head of the religion department in 1974. In 1979 her book based on her work with the Nag Hammadi scrolls, *The Gnostic Gospels*, sold 400,000 copies and won numerous awards and acclaim. In this book, Elaine Pagels asserts that the differences between the gnostics and the orthodox Christians was more about politics and organization than theology.

In 1982, Pagels joined Princeton University as a professor of early Christian history . . . In 1987, Pagel's son Mark died, after four years

of illness, and the following year her husband, Heinz, died in a hiking accident . . . In 1995 Pagels married Kent Greenawalt, a law professor at Columbia University.¹

Ms. Pagels has a distinguished academic record of accomplishments and is a very successful author and lecturer. She is known for her personal style of writing, in which she mixes her personal story with her research. This was quite evident in her top-selling *Beyond Belief* published in 2003. Her most recent book published in 2007 is *Reading Judas: The Gospel of Judas and the Shaping of Christianity* which she co-wrote with Karen L. King.

Basic Thesis of the New School

The basic idea of Ms. Pagels and the so-called *New School* is to reject the idea of a singular orthodox tradition that runs in a straight line from Jesus to his apostles, to the early church fathers, through the historic councils and creeds, and down to us today.

Rather, they believe that orthodox Christianity is a distortion of the original teachings of Jesus. Further, they believe that there were many competing versions of Christianity in the first and second century, and that what we call orthodox or historic Christianity was just one of those competitors who happened to win the battle through political maneuvering and suppression of their enemies.

The *New School* advocates believe that writings being discovered in the last century (Nag Hammadi etc.) such as the Gospel of Thomas etc. are not the writings of heretical groups (as the early church fathers believed), but are rather equally valid versions of early Christianity. These *New School* theories are bad history and bad theology.

Ms Pagels Religious Upbringing

Ms. Pagels is quite open about her religious upbringing. In an interview in 2003, she said:

I was brought up to believe that religion is obsolete—and is about to wither up and die, because it is no longer needed. As soon as enough people are educated, I was told, no one will need religion anymore; they'll understand that science now gives us adequate understanding of the universe . . . My father . . . was a plant biologist, had converted from the Calvinism of his parents to Darwin, to believe that the bible was basically a bunch of children's stories—I was brought up to think that as well. My

¹ http://womenshistory.about.com/cs/religion/p/p_elaine_pagels.htm

father had absolutely no use for religion, thought it was absolute nonsense, basically ridiculed it.²

Pagel's Conversion to Christianity?

Though Pagels was raised with ideas antithetical to biblical Christianity, it apparently left her feeling the need for something more. In an article from 2004, we learn what happened next in her spiritual journey:

“Pagels comes to her evolving interpretations of ancient texts by way of a difficult personal journey. Raised in a ‘nominally Protestant’ family, she did the rebellious teen bit when she was 14 by joining an evangelical Christian church.”³

She described this experience further in her book *Beyond Belief*:

“When I was fourteen, and had joined an evangelical church, I found in the enthusiastic and committed gatherings and in John's gospel, which my fellow Christians treasured, what I then craved—the assurance of belonging to the right group, the true ‘flock’ that alone belonged to God.”⁴

Pagel's Crisis of Faith

But what happened next is both troubling and revealing:

But when church members told her that a close friend of hers who'd been killed in a car accident was eternally damned because he was Jewish and not “born again,” Pagels abandoned that faith and did not attend any church on a regular basis.⁵

In her own words:

Then, after a close friend was killed in an automobile accident at the age of sixteen, my fellow evangelicals commiserated but declared that, since he was Jewish and not “born again,” he was eternally damned. Distressed and disagreeing with their interpretation—and finding no room for discussion—I realized that I was no longer at home in their world and left that church.⁶

Pagel's Spiritual Journey as a Young Woman

² http://womenshistory.about.com/cs/religion/p/p_elaine_pagels.htm

³ <http://www.stanfordalumni.org/news/magazine/2004/janfeb/features/pagels.html>

⁴ Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief*, Vintage Books, New York, 2003, p. 30

⁵ <http://www.stanfordalumni.org/news/magazine/2004/janfeb/features/pagels.html>

⁶ Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief*, Vintage Books, New York, 2003, p. 31).

Ms. Pagel's stated: "When I was in my twenties, there was no religion in my life."⁷

But again, living a life without God apparently was not fulfilling:

When I entered college, I decided to learn Greek in order to read the New Testament in its original language hoping to discover the source of its power . . . After college I . . . still wondered what it was about Christianity that I had found so compelling and at the same time so frustrating. I decided to look for the "real Christianity."⁸

Pagel's Search for Real Christianity

Tragically, her search for 'real Christianity' led her to a pseudo-faith that has more to do with new age teachings than 'real Christianity.' That is, when at once she rejected the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3), she found the wide gate leading to destruction (Matthew 7:13).

She states:

"When I found that I no longer believed everything I thought Christians were supposed to believe, I asked myself, Why not just leave Christianity—and religion—behind, as so many others have done? Yet I sometimes encountered, in churches and elsewhere—in the presence of a venerable Buddhist monk, in the cantor's singing at a bar mitzvah, and on mountain hikes—something compelling, powerful, even terrifying that I could not ignore, and I had come to see that besides belief, Christianity involves practice—and paths toward transformation."⁹

Biblical Truth or Empty Form?

In trying to explain this more mystical approach to her 'Christian' experience, Pagels describes the peace she received at a Christmas gathering at a church:

But this year I found myself wholeheartedly singing the carols and listening to the stories of the child of Bethlehem . . . Attending to the sounds and the silence, the candlelight and darkness, I felt the celebration take us in and break over us like the sea . . . For a moment I was shocked by the thought: We could have made all this up . . . But of course, we did not have to do that,

for, as I realized at once, countless other people have already done that.¹⁰

In a PBS interview from 2003, Ms. Pagels stated the same idea bluntly:

"I realized that conventional views of Christian faith that I'd heard when I was growing up were simply made up -- and I realized that many parts of the story of the early Christian movement had been left out."¹¹

Tragic Loss

One of the things that had spurred her return to "faith" was the tragic loss of one of her children and then her first husband in a short period of time, and the surprising place (according to Pagels) she found comfort:

On a bright Sunday morning in February, shivering in a T-shirt and running shorts, I stepped into the vaulted vestibule of the Church of the Heavenly Rest in New York to catch my breath and warm up. Since I had not been to church in a long time, I was startled by my response to the worship . . . The previous night I had been sleepless with fear and worry . . . Two days before, a team of doctors . . . called us in to say that Mark [her little boy] had pulmonary hypertension, and invariably fatal disease . . . Standing in the back of the church, I recognized, uncomfortably, I needed to be there . . . I returned often to that church, not looking for faith but because, in the presence of that worship and the people gathered there . . . my defenses fell away, exposing storms of grief and hope.¹²

Ms. Pagel's loss of her child and husband was tragic, but her rejection of true Christianity is even more tragic. She has essentially rejected biblical, historic, and orthodox Christianity and replaced it with a watered-down new age version, a pseudo-christianity. She rejects the essence of Christianity, and retains a mere shell. She rejects biblical truth, but retains the outward forms. She is comforted by ritual and community; but despises the very purpose and meaning of the same. For Ms. Pagels, truth is irrelevant; experience is everything. But a Christianity without content is not Christianity.

In 2003 Ms. Pagels stated: "What I've learned through studying the Gospel of Thomas and the context of the politics of early Christian-

⁷ http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/pagels03/pagels_index.html

⁸ Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief*, Vintage Books, New York, 2003, p. 31.

⁹ Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief*, Vintage Books, New York, 2003, p. 143.

¹⁰ Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief*, Vintage Books, New York, 2003, pp. 144-145.

¹¹ <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week706/profile.html>

¹² Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief*, Vintage Books, New York, 2003, pp. 3-5.

ity,” she says, “is that anyone who participates in Christian tradition without having learned anything about it, and that’s most people who participate in it, because it’s not taught in public or private schools for the most part—often think of their traditions as immutable, as if they’ve just come down from God.”¹³

Ms. Pagels laments those who haven’t achieved her level of awareness that Christianity is a human invention rather than truth from God. Essentially, Ms. Pagels rejects the idea that God can communicate to his followers on earth, giving them His word as guide for living. Rather than being truth from above, for Ms Pagels, orthodox Christianity is from the bottom up—a mere invention of man—not a revelation from God.

Lessons to Learn From Ms. Pagel’s Life

But what can we learn from Ms. Pagels experience? Let me suggest a few things. We must all be responsible for our own beliefs. We must not blindly accept what our parents, or our faith tradition (whatever it is), or our culture tell us. Ms. Pagels was certainly misled by her father as he mocked Christianity, but as an adult she (and we) was responsible for her beliefs. What I am saying is that we must all examine our beliefs; not only *what* we believe, but *why*?

Though we can learn from our parents or teachers at church, the faith must be our own. When we encounter people who are skeptical or even antagonistic toward the faith, we can keep in mind that they have probably been misled by their parents or friends, or perhaps from something in the media. We can gently challenge them to examine the evidence for themselves. We can suggest that they read the Gospel of John (or other biblical passages) knowing that God’s word is powerful (Isaiah 55:10-11; Hebrews 4:12).

Ms. Pagels testifies that she lost her faith when as a teenager, church members told her that a friend who died in a tragic accident was going to hell. I can identify with the difficult position her friends in the church were in. I personally would not say any particular person was going to hell. That is God’s place to judge (Philippians 2:10-11, 1 Corinthians 3:11-15). We simply don’t know each person’s history and whether at some point they made a sincere profession of faith in Christ.

Pagel’s reaction is perhaps understandable for a fourteen year old. But the idea that everyone goes to heaven cannot be maintained biblically. Would it be just for an unrepentant Hitler to abide in

heaven? Jesus himself made it clear that there is indeed a broad way that leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13-14), and that some go away to eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46). We must choose whether we will believe Jesus or Ms. Pagels! As for me and my house we will serve the Lord (Joshua 24:15).

Also, some may wonder why Ms. Pagels fell away from her professed evangelical faith? Does this mean Christians can lose their salvation? In very strong terms, the Bible affirms the security of the believer in the hands of Christ (Ephesians 1:13-14, Jude 24-25).

However, the Bible teaches that there are some in the church who are mere professors, but not possessors of true faith. People who have social and emotional needs met, but have not met Jesus Christ with sincere faith. They are those Jesus described in the parable of the Sower as “ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing, they fall away” (Luke 8:13).

Again, I certainly sympathize with Ms. Pagels for the tragic loss of her son and husband. But her current beliefs seem to be so hopeless. That is, it seems that she views religion as merely a tonic; something that comforts us and provides meaning. But how can you find meaning in Christianity when you reject the idea that it has any real truth or meaning? Biblical Christianity offers the hope of resurrection based on the fact of Christ’s resurrection. Christians don’t grieve like those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13). But what hope does Ms. Pagels have of seeing her loved ones again, since she considers Christ’s resurrection a fairy tale?

When Ms. Pagels asked herself why she didn’t just leave Christianity, I wondered the same thing. She reminds of the warning of the apostle Paul about those who have “a form of godliness but denying its power”(2 Timothy 3:5), and “who abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons”(1 Timothy 4:1). I know that Pagels denies the reality of Satan (See her book *The Origin of Satan*, Random House, New York, 1995, where Pagels teaches that the Devil is merely a projection of our fear of others who are different than us, rather than a real being). But we must choose whether we will believe the Bible or Elaine Pagels.

In closing, I respect Ms. Pagels abilities and gifts as a scholar and a writer. Indeed it is with sadness that I must warn Christians against her teachings. But it is for truth we must stand; and error must be exposed. The apostle Paul said, “Have nothing to do with the fruitless

¹³ http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/pagels03/pagels_index.html

deeds of darkness, but rather expose them”(Ephesians 5:11). To God be the Glory!

THE RELIABILITY OF THE GOSPELS

by Steve Lagoon

RAS Question from Readers

Question:

I have noticed as I read the Bible that there are some variations in the wording of Jesus’ statements (the red letter portions of the gospels), even when they seem to be describing the same event in the life of Christ. I have a friend that claims that this is an example of all the contradictions in the Bible. Further, he says that over the thousands of years since the Bible was written, it has been constantly changed, and this proves the Bible is not really inspired by God. Can you tell me how to answer my friend?

Answer:

Let us begin by acknowledging the minor variations in the gospel accounts of the words of Jesus. But as we shall see, this is hardly a reason for concern; for what the careful student will find most remarkable is not the minor variations found, but the amazing degree of agreement among them, even after 2000 years.

Further, these minor variations are not the result of some process of corruption of the biblical text, but rather are easily accounted for when we consider the process by which we have arrived at our modern versions of the Bible.

The Gospel Accounts of Jesus’ Blessing of the Children

For the sake of clarity, let us look at an example of these variant readings of Jesus’ statements when comparing gospel with gospel (This example is from the NIV Harmony of the Gospels.¹

In the account of Jesus’ blessing of the children, Matthew 18:5 says: “And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.” Compare this with Mark 9:37: “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me.” Luke has it: “Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me” (Luke 9:48).

I have highlighted some examples where Mark and Luke vary from Matthew. These minor variations are typical of the kinds one will encounter when comparing the gospels, and do not affect the historical reliability or accuracy of the event being reported.

¹ Robert L. Thomas & Stanley N. Gundry, *The NIV Harmony Of The Gospels*, San Francisco (HarperCollins, 1998).

Defining Terms for Clarification

As we proceed, it will be helpful to define some terms related to the topic. We begin with the word *pericope*, which is defined as a small section of a gospel describing a particular event in the life of Christ, i.e. the feeding of the 5000, the healing of the demoniac, or the transfiguration, etc. Soulen states, “In Biblical criticism, the term [Pericope] is often used to refer to any self-contained unit of Scripture.”² Many Bibles mark each of these pericope sections with subheadings.

The Synoptic Gospels

It will also be helpful to define the term *synoptic* as it is used in biblical studies. Now each gospel writer reported the events that they thought were most relevant to share with their readers about the life of Jesus Christ. Students of the Bible have noted that the first three gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke share much of the same material and so have been called the Synoptic Gospels since *synoptic* means to see together.³ These are contrasted with the fourth gospel, that of the apostle John, which includes much information not included by the Synoptics.

Parallel Passages

When two or more gospels include a report (or pericope) of the same event in the life of Christ, we can refer to these as parallel passages. As each gospel biographer wrote his account of the life of Christ, he chose those events that he felt were most important for his readers to hear.

We should keep in mind Luke’s report that the authors of the gospels used various sources as they compiled and wrote their biographies of Jesus:

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught (Luke 1:1-4).

As we shall discuss further, most New Testament scholars believe

² Richard N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, Atlanta GA (John Knox Press, 1978) 127.

³ W. Randolph Tate, *Interpreting the Bible: A Handbook of Terms and Methods*, Peabody MA (Hendrickson Publishers, 2006) 365.

that the reason the Synoptic Gospels are so similar is that they were using some of the same sources (such as the hypothetical sources of “Q,” “M,” and “L.”) But though using these same sources, each author shaped the material for their own needs. So, even when sharing the same story, each varied in how much of that particular story to share, some including more detail and others less. Indeed, we see repeated examples where one gospel includes a whole statement by Jesus where another records only a portion of the statement.

As in the example above, Matthew omits a statement that both Mark and Luke include: “And whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me” although Luke’s wording is slightly different than Mark’s. And to top it off, Luke includes a final statement that neither Matthew nor Luke included: “For he who is least among you all—he is the greatest” (Luke 9:48c).

These choices do not affect the accuracy of each of their accounts, but merely reflect where each wants to take their reader in considering Jesus’ life and teaching. We have the advantage today of taking these complimentary accounts and by comparing them, getting a fuller picture of the life and ministry of Jesus than we would have with any one of the gospels separately. Indeed we can thank God for including all four of the gospels in the New Testament canon for just this reason.

Jesus the Itinerant Preacher

Another important factor to consider when comparing statements in the Gospels is to remember that Jesus was an itinerant preacher in the truest sense of the word. That is, Jesus didn’t just minister in one town as a pastor would, but he was constantly on the move. And as he travelled from audience to audience, he often shared the same or a very similar message. Indeed, at times it is difficult to tell if something is a true parallel passage (describing the same event in Christ’s ministry) or if it is actually a different but similar event.

As an example, in Matthew 12, in response to a question from the Pharisees asking for a sign, Jesus says “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah” (Matthew 12:39). But later in the same gospel, but in a different context, Jesus spoke nearly the identical statement: “A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah” (Matthew 16:4).

Now some scholars refer to such occurrences as doublets, and believe

they represent different sources that the gospel writer drew upon, but didn't edit out of their final revision.⁴ But that Jesus was an itinerant preacher much better accounts for these doublets in which Jesus would repeat, in whole or in part, the same message.

What this means is that we must be cautious before we too quickly assume that similar accounts are the same event. For it could very well be that the variant wordings are the result of variant, but similar, events being described.

The Journey from Jesus to Your Bible

But how do we account for the minor variations in wording in parallel accounts as we have noted above? To answer that question, we will gain a much greater understanding by considering how Jesus' words made it from his mouth to our Bibles.

Jesus Usually Spoke Aramaic

First, Jesus spoke the words within his life and ministry. Most New Testament scholars believe he regularly spoke in the Aramaic language.⁵ For instance, W. Randolph Tate says, "Not only was it [Aramaic] the language of Jesus."⁶ Robert Gordon agrees, "Aramaic, in the Galilean dialect was spoken by our Lord and his disciples."⁷ Douglass Guthrie adds,

An interesting question arises regarding the possibility that Jesus using the Gr. language in Galilee, in addition to Aram . . . In all probability the area was bilingual, and the possibility certainly exists that Jesus was acquainted with Gr. His teaching was certainly in Aram . . . the language of the common people, to whom Jesus mainly addressed himself.⁸

Narratives of Jesus' Ministry Collected

It is only natural that Jesus' disciples and other faithful followers would begin to make collections of their memories of Christ. No doubt some were passed along orally for a time, while other immediately began to write them down. Between the time of Christ Resurrection (30 A.D.) and the writings of the Gospels themselves (ca. 60 A.D.), there were certainly many such collections circulating among Chris-

⁴ Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, Downers Grove IL (InterVarsity Press, 1987) pp. 146-148.

Blomberg has a good discussion of the phenomenon of doublets in the gospels.

⁵ Most scholars believe that Jesus was multilingual including Hebrew and Greek.

⁶ W. Randolph Tate, *Interpreting the Bible: A Handbook of Terms and Methods*, Peabody MA (Hendrickson Publishers, 2006) 23.

⁷ Robert P. Gordon, *Aramaic*, in *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Revised Edition, J. D. Douglas, General Editor, Grand Rapids MI (Regency- Zondervan Publishing House, 1978) 62.

⁸ Douglass Guthrie, *Jesus Christ*, in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Volume 3, Merrill C. Tenney, General Editor, Grand Rapids MI (Reference-Zondervan Publishing House, 1976) 500.

tians. For instance, Robert Stein states, "Before the Gospels were written there did exist a period in which the gospel materials were passed on orally . . . Whereas Luke 1:2 does refer to an oral period in which the gospel materials were transmitted, Luke explicitly mentions his own investigation of written sources."⁹

Some were probably oral at first and written down later, while others set them to writing from the start. Much of New Testament scholarship is devoted to understanding how this material came to eventually form the biblical gospels.

The Synoptic Problem

Those studying the so-called Synoptic Problem try to understand the interrelationship of the Synoptic Gospels, and how each of the gospel writers used these early written collections as sources for their own unique finished work. As we have stated earlier, students of the Bible have long noted the incredible similarities of the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and quite reasonably conjectured that they have all borrowed from the same sources in most cases.

New Testament scholars have noted that there is material that is common to both Matthew and Luke, but not found in Mark. Such material was theorized to contain an early collection of Jesus' sayings, but also including some narratives, and given the name "Q" for the German *Quelle*, which simply means source. There other theoretical sources such as "M" for material found only in Matthew and "L" for material found only in Luke.

Though these documents (or something similar) have not been discovered, they must have existed and accurately conveyed the accounts of Jesus' life, as Luke suggests in the preface of his gospel.

Telephone

To cast doubt on this stage of the transmission of the Jesus narrative, critics will sometimes refer to the children's game telephone in which a teacher gives a message to her students and compares the message she receives back after it has been whispered through a chain of students. This exercise is usually purported to show how unreliable oral tradition is.

But there is a growing consensus among sociologists to cast doubt on this long-held assumption. True, a group of giggling elementary students are not likely to accurately send a message, and may even change it purposely for the laugh. But how accurate would that mes-

⁹ Robert H. Stein, *The Synoptic Problem: An Introduction*, Grand Rapids MI (Baker Book House, 1987) 43.

sage be conveyed if their parents were brought into the room and told that each would get \$100.00 if the message returns without error.

Robert Stein adds, "It is furthermore difficult to believe that the disciples . . . would not have exercised great care to memorize and preserve the words of Jesus which the prophets of old longed to hear."¹⁰

In the case of the narratives of Jesus, it is most doubtful that they were passed on orally for very long before His closest disciples began to write them down.

Again, Robert Stein states:

It is therefore quite certain that the translation of the gospel traditions from Aramaic into Greek did not take place decades later in a far-distant land and by people quite isolated from the actual events. On the contrary, the translation into Greek probably took place after at most a few years, or more likely only months later. In fact . . . the translation of the gospel materials from Aramaic into Greek may have already begun during the ministry of Jesus.¹¹

In another place, Stein adds, "It is not at all improbable that in their preaching mission during the ministry of Jesus the disciples used notes and written materials as a basis for their preaching. The use of such notes would then have a preservative effect upon the tradition process."¹²

Witnesses for the Gospels

That these earliest collections of Jesus' narratives and sayings that were to form the gospels were accurate is proven by the very reality that the whole generation of people who lived through the events and were personal witnesses of them were still alive to testify as to their authenticity.

Of course, the greatest claim of the Gospels is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and the apostle Paul reminds his readers that although the resurrection was an incredible event, miraculous indeed, nevertheless, there were still plenty of witnesses alive to verify its truth:

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that

¹⁰ Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 201. Stein has a good discussion showing the reliability of memorization among Second Temple Jews on pages 202-206.

¹¹ Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 208.

¹² Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 210.

he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

Multiple Gospel Authors Means Multiple Translations of Jesus

What happens next is quite important to our discussion. As each of the gospel authors shaped their narratives, using multiple sources, they produced four unique accounts of the life of Christ. Matthew could check the accuracy of his sources against his own memory as an eyewitness and apostle, while Mark could verify his sources against the personal memory of Peter, who tradition tells us was Mark's primary source for his gospel.¹³ Finally, Luke was the careful researcher who turned over every stone he could to produce an accurate account of the life of Christ (Luke 1:1-4).

Preservation of the Greek Text

However, though the completion of the four gospels was God's gift to mankind, yet our purpose in this article is to trace how the Gospels made it from the actions and words of Jesus to the Bibles we have in our hands today. That also is a marvelous testimony of God's superintending process of preserving his word.

The desire of early Christians everywhere to read the gospels naturally lead to their being copied and multiplied and sent to the four corners of the earth. W. Edward Glenny sums the up the impressive evidence supporting the reliability of the text of the New Testament in general:

We can have absolute confidence in the Bibles we have today . . . First, God has given us 5,656 manuscripts containing all or parts of the Greek NT. It is the most remarkably preserved book in the ancient world. Not only do we have a great number of manuscripts, but some of them are also very close in time to the originals that they represent . . . These facts are all the more amazing when they are compared with the preservation of other ancient literature. No one questions the authenticity of the historical books of antiquity [Caesar's Gallic Wars, Herodotus's History, Tacitus's Histories and Annals] because we do not possess the original copies. Yet, we have far fewer manuscripts

¹³ D. A. Carson & Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Grand Rapids MI (Zondervan Publishing House, 2005) 172-173.

of these works than we possess of the NT.¹⁴

New Testament scholars who specialize in the area of textual criticism are able to use the science of textual criticism to arrive and produce a reliable textual apparatus faithful to the original gospels, and ready for modern translator to reproduce into a receptor language.

The Last Stop from Greek to the Receptor Language

We arrive at the final step in the process, the translation of the gospels into our native tongues, in this case English. We should bear in mind the difficulty of translating from one language into another, as their seldom exists a perfect translation.

For instance, should translators use the ancient idioms and figure of speech used in the Bible, or should they try to find a similar idiom that is more familiar to the modern reader?

Differences between Greek and English Syntax make is difficult to translate. The basic challenge facing translators is rather to strive to follow the form of the Greek staying as close to a word for word translation as is possible, even though the result can be a bit wooden and hard to understand. This is the theory behind the F-E or Formal Equivalence translation.

Or should translators follow the D-E or Dynamic Equivalent approach in which the goal is to try to be as faithful to the meaning of the text, idea for idea, rather than word for word. The D-E can be very readable, but depending on your viewpoint, more or less accurate.¹⁵

Finally, in this translation process, we should remember that though the context determines the meaning of the Greek word, narrowing down its semantic range, yet, there remain choices for the translators such as which synonym might be best in this place (should it be “they were tired, or sleepy, or groggy, or exhausted”).

The good news is that despite these challenges, we are blessed with many very good translations available to modern readers.

Conclusion

Let us return to the question that served as the basis for this article. Should the variations we find in the words of Jesus recorded in the New Testament be a cause for concern or an indication of an unreliable text as critics have charged?

By all means no, for as we have seen in our journey tracing how the words of Jesus were first collected, written in the gospels, preserved in manuscripts for thousands of years, and finally translated into our modern Bibles, at each step of the way we have seen the amazing way God has accurately preserved the words of our savior.

¹⁴ W. Edward Glenny, *The Preservation of Scripture and the Version Debate*, Chapter in *One Bible Only: Examining Exclusive Claims for the King James Bible*, Roy E. Beacham & Kevin T. Bauder, General Editors, Grand Rapids MI (Kregel Publications, 2001) 123.

¹⁵ For a good discussion of this challenge comparing various modern English Translation see John R. Kohlenberger III, *Words About the Word: A Guide to Choosing and Using Your Bible*, Grand Rapids MI (Regency/Zondervan, 1987) 61-71 and Robert W. Milliman, *Translation Theory and Twentieth-Century Versions* chapter in *One Bible Only: Examining Exclusive Claims for the King James Bible*, Roy E. Beacham & Kevin T. Bauder, General Editors, Grand Rapids MI (Kregel Publications, 2001) 137-146.

BUILDING A GOOD HERITAGE

by Jerry Hopkins

Psalms 127 is contrary to the beliefs and practices of our day. We believe in self-sufficiency and independence. The first thing we must learn is that we are neither self-sufficient nor independent (Romans 14:7-8).

Sometimes we must fail miserably and repeatedly before we realize that without God we cannot build a good or lasting heritage. How can we build a good (some would say “godly”) heritage for ourselves and our children.

We should first recognize that God is essential to “good” success. This is true not only in our personal lives, but in our families also. We cannot see our children succeed if we do not teach them the importance of God. Many are concerned that their children stray from the Lord, or do not remain faithful to church. Why? Could it be that we have not, even with all our attendance, work and words about church, communicated that God is essential, not just to succeed in life, but to even continue living a meaningful life.

Our children must see that God is first in our lives. No amount of moral or spiritual training will keep our children from wrong behavior or influences if we do not demonstrate in our lives this priority. “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). We train our children whether we think we are or not. The way we train them they will live for the rest of their lives. So it is vitally important that we teach our children early in life the necessity of believing in God and trusting Jesus Christ as personal Savior. We should lead them to trust God and do good (Psalm 37:3-4).

God is life’s only essential. If we have God, we need nothing else. If we give our children God, we need give them nothing else. If we do not give them God, we can give them everything in the world and it will be insufficient and inadequate.

We must, second, realize that our work is related to the work of God. What we do must be in harmony with God or we work “in vain.” Note the importance of what Solomon says in Psalm 127-“Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain” (Psalm 127:1).

Mark those words-“in vain.” No amount of work can construct what will stand the test of adversity and aggravation. If the foundation is not the Lord and the substance good and godly it will collapse when the testing time comes. Actually we must realize that tests come to show what is in us.

The situation that developed between Lot and Abraham should instruct us in this regard. Lot led his family away from God. He didn’t so much decide against God, as he just tried to get all he could for himself. He chose the prosperity of Sodom and Gomorrah. He ignored the godly and good influences in his life and that of his family. He chose not to work with God or God’s friend Abraham.

Mothers and fathers have a responsibility to lead their children and families in good, godly ways. We don’t work with God when he work against God’s law. In the last chapter of Proverbs there is just a passing reference but it is so important, “The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him” (Prov. 31:11). The king’s mother led him in a godly and good manner to learn the important things of God, thereby he could do the work of God.

The Lord is our only protection. He is our only positive construction. Paul spoke of this fact when he wrote to the Corinthians, “For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building” (1 Corinthians 3:9). What are you building in your life? What are you building in the lives of your family and children? Is it good? Is it godly? Will it stand the test of time and adversity? Will it last all of your life and in all their lives?

In the third place, we must learn for ourselves and share with others that peace is a gift from God. Worry doesn’t produce peace. It produces pain, illness and death. Researchers say that some cancers come from negative emotions such as worry. It is for this reason that the Psalmist said, “It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows (that is worry!); for so He (God) gives His beloved sleep” (Psalm 127:2). This rest (peace) is God’s gift. Indeed, God “gives His beloved sleep.” This is the sleep of a good conscience cleansed by God, a forgiven person, a saved person. Only God can do this. What a gift. It is what Jesus spoke about when He said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

In building a good heritage, we must come to value life as God values it. We must teach our children to value life as God values it. Children can tell if they are valued or not. They know! People can tell if they are appreciated or valued. “Children are a heritage from the Lord, the

fruit of the womb is His reward” (Psalm 127:3). We should value life as given by God.

Our world does not value life. Many people across the earth do not value life. Millions have been murdered, casualties of genocide, ethnic cleansing and war. In our country there have been millions (approximately 1.5 million per year) sacrificed through abortion. A sad reality that abortion testifies is that children are inconvenient. If a little unborn baby will inconvenience us financially or socially, why not kill it? Are we any better than our ancestors who sacrificed babies to idols? Psalm 106:36-39 speaks of this awful problem. We must regain the value of life, every life.

Without God there cannot be the founding of a good heritage. We should learn from one who lived what he confessed. Alexander Solzhenitsyn was asked why all the atrocities occurred in the Soviet Union. He replied, “If I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous Revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: ‘Men have forgotten God’; that’s why all this has happened.”

Let’s be thankful we live in a free land, but realize that we could easily lose it. Each new generation must be vigilant. We must not forget God! I would like to hear from you about our heritage and what you think we ought to be and do. I would appreciate you sharing your thoughts on life values and civil relationships with me. You may contact me by email at drjerryhopkins@yahoo.com.

Dr. Jerry Hopkins is a professor in Marshall.

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QUIZ: GENEALOGIES, BIRTHDATES

1. According to the Jewish calendar, we are now living in the year:

___ a. 5774	___ c. 6025
___ b. 4996	___ d. 5326

2. Which statement is correct? Jesus was born

___ a. in the reign of Tiberias Caesar
___ b. in the reign of Augustus Caesar
___ c. before the reign of Julius Caesar
___ d. after the death of Herod the Great

3. Whose genealogy is part of the Edomite nation?

___ a. Joseph	___ c. Ishmael
___ b. Lot	___ d. Isaac

4. An Amalekite who tried to exterminate the Jewish people in Persia?

___ a. Haman	___ c. Nebuchadnezar
___ b. Cyrus	___ d. Xerxes

5. What name is not included in any genealogical record?

___ a. Jabez	___ c. Melchizedek
___ b. Boaz	___ d. Seth

6. Adolph Hitler's background included Jewish blood. What name indicates this?

___ a. Dietzmann	___ c. Schickelgruber
___ b. Cohen	___ d. Goldberg

7. The longest genealogical records in the Bible are in?

___ a. 1. Chronicles	___ c. Matthew's Gospel
___ b. Luke's Gospel	___ d. Genesis

8. Luke's genealogy begins with

___ a. Abraham	c. Adam
___ b. David	d. Joshua

9. Which cult is known for its genealogical research?

___ a. Jehovah's Witnesses	c. Christian Science
___ b. Mormons	d. Scientology

10. A.D. means

___ a. "after the death"
___ b. "according to an angel's declaration"
___ c. from Latin: "in the year of our Lord"
___ d. "after the death of Augustus Caesar"

Answers:

1. (a); 2. (a); 3. (b); 4. (c); 5. (a); 6. (c); 7. (a); 8. (c); 9. (c); 10. (c)

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