

### Paul's Ignorance of the Earthly Jesus, Part 3: Claims 8-14

I now continue with the conclusion of my examination of David's rejoinders to my points in response to the citations from Paul's letters alleged to have come from knowledge he supposedly had of the earthly Jesus. (Whew!)

#### Claim #8:

*Paul refers to Peter by the name Cephas (rock), which was the name Jesus gave to him. (1 Cor. 3:22)*

I responded:

Paul tells us that he had a very involved conflict with Peter, but he never tells us that Jesus gave Peter this name. This is not even hinted at in anything Paul says about Peter. In fact, Paul nowhere indicates that Peter was a traveling companion of Jesus on earth before the crucifixion. Later writers were probably perplexed by the use of two names for Peter, and explained it by having the Jesus of their narratives give the name Cephas to Peter in an exchange which is nowhere given in Paul.

David's rejoinder:

Interesting speculation, but my only question is how would one conclude that Peter/Cephas were the same person going from source material alone with no historical backbone?

First of all, notice that David has not challenged these points from my statement above:

1. Paul tells us that he had a very involved conflict with Peter, but he never tells us that Jesus gave Peter this name.
2. This is not even hinted at in anything Paul says about Peter.
3. In fact, Paul nowhere indicates that Peter was a traveling companion of Jesus on earth before the crucifixion.

Were David to challenge these, I would expect to see statements drawn from Paul's authentic letters which contradict them.

Second, since the question is what knowledge Paul had of the earthly Jesus, Paul's reference to Peter as Cephas does not qualify, precisely because Paul never suggests anything like what we read in John 1:42, where the evangelist has Jesus bestow Peter with the name 'Cephas'.

Also, my proposal is certainly not farfetched, since, as I have shown, Paul does not explain his use of two names. Also, the backbone identifying Peter with Cephas need not have been historical so much as linguistic, since both words in their respective languages mean the same thing: in Aramaic, 'cephas' means 'rock', and in Greek, 'petros' is the masculine equivalent of 'petra', which means 'rock'. Later writers could easily have taken this transliteration and constructed a story from it: Jesus dubbed Peter with the name 'Cephas' to emphasize his imperturbable faith. But at that point we have fiction, not history.

#### Claim #9:

*Jesus had a brother named James. (Galations 1:19)*

I responded:

We've already beaten this horse to death. Paul never gives a brother to Jesus - that is, a biological sibling to the earthly, pre-crucifixion Jesus. Paul is clear in reference James as "the brother of the Lord," which title signifies the post-resurrection Jesus. James, it was seen, was referred to as one of the "pillars" of the church by Paul. It is most probable then that Paul is referring to James with a fraternity title, similar to the one he uses for an unspecified number of persons in I Cor. 9:5, where he states: "Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" Here Paul is

obviously referencing the upper echelon of the Christianity of his day. It would be hard to suppose that Paul is referring to a group of biological siblings of Jesus here. Instead, he's speaking of an inner circle group, who were obviously held in high regard. The assumption that Paul is referring to a biological relationship is generated by reading the gospel details into Paul's letters, when in fact Paul's letters in no way confirm this reading.

David's rejoinder:

What we've seen is you have no argument for your interpretation. Not one of your points has passed the bar. All the citations you quoted were unsupported assertions or admitted speculation, and reference to "extant texts" which you have failed to provide information about. No I'd say the horse has been beaten to death alright but you seem to be confused about who's holding the stick.

What argument has David provided for supposing that *Paul* meant a biological sibling when he refers to James as "the brother of the Lord"? He's provided none. All he can do is appeal to the gospels. But I've already explained why this is at best shaky. It's a dead horse because I've already pointed to both motive and opportunity for later writers to exploit what is likely a fraternal title to the end of giving Jesus a biological sibling in their concoction of a historical narrative.

David wrote:

All you said about the external sources is basically "well they were just propounding the legend from the Gospels, so we can't trust them either."

David is frustrated because he resents my view that the gospels are legends. This is why he feels the need to cast it in simplistic terms.

David wrote:

I have already told you that 1 Cor 9:5 is also addressing the same group of literal brothers mentioned in the Gospel.

Specifically what in 1 Cor. 9:5 suggests that Paul has "literal brothers" (i.e., biological siblings) in mind? David simply asserts that it must mean this, but clearly he's assuming the truth of the gospels at this point and artificially reading them into Paul's epistle. But the truth of the gospel stories is what's in question.

David wrote:

I guess they misunderstood that one too, and figured it would make for good fiction.

It's certainly possible that they misunderstood it. And it is clear that they (the gospel writers) did not view their own work as historical chronicles, but as storybook narratives intended to concretize theological notions which they expected readers to accept as truth.

David wrote:

You said "It would be hard to suppose that Paul is referring to a group of biological siblings of Jesus here." To which I simply respond that, "It would be hard to suppose that Paul is referring to a group of highly regarded inner circle members (of which Cephas is excluded)."

Why? Paul calls non-biologically related persons 'brother' all the time in his letters. The term 'brother' was commonly used by Paul and other early Christians to designate fellow believers, and such use carried no implication of a biological relationship. Is it hard to suppose that the "500 brethren" whom Paul mentions in I Cor. 15 were not biological siblings? If not, why would it be hard to suppose that Paul has no sibling relationship in mind when he mentions "the brethren of the Lord" in I Cor. 9:5? Moreover, his statements in Galatians clearly indicate that there was an inner core of leadership within the Jerusalem church. So all the factors for the interpretation I believe is most reasonable from the text are there, while all David can do is assert his view in the interest of protecting literalist Christian dogma. He gives no support for his preferred interpretation.

David wrote:

The assumption that Paul is not referring to a biological relationship is generated ad-hoc in support of the legend theory's interpretation of Paul's letters, when in fact Paul's letters in no way confirm this reading nor

does any external source throughout the first 1700+ years of Christianity”

Here David is projecting: since he begins with a grand conclusion (e.g., the gospel portraits of Jesus are historically accurate) and works backwards from this as his guiding assumption, he figures everyone else operates the same way, which in fact is not the case.

**Claim #10:**

*Jesus initiated the Lord's supper and referred to the bread and the cup. (1 Cor. 11:23-25)*

I responded:

As I asked before, when does Paul say this happened? Where? Under what circumstances? Who attended this event? Paul doesn't give any details. Later writers came along and supplied them. Paul gave the primitive rudiments, indicating no time, place or historical setting. In fact, I don't even find any indication that Paul is associating "the Lord's supper" with the Passover. It would be temptingly easy for later writers to take what Paul writes here and redress it in a narrative situation that seemed historical, but is essentially just a piece of fiction.

David's rejoinder:

Ignoring the usual tiresome questioning ploys, and your repetitive bald assertions about later writers supplying details (I think you include this in every response to the bullet list, as if reasserting you point provides further argumentation)....uhh oh wait that's all there is. :P

Of course, one way to keep oneself from facing problems is to ignore questions which draw our attention to them. As for later writers supplying details to the kind of bare threadwork that Paul reports, how is noting this progression from lack of details (no time, place or circumstances in the case of Paul's crucifixion, resurrection, supper scene) in Paul's letters, to full-fledged biographical narratives in later writers a case of "repetitive bald assertions"? What would keep later writers from taking motifs from earlier traditions which had no ties to specific historical settings, and grafting them into constructed narratives of Jesus' earthly life? Yes, I expect a serious answer to this question.

**Claim #11:**

*Jesus' death was related to the Passover Celebration. (1 Cor. 5:7)*

I responded:

Is Paul saying that Jesus was crucified around the Passover holiday? I don't get that from this. This is Pauline symbolism, derived from his Jewish roots, and later writers took references like this and assembled them into their narrative. Again, it would be temptingly easy for them to do this.

David's rejoinder:

See Mk 14:12 and Lu 22:7

This is unhelpful for the literalist view, since it is already agreed that the gospels put Jesus' crucifixion on the occasion of the Passover. Let's go back to Paul and take a look at what 1 Cor. 5:7 states. It states:

Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.

Note how Paul is here equating Christ with "our passover," which is clearly symbolic. He is certainly not saying that Jesus' crucifixion took place on the occasion of the Passover festival. I do not see that being stated here, and I'd like to see how one can derive this from what Paul says here. "Many commentators," Wells points out (*The Jesus Myth*, p. 71), "(for instance Ruef [*Paul's First Letter to Corinth*], p. 42 ad loc.) agree that all this has nothing to do with the date of the crucifixion or the Last Supper: the identification of the death with the Passover is 'first and foremost theological and is not dependent on chronology'." Paul is giving us theological symbolism here; he is not referring to an historic event.

## Claim #12:

*The death of Jesus was at the hands of earthly rulers. (1 Cor. 2:8)*

I responded:

It is not clear what Paul means here by "princes of this world" (the ESV translates this phrase as "rules of this age" and the ASV has it as "rulers of this world"). Doherty has some interesting thoughts on this:

Where, then, was Jesus crucified and by whom? Like the myths of the savior gods, this deed took place in the mythical world, the upper spirit realm of Platonic philosophy, where spiritual processes were seen to be located. It was the work of demon spirits. Paul says, in I Corinthians 2:8, that those who "crucified the Lord of glory" were "the rulers of this age." That phrase is not a reference to human authorities on earth, but to the demon spirits, who were regarded as controlling the world in the present age of history and who would be overthrown with the arrival of the new apocalyptic age... This was the interpretation of 2:8 by ancient commentators like Marcion and Origen. Modern critical scholars have largely followed suit: Brandon, Barrett, Hering, Fredriksen. Paul Ellingworth, *Translator's Handbook for I Corinthians*, p. 46, says: "A majority of scholars think that supernatural powers are intended here." *The Ascension of Isaiah*, a Jewish-Christian document in the Pseudepigrapha, foretells the Son descending through the layers of heaven, hiding his identity from the angels and demons until he reaches the lower celestial sphere, where he is "crucified by the god of the world," meaning Satan (chapter 9). The crucifixion of Paul's Christ was a spiritual event. (*Challenging the Verdict*, pp. 250-251)

David asserted:

It is clear that what Paul means here is both the Jewish rulers and the Roman governor.

Where does Paul put such specificity to what he says in I Cor. 2:8? And why no support for this assertion? Again, the issue is Paul's knowledge of the earthly Jesus. Does Paul tell us who he thinks put Jesus to the cross? Only vaguely. He identifies no one in particular here.

David continued:

Doherty supports his absurd, err I mean interesting, Gnostic interpretation by pointing to early Gnostic Christians who consistently blend the two systems together...surprise surprise!

Again failing to produce an argument, David resorts to sneering at sources that have been cited as if this constituted a refutation or could substitute for a counter-argument. He ignores not only the fact that the phraseology in I Cor. 2:8 provides a wide latitude of interpretation, in no way necessitating the literalist view he claims it clearly indicates, but discounts Doherty's point by preferring his literalist interpretation against an interpretation which he associates with that dreaded, heretical foe, Gnosticism. But notice that Doherty does not appeal exclusively to Marcion and Origen. He notes that "modern critical scholars have largely followed suit" in this interpretation of "rulers of this age," and named several, including Brandon, Barrett, Hering, Fredriksen, and Ellingworth, notably the latter's *Translator's Handbook for I Corinthians*, which I would think David might accept as at least somewhat of a reliable source, which states: "A majority of scholars think that supernatural powers are intended here." David dismisses all of this with the wave of his hand, simply because this position is associated with Marcion and Origen. Amazing!

David huffed and puffed:

If you wish to hide behind what a "majority of scholars think" you better be consistent with that.

Or else what? As part of his meltdown, David resorts to tough talk, which is common with apologists who find themselves hanging on the ropes. He has continually complained about my reliance on "rhetoric," and yet here he is doing the same thing, insinuating that I am "hiding" in some way. To be perfectly blunt here, there are times when I do agree with the predominant views among scholars, and there are times when I do not. I do not decide my position by tallying the numbers in favor for it.

## Claim #13:

*Jesus underwent abuse and humiliation. (Romans 15:3)*

I responded:

These are themes that are common throughout the Psalms and Isaiah, both of which very highly influenced Paul's views. Romans 15:3, the very passage you cite here, quotes Psalms 69:9, which is attributed by the OT to David! Moreover, when Paul refers to Jesus' abuse and humiliation, he refers to them only vaguely, and gives no historical setting, indicating no specifics of the occasion. Later writers (i.e., of the gospels) take this motif and elaborate on it in their passion scenes, which are variously embellished in the different versions.

David's rejoinder:

Wow I'm seeing a trend here Dawson...1)point out "missing" stuff 2)assert the legend theory. Are you using a template or something this is crazy?! How would you like it if every single one of my responses started with "since the Gospels are all historical factual accounts...?"

The question before us is: What knowledge did Paul have of the *earthly* Jesus. As evidence of Paul's knowledge of the earthly Jesus is a citation to Romans 15:3 which is apparently taken to confirm the view that Paul knew of the passion sequences found in the gospels. Look at what Romans 15:3 states:

For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, 'The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me'.

As I pointed out in my initial response to David's claim, Paul is quoting from Psalm 69:9, which states:

For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.

It's clear here that Paul is drawing from the OT, not from knowledge he allegedly has of Jesus' earthly biography. It is through such citations that the early Christians conceived of Jesus, as a savior already present in the OT literature. For Paul, "seeing" this savior already suggested in the OT may be all that constitutes "revelation" for him. This is not some simplistic "template" of my own here. After all, I did not write Paul's letters, and I am not the one trying to link Jesus to the OT; Christians have done this since the very beginning. Since the question before us has to do with what Paul knew about the earthly Jesus, we need to review the citations given from Paul's letters which are purported to attest to his knowledge of the earthly Jesus, and see where he might have gotten them. Clearly this is not a reference to Jesus' life on earth, but an excerpt from the OT grafted into a concoction which was later filled in with specific details to create a narrative of Jesus' earthly life. There is certainly no reference to time or place of the reproaches Paul mentions here, indeed no specifics at all.

#### Claim #14:

*Jewish authorities were involved with Jesus' death. (1 Thess. 2:14-16)*

I responded:

Doherty points out for us that many scholars are of the view that I Thess. 2:15-16 is an interpolation into an otherwise (for the most part) authentically Pauline letter. He writes: [insert lots of unsupported assertions and citations to other scholars who may have argued something

In the quotation which David omitted here, Doherty names five scholars who consider the passage in question to be an interpolation. I also pointed to two additional scholars identified by Wells who consider it an interpolation. On page 241 (n.16) of his book *Challenging the Verdict*, Doherty gives some more specifics:

Some scholars who regard the passage as an interpolation: Burton Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* Harper San Francisco (1995), p. 113; Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, Yale Univ. Press (1983), p. 9, n.117; Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia (1982), vol. II, p. 113; Paul Fredriksen: *From Jesus to Christ*, Yale Univ. Press (1988), p. 122; Birger A. Pearson: "1 Thessalonians 2:13-16: A Deutero-Pauline Interpolation," *Harvard Theological Review* 64 (1971 p. 79-94.

Here's what Paula Fredriksen writes about I Thess. 2:14-16 in the citation given by Doherty:

There are many impediments to accepting this as authentically Pauline. Its sweeping condemnation of "the Jews" contrasts strongly with the way Paul speaks of his own people elsewhere (e.g., Rom 9-11). Its invocation of the prophet-martyr tradition and its accusation of a Jewish spiritual stinginess toward the Gentiles implies

an acquaintance with the later synoptic tradition. And finally the past completed action of the final phrase - "God's wrath has come upon them at last!" - most readily calls to mind the Temple's destruction in 70. But the strongest argument against Pauline authorship of this passage is Paul's undisputedly authentic statement in I Cor. 2:8: "None of the rulers (*archontes*) of this age (*aión*) understood this [secret and hidden wisdom of God]; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." The archons of this aeon, I have argued, are to be understood as astral, nonhuman entities. But if Paul did refer here to the human agents in Jesus' death, the "rulers of this age" could only be the Romans [i.e., *not* "the Jews"].

David's rejoinder:

You haven't demonstrated it as an interpolation so really your response shows nothing other than Doherty and others trying to make sense of their Platonic eisogesis of Paul.

Well, if David won't take it from scholars in the know, why would he accept it from lil' ol' me?

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: [Christian Legends](#)

posted by Bahnsen Burner at [11:00 AM](#)

### 15 Comments:

[madmax](#) said...

Dawson,

Because of your writing on this subject I have purchased books by Wells, Doherty and Price. I am half way through with "The Jesus Puzzle" and I must say that it is quite impressive. It really does seem that Christianity developed from a legend and not a real preacher. This would mean that Christianity was a tissue of lies from the very start. Once again, your blog has proved to be a great resource for me.

Also, I would like to show you a small online debate I had with a true believing Christian about 10 months ago. It was before I had read any of your blog posts. Since then I have read about 75% of your archives. I feel I would be able to do much better today. I will post the link to it here so you can see this Christian's responses to my arguments. I used Ayn Rand's quote from Galt's speech to show that the God concept can never be reduced to sense perception and is therefore an arbitrary and meaningless concept. He really took offense to it which makes me think he had no answer. I think for a second his faith was shaken.

Here is the link. My name is D. Sanchez and I show up on the page linked to about half way in and then the debate ensues.

<http://www.amnation.com/vfr/archives/009499.html#regress>

Thanks again for a great blog and great material.

[September 27, 2008 2:52 PM](#)

[madmax](#) said...

I should also add that in the debate I conceded that Christianity was not based on mythology (which he took offense to). I would not do that today. Also, the Christian I debated asserted the testimony of Luke as real and historical, as things Luke actually witnessed (why, well, because he said so.). Today I would dispute that as well. After reading Doherty and your posts, I would never concede the historicity of the Gospels.

Regards

[September 27, 2008 2:58 PM](#)

[david](#) said...

Ok last post to respond to! Only a few comments.

Dawson: *. So all the factors for the interpretation I believe is most reasonable from the text are there, while all David can do is assert his view in the interest of protecting literalist Christian dogma.*

At least this is a point you disagree with Wells on :)

Dawson: *What would keep later writers from taking motifs from earlier traditions which had no ties to specific historical settings, and grafting them into constructed narratives of Jesus' earthly life?*

Honesty! Seriously, I think that is the strongest feature of the legend theory. It builds itself on features of the evidence in a compelling way.

Dawson: *Or else what? As part of his meltdown, David resorts to tough talk, which is common with apologists who find themselves hanging on the ropes.*

I think you are greatly misreading the tone in those statements, but to be fair this is text so anything goes I suppose. I am certainly not upset in the least, or feeling "on the ropes." I think for my first debate I did pretty well. Didn't exactly pick on someone my own size did I? ;)

I would still like to know what separates a literalist Christian from a non-literalist?

[September 29, 2008 10:39 PM](#)

[breakerslion](#) said...

The denial is strong in this one.

I wonder how quickly David's mind would refuse to see [this](#) and how quickly he could come up with empty rhetoric to dismiss it?

[October 17, 2008 5:14 PM](#)

[david](#) said...

believe it or not I had already dismissed that before you posted it ;)

[October 17, 2008 7:06 PM](#)

[breakerslion](#) said...

David:

I have no trouble believing that.

You believe what you believe not because of any overwhelming proof of its veracity, but because you have either a deep emotional stake, a financial/fraternal interest, or all of the above. In other words, you not only *want* to believe it, deep down you have been programmed to believe that you *need* to believe it. That's what indoctrination is all about.

I don't expect to change your mind. Those who have given you this affliction have had centuries to perfect their brainwashing techniques. They have given you all manner of dark motives and alliances with which to endow me and my actions, and keep you safely cocooned within your delusional framework. Besides that, *you* are the conformist, allowed at all the right parties thanks to your beliefs.

I tell you this not to change your mind, but in the hope that someday, you will see that there is some validity to an alternative point of view. One that sees organized religion as a highly refined and brutally self-protective scam. One that sees church services of any creed as vehicles of mass hypnosis and control. One that sees a huge, greed-driven commercial enterprise in the constant bombardment of "advertisement" for, and reinforcement of, superstitious values such as afterlife belief, and the personification of good and evil. One that sees an unbroken continuum of scam artists, shills, and pawns from the first bone-rattling shaman right through all the major religions, and right down to whatever current New Age World of Woo holistic-magnetic-crystal-quantum abortion is the latest fad.

Now go to Service, or wash yourself in blood, or have a nice plate of Jesus Crackers (now with 40% more Christian piety and enriched flour!) or whatever it is you do, and forget you ever met me.

[October 18, 2008 8:21 AM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Hi Breakerslion. Thanks for the link. I'll try to get a chance to read it hopefully later this weekend.

I was recently summoned to jury duty, and although I've been summoned numerous times in the past (my number seems to come up every year!), this is the first time I've actually been picked to serve on a jury. So I've been pretty much occupied with that and trying to get some work done at the same time (some very late nights!). The trial ended yesterday so hopefully I'll be able to get back on track with things. It was a very fascinating experience, and although it's made things quite difficult in the meantime, there were a lot of valuable lessons to be learned.

Anyway, upwards and onwards as my composition professor used to say... I will resume work on my response to Bnonn's blog hopefully later this weekend, and maybe take some time to review the article you linked to.

Regards,  
Dawson

[October 18, 2008 9:09 AM](#)

[david](#) said...

An article with similar arguments to mine just popped up over at [Christian Think Tank](#).

[November 11, 2008 11:33 AM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Well, surprise surprise, a committed Christian apologist finds ways of balking at the proposal that Paul's references to "brothers of the Lord" are to an inner circle at the upper levels of early Christian hierarchy. In fact, I saw this article by Miller this morning (Triablogue gave a link to it), and at first I almost thought Miller's correspondent might have been you, David Parker. I tend to think it wasn't, given some of the statements Miller quotes from his correspondent, but I could be wrong...

Before I proceed, I wanted to ask if it's your birthday tomorrow? If so, happy birthday!

Now let's dig into Miller a bit... One does not need to read very far to see what kind of quality apologetics we're in for in Miller's new piece. For instance, he expediently interprets the disputed theory as advancing the equation "brother(s) of the Lord" = "Christian(s)" and then tries to "test" it on the two Pauline passages which make the reference as follows:

- "I saw none of the other apostles—only James, a Christian" (Gal 1.19)
- "Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Christians and Cephas(Peter)?" (1 Cor 9.5)

This ignores the part about "the brother of the Lord" being a \*title\*, not simply another designation for Christians as such. I don't know of any source which makes the equation that Miller tries to pry from the proposal in question. Miller says that, if there were a group so designated, "they have left no evidence behind." It would not be difficult to come up with a list of things we don't have evidence for. But we do have Paul's references, and they had to mean something. I find no compelling evidence that Paul had a biological relationship to Jesus in mind with this reference, nor do I find attempts to balk at the proposal that it referred to an inner core of early Christian leadership at all persuasive, Miller's subsequent points included.

Noteworthy for its register on the disappointment scale is Miller's appeal to Josephus. He says of the shorter passage (which mentions James as a "brother of Jesus") that it is not disputed. This is not true. As I have pointed out already in my blog entry, it is very much disputed. Perhaps it's not disputed in Miller's sources, but that would tell us about Miller's reading list, not about those not appearing on it.



Regarding Paul's knowledge of the earthly Jesus, Miller says "Paul gives plenty of details about the historical [Jesus]." He quotes O'Connor, who states "Paul certainly learnt much about the historical Jesus." That's exactly what's in question. Much of what Miller quotes here simply begs the question, for it assumes the gospel portrait of Jesus (and thereby of Peter), which - as I have demonstrated over and over in my blogs devoted to this issue - is profoundly questionable at best. For instance, O'Connor holds that "[t]he centrality of Christ in Paul's conversion experience and his theology, and the natural curiosity engendered by the hints he picked up during his three years in the Christian community at Damascus, make it extremely improbable that he did not avail himself to the utmost of Peter's knowledge of the historical Jesus." Well, for that matter, what did Peter know of earthly Jesus? If we go by the gospel portraits, we would think that Peter knew all kinds of things about the earthly Jesus, for instance a ministry in and around Judea and Galilee, miracle working, healings, exorcisms, disputes with Jewish leaders, the teachings found in the Sermon on the Mount, the raising of Lazarus, etc. Curiously, we learn nothing about any of these things from Peter himself. See for instance [his first letter](#).

O'Connor writes: "The implication that Paul preached the historical Jesus is formally confirmed by his condemnation of anyone 'who preaches a Jesus other than the one we preached' (2 Cor. 11: 4)." But what indicates that Paul preached the historical Jesus (particularly, the Jesus we read about in the gospels)? Blank out. If we go by Paul's letters as an indication of what Paul preached, he was clearly focused on the heavenly Jesus. There is no virgin birth, Bethlehem, Nazareth, baptism by John, miracle workings, healings, exorcisms, verbal debates with Sadducees and Pharisees, raising of Lazarus, etc., etc., etc., to be found in Paul's several letters.

Miller also quotes Eddy and Boyd, but if you read through their list of references to "the historical Jesus," you'll see that I have already answered all of these (plus numerous others).

Things are just as dim when we get to Miller's treatment of G.A. Wells. He quotes several sources who comment on Wells, but curiously there are no quotations from Wells' own writings to buttress their criticisms of his work. Some quotes would do well to give Miller's sources some credibility. For instance, he quotes Stanton, who writes: "Wells claims that the four gospels were written c. AD 100 and that the evangelists largely invented their traditions about the life of Jesus." Completely untrue. Wells puts the composition of Mark "after 70, probably as late as 90" (*The Jesus Myth*, xvi), i.e., not ca. 100. He puts the other three canonical gospels between 90 and 100 AD (ibid.). Nowhere does Wells argue that the evangelists "invented" the traditions they give in their narratives, but rather that they enlarged on traditions which had already been developing. (I quoted Wells at length on the gospel of Mark in my blog-responses to you.)

I could go on, but it's just more tiresome numbskullery devoted to protecting belief in invisible magic beings. As I have mentioned before, you're free to indulge your imagination in these things all you want, but there will always be a distinction between the imaginary and the real.

Oh, by the way, David, did you get a chance to read my [reply to Dominic Tennant](#) on the Objectivist axioms vs. "theistic foundationalism"?

Regards,  
Dawson

[November 11, 2008 8:12 PM](#)

[david](#) said...

Thanks, today is my 25th birthday! Did you guess from my email address?

I did read your response to Dominic, but with my philosophy background I didn't have enough knowledge of axioms and foundations to comprehend it all. It sounds like your criteria for what can be a foundation is different than his, but I'm not sure I understand how two people can even argue about the criteria. Seems like they would need some common ground to argue from.

Also thought you might want to be aware that your name popped up [here](#)

[November 12, 2008 3:42 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

David: "Thanks, today is my 25th birthday! Did you guess from my email address?"

I'm pretty good, aren't I? Happy 25!

David: "I did read your response to Dominic, but with my philosophy background I didn't have enough knowledge of axioms and foundations to comprehend it all."

Really? I tried my best to make it easy to understand. What part(s) threw you?

David: "It sounds like your criteria for what can be a foundation is different than his, but I'm not sure I understand how two people can even argue about the criteria."

It's not fully clear what Dominic's criteria for what should be one's proper foundation are. At one point in his piece he says that there is a good reason why one's first principles should not be self-evidently true, but it's not clear what he thinks is a good reason for this. Overall, I'd say he doesn't have a good grasp of the knowledge hierarchy. That's why I thought it was important to include some discussion of the principle of reduction in my response to him.

Dominic proposes the statement "the Bible is the Word of God" as the proper foundation. But as I ask in my blog, "why this statement, and not 'The Wizard of Oz is the Blurb of Klaigh' or 'Prahpubenjao is the Kwamlao of Geusha'?" With choices as arbitrary as all these, why choose one over the other?

David: "Seems like they would need some common ground to argue from."

Dominic himself wrote: "Of course, a Christian certainly *believes* that existence exists." And though I've encountered a number of Christians who have denied this truth (yes, it's true, I have), Dominic affirms it (perhaps because he feels forced to, now that it's in the open), but for some reason he just doesn't seem to think it's fundamental. Apparently something else is more fundamental than the fact of existence. I don't know how that could be though, and he doesn't explain. As for common ground, I've discussed this issue at length on my blog. See the following entries:

[Common Ground Part 1: What Do Believers and Non-Believers Have in Common?](#)

[Common Ground Part 2: The Standard of Evaluation](#)

[Common Ground Part 3: Metaphysics](#)

[Common Ground Part 4: Epistemology](#)

[Common Ground Part 5: Ethics](#)

[Common Ground Part 6: Cooperation](#)

[Common Ground Part 7: Consequences of Division](#)

David: "Also thought you might want to be aware that your name popped up here"

Ah, yes, Paul Manata. I see he's still trying to win his first argument. Sometimes I almost feel sorry for the chap.

Regards,  
Dawson

[November 12, 2008 4:38 PM](#)

[david](#) said...

I'll check out those links.

I guess my main confusion is that whenever one argues, they at least have to assume enough to do basic logic such as modus ponens:

P1 If a foundational proposition (fp) meets criteria x, it is valid.

P2 fp meets criteria x  
C Therefore, fp is valid

But both parties must at least agree that modus ponens is a valid way to determine truth. Otherwise they couldn't deduce anything from their respective fp's.

And thats my other concern. How do you deduce things from "existence exists" to form the worldview? Are there other axioms that come into play?

Starting with "The Bible is the Word of God", you can deduce the entire Christian worldview, including "existence exists" etc...

[November 13, 2008 3:04 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

David: "And thats my other concern. How do you deduce things from 'existence exists' to form the worldview?"

I specifically addressed this matter already in [my blog](#). I thought you said you had read it. I don't think I need to repeat myself.

David: "Are there other axioms that come into play?"

I address this question in my blog [The Axioms and the Primacy of Existence](#).

David: "Starting with 'The Bible is the Word of God', you can deduce the entire Christian worldview, including 'existence exists' etc..."

But as I explained, such a statement is **not fundamental**. Not even close. Besides, one would not only need to be aware of the fact that existence exists in order even to distinguish the bible from any other source, he would need to be aware of a whole host of other facts as well, even if only implicitly. The fact of existence is not something we "deduce" from prior facts; there are no prior facts. What "fact" could be prior to the fact of existence? To what would one point as such a fact, if not to something that exists? And if it doesn't exist, why (pretend to) consider it? We do not need to deduce a truth which we perceived directly. And not only is the statement "the Bible is the Word of God" not a truth which we directly perceive, it's not even a truth to begin with. So not only would you be borrowing from my worldview, you'd also be committing the fallacy of the stolen concept. In the final analysis, the statement "the Bible is the Word of God" is on the same par as "Prahpubenjao is the Kwamlao of Geusha." There are people in the world who essentially affirm such a "truth" as their all-encompassing fundamental. (I know, I've visited them personally.) Both are equally arbitrary. Both are equally baseless. Both equally rely on blurring the distinction between the real and the imaginary.

Regardless, your response does not address my question.

Regards,  
Dawson

[November 13, 2008 8:14 PM](#)

[david](#) said...

*Besides, one would not only need to be aware of the fact that existence exists in order even to distinguish the bible from any other source*

The chronological priority objection is precisely this. Just because existence exists comes first, then it must be the founding proposition. I think that was Bnonn's point of disagreement with you.

Dawson said:

*Really? I tried my best to make it easy to understand. What part(s) threw you?*

then...

*Regardless, your response does not address my question.*

How is it that I didn't address your question? Unless you have another question in mind that perhaps hasn't been addressed at all ;)

[November 13, 2008 10:44 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

David: "The chronological priority objection is precisely this. Just because existence exists comes first, then it must be the founding proposition. I think that was Bnonn's point of disagreement with you."

A fact can be *both* logically and chronologically more fundamental than another one (or a proposed one). Unless Bnonn can show that something is logically more fundamental than the fact of existence, he's cooked on this one.

Again, I went over all this in my blog. Did you read it? If you had trouble understanding something, what did you have trouble understanding?

David: "How is it that I didn't address your question? Unless you have another question in mind that perhaps hasn't been addressed at all ;)"

Here was my question, David:

*Dominic proposes the statement "the Bible is the Word of God" as the proper foundation. But as I ask in my blog, "why this statement, and not 'The Wizard of Oz is the Blurb of Klaigh' or 'Prahpubenjao is the Kwamlao of Geusha'?" With choices as arbitrary as all these, why choose one over the other?*

Your response did not address this question.

Regards,  
Dawson

[November 14, 2008 5:00 AM](#)

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