

## Geisler-Turek Reflux

### *Reading the Gospels into 1 Corinthians is simply circular reasoning.*

-- Earl Doherty, *Challenging the Verdict*, p. 214

Recent frequent commenter David has repeatedly challenged my view, which I presented in my 27 July blog [Is 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 'Too Early' to Be Legend?](#), that Geisler and Turek, in their popular apologetics book *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, begged the question when they asserted that the so-called 'creed' which Paul is allegedly quoting in I Cor. 15:3-8 is too early to be the product of legends. Also repeatedly, I have stated my reasons for surmising this (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)).

David then urged me to reconstruct Geisler and Turek's argument, which they never formally lay out themselves, and show how that argument commits the fallacy which I have charged it of committing. In [one comment](#), David did me the service of presenting his own rendition of Geisler and Turek's under-expressed argument, which he culled from statements found on pp. 241-243 of their hokey book. David writes:

In the interest of fairness here is my exposition of the G/T argument from page 241-243:

- P1. Legends require sufficient time for development (implicitly assumed)
- P2. As corroborated by multiple independent attestation, the crucifixion happened around 30AD
- P3. The Gospels record that the Resurrection happened 3 days later
- P4. The Corinthian creed predates the writing of Corinth (56AD), probably within 0-3 years of the Resurrection.
- P5. 0-3 years is not sufficient time for legend development.

I am content to look at these points along with David as accurately representing the chain of thought which Geisler and Turek may have in mind, as far as it goes at any rate, behind their remark that "there's no possible way that [1 Corinthians 15:3-8] could describe a legend, because it goes right back to the time and place of the event itself" (p. 242). But it needs to be borne in mind that this argument is enlisted by Geisler and Turek in support of a grander conclusion, namely that we have a reliable historical account of Jesus' resurrection. The overall intent of providing arguments like the one we have above, is to secure belief in Jesus' resurrection. That is the prime directive, the ultimate purpose, the crowning event which all of this is supposed to help establish. This point cannot be overlooked or denied because, as appearing in chapter 10 of their book, this argument is found in Geisler and Turek's effort to establish the premise that "the New Testament is historically reliable" (cf. p. 219). Hence the urgency to dispel the position that legends may have crept into the early written Christian accounts of Jesus, and hence the urgency to date certain statements about Jesus' resurrection so close to the event itself that they couldn't possibly have been the product of earlier legend-building.

Let's look at these points.

In regard to P1, it is stipulated that "legends require sufficient time for development." That's well and good, but the question of how one determines how long a time is "sufficient" for a legend to develop is not adequately explored by Geisler and Turek. How long a time is sufficient, and how does one determine this?

I remember hearing all kinds of stories about Elvis Presley not long after he died in 1977. There were sightings of him virtually every week within months after his death; he was seen in grocery stores from Las Vegas to Monte Carlo, he was seen driving down city streets, he was seen at gas stations, convenience stores, shopping malls, and pictures of him (or what looked like him) were circulating along with these stories, etc. There was even a report of a motorcycle accident in which Elvis, still very much alive, had broken his leg. I always thought these were tongue-in-cheek, but some fans apparently took these reports seriously, and maybe were responsible for generating them to begin with. They had put an undying hope in "the King" - a hope which refused to die with him. The rest of society snickered and sneered while the loyal core held true to the dream. But I don't think anyone who didn't believe these reports felt the need to sit down and launch into refutations, let alone parade Presley's body through the city streets.

Were these stories about Presley legends? Well, I certainly do not think they were factual claims. Were they just tabloid hype intended to sell the gossip rags? Surely these stories were enlisted to promote sales, but does this make them any less factual? And did some people take these stories seriously? Again, they seemed unserious to me, but it also seemed to me that some people certainly were in fact taking them seriously.

While the Elvis phenomenon may be a good test case for how long it takes legends to develop, the one advantage it has is that Elvis' death can be traced to a date by contemporary records. Elvis died in August of 1977. There is also vast evidence - much much more than sufficient - that Elvis actually existed. But legends focusing on supernatural personages tend to be much more blurry. In such cases, there may not be any actual historical inception date, even approximate, back to which the legend can be legitimately traced. That is, they may have no actual historical basis whatsoever. Can the legends of Mithras, Zoroaster, Dionysos, Osiris, et al., be traced back to some seminal historical event? If not, how can we apply the sufficient time rule to these legends? When did Mithras slay his sacred bull? Can the Mithraen religion be traced back to this event, or did it actually occur in the first place?

Now another point to keep in mind is the fact that legends involving supernatural claims are certainly not going to be unlikely to develop in a culture steeped in worldviews governed by the primacy of consciousness. In such cultures, the basic metaphysical premise of such legends is essentially guaranteed. The evidence we have of first century Palestine and the centuries prior to it and those following after it, sufficiently attests to the widespread acceptance of worldviews assuming the primacy of consciousness. From the Greek pantheon to the official religion of Rome, to the Hellenistic mystery religions, the Egyptian deity cults, and yes, even the culture of Judaism, the primacy of consciousness premise was alive and well, thriving in full bloom at this time in human history. People who accept the primacy of consciousness metaphysics deprive themselves of any consistent rational basis from which to question claims about miracles, miracle workers, magicians, deities, risen saviors, virgin births, miraculous healings, exorcisms, etc. In such a cultural environment we find the basic platform for myth-building and legendary development well established, such that it would be difficult to explain if legends did not emerge, especially out of the messianic expectations which had reached their culmination at this time in Judaism. Jews had become desperate for the deliverance promised by the prophesied advent of their Messiah, and it was just a matter of time until inventive mystics were willing to pull one out of their hat.

However, if it is insisted that "legends require sufficient time for development," and this means a *substantial* amount of time like, say, 20 years, or even more, this may be exactly what we have in the case of the Jesus story. On pp. 244-245 of their book, Geisler and Turek quote William Lane Craig on the matter, who claims that "tests show that even two generations is too short to allow legendary tendencies to wipe out the hard core of historical fact." What we have in the case of Paul, the earliest writer in the New Testament, may in fact be much more than two generations. Wells makes the following points:

If, then, Paul did not regard the earthly Jesus as recently deceased, Alvar Ellegård may be right in suggesting, in his 1999 book, that the earliest Christian ideas about him were to some extent shaped by imprecise knowledge about the Teacher of Righteousness who figures in Dead Sea Scrolls written around 100 B.C. as a revered leader (not the Messiah and not a supernatural personage) to whom God had made known all the mysteries of the prophets, and who had been severely persecuted. Whether he was an actual historical figure or largely a construction to give substance to his followers' conception of the founder of their movement cannot now be determined. In any case, the Scrolls show that his memory was still treasured a century or more after his presumed death. What his followers thought they knew about him was that he had lived long ago and had been maltreated and persecuted, probably dying as a martyr. It would be natural for those who knew, even indirectly, of what is said of him in, for instance, the Qumran Habakkuk commentary to assume that the persecution eventually led to his martyrdom. The Scrolls do not name him - they avoid actually naming the sectarian personages (including the Teacher's chief enemies) whom they mention - but 'Jesus', which means 'Yahweh saves', and hence has connotations of 'salvation', would be an appropriate name to have been given at some stage to someone of such religious importance. (*Can We Trust the New Testament?*, pp. 8-9)

So to suppose, along with the above argument, that there was "not sufficient time for legend development" in the case of the stories of Jesus, relies on a dating scheme which may not in fact reflect the actual facts of the case. What is that dating scheme, and where does it come from? If Paul were in fact enlarging on what was by his time already a set of legends about some 'Teacher of Righteousness' who had been martyred a century or more earlier, then obviously there was "sufficient time for legend development" and the dating scheme hired to counteract this is out of a job.

Moving onto P2, we have the premise: "As corroborated by multiple independent attestation, the crucifixion happened around 30AD." In response to this, we must ask: What do these independent reports allegedly

corroborating the claim that a miracle-working man-god was crucified and resurrected in 30 AD actually say, and when were they written? Were these reports written at the time of the alleged event itself? No scholar dates the authorship of any extant text referring to Jesus, either in the New Testament itself or from non-Christian sources, to this time. The earliest we have is Paul, and as we have already seen, he never puts any indicator of time or place for the crucifixion or resurrection. And by all accounts Paul himself was writing from the late AD 40's into the early 60's. So even here we are not talking only 0-3 years from the approximate date assigned to the crucifixion going by literalist Christian accounts in the gospel narratives, which blows the "not sufficient time for legend development" thesis out of the water. Apologists seek to get around this by making Paul quote a creed in I Cor. 15:3-8 which, it is alleged, "goes right back to the time and place of the Resurrection itself" (Geisler and Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, p. 242). But even then apologists are unable to stand by this with anything more than wide approximations; Geisler and Turek, for instance, qualify their statement by allowing from "eighteen months to eight years after," which only causes one to wonder how they arrive at this kind of conclusion in the first place, especially when Paul gives no indication of when or where or under what circumstances Jesus was crucified, and does not even state that what he is including in his letter is a quotation from a pre-existing creed.

The gospels, the earliest being written at least a decade or more after I Corinthians (which itself is usually dated to about 53-57 AD, even on a conservative estimation, this is more than enough time for a legend to have developed if some seminal crucifixion event took place circa 30 AD), are the first documents from which an approximate date for the crucifixion can be inferred, and even then the best for this is Luke, which many scholars date to the later decades of the 1st century (it is generally accepted that Luke's gospel contains unmistakable references to the war which resulted in the destruction of the temple in AD 70, and Richard Carrier's [summary of Steve Mason's argument for Luke's reliance on Josephus](#) identifies solid reasons why Luke was most probably not written until AD 94 at the earliest). All these sources were composed by Christians, and no non-Christian notice (uninterpolated that is) dates to these periods (again, see my [Paul, the Historicity of the Gospel Jesus, and Early Non-Christian Testimony](#) for details). By the early second century you start seeing some brief mentionings of Christians and even of Jesus, but these can be reasonably understood as reports repeating what Christians by this point in time had come to believe. None of this is impressive as corroborating evidence, especially for the kind of event they are purported to corroborate.

P3 states that "The Gospels record that the Resurrection happened 3 days later." This is the detail of Jesus rising "on the third day," an early tradition which is older than any reference suggesting any actual date or timeframe for the crucifixion itself, and appears to have been borne from theological purposes rather than from reports deriving from an actual historical event. Addressing this matter, Wells makes the following points regarding this reference in I Cor. 15:

Nor does mention of 'the third day' constitute a precise historical allusion. As the other indications of time in the passage ('then', 'after that') are vague, and as it supplies no time reference for the death of Christ from which to reckon the three days, the preciseness of this one reference in it cannot be attributed to any general interest in chronology, but is (as Evans concedes) more likely intended as 'a theological statement' ([*Resurrection and the NT*], p 48). Pagan gods whom no one now believes to have existed, were resurrected on the third day. Metzger has observed that 'in the East, three days constitutes a temporary habitation, while the fourth day implies a permanent residence'; hence the purpose of Paul's formula may be to 'convey the assurance that Jesus would be but a visitor in the house of the dead and not a permanent resident therein' ([article on 1 Cor. 15:4 in *Journal of Theological Studies, New Series*, 8], p 123). The influence of pagan parallels could have been strengthened by the rabbinical idea that the general resurrection - presaged according to Rom. 8:29 and Coloss. 1:18 by Christ's resurrection - will occur three days after the end of the world. 'In these conditions', says Goguel, 'it is natural that the resurrection of the Christ was placed in a chronological rapport with his death similar to that which was thought would occur between the end of the world and the general resurrection'. If so, then 'on the third day' is 'not a chronological datum, but a dogmatic assertion: Christ's resurrection marked the dawn of the end-time, the beginning of the cosmic eschatological process of resurrection' (Fuller, [*The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives*], pp 26-7, with references to Goguel; cf. Vermes, [*Jesus the Jew*], pp 234-5 for other saving events occurring, in Jewish lore, 'on the third day'). (*Did Jesus exist?*, p. 31)

So the later writers simply picked up on what began as "not a chronological datum, but a dogmatic assertion," and grafted it into their narratives. This would have been natural if the tradition stuck, which obviously it did, and later writers sought to explain it by putting it into a concocted historical context. What's notable here, however, is that the supposition that Jesus rose "on the third day" predates any historical setting, which we find a decade or more later in the gospels. This is one way legends are created: a motif is invested with mythical or theological significance, often deriving some of that significance from the surrounding culture, and as it is retained it is recast in new contexts to make it meaningful to the new generation. In Matthew (12:40) the significance of this motif is

strengthened by relating Jonah's time in the belly of a whale to Jesus' "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." The intent here appears to be to instill continuity between the old prophets and the Jesus story. That this carries theological rather than historical significance is only confirmed all the more by the fact that none of the gospel passion sequences puts Jesus in his tomb for "three days *and three nights*." This last part - "and three nights" - is, to put it mildly, hard to reconcile with the passion sequences which have Jesus entombed on a Friday evening and emerging from the tomb on a Sunday morning.

Even highly credentialed Christian literalists are often prone to misunderstanding the reference to "the third day" in I Cor. 15:4. Again I quote Wells:

I must stress that, although Paul clearly implies that all these appearances were quite recent occurrences which went back no more than a few years, he does not say that they followed the resurrection immediately, or even soon. Even Archbishop Carnley, whose book on the resurrection is the most valuable of the NT evidence that I have seen, says that Paul's "message involved the startling claim that Jesus had been seen alive three days after his death and burial" (*The Structure of Resurrection Belief*], p. 140). It is the resurrection, not the appearances, that Paul puts three days after the burial. He does not say that the burial was recent, nor that the appearances followed soon after the resurrection. People who claim to see a ghost do not necessarily suppose it to be the wraith of someone recently deceased. (*The Jesus Myth*, p. 125)

So the "third day" tradition seems to be nothing more than just that, a tradition, indeed, one that has apparently been adapted from pre-Christian models and woven into the earliest legends of Jesus as the risen savior as a motif bearing theological meaning before acquiring any would-be historical significance.

P4 affirms that the 'creed' which Paul is supposedly reciting in I Cor. 15:3-8 "predates the writing of [I Corinthians] (56AD), probably within 0-3 years of the Resurrection." Of course, this premise assumes that Paul is in fact quoting from a creed in I Cor. 15. I wonder if the entirety of this creed has ever been located, and if so, has a reliable date been put to it? It would certainly be interesting to see what else it says. Paul never recites it again in his letters, which by itself is perplexing. Regardless, assuming the passage does contain an excerpt from an earlier creed, how can its date be established? What evidence puts it "within 0-3 years of the Resurrection"? What else did this creed say? Is it found anywhere else in the early Christian writings? Interestingly this creed is not found in the many speeches given in Acts, which purports to portray the adventures of Jesus' apostles (well, at least a few of them) after his resurrection.

Now note the questionable assumption we have here. By alleging that Paul has quoted from an earlier creed which dates "probably within 0-3 years of the Resurrection," isn't this assuming that the resurrection actually took place? To say that the origins of a piece of text can be traced back to a specific event, is to assume that the event in question actually happened. Indeed, such statements would be nonsensical if they did not assume the event back to which a textual allusion referred actually took place. So really here we have the offending premise, for it assumes what the legend theory disputes, namely the historicity of the resurrection itself. Naturally the question comes up, in addition to the questions about the dating of the creed which Geisler and Turek have assumed in their argument, as to how we can put a date to the resurrection in the first place. As I have demonstrated over and over, Paul never gives any indication of time, place or circumstances for the resurrection, something he references repeatedly in his several letters. So the date for the resurrection does not come from Paul's own writings. Where do Geisler and Turek get their date for the resurrection? From the gospels, of course, which are the first documents in the Christian record to associate Jesus' crucifixion with Pontius Pilate. It is only by reading the gospels into Paul's letter that one can put a date to what Paul talks about. But as Doherty's statement which I quoted at the beginning of this blog rightly acknowledges, "reading the Gospels into 1 Corinthians is simply circular reasoning." So at this point, Geisler and Turek are without a doubt begging the question against the legend theory in their frail attempt to wave it away.

P5 stipulates that "0-3 years is not sufficient time for legend development," which is only relevant if in fact we have something to date back to and start the clock ticking. If the event which starts the clock is itself disputed in fact not to have taken place, then we cannot simply assume, as Geisler and Turek clearly do, that the event did take place, thus warranting the stopwatch to which this statement appeals. Of course, in response to P5, I wonder how one determines that "0-3 years is not sufficient time for legend development." Why can't a legend develop in, say, 6 months? I just want to know why. After all, the germs of a legend could be born in a passing suggestion. Suppose after the crucifixion, Jesus' followers, anxious for him to live again, believed that he was resurrected in some otherworldly realm, not necessarily on earth, and not in the flesh as the gospel stories have it? After all, Paul does not say that the appearances he mentions in I Corinthians 15 were made by a physical Jesus appearing to followers in the flesh. Paul makes no effort to distinguish the appearances which Cephas, James and the 500 brethren enjoyed

from the one he himself got, and nowhere does Paul say that Jesus appeared to him in a physical body, with fresh wounds and eating fish, etc. These are later traditions not found until the gospels, after the legend had developed.

As for the dating, how do we establish that the legend did not start in some very primitive form around the year of, say, 6 AD or even earlier, like 25 BC, and that only by the time Paul hit the scene, it had become quite developed, fusing OT inspired theology with Wisdom literature motifs and a few influences from pagan religions that were popular at the time (e.g., Mithras, Osiris-Dionysos, Bacchus, etc.) sprinkled in, and by the time that the authors of the gospels hit the scene, the central figure of worship, Jesus, had all sorts of stories sprouting up about him (e.g., virgin birth, baptism by John the Baptist, miracles, healings, wrestling with the devil, raising the dead, trial before Pilate, an empty tomb, etc.)? By this point, it would seem that dating the resurrection to AD 30 would be sensible, given the gospels. But if the gospels themselves are legends, then the claim that the resurrection took place in AD 30 is historically worthless.

So let's review what we have here: Paul, who gives no date to the crucifixion and resurrection that he ascribes to Jesus, is allegedly quoting from a creed in his letter, dated to ca. 56 AD, claiming that this resurrected Jesus "appeared" to a bunch of people, the vast majority of whom being completely anonymous, and this creed can allegedly be dated back to 30 AD or sometime soon thereafter, with no evidence whatsoever for this dating.

From all of this, David concluded:

Conclusion: The window between Resurrection and resurrection belief is insufficient for legend development.

So I was right all along: since the dating of the resurrection which Geisler and Turek use in drawing this conclusion comes from the gospels (which, as later legends, were built on earlier legends), they are clearly assuming the truth of what it is they're trying to establish here, namely that "there's no possible way that such testimony could describe a legend." That's a circular argument. QED. There is no non-circular way for them to draw such a conclusion, and my interaction with the premises David compiled from their book confirms this.

David continued:

Related conclusions of this argument that other apologists use: C1. Early belief in the Resurrection requires an alternative explanation.

This has been supplied in previous responses to David.

Then David stated:

C2. The Resurrection actually happening is the best explanation of early resurrection belief.

This evaluation depends on how one determines the quality of an explanation. The view that the resurrection actually happened is the best explanation is only possible on a view which grants validity to [the supernatural](#). But there is no consistent way to do this, as I have shown. It is philosophically futile.

David wrote:

Again let me just point out that G/T says 'There's no possible way that such testimony could describe a legend, because it goes right back to the time and place of the event itself.' They do not say 'It could not be a legend because the Resurrection actually happened'.

But as you've shown, the statement they do make \*assumes\* that the resurrection actually happened. That's where they beg the question. By assuming that the resurrection actually happened (note that they never \*prove\* that the resurrection happened), they are in effect saying that it could not be a legend.

David closed with the following declaration of faith:

I remain firm in my stance that you are incorrectly evaluating the argument when you conclude it is circular.

Yes, David, just soldier on. Maybe it will go away.

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: [Christian Legends](#)

posted by Bahnsen Burner at [6:00 AM](#)

## 9 Comments:

[Martin](#) said...

Only partway through reading the above, but I thought I'd mention, in the interest of how quickly legends develop, is that if you read period historians like Seutonius, he quite often reports on omens and rumors of miraculous events in such a way as to give them similar factual weight as his straightforward accounts about the lives of the Caesars. In a culture like that, where people didn't think twice about conflating the natural and the supernatural, it would hardly take years and years for legends to build.

[September 21, 2008 1:50 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Good point, Martin. In fact, if you think about it, the early Christians would not have been indulging in something completely new for them in the first place. They were Jews, and Jews had a religion full of legends already well developed. And even non-Jewish Christians were most likely raised up originally in pagan religions, either of the Romans or of the Greeks or of some other sectarian culture. The Near East at that time was one big hotbed of legends and mysticism. It seems that it would be difficult to find anyone in those days who had not adopted in one form or another a set of legends from previous generations. Both philosophically and culturally, people then were clearly predisposed to interpreting reality through the lenses of legends.

Regards,  
Dawson

[September 21, 2008 3:03 PM](#)

[Bruce Tatum](#) said...

Great essay and great blog!

Interesting article on this subject:

[http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/richard\\_carrier/kooks.html](http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/richard_carrier/kooks.html)

[September 21, 2008 4:55 PM](#)

[david](#) said...

Dawson: *But I don't think anyone who didn't believe these reports felt the need to sit down and launch into refutations, let alone parade Presley's body through the city streets.*

In response to yet another example of anachronistic thinking, I will simply point out that in first century Palestine there was little inhibition against parading corpses; the Roman government did stuff like this all the time. There has actually been a lot more than snickering and sneering involved in the investigation of Elvis' death by the way; I saw a documentary a few years back on the subject.

Dawson: *Now another point to keep in mind is the fact that legends involving supernatural claims are certainly not going to be unlikely to develop in a culture steeped in worldviews governed by the primacy of consciousness.*

Are you saying the Jewish worldview proposes an axiom that reality is dependent on man's inner conception of it? If so, we needn't continue past this premise because it is demonstrably false.

Also the Wells quote is itself an example of quoting scholars' opinion (Ellegard), yet you fancy calling this an argument - a reference to Wells, who references Ellegard. Notice the first condition upon which Well's statement rests: "If, then, Paul did not regard the earthly Jesus as recently deceased." You then probe the counterfactual, essentially asking "what if the dating scheme is flawed?" Instead of providing any argument against it, you ask, "What is that dating scheme, and where does it come from?" Then you conclude by adding yet another condition: "If Paul were in fact enlarging on what was by his time already a set of legends about some 'Teacher of Righteousness'

who had been martyred a century or more earlier, then obviously there was “sufficient time for legend development” and the dating scheme hired to counteract this is out of a job.”

Look at the argument in detail:

- a) Ellegard’s suggestion - the origin of Christian ideas about Jesus may go back to 100 B.C.
- b) Well’s assertion - If Paul did not regard Jesus as recently deceased, Ellegard’s suggestion “may be right”
- c) Dawson’s argument - If Well’s assertion is true, then there was sufficient time for legends to develop.

This is an inherently weak argument given the way it is constructed. Regardless, Dawson rightly concludes that if the Qumran dependence can be demonstrated to be the case, then premise 1 in my reconstruction fails. I don’t think anyone has demonstrated this to be the case, but some have “suggested” it as a possibility.

Dawson: *Moving onto P2, we have the premise: “As corroborated by multiple independent attestation, the crucifixion happened around 30AD.” In response to this, we must ask: What do these independent reports allegedly corroborating the claim that a miracle-working man-god was crucified and resurrected in 30 AD actually say, and when were they written? Were these reports written at the time of the alleged event itself? No scholar dates the authorship of any extant text referring to Jesus, either in the New Testament itself or from non-Christian sources, to this time. The earliest we have is Paul, and as we have already seen, he never puts any indicator of time or place for the crucifixion or resurrection. And by all accounts Paul himself was writing from the late AD 40’s into the early 60’s. So even here we are not talking only 0-3 years from the approximate date assigned to the crucifixion going by literalist Christian accounts in the gospel narratives, which blows the “not sufficient time for legend development” thesis out of the water. Apologists seek to get around this by making Paul quote a creed in I Cor. 15:3-8 which, it is alleged, “goes right back to the time and place of the Resurrection itself” (Geisler and Turek, I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, p. 242). But even then apologists are unable to stand by this with anything more than wide approximations; Geisler and Turek, for instance, qualify their statement by allowing from “eighteen months to eight years after,” which only causes one to wonder how they arrive at this kind of conclusion in the first place, especially when Paul gives no indication of when or where or under what circumstances Jesus was crucified, and does not even state that what he is including in his letter is a quotation from a pre-existing creed.*

Verbiage, verbiage! This turgid narrative raises many questions, but fundamentally there are several problems. Historians gladly admit that the Gospels are among the most well attested documents from the first century - not even vis-à-vis writings about the imperial rulers of that time. Even the most liberal dating of the New Testament documents could change this. It is not as if historians take some threshold for legend development (for example, two generations) to define what documents they will make use of for modeling historical data. What do you intend to accomplish by pointing out that Paul wasn’t writing 0-3 years from the “approximate date assigned to the crucifixion by literalist Christian account...” and how in the world would this serve to blow anyone’s thesis out of the water?

Again you display your habit of calling everyone an apologist, but I have already provided several lines of evidence for 1 Cor 15 being an oral creed and cited a New Testament linguistic specialist who can scarcely be called an apologist. You then say that “even then apologists are unable to stand by this with anything more than wide approximations...” Umm, no it’s actually the historians who differ anywhere from eighteen months to eight years. Obviously, the more skeptical historians will generally give a bigger window in front of the creed.

Why do you continue to refer to “literalist Christians?” What distinguishes a literalist Christian from a non-literalist Christian?

You then say, “Paul gives no indication...and does not even state that what he is including in his letter is a quotation from a pre-existing creed”. I will merely remind the reader of what I have already pointed out: Paul introduces the creed using the standard rabbinical formula for oral traditions. The language of the creed itself suggests a non-written origin (such as the shortening of “the twelve disciples” to “the twelve” and the overall rhythmic syntax).

Dawson: *The gospels, the earliest being written at least a decade or more after I Corinthians (which itself is usually dated to about 53-57 AD, even on a conservative estimation, this is more than enough time for a legend to have developed if some seminal crucifixion event took place circa 30 AD)*

More than enough time by what standard? So far you have only mentioned Bill Craig who suggests a two-generation minimum; certainly this meets his standard by a long shot.

Dawson: *None of this is impressive as corroborating evidence, especially for the kind of event they are purported to corroborate.*

Again I just reassert that your standard for first-century historical evidence is quite unrealistic. I find it very convenient that any non-Christian source which contradicts your theory is given interpolative status.

Dawson: *I wonder if the entirety of this creed has ever been located, and if so, has a reliable date been put to it? It would certainly be interesting to see what else it says.*

Unless there is a revolution that allows scientists to recover ancient sound waves from the atmosphere (maybe the String theory could turn out to be true), I don't think any oral traditions are going to be cropping back up anytime soon.

Dawson: *Regardless, assuming the passage does contain an excerpt from an earlier creed, how can its date be established? What evidence puts it "within 0-3 years of the Resurrection"? What else did this creed say?*

Did you want an explanation or a reference to the works in which these theories are hashed out?

Dawson: *By alleging that Paul has quoted from an earlier creed which dates "probably within 0-3 years of the Resurrection," isn't this assuming that the resurrection actually took place?*

Nope, not at all. You can simply replace "Resurrection" with the information in P3 and state it as "probably within 0-3 years of the 3rd day following the crucifixion"

Dawson: *To say that the origins of a piece of text can be traced back to a specific event, is to assume that the event in question actually happened.*

You're saying if a event is given an alleged time and place this means the event is assumed to actually have happened? Not true. To say that the origins of a piece of text can be traced back to the **time and place** of a specific event does not assume any such event happened. Methodologically speaking the dating of an event is independent of its factuality. Historical dating is merely the process of modeling known information in order to place other information in a timeframe. Historians use what dates they know to establish when other events allegedly, probably, most likely, theoretically, hypothetically, or most likely happened. If the event didn't actually happen, this doesn't change the fact that all known data suggests a date (or range of dates)...in that case the data would simply be incorrect. You can date fictional events just as easily as non-fictional ones with the same canons of historiography. **Your argument fails since establishing a date does not assume factuality, period.**

Dawson: *Indeed, such statements would be nonsensical if they did not assume the event back to which a textual allusion referred actually took place.*

Look at the argument again and force yourself to assume the Resurrection didn't actually happen (shouldn't be hard). It still works. It's only nonsensical if you don't understand how dating works.

Dawson: *But as Doherty's statement which I quoted at the beginning of this blog rightly acknowledges, "reading the Gospels into 1 Corinthians is simply circular reasoning." So at this point, Geisler and Turek are without a doubt begging the question against the legend theory in their frail attempt to wave it away.*

It amazes me at how much explanation is required of you to show something which should be so easy to demonstrate. "Without a doubt" you have not shown any such thing, and yet in the process you continue to ambiguously reference the legend theory in an attempt to present your position as relevant to the argument being discussed. Your theory is completely out of the scope of what the G/T argument is trying to accomplish. All the argument is trying to demonstrate is that the early belief in the resurrection originated too soon after alleged time/place of the Resurrection. This is really quite a simple point compared to other things in the book. In fact there are numerous other things in the book I would have expected you to critique, but instead we sit and argue this inane point which anyone who wasn't out to smear two apologists could readily concede.

Dawson: *P5 stipulates that "0-3 years is not sufficient time for legend development," which is only relevant if in fact we have something to date back to and start the clock ticking. If the event which starts the clock is itself disputed in fact not to have taken place, then we cannot simply assume, as Geisler and Turek clearly do, that the*



*event did take place, thus warranting the stopwatch to which this statement appeals*

Do you really think that G/T intended to argue that *the Resurrection* couldn't have been legendary because the Pauline creed is too soon after *the Resurrection*? Come on Dawson that is palpably circular and I would give elementary students more credit. This is plainly not a [fair reading](#).

Dawson: *After all, Paul does not say that the appearances he mentions in I Corinthians 15 were made by a physical Jesus appearing to followers in the flesh. Paul makes no effort to distinguish the appearances which Cephas, James and the 500 brethren enjoyed from the one he himself got, and nowhere does Paul say that Jesus appeared to him in a physical body, with fresh wounds and eating fish, etc. These are later traditions not found until the gospels, after the legend had developed.*

The Jewish concept of resurrection was physical, so unless you want to argue that Paul was abandoning his Jewish background to embrace Hellenism, this stands as an unlikely and unsupported assertion. In Judaism, the concept of resurrection implies physical rebirth, [period](#).

Dawson: *But if the gospels themselves are legends, then the claim that the resurrection took place in AD 30 is historically worthless.*

You are quite averse to recognizing this blatant false dichotomy which I already pointed out several times. This is not all or nothing. How can you assert that "the gospels themselves are legends" unless you intend to imply that **everything** in them is legendary. Otherwise, the statement is meaningless because if "some of the gospels are legends" then clearly that doesn't preclude using some information from the gospels.

Dawson *So I was right all along: since the dating of the resurrection which Geisler and Turek use in drawing this conclusion comes from the gospels (which, as later legends, were built on earlier legends), they are clearly assuming the truth of what it is they're trying to establish here, namely that "there's no possible way that such testimony could describe a legend." That's a circular argument. QED. There is no non-circular way for them to draw such a conclusion, and my interaction with the premises David compiled from their book confirms this.*

So I was right all along, you still think that Geisler and Turek are addressing your legend theory, unbelievable! Its quite simple: you haven't shown circularity, because you don't understand what a historical date is. If you did, then you would realize that "dating an event assumes its factuality" is absolutely without merit.

Dawson: *This evaluation depends on how one determines the quality of an explanation. The view that the resurrection actually happened is the best explanation is only possible on a view which grants validity to the supernatural. But there is no consistent way to do this, as I have shown. It is philosophically futile.*

Certainly no offense Dawson, but it is this kind of egotism that has caused many former Christian apologists to dismiss you as a serious proponent of atheism.

Dawson: *But as you've shown, the statement they do make \*assumes\* that the resurrection actually happened. That's where they beg the question. By assuming that the resurrection actually happened (note that they never \*prove\* that the resurrection happened), they are in effect saying that it could not be a legend.*

I hope by this point has been driven home by now, but just to make sure we're clear. The argument does *\*not assume\** that the resurrection actually happened. Read it as many times as necessary until you can see it, I promise its there. They are not trying to *\*prove the resurrection\** happened, but merely demonstrate that early belief came to early after the **time and place** given to the **alleged** event. If the Resurrection can be shown to be historically inaccurate on other grounds, then of course this argument has no real force; however, as it stands that case is unopened.

Dawson: *Yes, David, just soldier on. Maybe it will go away.*

Haha, wonder how many more posts it will take for you to convince yourself that you have won the battle? Keep em' coming Dawson, I do enjoy it.

[September 26, 2008 5:35 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

I wrote: *But I don't think anyone who didn't believe these reports felt the need to sit down and launch into*

*refutations, let alone parade Presley's body through the city streets.*

David: "In response to yet another example of anachronistic thinking, I will simply point out that in first century Palestine there was little inhibition against parading corpses; the Roman government did stuff like this all the time."

Of course, this is entirely irrelevant if there were no body to begin with. Also, refutation of a legend would not require parading a corpse. Besides, you're missing the point: who would feel compelled to refute a legend that only an statistically insignificant number of cult followers believed in? Acts tries to paint a bigger portrait of Christian beginnings with its larger than life stories of Peter converting thousands of Jerusalem's Jews to Christianity shortly after the city's authorities had Jesus crucified. Clearly this is not history, but later Christian fiction aggrandizing its post-Easter heroes.

David: "There has actually been a lot more than snickering and sneering involved in the investigation of Elvis' death by the way; I saw a documentary a few years back on the subject."

A lot more snickering and sneering than what? Of course, I snicker at the Elvis sightings claims, just as I do at the Jesus sightings claims. As an historical event, it is one of the poorest attested in the literature. Even according to the gospel stories themselves, no one is said to have witnessed Jesus' resurrection - it allegedly took place in a sealed tomb! The gospels disagree who saw what where and when, and exhibit obvious edits and revisions. At least in the case of Elvis, there are actually photographs (I've seen quite a few). We don't have evidence like this in the case of Jesus, and I don't even accept the Elvis claims. I suppose I just have a more discriminating mind. Thank myself!

*I wrote: Now another point to keep in mind is the fact that legends involving supernatural claims are certainly not going to be unlikely to develop in a culture steeped in worldviews governed by the primacy of consciousness.*

David: "Are you saying the Jewish worldview proposes an axiom that reality is dependent on man's inner conception of it? If so, we needn't continue past this premise because it is demonstrably false."

You apparently do not understand that there are three essential manifestations of the primacy of consciousness. There's the personal expression, which is what you apparently have in mind here. There's also the social, which is the collectivistic mindset. There's also the cosmic or supernatural expression of the primacy of consciousness. I discuss these distinctions in my blog [Theism and Subjective Metaphysics](#). The Jews clearly affirmed a worldview which takes for granted the last of these three.

David: "Historians gladly admit that the Gospels are among the most well attested documents from the first century"

This is highly generalized, and suggests a uniformity of agreement on the details than may actually exist. Coming from a Christian, it's simply a self-serving assertion. But let's look at the details. Carrier rightly concludes, in response to Doug Geivett, that "We have no trustworthy evidence of a physical resurrection, no reliable witnesses. It is among the most poorly attested of historical events." ([Why I Don't Buy the Resurrection Story: Main Argument](#)). How well attested is Jesus' post-resurrection sojourn among the apostles? The gospels disagree where they elaborate beyond Mark's basic model. Mark (with its original ending) does not even have any post-resurrection appearances by Jesus; either he didn't know of any, or he knew of them but deliberately (and inexplicably) left them out of his narrative. Or, he died before finishing it? Matthew has Jesus appear in Galilee, an appearance which the other evangelists do not mention. According to Matthew, this appearance in Galilee took place after Jesus' resurrection, which was accompanied by an earthquake, a renting of the temple veil, and the emergence of an untold number of dead people from their graves who went through the city and showed themselves unto many. No other writers ever corroborate these things, so how they can be "attested" is beyond me. Luke, on the other hand, has Jesus appear first in Emmaus, and later that evening in Jerusalem. Matthew seems to have had a different Jesus in mind, for he knows of none of this. Even Luke disagrees with himself. In his gospel, Jesus escorts his eleven disciples to Bethany, which is just east of Jerusalem, and ascends the same day he is resurrected. In Acts, he lingers some forty days before he is wafted up into a cloud. If "well attested" simply means that more than one source says Jesus was resurrected and ascended to heaven in a cloud, big wow. In fact, Acts portrays either Jesus as a lousy teacher or his disciples as not very astute learners, for just before he ascends his disciples ask him "wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts. 1:6), where just before we are told that Jesus spent forty days with them and teaching them "things pertaining to the kingdom" (v. 3) Luke does this to introduce the topic of the second coming, which by the time he was writing had obviously not happened according to earlier expectations, and so has Jesus tell them, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (v. 7). All these accounts read like fantasy, and cannot be reconciled. Then we read how Peter converts five

thousand of Jerusalem's Jews in the space of two sermons, just weeks after they had Jesus crucified for blasphemy. How is any of what we read here in Acts "well attested"?

I wrote: *Paul gives no indication...and does not even state that what he is including in his letter is a quotation from a pre-existing creed.*

David: "I will merely remind the reader of what I have already pointed out: Paul introduces the creed using the standard rabbinical formula for oral traditions. The language of the creed itself suggests a non-written origin (such as the shortening of 'the twelve disciples' to 'the twelve' and the overall rhythmic syntax)."

Again, I'm just pointing out an observation here that Paul does not state that what he is including in his letter here is a quotation from a pre-existing creed. If I were wrong here, David should be able to show where Paul does say he's quoting from a pre-existing creed here. Instead, he says that "the language" here "suggests a non-written origin," which is hardly persuasive, let alone conclusive.

I wrote: *The gospels, the earliest being written at least a decade or more after I Corinthians (which itself is usually dated to about 53-57 AD, even on a conservative estimation, this is more than enough time for a legend to have developed if some seminal crucifixion event took place circa 30 AD)*

David: "More than enough time by what standard?"

By a rational standard, of course, one which takes into account the pervasiveness of legends, tales, superstitions in the cultural milieu of the time in question. The implicit acceptance of the primacy of consciousness was widespread at the time, as the literature of the period clearly indicates. The cultural milieu of the time was ripe for legend-mongering. In his comment above, Bruce Tatum pointed to Carrier's essay [Kooks and Quacks of the Roman Empire: A Look into the World of the Gospels](#), which is topical on this point, and confirms my assessment of the period based on the literature that has survived.

David: "So far you have only mentioned Bill Craig who suggests a two-generation minimum; certainly this meets his standard by a long shot."

Well, if it meets his standard by a long shot, then what's the problem? I'm guessing you left out a negation here. Regardless, I don't tend to take Bill Craig very seriously, especially on this point. I gave reasons for this already.

I wrote: *None of this is impressive as corroborating evidence, especially for the kind of event they are purported to corroborate.*

David: "Again I just reassert that your standard for first-century historical evidence is quite unrealistic."

Yes, assert as you please. In other words, we need to grant a looser, more elastic standard for evidence here. Of course!

David: "I find it very convenient that any non-Christian source which contradicts your theory is given interpolative status."

I've pointed to reasons why the passages I consider interpolated were most likely in fact interpolated. That you find this "very convenient" does not suffice as an argument against these reasons.

I wrote: *I wonder if the entirety of this creed has ever been located, and if so, has a reliable date been put to it? It would certainly be interesting to see what else it says.*

David: "Unless there is a revolution that allows scientists to recover ancient sound waves from the atmosphere (maybe the String theory could turn out to be true), I don't think any oral traditions are going to be cropping back up anytime soon."

So this alleged creed was oral, one which was never recorded in writing in its entirety, is that it? So, whatever else it supposedly affirmed, is lost to history, is that right? So how can we be so sure that what Paul states in I Cor. 15:3-8 came from a pre-existing creed in the first place? The reasons you gave earlier are far from conclusive. Meanwhile, you are in effect admitting that there is no independent documentation for such a creed.

I asked: *Regardless, assuming the passage does contain an excerpt from an earlier creed, how can its date be established? What evidence puts it "within 0-3 years of the Resurrection"? What else did this creed say?*

David responded to my question with a question of his own: "Did you want an explanation or a reference to the works in which these theories are hashed out?"

I just want an answer to my question. Are you stalling so that you can go search one out?

I asked: *By alleging that Paul has quoted from an earlier creed which dates "probably within 0-3 years of the Resurrection," isn't this assuming that the resurrection actually took place?*

David: "Nope, not at all."

Really? How so? Your answer to this requires you to remove "Resurrection" from the offending statement. Observe:

David: "You can simply replace 'Resurrection' with the information in P3 and state it as 'probably within 0-3 years of the 3rd day following the crucifixion'"

So you apparently agree, then, that the phrase "probably within 0-3 years of the Resurrection" is question-begging. That's good, David. You're making some progress here. Not a lot, but at least a little bit. It's apparent that you recognize this because you find need now to revise the statement: instead of "within 0-3 years of the Resurrection," you now need to have it say "within 0-3 years of the crucifixion." Crucifixions happened in plentiful numbers back in those days. There's nothing supernatural about crucifixion. It was quite mundane and this-worldly.

This of course means you need to prove that Jesus was resurrected. How do you do this with such poor attestation? I've looked at it over and over and over again. I'm convinced it is all fiction. Now what do you do? How do you convince someone like me that it's true rather than fictional? Especially when all the indicators I see point to legend-building. Everything you've been throwing at me has been quite unpersuasive.

I wrote: *To say that the origins of a piece of text can be traced back to a specific event, is to assume that the event in question actually happened.*

David asked: "You're saying if an event is given an alleged time and place this means the event is assumed to actually have happened?"

Not exactly. Rather I'm saying that if someone says that some artifact which exists dates back to a specific event, he is clearly implying that said event actually took place. The artifact is real, so it would make little sense to date it to something unreal, such as a non-event. If I say that Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous quote "I have a dream" dates back to the speech he delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. in August 1963 (an example which Geisler and Turek themselves use on p. 240 of their book), I'm assuming that he actually did give that speech on that occasion. I certainly wouldn't, for instance, date the building of a house in Kansas to the time when Dorothy had her dream about the Wizard of Oz. That would be ridiculous. Clearly Geisler and Turek think the resurrection really happened, and they treat it as an actual historical event in their reference to its occurrence at a certain time in history.

David: "To say that the origins of a piece of text can be traced back to the time and place of a specific event does not assume any such event happened."

If an event is referenced in an attempt to establish the date of some artifact (such as a piece of writing or an oral tale), but the event itself is not assumed to have actually taken place, what good is using that event as a benchmark for establishing a date? If it never happened, then it never happened at any specific time, so it could not be used as a date reference. It would be bogus to do so. It would be as useful as trying to establish the date of the composition of Brunei's constitution by reference to some event in a Harry Potter novel. I don't get the impression that Geisler and Turek are doing similarly when they write "even if Mark is not before Luke, the very fact that we know beyond a reasonable doubt that Luke is before 62 [AD] and probably before 60 [AD] means that we have meticulously recorded eyewitness testimony written within 25 or 30 years of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection." They say that "this is far too early to be legendary." (*I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, p. 240.) It's clear that they're assuming the resurrection actually took place, for they refer to it explicitly and treat it as actually having taken place in history. Right there in black and white, they blatantly beg the question.

David: “Methodologically speaking the dating of an event is independent of its factuality.”

This is a red herring if there ever were one. There’s no question that Geisler and Turek think the resurrection is factual, David. Don’t try to deny it. That just makes you look utterly disingenuous, and also boring. Geisler and Turek have an agenda, and that’s to smear non-Christians (hence the title of their book), and in the midst of their efforts to establish their position, they clearly beg the question. To be sure, there are many other errors in the book. But this one caught my fancy for purposes of a blog entry. And what a sore wound it opened up! I must really be doing damage to someone’s faith-based worldview.

David: “Historians use what dates they know to establish when other events allegedly, probably, most likely, theoretically, hypothetically, or most likely happened.”

Nothing in Geisler and Turek’s statements suggest to me that they are speaking theoretically or hypothetically about the historicity of Jesus, his crucifixion or his resurrection. When they claim that “we have meticulously recorded eyewitness testimony written within 25 or 30 years of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection,” which they say is “far too early to be legendary,” and “that the eyewitness sources go back even earlier” (*I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, p. 241), I see no hint of hypothesizing here. It may be what historians do, but Geisler and Turek are not historians, they’re clearly apologists for a religious viewpoint.

David: “If the event didn’t actually happen, this doesn’t change the fact that all known data suggests a date (or range of dates)...”

The data involved in the dating of Jesus’ resurrection would have to include Paul’s epistles, the earliest documents referring to it. But as I have pointed out, nothing Paul says suggests a specific date. Paul gives no time or place references in his mentionings of Jesus’ resurrection. So it is not the case that “all known data suggests a date (or range of dates),” unless that “range of dates” spans centuries. Otherwise, you’re simply skewing the data to confirm a confessional standpoint.

David: “You can date fictional events just as easily as non-fictional ones with the same canons of historiography.”

So when Geisler and Turek say that “we have meticulously recorded eyewitness testimony written within 25 or 30 years of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection,” they’re talking about a fictional event? I don’t get that impression. But it’s good to know you think this.

*I wrote: Indeed, such statements would be nonsensical if they did not assume the event back to which a textual allusion referred actually took place.*

David: “Look at the argument again and force yourself to assume the Resurrection didn’t actually happen (shouldn’t be hard). It still works. It’s only nonsensical if you don’t understand how dating works.”

How could I date an artifact to an event that never took place? If the event never took place, it has no date, and saying an artifact dates back to it would be ludicrous. You’ve got things backwards, David. You’ve got ungrounded assumptions posing as truths and treated as such without “proper warrant.” When you’re called on it, you basically say “the event didn’t actually have to take place for it to have a date.” And even then, to ascribe a date to Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, you have to read the gospels into what Paul writes in his epistle. As Doherty rightly points out, “reading the gospels into 1 Corinthians is simply circular.”

David: “All the argument is trying to demonstrate is that the early belief in the resurrection originated too soon after alleged time/place of the Resurrection.”

As I will show below, Geisler and Turek never qualify their assumed dating for the resurrection as “alleged.” At two points they are explicit in referencing the resurrection as an actual event in the very context that I have pointed out as fallaciously circular.

David: “This is really quite a simple point compared to other things in the book. In fact there are numerous other things in the book I would have expected you to critique, but instead we sit and argue this inane point which anyone who wasn’t out to smear two apologists could readily concede.”

David, it should be clear to you that I am firm on this, and am 100% convinced not only that Geisler and Turek beg the question as I have pointed out, but also that your attempts to defend them against this criticism are

consistently futile, as I have shown with my patient and comprehensive interaction with your comments, which are continually trying to drag the discussion into new areas of contention. If this is such an “inane point,” why is it so important to you? It is important to you, isn’t it?

I wrote: *P5 stipulates that “0-3 years is not sufficient time for legend development,” which is only relevant if in fact we have something to date back to and start the clock ticking. If the event which starts the clock is itself disputed in fact not to have taken place, then we cannot simply assume, as Geisler and Turek clearly do, that the event did take place, thus warranting the stopwatch to which this statement appeals*

David: “Do you really think that G/T intended to argue that the Resurrection couldn’t have been legendary because the Pauline creed is too soon after the Resurrection? Come on Dawson that is palpably circular and I would give elementary students more credit.”

David, that’s exactly what they say! They do so twice in fact! Observe:

Page 241: even if Mark is not before Luke, the very fact that we know beyond a reasonable doubt that Luke is before 62 [AD] and probably before 60 [AD] means that we have meticulously recorded eyewitness testimony written within 25 or 30 years of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection. This is far too early to be legendary.

Page 242: Why is this important? Because, as Gary Habermas points out, most scholars (even liberals) believe that this testimony was part of an early creed that dates right back to the Resurrection itself - eighteen *months* to eight years after, but some say even earlier. There’s no possible way that such testimony could describe a legend, because it goes right back to the time and place of the event itself.

In both statements here, it is clear that they have the *resurrection* in mind. And you’re right, it is obviously circular. But that’s what I had pointed out originally. It’s not my fault. I didn’t write for these guys.

I wrote: *After all, Paul does not say that the appearances he mentions in I Corinthians 15 were made by a physical Jesus appearing to followers in the flesh. Paul makes no effort to distinguish the appearances which Cephas, James and the 500 brethren enjoyed from the one he himself got, and nowhere does Paul say that Jesus appeared to him in a physical body, with fresh wounds and eating fish, etc. These are later traditions not found until the gospels, after the legend had developed.*

David: “The Jewish concept of resurrection was physical, so unless you want to argue that Paul was abandoning his Jewish background to embrace Hellenism, this stands as an unlikely and unsupported assertion. In Judaism, the concept of resurrection implies physical rebirth, period.”

There are numerous points at which Paul departs from Judaism (e.g., clean vs. unclean foods, circumcision, consumption of the flesh and blood of God, etc.), so even if Judaism were monolithic in its view of resurrection, Paul’s departure from this would not be surprising or unexpected. At any rate, Paul does not explicitly stipulate that resurrection is physical. Nor does he say that the risen Christ which appeared to him was physical. Of course, the literalist view just assumes at this point, as you clearly want to do. But where’s the support for such assumptions?

I wrote: *But if the gospels themselves are legends, then the claim that the resurrection took place in AD 30 is historically worthless.*

David: “You are quite averse to recognizing this blatant false dichotomy which I already pointed out several times. This is not all or nothing. How can you assert that “the gospels themselves are legends” unless you intend to imply that everything in them is legendary.”

I have addressed this already. The gospels mention places and persons which are historical, such as Jerusalem, Galilee, Tyre, Pontius Pilate, etc. This does not mean that the stories they tell are not legendary, of course. Surely even you can understand this. By saying that the gospels are legendary, I am not affirming that each and every reference is legendary. The stories are legends. Come on, David. You yourself have accused me of uncharitable reading. You can do better I think.

David: “Otherwise, the statement is meaningless because if ‘some of the gospels are legends’ then clearly that doesn’t preclude using some information from the gospels.”

“...using some information from the gospels...”? What information, and for what?

I wrote: *So I was right all along: since the dating of the resurrection which Geisler and Turek use in drawing this conclusion comes from the gospels (which, as later legends, were built on earlier legends), they are clearly assuming the truth of what it is they're trying to establish here, namely that "there's no possible way that such testimony could describe a legend." That's a circular argument. QED. There is no non-circular way for them to draw such a conclusion, and my interaction with the premises David compiled from their book confirms this.*

David: "So I was right all along, you still think that Geisler and Turek are addressing your legend theory, unbelievable!"

Mine personally? No, I never said this. Many people independent of my own position hold that the stories contained in the gospels are legendary. Geisler and Turek seem most concerned about the view that Jesus' resurrection is legendary. I'm not the only one who holds to this view. More and more people are seeing this as the only rational evaluation of early Christian literature.

David: "Its quite simple: you haven't shown circularity, because you don't understand what a historical date is."

I "don't understand what a historical date is"? Where have you established this? If someone tells me that the *Bonhomme Richard* sank on Sept. 25, 1779, do you think I would misunderstand this to mean March 12, 1979? Come on, David. Your defense has reached beyond absurdity and into utter desperation at this point.

David: "If you did, then you would realize that 'dating an event assumes its factuality' is absolutely without merit."

"Absolutely"? Even with the points you raised about how historians work, you're overstating your case here. But I guess you need to do this. So if someone tells me that the *Bonhomme Richard* sank on Sept. 25, 1779, it would be "absolutely without merit" to suppose that he's talking about a real event? Fine, have it your way. When Christians say that Jesus' resurrection took place ca. 30 AD, it would be "absolutely without merit" that they think this event actually took place. Okay.

I wrote: *This evaluation depends on how one determines the quality of an explanation. The view that the resurrection actually happened is the best explanation is only possible on a view which grants validity to the supernatural. But there is no consistent way to do this, as I have shown. It is philosophically futile.*

David: "Certainly no offense Dawson, but it is this kind of egotism that has caused many former Christian apologists to dismiss you as a serious proponent of atheism."

Not that it matters to me (since selfishness is a virtue in my book), which "former Christian apologists" do you have in mind here? And if someone considers me "a serious proponent of *atheism*," they obviously have not understood me very much. I'm a serious proponent of rational philosophy. While rational philosophy is necessarily atheistic (since it rejects the primacy of consciousness, the ultimate foundation of theism), it does not follow from this that all atheists necessarily ascribe to rational philosophy, or that atheism and rational philosophy are one and the same. I've pointed out before that atheism is simply the absence of god-belief, and leaves open what one does affirm. Marxist-Leninists are typically atheists, for instance, but they are not Objectivists.

David: "If the Resurrection can be shown to be historically inaccurate on other grounds, then of course this argument has no real force; however, as it stands that case is unopened."

Since the case for the resurrection requires the primacy of consciousness (indeed, on several levels), then it cannot fail to be false. There's also the botchy record of the New Testament, which contains many internal conflicts in its accounts of the resurrection, not to mention no eyewitnesses to the event itself in question itself.

Regards,  
Dawson

[September 28, 2008 9:29 PM](#)

[david](#) said...

Now we're making some progress I think.

Dawson: *Of course, this is entirely irrelevant if there were no body to begin with. Also, refutation of a legend*

would not require parading a corpse. Besides, you're missing the point: who would feel compelled to refute a legend that only an statistically insignificant number of cult followers believed in? Acts tries to paint a bigger portrait of Christian beginnings with its larger than life stories of Peter converting thousands of Jerusalem's Jews to Christianity shortly after the city's authorities had Jesus crucified. Clearly this is not history, but later Christian fiction aggrandizing its post-Easter heroes.

You have routinely declared the reality of your position to support the negation of premises inherent in mine...this does not constitute an argument but merely stating the obvious.

Where do you derive this "statistically insignificant number" from? The Palestinian Jews were not happy about Christianity (Jewish sources attest such just as much as Christian); if there were means available to the Jewish community to extinguish Christianity (blasphemous rebellious Jews), those means certainly would have been utilized.

Since you brought of cults, you know Ayn Rand's objectivism has been pinned with a cult following itself?

David: "There has actually been a lot more than snickering and sneering involved in the investigation of Elvis' death by the way; I saw a documentary a few years back on the subject."

Dawson: *A lot more snickering and sneering than what*

Try reading that sentence again.

Dawson *You apparently do not understand that there are three essential manifestations of the primacy of consciousness. There's the personal expression, which is what you apparently have in mind here. There's also the social, which is the collectivistic mindset. There's also the cosmic or supernatural expression of the primacy of consciousness. I discuss these distinctions in my blog Theism and Subjective Metaphysics. The Jews clearly affirmed a worldview which takes for granted the last of these three.*

So is it your position that any worldviews which posit personal supernatural beings are incompatible with the primacy of existence? Doesn't this constitute a priori denial?

Dawson: *How is any of what we read here in Acts "well attested"?*

As much as I'd like to spend several paragraphs explaining attestation to you, I think you have the resources to study it on your own should you desire such. Of course you can always just take Carrier, Wells, Doherty, Price, and Rand's word for everything; they're probably more intelligent than me anyways. :P

Dawson: *Again, I'm just pointing out an observation here that Paul does not state that what he is including in his letter here is a quotation from a pre-existing creed. If I were wrong here, David should be able to show where Paul does say he's quoting from a pre-existing creed here. Instead, he says that "the language" here "suggests a non-written origin," which is hardly persuasive, let alone conclusive.*

Anyone with basic knowledge about Jewish history would reject the criteria you posited. As if one should expect, "Well here is this oral creed that originated in 33AD."

Instead Paul says:

**For I delivered unto you as of first importance what I also received :**

Obviously an oral creed by any standard of comparison with rabbinical literature. The only scholars who doubt the pre-existence of the creed (not the fact that it is a creed) are those who deem it interpolative, which you have already stated is not on your list of rejections.

Dawson: *Well, if it meets his standard by a long shot, then what's the problem? I'm guessing you left out a negation here. Regardless, I don't tend to take Bill Craig very seriously, especially on this point. I gave reasons for this already.*



I think there is some confusion. I'm saying the distance between Paul and the Gospels falls below the 2 generation minimum, and thus by the very standard you stated would not be susceptible to the degree of legendary embellishment charged against them.

Dawson: *So this alleged creed was oral, one which was never recorded in writing in its entirety, is that it? So, whatever else it supposedly affirmed, is lost to history, is that right? So how can we be so sure that what Paul states in I Cor. 15:3-8 came from a pre-existing creed in the first place? The reasons you gave earlier are far from conclusive. Meanwhile, you are in effect admitting that there is no independent documentation for such a creed.*

Welcome to the study of ancient history Dawson.

Dawson: *I just want an answer to my question. Are you stalling so that you can go search one out?*

Your usual mischaracterizations aside, I will defer you to Habermas on the issue as I needn't regurgitate his argumentation. Google works pretty well too, and I shouldn't spoon feed you right? :P

Dawson: *So you apparently agree, then, that the phrase "probably within 0-3 years of the Resurrection" is question-begging.*

No I disagree, because I realize that "the Resurrection" means "the time and place of the event itself" (pg 242) and not "the actual event itself" (your fallacious assumption).

Obviously you are comfortable thinking Geisler/Turek argued, "the Resurrection isn't legendary because this creed goes right back to the Resurrection." I think it's an intellectually dishonest interpretation, and I have already shown how a valid interpretation is possible so let the reader decide for themselves. Never fear, I'm sure you will retort with some magnificent rhetoric to persuade us.

Dawson: *That's good, David. You're making some progress here. Not a lot, but at least a little bit. It's apparent that you recognize this because you find need now to revise the statement: instead of "within 0-3 years of the Resurrection," you now need to have it say "within 0-3 years of the crucifixion." Crucifixions happened in plentiful numbers back in those days. There's nothing supernatural about crucifixion. It was quite mundane and this-worldly.*

Incorrect. "Within 0-3 years of the 3rd day following the crucifixion" is the accurate way to state it. Why in the world does it matter how often crucifixions happen? Nothing supernatural is required of its premises or its conclusions. It is just an observation about a window of time between two alleged events based on the evidence we have to date them.

Dawson: *Not exactly. Rather I'm saying that if someone says that some artifact which exists dates back to a specific event, he is clearly implying that said event actually took place. The artifact is real, so it would make little sense to date it to something unreal, such as a non-event. If I say that Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous quote "I have a dream" dates back to the speech he delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. in August 1963 (an example which Geisler and Turek themselves use on p. 240 of their book), I'm assuming that he actually did give that speech on that occasion. I certainly wouldn't, for instance, date the building of a house in Kansas to the time when Dorothy had her dream about the Wizard of Oz. That would be ridiculous.*

The oral creed's dating is independent of the factuality of the Resurrection, so why would you need to "date it to something unreal." Even if the Resurrection could be shown to be false historically, that would not unravel the dating of this creed. Your examples are ridiculous, and suggest that you don't distinguish between the dating of the creed, the dating of the Resurrection, and the historicity of the Resurrection itself. You realize these are distinct?

Dawson: *Clearly Geisler and Turek think the resurrection really happened, and they treat it as an actual historical event in their reference to its occurrence at a certain time in history.*

Regardless of what they believe, the argument presented is valid. You have yet to demonstrate otherwise. Just to make sure I'm not biased here I emailed our exchange to several of my atheist friends (philosophy grad student and

my favorite history professor) and they agree that your original post has straw man written all over it.

Dawson: *This is a red herring if there ever were one. There's no question that Geisler and Turek think the resurrection is factual, David. Don't try to deny it. That just makes you look utterly disingenuous, and also boring. Geisler and Turek have an agenda, and that's to smear non-Christians (hence the title of their book), and in the midst of their efforts to establish their position, they clearly beg the question. To be sure, there are many other errors in the book. But this one caught my fancy for purposes of a blog entry. And what a sore wound it opened up! I must really be doing damage to someone's faith-based worldview.*

Why a red herring?

Where did I deny that Geisler and Turek think the resurrection is factual?

Keep mudslinging all you wish; it certainly isn't making me look bad.

Think about it: what do I have to lose if you're right? I just waste away after 80+ years (if I outlive my father and grandfather) and maybe I wasted a lot of time reading the Bible and trying to love people unselfishly. Ok big deal when its all over the universe cools down and life fades into a irretrievable memory. But what if you're wrong? Clearly what I invest in my beliefs appears minimal when compared to the way you have behaved during our interaction. It doesn't surprise me from the little I have read about Randian objectivists; this is exactly what I would expect. Seriously I'm not kidding, check out the Wikipedia article on it. Even the atheists act like its horribly fallacious and damaging to society.

Dawson: *Nothing in Geisler and Turek's statements suggest to me that they are speaking theoretically or hypothetically about the historicity of Jesus, his crucifixion or his resurrection. When they claim that "we have meticulously recorded eyewitness testimony written within 25 or 30 years of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, " which they say is "far too early to be legendary," and "that the eyewitness sources go back even earlier" (I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, p. 241), I see no hint of hypothesizing here. It may be what historians do, but Geisler and Turek are not historians, they're clearly apologists for a religious viewpoint.*

Wow this is unreal, so now "death, burial, and resurrection" isn't a common Christian phrase but instead a logically distinct set of propositions. And I'm the literalist mind you.

Dawson: *The data involved in the dating of Jesus' resurrection would have to include Paul's epistles, the earliest documents referring to it. But as I have pointed out, nothing Paul says suggests a specific date. Paul gives no time or place references in his mentionings of Jesus' resurrection. So it is not the case that "all known data suggests a date (or range of dates)," unless that "range of dates" spans centuries. Otherwise, you're simply skewing the data to confirm a confessional standpoint.*

You have misinterpreted me; "all known data" refers to the data that can be used to infer a date. Sometimes historians encounter vast disagreement on dates within source material; I was simply stating this is not the case with the New Testament documents.

Dawson: *How could I date an artifact to an event that never took place? If the event never took place, it has no date, and saying an artifact dates back to it would be ludicrous. You've got things backwards, David. You've got ungrounded assumptions posing as truths and treated as such without "proper warrant." When you're called on it, you basically say "the event didn't actually have to take place for it to have a date." And even then, to ascribe a date to Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, you have to read the gospels into what Paul writes in his epistle. As Doherty rightly points out, "reading the gospels into 1 Corinthians is simply circular."*

Like a steamed up gospel preacher, you expel verses from Doherty, Price, and Wells. Preach it brother! Haha I hope you can interpret my tone well so you don't think I'm being malicious nor having a meltdown. I am quite sarcastic at times and text just doesn't do me justice. Ok lets say the Resurrection didn't take place, but if the crucifixion took place then "3 days after it" exists and has a date as well. It seems like you have a problem with the nomenclature. I don't have this problem because I studied Harbermas' version of this argument first (he constructed it in the first place), so I have a better angle to interpret what Geisler/Turek mean. Perhaps if you look at his argumentation it will make more sense.

You accuse me of taking the conversation all over the place, but as I recall you chose to defend the legend theory,

discuss objectivism, and also epistemology of resurrection belief.

Dawson: *I have addressed this already. The gospels mention places and persons which are historical, such as Jerusalem, Galilee, Tyre, Pontius Pilate, etc. This does not mean that the stories they tell are not legendary, of course. Surely even you can understand this. By saying that the gospels are legendary, I am not affirming that each and every reference is legendary. The stories are legends. Come on, David. You yourself have accused me of uncharitable reading. You can do better I think.*

Assuming all the stories are legendary still holds consistently with what I said.

Dawson : *“Absolutely”? Even with the points you raised about how historians work, you’re overstating your case here. But I guess you need to do this. So if someone tells me that the Bonhomme Richard sank on Sept. 25, 1779, it would be “absolutely without merit” to suppose that he’s talking about a real event? Fine, have it your way. When Christians say that Jesus’ resurrection took place ca. 30 AD, it would be “absolutely without merit” that they think this event actually took place. Okay.*

Please try to distinguish between asserting a date and determining a date; it is an important distinction and one which you have failed to make over and over.

[September 29, 2008 6:48 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

David: “Where do you derive this ‘statistically insignificant number’ from?”

From the New Testament. Even if Acts’ portrayal of five thousand Jews being converted by Peter’s two sermons were true (and I see no reason to believe it), this would still be a statistically insignificant number of people in those days. The world was much bigger than merely Palestine. Think outside the desert, David.

David: “Since you brought of cults, you know Ayn Rand’s objectivism has been pinned with a cult following itself?”

Yes, I’ve seen such accusations. They’re simply dishonest. Here are two articles which address this stupid attempt to smear rational philosophy:

[Objectivism as a Cult](#)  
[Is Objectivism a Cult?](#)

I asked: *A lot more snickering and sneering than what?*

David: “Try reading that sentence again.”

I did. Typically when one uses the comparative (e.g., “a lot more...”), there is something to contrast what is being so qualified. I didn’t see that in your statement. Did I miss it?

David: “So is it your position that any worldviews which posit personal supernatural beings are incompatible with the primacy of existence?”

Yep.

David: “Doesn’t this constitute a priori denial?”

Nope.

I asked: *How is any of what we read here in Acts “well attested”?*

David: “As much as I’d like to spend several paragraphs explaining attestation to you, I think you have the resources to study it on your own should you desire such.”

Okay.

David: "Of course you can always just take Carrier, Wells, Doherty, Price, and Rand's word for everything; they're probably more intelligent than me anyways. :P"

Probably.

I wrote: *Again, I'm just pointing out an observation here that Paul does not state that what he is including in his letter here is a quotation from a pre-existing creed. If I were wrong here, David should be able to show where Paul does say he's quoting from a pre-existing creed here. Instead, he says that "the language" here "suggests a non-written origin," which is hardly persuasive, let alone conclusive.*

David: "Anyone with basic knowledge about Jewish history would reject the criteria you posited."

This is not an argument, David. It's just an appeal to an invisible, anonymous populous.

David: "As if one should expect, 'Well here is this oral creed that originated in 33AD'."

As I said, I simply observed that Paul does not state that he's quoting from a creed. Either he does say this, or he doesn't. Don't get sore at me if he doesn't. ;)

David: "Instead Paul says: For I delivered unto you as of first importance what I also received :"

Does Paul identify what he "received" was a creed? I don't see that he does.

David: "Obviously an oral creed by any standard of comparison with rabbinical literature."

How is this obvious? It's not obvious to me. Come on, I'm just a dummy with know intellect at all. Teach me, David.

David: "The only scholars who doubt the pre-existence of the creed (not the fact that it is a creed) are those who deem it interpolative, which you have already stated is not on your list of rejections."

Again I see no proof that what Paul is quoting is a creed. The instant surveys you suddenly unpocket ("the only scholars who doubt...") are unimpressive to me. A consensus on a matter is not proof. If you can't prove that Paul's quoting from a creed, just admit it and let it go.

I wrote: *So this alleged creed was oral, one which was never recorded in writing in its entirety, is that it? So, whatever else it supposedly affirmed, is lost to history, is that right? So how can we be so sure that what Paul states in I Cor. 15:3-8 came from a pre-existing creed in the first place? The reasons you gave earlier are far from conclusive. Meanwhile, you are in effect admitting that there is no independent documentation for such a creed.*

David: "Welcome to the study of ancient history Dawson."

Thank you for the parade! At any rate, the whole creed thing seems poorly supported, to say the least.

I asked David how the creed which Paul is allegedly quoting in I Corinthians 15:3-8 can be dated, since Geisler and Turek seem to think it goes back to within "eighteen months to eight years after" Jesus' resurrection. David's response:

David: "Your usual mischaracterizations aside, I will defer you to Habermas on the issue as I needn't regurgitate his argumentation. Google works pretty well too, and I shouldn't spoon feed you right? :P"

Okay, if that's the way you want to play it. This is a major piece on the game board though, the dating of the alleged creed which Paul is supposedly quoting. If you can't fix a date to it, though, it'd be better if you didn't try to hide behind Habermas, and just come out and admit it.

I wrote: *So you apparently agree, then, that the phrase "probably within 0-3 years of the Resurrection" is question-begging.*

David: "No I disagree,"

Then why the need to replace “resurrection” with “crucifixion”?

David: “because I realize that ‘the Resurrection’ means “the time and place of the event itself” (pg 242) and not ‘the actual event itself’ (your fallacious assumption).”

David, on page 242, Geisler and Turek say explicitly that the creed which Paul was allegedly quoting “dates right back to the Resurrection itself.” They clearly have in mind a specific event here - “the Resurrection itself.”

David: “Obviously you are comfortable thinking Geisler/Turek argued, ‘the Resurrection isn’t legendary because this creed goes right back to the Resurrection’.”

They state that “there’s no possible way that such testimony could describe a legend, because it goes right back to the time and place of the event itself” where “event itself” is understood to be Jesus’ resurrection. They think they can fix the date of the creed Paul allegedly quotes to an actual event. It’s there in plain black and white. No “magnificent rhetoric” needed.

Still I find it odd when apologists for Christianity want, on the one hand, that we accept all these tales of supernaturalism as truth, that miracles and demons and angels and resurrections are all possible. But on the other hand, they go and tell us that “there’s no possible way” that the testimony in Paul’s letter could “describe a legend.” Poor fellows. I almost feel sorry for them.

I wrote: *It’s apparent that you recognize this because you find need now to revise the statement: instead of “within 0-3 years of the Resurrection,” you now need to have it say “within 0-3 years of the crucifixion.”*

David: “Incorrect. ‘Within 0-3 years of the 3rd day following the crucifixion’ is the accurate way to state it.”

Ah, another modification. I’ll note it, but it doesn’t buy you anything.

David: “The oral creed’s dating is independent of the factuality of the Resurrection,”

And yet Geisler and Turek tell us that the “creed... dates right back to the Resurrection itself.”

David: “so why would you need to ‘date it to something unreal’.”

Exactly: When Geisler and Turek claim that the creed embedded in Paul’s letter “dates right back to the Resurrection itself,” they’re not supposing that the event to which they are dating the creed is unreal. They think the resurrection is real, and are assuming it really happened. Again, they simply beg the question.

David: “Even if the Resurrection could be shown to be false historically, that would not unravel the dating of this creed.”

That depends on how one fixes a date to it. You’ve not shown how the alleged creed embedded in Paul’s letter can be dated at all. Remember?

I wrote: *Clearly Geisler and Turek think the resurrection really happened, and they treat it as an actual historical event in their reference to its occurrence at a certain time in history.*

David: “Regardless of what they believe, the argument presented is valid. You have yet to demonstrate otherwise.”

As I pointed out weeks ago, the validity of their argument is not the concern here. An argument can be valid and yet still commit informal fallacies, like begging the question. I’m sure you realize this, David.

David: “Just to make sure I’m not biased here I emailed our exchange to several of my atheist friends (philosophy grad student and my favorite history professor) and they agree that your original post has straw man written all over it.”

Boy, David, this little quodlibet sure has your panties in a bunch, doesn’t it? It’s had you going to a whole bunch of people for help on it, and still you’re barely treading water. And I e-mailed it to 17 Christian friends of mine and so far 16 have agreed with me (I’m still waiting for one to get back to me). Now what?

David: "Think about it: what do I have to lose if you're right? I just waste away after 80+ years (if I outlive my father and grandfather) and maybe I wasted a lot of time reading the Bible and trying to love people unselfishly."

Well, in one breath you just gave me a clear snapshot of your code of values. Makes me so glad I'm not a Christian.

David: "But what if you're wrong?"

I'm not wrong, David.

David: "Seriously I'm not kidding, check out the Wikipedia article on it."

I tend not to rely on Wikipedia for my knowledge about philosophy, David. There are better sources.

David: "Even the atheists act like its horribly fallacious and damaging to society."

Yeah, like crusades, witch hunts, inquisitions, slavery, blue laws, calls for death to homosexuals, etc. Oh wait, none of these were Objectivists programs...

Anyway, David, thanks again for your contributions to my blogs. It's been a real treat. But I can tell you've reached a point of desperation in our exchanges. I'll have some more follow up comments, but I can see this is going nowhere very quickly.

Regards,  
Dawson

[September 29, 2008 9:24 PM](#)

[david](#) said...

How can you tell I've reached the point of desperation in these exchanges? How do I know this isn't your point of desperation tactic? ;)

Dawson: *I did. Typically when one uses the comparative (e.g., "a lot more..."), there is something to contrast what is being so qualified. I didn't see that in your statement. Did I miss it?*

When someone says "I got alot more than John did" they are merely qualifying what they got in relation to what John got.

In the same manner, when I say "There has actually been a lot more than snickering and sneering involved" I am basically saying this:

a = amount of attention given to Elvis phenomenon

l = level implied by snickering and sneering

$a > l$

Make sense?

Sad to see you're ready to call it quits, but I understand why. I think we've exhausted all the subject matter at hand.

You keep responding as if I came here to prove Christianity to you. I certainly don't think that highly of my abilities (as I've said, my time studying apologetics has barely crossed the two year mark). I just wanted to discuss what we differ on in a rational way. You seem to prefer demeaning and deriding your opponent in the process...ok fine as you said you'll do whatever the hell you want. May I humbly submit that such tactics make the arguments harder to examine, and also make the exchanges unnecessarily long and combative.

You know in lieu of a closing statement, I have an idea. You would have obviously have to agree to it. I would like take a few weeks to examine everything we've written here, and then each of us honestly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence/arguments we presented. A self-critique if you will. Sound like something you'd be

interested in?

Oh and I started with Wikipedia and then move over to the [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#). I will read those two articles on objectivism you posted. Lots of reading to do!

[September 29, 2008 10:19 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

David: "How can you tell I've reached the point of desperation in these exchanges? How do I know this isn't your point of desperation tactic? ;)"

Experience, David. Years of experience.

David: "Sad to see you're ready to call it quits, but I understand why. I think we've exhausted all the subject matter at hand."

It's going nowhere, David. In regard to Geisler and Turek, you came to defend them against my charge of begging the question, but have failed. Your repeated attempts to do so have been valiant, I suppose, but they will not rewrite what Geisler and Turek have stated. It's time to bring this particular discussion to an end.

David: "You keep responding as if I came here to prove Christianity to you."

Actually, I've been responding to your points, and have done my best, with the little time I have, to provide comprehensive answers to the points you've raised. I've noted along the way that you have offered little by way of validating Christianity as a worldview. If it wasn't your point to do so, that would explain this.

David: "You seem to prefer demeaning and deriding your opponent in the process..."

Maybe you're just misreading the tone of my responses. I have not sought to demean or deride you personally, David. If you got that impression, you have my apologies. I tend to write polemically, though I also try to curb it as well. I realize that a half-dozen barbs peppered here and there can do a lot of cutting, so I try to contain it to a minimum. I would say I'm quite mild compared to some Christian folks I've seen on the net, who rail with venom for anyone who doesn't confess belief in their supernatural beings. That seems quite silly to me.

David: "You know in lieu of a closing statement, I have an idea. You would have obviously have to agree to it. I would like take a few weeks to examine everything we've written here, and then each of us honestly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence/arguments we presented. A self-critique if you will. Sound like something you'd be interested in?"

Frankly, David, I would prefer to spend my time more productively. I already know what I think about the Geisler-Turek passage.

David: "Oh and I started with Wikipedia and then move over to the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy."

I haven't read this article, so I can't endorse what it says. I tend to think that the best place to learn about a worldview is from its primary sources. In this case, Rand's books, or Peikoff's summary *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand*. I wrote my own [Succinct Summary of My Worldview](#) which you might find helpful as an introductory statement to Objectivism.

David: "I will read those two articles on objectivism you posted. Lots of reading to do!"

You mean the two responses to the notion that Objectivism is a cult? Both make some very good points. To be sure, Objectivism is certainly no cult. Anyone who buys into this gratuitous slander simply doesn't know what he's talking about.

Regards,  
Dawson

[September 30, 2008 6:42 AM](#)

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