

IS THE BIBLE THE WORD OF GOD?

Emmett F. Fields



Before we can talk about the Bible we must consider another question, a deeper and a far more important question.

First we must consider God.

Throughout history mankind has sought God. Sought to find some proof, some indication, some hope, that God is; or might be.

That search goes on today.

Wisdom seeks to find a trace of God in the vastness of eternal space, seeks some indication throughout the far reaches of the cosmos — within the very heart of nature itself — that there is, or might be, some guiding intelligence — however remote — that would, perhaps, be God. Wisdom seeks, and continues to seek, a trace of God, but has not yet found that trace.

Upon this tiny, remote, speck that we call earth and home, and across the endless reaches of space, wisdom and science finds only nature and the workings of nature. Nothing more!

And yet, while wisdom seeks and searches in vain, for a trace of God, ignorance found God. Or, at least, believes it has found God. Ignorance not only found God, but has direct information as to what God said and did, what God wants, what God thinks, what God likes, and what God hates.

The ignorance that found God has nothing to do with religious believers today. God, or the illusion of God, was found long ago; in the childhood of the human race. Ignorance found God long before mankind found science; even before the wheel was invented, or fire was captured and made a friend of man. In that barren, cold, dangerous world stood our remote ancestors. Humanity was in its infancy, struggling to understand the forces of nature, to escape its enemies, to feed itself, and to reproduce its kind. The human mind was emerging from the darkness of animal instincts into the beginnings of reason. Its only thought: Survival! It was a dangerous world with enemies, everywhere and always.

"How great and powerful was our leader who was killed last season" they would think. "If only his might was with us now, we would easily destroy this enemy."

"Oh great leader help us in this time of our greatest need!"

And so ignorance created faith in the face of necessity.

And God was born!

This God that ignorance found, or formed, looks a great deal like a man. They tell us it has a face, hands, bowels, a foot (maybe two). They tell us it has nostrils and likes to smell the burnt offerings upon the primitive altar. (Face: Ex. 33:11,20,23; Num. 14:15. Hands: Ps. 28:5. Bowels: Jer. 31:20. Foot: Is. 37:25. Maybe two feet: Ps. 18:9. Nostrils: 2 Sam. 22:9,16. Smell burnt offerings: Gen. 8:21)

This God, that ignorance found or formed, also has remarkably human desires and emotions. It hates, it loves, it feels anger and it feels compassion. It has favorite individuals, and a chosen people. This God is definitely of the male sex, and has definite male tendencies. It is often angry, easily enraged, swears, destroys things, pouts, shouts, deceives and often rests. (Hates: Mal. 1—2,3, Rom. 9:11-13. Love: Deut. 7:13. Anger: Ex. 4:14. Compassion: Ps. 111:4. Favorite: Ex. 3:21. Chosen people: Is. 44:2. Angry: Deut. 9:20, 1 Kin. 11:9, etc. Enraged: 1 Sam. 6:19. Swears: Gen. 12:3. Destroys things: Gen. 6:17. Pouts: Ex. 32:9-10. Shouts: Ps. 47:5. Deceives: Jer. 20:7. Rests: Gen. 2:2)

Any wife would recognize God.

This God that was found by a primitive and ignorant people some thousands of years ago, just happened to have the same world outlook, and the same beliefs about nature, as the people who found him. This God thought the sun revolved around the earth, and that a day could be made longer by simply stopping the sun for a while. It is truly amazing, the number of similarities there are between the beliefs of God, and the beliefs of the people who discovered God. (Stopping the sun: Josh. 10:12)

Those people, though primitive, possessed skills, and so did the God they found. This God gave instructions for building a boat, he designed clothes for the priests, gave the formula for a perfume, was a tailor and made coats of skins. This God also made many simple, often foolish, laws that are called "Commandments." And God did many other things very human, and very peculiar to the time and people who first discovered God. (Boat: Gen. 6:14-18. Designed clothes for the priests: Ex. 28:39. Formula for perfume: Ex. 30:34-35. Made coats of skin: Gen. 3:21)

But of all the human-like things that God is said to have done, the most important thing of all, we are told, was to write books, or to guide the hand and mind of those who wrote. It is the books that God is said to have written, or caused to be written, that are to be considered tonight.

The story I have told about the discovery of God is not unique. Anthropologists agree it has happened many times, and in many different places. Whenever primitive people needed a God they have always found a God, tailor made. It was their own God, and always resembled them a great deal. The God always had the same enemies and the same morals, as the people who found him, and many of those Gods were authors; They wrote books.

I would have no trouble, if I were in a Moslem part of the world, convincing the people there that the Christian Bible is not "the word of God." If I were addressing Buddhist, Hindu, or people of any other religion I would have no trouble proving, to their satisfaction, that the Christian Bible is not the inspired word of God.

But I am in a Christian dominated part of the world. And being in a Christian part of the world, I feel that I would have no trouble convincing most of you that the Moslem holy books are false, that those books are not the true word of God. You would tend to agree that all those other people, who have other Gods and other religious books, are mistaken. You might agree that they have been misinformed, or even deceived. It would seem that people in other parts of the world are so easily made to believe whatever is accepted in their part of the world. They so easily believe in false idols. Only we, who happen to be born in the Christian part of the world, have the "true truth." Well, most of us do. There are, of course, the Jews, and those terrible old Atheists, and many others who refuse to accept the "truth" of the Christian Bible, . . . but they don't count.

Let us ignore the non-Christians among us and assume the Christian religion — and Bible, is totally accepted in this part of the world. The point is simply this: is truth geographical? Should not the same things that are true in Iran be also true in India, Japan, Africa, Canada, and all the rest of the world? It would seem so, doesn't it? Scientific truths are universal, why are religious truths not universal? Is it reasonable to assume that we alone are right and all the rest of the world wrong? That we are the ones, the only ones, who have the true God and the true "word of God" book?

Can the simple God of the Christian Bible, that is so like a man, that is so like the people who first found God, can that God be the God that wisdom seeks? Wisdom is well aware of the God that the primitive mind has found. Wisdom is aware of the Bible, and of all the other God books, and is aware of the religions built upon those books and those Gods; and yet wisdom and reason continue to seek God, or even a trace of God.

Once the God idea was established in a tribe it was passed along from generation to generation, the children were taught to believe as the parents believed, and the children's children were in turn taught to believe. Just as we were taught to believe what our parents believed. Children have always been taught to believe, but never to question.

And so God became a self perpetuating assumption.

In our part of the world the Christian Bible dominates. In these countries there are many people who believe the Bible is "the inspired word of God." They have been taught to believe that book is the foundation of our laws, the essence of justice, the source of our liberty and even of our civilization. They believe it promises to defeat death and gives hope of another world where happiness will be theirs for all eternity.

I wish it were true.

Those people have not read the Bible, or they have read it with a closed mind. They have failed to see the ignorance, the injustice, the hatred of liberty, the religious intolerance, the persecutions, and the gross immorality that is in the Bible.

They remember the heaven, but they forget the hell.

It is not lightly that I take the task of proving the Bible cannot be the word of God. If the promises, though false, were helpful to mankind, I would pass over them in silence. But they are not beneficial! "Holy books" have never been a help to humanity, and can never be. In fact they are becoming more dangerous every day. The honest historian knows that religious books are, and have always been, a great burden to mankind. And in spite of all our modern knowledge those old books continue to cause hatred and wars today.

So we must examine the Christian Bible, not because it is greatly different from other religious books, of other nations and of other Gods, but because it is the one book that is made to dominate our society by indoctrination. We are taught to believe it in childhood, and forbidden to question it in adulthood. It endangers our modern world, it prevents intellectual maturity and limits the scope of our thoughts to primitive legends.

Is the Christian Bible "The inspired word of God"? Let us think carefully what that claim must mean. With that claim comes the obvious conclusion that the Bible must be "God perfect." That is to say the Bible must be far more perfect than any mere human minds could possibly have made it. Any mistake in that book, any error or contradiction, in fact or form, would prove that book could not be "God's inspired word."

Not only would the Bible be perfect in itself, but it would be equally plain and understandable to every human mind, and every person would understand it exactly the same.

Perhaps you feel that I demand too much of a mere book. That a God who could create the human understanding, could not be expected to produce a book that would agree with that creation.

Personally, I believe it is asking too much of us to believe that God would write, or inspire, a book that mankind could not agree upon. A book that has caused endless wars, persecutions, torture, bigotry and hatred. A book that is so unintelligible that not only do "non-believers" reject it, but those who believe it to be the true word of God cannot agree upon its interpretation. There are hundreds of different Christian sects in the United States alone, and that does not include the countless thousands of private individuals who have their own, personal, interpretations of the Bible.

The very fact of this debate, or any debate about the Bible, is irrefutable proof that the Bible cannot be "the word of God."

It is often claimed by theologians that the original scriptures were perfect, but that the Bible has lost its perfection through copy errors and by being translated through several languages. Impossible! There could not be an imperfect copy or translation of a perfect book that was perfectly understood by the translator. God would not permit it!

If there is a God.

There are many versions of the Christian Bible and there are many conflicting interpretations of each version. Not only by the ordinary Christian believers and clergymen, but by those scholars who have spent their entire lives studying the scriptures. Such confusion is not the work of God.

From the evil and confusion the Bible has caused, and continues to cause, and from the primitive, foolish and contradictory nature of that book, it is self evident that the Bible cannot represent the word of God. I will quote a few passages, from one of the many versions of the Bible to show why I reject the Bible. I will quote the King James version, as I read and understand it. I am not foolish enough to believe what I understand the Bible to say, is what the Bible says. Considering the numerous versions and interpretations of the Bible, I am amazed that there is any person on earth foolish enough to believe his, or her, interpretation of the Bible is the correct one; that he or she alone, somehow, has stumbled upon the true meaning of the Bible, while all the other believers, non-believers, ministers, priests, scholars and infidels have misinterpreted, and misunderstood, the Bible.

Some people say there are over two thousand self contradictions in the Bible, some other people say they cannot find even one. All I can do at this time, is to point out a few, of the many, that seem contradictory to me.

I will begin with the first commandment that God gave to man; the one that no fundamentalist Christian has ever broken.

Genesis 2: verses 16-17 reads: "And the Lord God, commanded the man, saying 'of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: (17) But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die'."

According to the Bible, the man, Adam, did not die in the day that he ate from the forbidden tree. For the Bible says that Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden and; Genesis 5: verse 5 reads: "And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died."

But, as I understand the Bible, there is yet another contradiction to Genesis 2: verse 16-17.

In Genesis 3: verse 22-23 God seems to be talking to some others God, and I read it to say: (22) "And the Lord God said, behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever; (23) therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken."

In Genesis 2:16-17, God said "of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat but of the tree of knowledge." Now, in Genesis 3:22-23 we find that there is yet another tree in the garden that was forbidden; the tree of life.

As I read the Bible, it does appear that God's word cannot be relied upon as in this, apparent, contradiction:

Exodus 33: verse 20, God is said to have said: "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live."

Exodus 33: verse 22 reads: "And the Lord spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend."

That seems like a self-contradiction to me, but as I have said, the Bible is obviously incomprehensible, and you may not see anything strange about the two statements at all. I could spend the rest of the evening giving contradictions that are to be found in the Old Testament, so I must skip over the rest.

How about the New Testament, are there contradictions in that too? Well, some say there obviously are many contradictions in the New Testament, and there are others who say there are none at all. I can only tell you what that book says to me.

As I read the New Testament I find the first contradiction in the very first verse, of the very first chapter, of the very first book of the New Testament.

In Matthew 1: verse 1, I read: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." And after that verse comes a long line of "begats" until we come to verse 16, that reads: "And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ."

Now if Joseph was not the natural father of Jesus, but only the husband of Mary, as Matthew 1:16 says, then Matthew 1, 1 to 16, is not, cannot be, "the origin of Jesus Christ," as is stated in the first chapter, first verse of Matthew.

But if Joseph is the natural father of Jesus, as is implied in other verses of the Bible, then the story of Jesus being born of a virgin is the contradiction. That legend is in Matthew 1:18 and reads: "Now the origin of Christ was in this wise. When Mary his mother had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit."

Also, and most important, if Jesus were born of a virgin and was not the descendant of David, then the words of Peter in Acts 2:29-30 are false. In Acts 2:29-30 Peter says: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. (30) therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;"

Now we have a pretty kettle of fish. If Jesus is the son of God through the "Holy Spirit," as is stated in Matthew 1:18-20, then either he is not the Christ, or God has "sworn with an oath" a lie to David. Or else, Jesus is the son of Joseph, son of David, son of Abraham, and thus might be the "Christ"; but then he cannot be the son of God by the Holy Spirit, and could not have been born of a virgin.

Again I could spend the entire evening going through the apparent contradictions in the New Testament. But as we are speaking of a book that is said to be the word of God, we need

only one contradiction, anywhere in the Bible to prove it is not the word and work of God.

If there is a God.

The Bible cannot be true as it constantly contradicts itself. Yet it might be an inspiration to good morals and proper conduct. So let us see what the Bible says about goodness, justice, kindness, morality and respect for family, friend and neighbor.

Let us look at some of the sexual morals that are in the Bible. I will begin with Genesis 19. As I read the story, two "angels" are guests in Lot's house when "the men of the city" come to the house and Genesis 19:5-8 reads: "And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them. (6) and Lot went out the door unto them and shut the door after him: (7) and said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. (8) Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known men; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes; only unto these men do nothing, for therefore they came under the shadow of my roof."

Naturally, I cannot know what that says to anyone else, but to me it seems to say: "Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known men; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes;"

What kind of father would offer his children to a mob to be used as they see fit? I will be honest with you, if you were a guest in my house, I would protect you with all my might, but if it came to the point of it being either you or my children, it would be you. And I would expect the same, if it were your choice between your children or me. If it were God himself, if there is a God, he would go before my children. I am not a Christian. I am very pro-family, my innocent children come first.

But that is not the end of the story, it goes on and gets worse. In Genesis 19:31-32, Lot's daughters are talking: "And the firstborn said unto the younger. Our Father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come unto us after the manner of all the earth: (32) come let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father."

And this seedy story goes on until Genesis 19:36 reads: "Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father."

Now I know that is not what the Bible says to you who believe it to be "the word of God." But to me, it seems to say: "Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father." To me that story is pure filth, but others say there is no filth, and no immorality, in the Bible, so I do not know what that story says to others, but to me it is pure filth. And, to me, filth cannot be a part of "the word of God."

There are many stories in the Christian Bible that I believe are immoral, pure filth, but that one will serve as an example for the rest. After all, we are considering the Bible as "the word of God," we need only one "bad" story, only one contradiction, only one untruth or injustice, to prove the Bible is not "the word of God."

Let us consider God's justice as recorded in the Bible.

King David obtained one of his many wives through kidnap, rape and murder. The story is in the second book of Samuel, chapter 11, and verse 4 reads: "And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him and he lay with her. . . ." I hope you will forgive me for repeating such filthy stories, but that is what the Bible says. The story goes on and Bathsheba is pregnant. David has her husband, Uriah, killed and in verse 26 and 27 we read: "And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. (27) And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord."

Good! Now we will have a chance to see God's justice in action. How did God punish David for those most awful crimes? How do you think such a terrible man should be punished? Well, God's punishment for David's crimes can be read in the second book of Samuel, chapter 11: verse 15, it reads: "And the Lord struck the child, that Uriah's wife bore unto David, and it was very sick." and verse 18 reads: "And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died." Believe it or not; God's idea of justice for the murder of Bathsheba's husband, was for God himself to murder Bathsheba's innocent baby. That is God's justice according to the Christian Bible.

I don't know what that story says to a believing Christian, but if what I understand the

Bible to say, is what it says, it would take a very deprived mind to believe the Bible is "the word of God."

Let us consider the Commandments of God, according to the Bible. There are not just ten Commandments, as many people seem to believe, but hundreds. There are no less than 73 chapters filled with the Commandments of God. And a God being what a God is, every Commandment must receive the same obedience as every other Commandment. Now, let us see what God hath Commanded.

Exodus 22:18 reads: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." When Christianity had power these eight words caused hundreds of thousands of innocent people to be tortured and burned alive. That Commandment is of the same group as one version of the, so called, Ten Commandments.

God's Commandment in Exodus 21:2 reads "If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go free for nothing." Exodus 21:4 reads "If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's and he shall go out by himself." Remember, these are God's Commandments, and God's justice, according to the Bible. Exodus 21:5-6 reads "And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children: I will not go out free: (6) Then the master shall bring him unto the judges . . . and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever."

The Bible always upholds slavery, and has always been the greatest obstacle to justice and human progress in the world.

Another of God's Commandments is Deuteronomy 13:6-8, it reads: "If thy brother, the son of thy mother. Or thy son, or thy daughter, or thy wife of thy bosom. Or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, let us go and serve other Gods which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; (7) namely, of the Gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth unto the other end of the earth (8) thou shalt not consent unto him, nor harken unto him; neither shalt thou conceal him (9) but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. (10) and thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."

Who said God was pro-life?

I have often pointed out to Christians that Christianity has caused untold suffering in the world. That history is so filled with Christian wars, persecutions, torture, burning and hate that no gentle and kind person would call himself a Christian if they knew the truth of Christian history.

The answer is always the same: "How can I, or any Christian today, be held responsible for what people, who called themselves Christians, have done in the past?"

And yet, according to the second Commandment God holds the children responsible for the mistakes, or crimes of their parents, "even unto the third and fourth generation." In fact the entire concept of Christianity is based upon "original sin," the ultimate in unjust hereditary guilt.

I do not believe in hereditary guilt. The very idea that we, the human race are born in sin because of some small misdeed that Adam was said to have done is foolish. No! It is more than foolish, it is insane. Such insanity is not of God.

The very idea that God would have to be born to a virgin, or anything else, and then have to be murdered by mankind, in order to forgive mankind, is very insane. I believe a God would do just as you would do if your child had been naughty, and you had become angry for a while. You would not say to that child: Bringeth thou me a hammer and hitteth thou me upon thine hand, hard, that I mayeth forgive thee thy naughtiness that thou hath done."

No! You would go to the child, and you would take that child into your arms, and you would tell your child that you love him/her with all your heart, and that you could never really be angry with him. That he/she means more to you than your own life. That is what you would do, or should do: That is what I would do, and any book that says God would do any less simply cannot be the word of God.

We must not be a slave to a primitive superstition. We must not be afraid to think, to question and to investigate. We must set our minds free: Get up off your knees and stand upon your own two feet, raise your head, open your eyes and start to use your mind. The use of the human mind has risen us above all the other animals and has made mankind master of the entire earth. The human mind —reason — is the only hope we have of surviving in our modern, atomic, world. We must learn to use our minds.

There is good news tonight: Spread the good news!

Our minds are now free to reason;

THE BIBLE IS NOT THE WORD OF GOD!

Nov. 1983

CONCLUSION #1

Emmett F. Fields

We are, without doubt, one of the most indoctrinated and deceived nations on earth; at least, at very least, in the area of religion. Today there is no greater threat to our nation, and to our liberty than Christianity. No other force could have silenced and changed American history as Christianity has done. And no other force could have so completely deceived the American public as Christianity has done.

The Christian aggression against America, against the rights of non-Christians, is based on the delusion that the Bible is "the word of God." Let us look at the terrible history of that delusion.

If you know any history at all, you know Christianity and the Bible has not only failed to maintain peace, you know they have been entirely responsible for the most bloody and unnecessary wars of history. You know all the Crusades were pure Christian aggressions. You know the crusaders, in spite of their devout faith in the Bible, in prayer, in Christianity, and in their God, failed again and again to recapture the "Holy land." And true to their Bible the Crusaders slaughtered men, women and children whenever they captured a city.

And yet Christians call the Bible "the word of God," and themselves "moral"!!

If you know any history at all you know the Dark Ages was a time of the absolute establishment of the Christian Bible and the Christian religion. You know it was a time of the greatest poverty, ignorance, oppression and superstition, and you know there was never a more evil and immoral age. You know the torture and burning of heretics was justified by the Bible. You know the Bible was the excuse for the Holy Inquisition, for the torture and burning of witches, for robbing orphans and widows. You know the Bible has caused more hate and persecution than any other book; more suffering than any other disease. And you know the Bible has always been the greatest enemy of human progress, of science, of culture and learning; the greatest enemy of morality, liberty, and justice in the world.

If you know any history at all you know America was a refuge for those who were persecuted by the Bible, and the established church in Europe. You know Bible-believing Christians have never had any concept of freedom. They have always thought freedom was their right to force their belief upon others. And you know the first concern of the Founding Fathers was to separate religion from government, and to establish a free nation, and a free people. And you know also that most of the Founding Fathers were Deists, not Christians.

If you know any history at all you know when the Bible was established, and Christianity had power, Christians tortured and murdered those who doubted or disagreed with their Bible. And whenever Christians lose the power to persecute, they slander and call "immoral" those they can no longer persecute.

And yet Christians call the Bible "the word of God," and themselves "moral"!!

Today Christianity has gained its dangerous power in America by teaching Bible, instead of nation; by confusing piety with patriotism; by calling good Americans "Communists," good patriots "traitors." They teach hate and distrust against those who uphold the great American ideals of separation of state and church and hate against the American courts that dare to uphold our nation's Constitution.

Christianity has suppressed and changed American history, has hidden quotes, facts and evidence which prove that Christianity and the Bible was recognized as the enemy of freedom by those who founded this nation. Christians have hidden the fact that the Founding Fathers struggled to insure freedom of conscience; struggled to put Christianity in its rightful place — the equal of every other religious opinion; struggled to put the Bible in its rightful place — the equal of every other book.

Today Christian history tells us one truth: Those who have murdered will also lie!

Unless you are a dedicated scholar of American history, you do not know that Deism was the direct rejection, and refutation, of the Christian Bible, the Christian religion, and the Christian God; You do not know that George Washington "was the leading statesman who advocated total separation of state and church and who saw to it that no reference to Christianity or even Deity was made in the Constitution" (The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 2). You do not know that the first freedom the Constitution was meant to establish is the freedom from religion. That Thomas Jefferson was a Deist and advised his young nephew to "question with boldness even the existence of a god" (Letter to Peter "Deism in the United States," pp. 222-34. Carr. Aug. 10, 1787) You do not know that the outspoken Deist Thomas Paine, did more to make the United States of America a free and separate nation than any other American. And you do not know a thousand other facts of American history that disprove Christian claims; facts that would keep America free.

You do not need to be a scholar to know that fundamentalist Christianity, and the forces of Bible superstition are attacking the very roots of our nation's freedom today.

And yet Christians call the Bible "the word of God," and themselves "moral."

History has proved again and again that personal morality cannot survive where people believe in divine forgiveness, believe in the Bible delusion that some "higher power" can remove the guilt from the guilty, without removing the wrong from the victim.

Religion always claims that immorality springs from a lack of religion, but the facts prove just the opposite. Christianity has never been stronger in the United States than it is today. Christians have churches in every community, they monopolize radio and television time with religious propaganda. They have forced their religion into our government, into our laws and into our lives. They have silenced all opposing facts and opinions. They are constantly acquiring more and more power, more and more property and more and more wealth. Yet they have not the basic morality to pay their honest taxes.

At the same time that Christianity has been growing every richer and ever more powerful, taxes have risen higher and higher, poverty and hunger have increased, the crime rate has been climbing ever higher and ever faster, the aged are afraid to leave their homes; narcotics have become a national plague, and our nation has been involved in more wars and international conflicts than at any time in its history.

How do Christians gain power again and again after failing constantly to establish peace, progress, prosperity and morality?

Their technique is very simple. They call their Bible "the word of God" and themselves "moral."

We must not allow organized ignorance to destroy this great nation of ours. The American people must be made aware of one simple fact:

The Bible is not, AND CANNOT BE, "the word of God."

IS THE BIBLE THE WORD OF GOD #2

Emmett F. Fields

In the Bible, the book of Numbers, chapter 31, verse 15 reads: "And Moses said unto them, "have you saved all the women alive?"

And verses 17 and 18 reads: "Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. (18) But all the women children, that have not known man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves."

I know the Bible is not the word of God because it tells us God is a murderer; that God killed, or caused to be killed, millions of innocent people. That God ordered, or approved of, the murder of civilians, of little children, of helpless old people, defenseless women, prisoners of war, and even livestock. It tells us that God approved the instructions to soldiers to keep the virgins for yourselves. I detest and deny such a book, and I reject and call blasphemous any book that says such is the nature of God. The Bible slanders God, and therefore the Bible cannot be the word of God.

If there is a God, the Bible is a blasphemy. If there is no God, the Bible is a myth. Either way, the Bible is not the word of God.

In Exodus 29:45-46, God is said to have said (45): "And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. (46) and they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God."

The Bible says most clearly that the God of the Old Testament (Jehovah) is "THE LORD GOD OF THE HEBREWS," the God of "the children of Israel," the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob. The Old Testament is the story of a private tribal god, whose first and only concern is for his "chosen people." It is a god created by the priests of that tribe, to justify the atrocities that tribe committed. It is the story of a simple tribal god, and like all the other tribal gods in the world at that time, the god always reflected the people who created him. If the tribe was a warlike tribe, their god was a warlike god.

The Bible tells us the Hebrew tribes were an aggressive, hostile people, and so their God reflected their heartless ferocity. That God, and the books of the Old Testament, literally drip with innocent blood, with conquered people murdered, with raped virgins—mere children, with inhuman cruelties and unspeakable crimes — All approved by the Old Testament God! We do not need such a God in our modern world.

WE ARE INDEED LUCKY THAT THE BIBLE IS NOT THE WORD OF GOD!

The Bible tells us that God is small, that the Bible God is not the God of the endless Cosmos. He is not even the God of the entire Earth — small as that is, but is the God of some remote and primitive tribe, of some obscure area of our little Earth, during a limited period of time, long after the evolution of man. Such a concept of God is an insult and is absolutely false! I might believe in a God that is incomprehensibly great, but I could never believe in a God that is disgustingly small.

It is certain that the true God of the endless Universe could not be small. The Bible describes a God too insignificant for intelligent belief.

When I was a Christian the very thought that there could be a lie in the Bible was repulsive to me, just as it would be to any believing Christian. I had been taught that the Bible was the word of God. I had been taught to believe — to believe blindly and to worship without question.

Being the word of God, I knew there could not be one single lie in the Bible, I knew deep within me that God did not lie. I still believe that! If there is a God that God would not lie. It never occurred to me that the Bible was not the word of God, that it might be a forgery, the product of human deception.

There came a time when I determined to read the Bible again, this time just as I would read the books of some strange and foreign religion, to see it with the eyes of a thinking infidel. Would the infidel see our Bible as reasonable, as moral, and as a force for human good? It was then that I found the lie, and looking further I found another lie, then other lies and still more. To me it was a revelation; it was as if a bandage had been taken from my eyes and I was seeing the truth for the

first time. We all know that a book containing lies cannot be the word of God. We all know that, regardless of what concept we have of God.

The Bible is not the word of God because the Bible contains lies.

The Bible says in Exodus 10, verse 27, "But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go." Then in verse 29; we read "And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle."

That is a lie!

The God of the endless Universe would not murder innocent children. It is a lie that God "hardened Pharaoh's heart" so God would have an excuse to murder little babies. That is a lie and a blasphemy!

In the Bible (Deut. 28, verse 16) God is made to say: "But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth."

That is a lie!

The God of the endless cosmos never told savages to slaughter defenseless, defeated people, "to save alive nothing that breatheth." It is the lie of savages to justify their robbing and murdering their neighbors.

The Bible is not the word of God.

In the Bible (Josh. 10, verse 12-13) "Then spoke Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and said in the sight of Israel, sun, stand thou still upon Gideon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon. (13) and the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies."

That is a lie!

The God of our endless universe never stopped the sun (That is to say, stopped the turning of the Earth) so one bunch of savages could slaughter another bunch of savages.

It is a lie!

In the Bible (1 Samuel 6, verse 19) "And He smote the men of Bethsemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the Lord had smitten many of the people with great slaughter."

That is a lie!

The God of the endless universe would not slaughter the men of one savage tribe because they peeped at the superstitious paraphernalia of another savage tribe.

We could go on and on quoting these primitive lies from the Bible, all of which prove but one thing: The Bible is not the word of God.

All I ask is that you read the Bible. Read it with an open mind, and you will be amazed that you ever, for one moment, believed the Bible was the word of God.

Even some believers have seen the bad that is in the Old Testament. I know they have sworn not to think about the Bible, not to judge — but only to believe. Yet they have moved, some of them, a little, ever so little, away from the Old Testament. They won't admit it but some Christian believers wish the Old Testament had not been written. They are ashamed of it; they are ashamed of the old God — and the slaughter.

There they were, on their knees, eyes closed tight, hands clasped, head bowed, brain off. But, with innocent blood rushing by, the screams of women being murdered, of little children being raped, something slipped. They thought, just a little, but they thought. Evolution and natural morality had built an over-ride switch into their brain and, in spite of themselves, in spite of their religion, they thought.

Somehow they knew there was something wrong about the Old Testament! They didn't know just what, but there seemed to be something that was not just right. And so they moved. In spite of themselves, they moved — they created a new God!

A-Men, there is yet hope for mankind!

We now come to the New Testament, and although the New Testament has Jesus say, in Matthew 5, verse 17-18; "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. (18) For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or

one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." In spite of such claims, the New Testament is the religious philosopher's attempt to create a new God idea, and to escape the evil bloody God Tyrant of the Old Testament.

What kind of God is this new God? We know the oldest gospel in the New Testament was written after 78 A.D., and the other gospels are even more recent. So we know that the quotes of the new God, Jesus, were only legends for at least one generation, and in most cases for several generations.

Let us see "what it is said" this new God said according to the New Testament.

Jesus is said to have said: (Luke 14:26) "If any man come to me and hate not his father, his mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

That cannot be the words of God!

Jesus is said to have said: (Matthew 10:34-37) "Think not that I am come to send peace to earth: I come not to send peace, but a sword. (35) For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. (36) And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. (37) He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

That cannot be the words of God!

How can we ever find peace with gods like that running around in people's minds?

Jesus is said to have said: (Matthew 19:29 and Mark 10:29) "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters; or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

These are not the words of God!

Jesus is said to have said: (Mark 9:43-48) "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: (44) Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. (45) And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: (46) Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. (47) And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the Kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: (48) Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

Those are not the words of God: Those are words of insanity!

Jesus is said to have said: (Luke 12:5) "But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; I say unto you, fear him."

Christianity is founded upon fear — and is perpetuated by fear. That would not be the way of the true God, the great God of this endless universe.

In the New Testament, as in the Old Testament, we could go on and on quoting cruel, foolish, un-Godlike sayings from the new God. Sayings that we know are the words of men — of cruel, mean, heartless, small minded men. Words of hate and vengeance! words to frighten and oppress! They are words to give power to the priest, the church and the religion. They are words to destroy reason and to make the human mind a slave.

We now know that the Jesus myth of the New Testament was taken from the story of the founder of the Essene cult. The founder of the Essenes was named Jesus, he was crucified in 88 B.C. and everything good that Jesus of Nazareth is said to have said was written almost a hundred years before Jesus of Nazareth is said to have lived.

From the Essenian cult of the old Jewish religion, has evolved a new God, a new myth, a new religion and a New Testament.

But the good work of the religious philosophers who created the New Testament God has been corrupted by organized religion. The Jesus myth of the New Testament no longer resembles the kind and just leader of the Essenes who lived, suffered and died just a little over two thousand years ago.

In the New Testament we find a God that evolved during the first few hundred years of the Christian era. Christianity developed through religious hate. The weak were called heretics and their teachings were brutally suppressed, and so the Christianity that survived is the orthodoxy of

the strong and the ruthless. Orthodoxy destroyed the meek and filled Christianity with hate, fire and fury.

The Christian layman and the unscholarly T.V. preachers, who have so much influence and emotional appeal today, are unaware of the deterioration that occurred in Christianity during its formation. The good in the original story was pushed aside and the bad took hold. The idea of eternal torment, as well as the idea of easy forgiveness of sins became established and soon fossilized into dogma and doctrine.

In the New Testament there evolved a God much worse than the Old Testament God. As much worse in fact, as endless torture is worse than endless sleep, as much worse as eternal burning is worse than simple annihilation.

Unlike the God of the Old Testament, the God of the New Testament was not happy when his victims lay dead and broken before him. The Son of God has not only carried on the family tradition, but has exceeded the wildest expectations of the father.

If we are heartless enough to believe the Bible, we must believe the God of the New Testament pursues the dead into death. This God, we are told, has found a way to torture even those who have paid "the final penalty."

The New Testament God has set up his torture chamber where there can be no escape, where death cannot be a welcome release. Everlasting torture, eternal burning; this terrible belief, this evil everlasting injustice, has become the heart and foundation of the Christian religion. People believe, NOT through reason, NOT through any desire to goodness or piety, NOT through any hope of making the world better, or mankind better, or themselves better, but through FEAR — simple, devastating, mind-numbing FEAR. They believe because they are afraid to think, afraid to question. They keep their minds as little children — afraid to be adult men and women. They believe simply because they are afraid not to believe!

Those who believe in hell can never know truth, for they are blinded by fear. The idea of hell was invented to establish a religious dictatorship and those who believe live under a tyranny far greater than any human tyrant could ever establish. They believe they are always under the eye of the tyrant! They believe their every word is recorded, their every action noted, even their innermost thoughts are known and judged by their cruel master of endless, unmerciful punishment. To such believers every act and thought is the result of fear. They are to be pitied.

That terrible dogma of hell has destroyed the very foundations of morality. The basic force of morality is "the power of sympathy"; feeling the hurt of others — and caring. The dogma of hell has destroyed that foundation. The mother, it is believed, could sit joyfully in heaven for all eternity and watch her wayward son or daughter burning and suffering in hell.

I detest a belief that can make people so heartless. I could never be a Christian! I could never be happy in a heaven knowing there are people suffering in a hell. I have great sympathy for people, their pain, their suffering, their feelings, their losses, and their hopes.

I deny that hell exists! I deny that a vengeful God exists! And I deny that any book that tells the lie that such a gross, everlasting injustice as hell exists could be the word of God!

About the turn of this century there were over a hundred studies made, and published, which questioned the historicalness of Jesus. Was Jesus a real historic person or was he a myth? One of the most famous books on the subject was Albert Schweitzer's "The Quest of the Historical Jesus." The book was first published in 1906. Schweitzer concluded that, "The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give His work its final consecration, never had any existence." (p. 398).

History and scholarship tell us that Jesus was not a god but a myth; a Jesus of Nazareth did not live at the time that Jesus is said to have lived, and no one at that time did the things that Jesus is said to have done. We now know where the myth of Jesus came from and how it originated.

The discovery of the truth about the New Testament is one of the greatest miracles of the modern world. It is as if there were a God and that God had said: "Enough of this myth that has caused so much hate and trouble, so much war and persecution, so much torture and suffering in the world! I will put a stop to it before it destroys the entire earth."

What were the "miracles" that revealed the truth about the origin of the myth of Jesus, of Christianity and of the New Testament?

In December, 1945, there was discovered in upper Egypt a group of 52 Gnostic scrolls that dated from about 148 A.D. These first scrolls tell about the conflicting doctrines and the uncertainty in early Christianity.

In 1947 there was another unbelievable discovery. In Qumran, on the shore of the Dead Sea — about 15 miles from Jerusalem, another great number of ancient scrolls were discovered. These scrolls are known as "the Dead Sea Scrolls." The impression given the public was that there were only a few scrolls found, just those found in the first cave. But there have been discovered hundreds of scrolls, these scrolls are about a thousand years older than any previously known copy of the Bible, and they contain all of the books of the Old Testament except Esther. There are also other scrolls that date almost a hundred years before Jesus of Nazareth is said to have lived. They contain almost every myth in the New Testament; they contain "The sermon on the Mount", and other bits of goodness and wisdom attributed to Jesus. They do not contain the evil sayings of Jesus. Those have been added later.

These old scrolls simply destroy the credibility of the historical foundations of Christianity by proving the New Testament evolved from the uninspired, historical, writings of man.

These scrolls have not been honestly presented to the public. It is strange that what God seeks so forcefully to reveal, the men of God are so determined to conceal!

Religion is big business, and those who hold positions of profit and prestige in that business will not allow mere truth to become a threat to religion.

What kind of a God do you think there would be if there were a God? A God would be just, kind, good, helpful, intelligent and wise. In short, God would be all the things the Bible God is not. A true God would be better than the best of us, not worse than the worst of us.

If there were a God there would not be war, there would not be evil, there would not be starvation, overpopulation, pollution, misery, religion, plague and disease; there would not be dogmas and doctrines and creeds. There would be no need to believe foolishness and there would be no fear of thinking. Why even science, philosophy and reason would be respectable — if there were a God.

Honestly now! Who could worship a God like the God of the Bible? Not a thinking person! Certainly not a kind and gentle person, not a just person nor a loving person. It would have to be a frightened person. A person so afraid that he doesn't think, he just falls down and grovels before a tyrant. Only a coward could blindly worship the murderous, bloody, vengeful tyrant that the Bible describes as "God."

I will NOT worship such a God!

I cannot and will not believe in such a God. It is a lie. It is a blasphemy and a slander against the very idea of God.

The Bible is not the word of God!

With a God like the God in the Bible we don't need a Devil. When we look at the Bible we must seriously question if we have not been misled into worshiping the evil elements of nature instead of the good. We must seriously question if belief is not the wrong end, and doubt the right end, of religion. After all, it has always been the kindest, the gentlest, the most moral and the most respectable people who have eaten deeply of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil — the very tree the Bible demands that we avoid.

Or, has the world advanced so far that what seemed good to those who wrote the Bible is seen as evil now? Let's think about that! If the Bible is not the word of God, and of course it is not, then let us consider who did write the Bible and why.

The Bible was written by primitive priests, but those primitive priests were the learned men of that day. They were the thinkers and the law-givers. They derived their authority by claiming to speak for God. Primitive people are easily fooled, and often the old priests fooled themselves — just as honest ministers fool themselves today.

The priests who wrote the Bible stood upon their tippy-toes and reaching just as high as they could reach, they drove their spike. That spike is the Bible. It represents their best knowledge, their best morals, their most advanced understanding and world view. It was as high as they could

think! And they thought it was as high as anyone would ever be able to think. So they drove the spike of their knowledge just as high as they could reach and they called it "The word of God."

That spike, that was as high as those old priests could reach, is less than knee high to modern man. Humanity has advanced during the thousands of years since the Bible was written and our modern knowledge, and higher moral understanding, tells us that the spike, the Bible, is not "the word of God."

Today we desperately need a new God — a God that is NOT an insult to our intelligence — a God that is as great as the endless cosmos. We need a just God that does not have chosen galaxies and a preferred life form — a life form that is told to slaughter other life forms. We desperately need a God that commands that we think, instead of believe and worship. We need a God to civilize us, not one that makes us savages.

But we must not be as foolish as the old Bible priests. We must not drive another spike, create another Bible, and say "believe." How soon would future generations find our highest morality brutish, our best intellect childish, and our world view primitive? How soon would our children's children again be divided, with future orthodox preachers insisting that our book is "the word of God," and some future heretic saying "it is the ravings of ignorance."

We must not hold back future generations at our level. Let us stand upon our tippy-toes and make our mark, but beside that mark write "Question and Grow." Our best knowledge today is NOT the word of God, and the best wisdom of people who lived and thought thousands of years ago is not "the word of God."

There is one fact which wise men and heretics have always known, which philosophers and scholars have known for generations, a fact that even theologians know today, a fact that frees the mind and drives away the awful fear. The time has come for the victims to know that fact also:

The Bible is not the word of God!

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CONCLUSION #2

Emmett F. Fields

For two thousand years Christianity and the Bible has failed to bring peace and harmony to our world. The Bible has, in fact, been responsible for some of the most diabolical massacres and persecutions known to man. Today those historic facts are kept out of our history books.

Humanity now stands between the past and the future as it has never done before. We all know there is a great possibility that humanity will not have a future; that we will destroy ourselves.

If we are to survive this atomic age we must find a new way of thinking, we can no longer believe blindly, and hate those who believe differently. Instead we must find ways to unite mankind, ways to remove unnecessary boundaries and barriers. We must find ways to remove the causes of hate.

Much of our hate and trouble in the world is founded upon the delusion that the Bible is "the word of God." There has never been a greater source of hate than the assumption that we are doing God's work, that we have the "word of God" to guide us and that our task is to destroy some "center of evil" in the world. Throughout history that delusion has been responsible for the most terrible wars and atrocities. That delusion may destroy our world!

There is not a conflict in the world today that does not have at its roots a different of religious opinion. The Jews, Christians and Moslems are murdering each other in Lebanon, Catholics and Protestants murder each other in Ireland. And how much of our hatred for Russia, and Communism, springs from the fact that they have chosen to establish Atheism.

When we read that Moslem terrorists will drive a truck load of explosives into a building and die to kill others in their "holy war," we recognize that as a form of insanity.

When we hear a Christian fundamentalist preaching "no coexistence with Godless Communism" we should know that is equally insane in our atomic age.

When we read that a powerful Christian leader has reaffirmed the medieval dogma that birth

control and contraceptives are immoral and against Bible teachings; we should realize that too is insanity in our overpopulated world.

Such teachings are of the past, a past full of hate, war and persecution; a past full of blind faith and religious delusions.

Today we are playing for keeps.

Today we must find a new way of thinking.

We can no longer stick our heads into the sands of superstition and hope "God" will protect us; that hope has failed too often. Those who study the facts of history know that:

Those who knew the Bible was not "the word of God" brought about the Renaissance and saved humanity from the Dark Ages;

Those who knew the Bible was not "the word of God" had the wisdom to establish America as a free nation;

Those who knew the Bible is not "the word of God" have given us every great advance in science and reason;

And those who know the Bible is not "the word of God" are the only ones who can lead mankind to peace and human survival.

The Bible and all the other so-called "holy books" are of the past. If humanity cannot outgrow these barbaric relics that divide us and cause so much hate, we cannot hope to have a future. We cannot hope to survive another generation!

If mankind survives, future generations will know this age as "the age of propaganda," the age of hate for opinion's sake. Future generations will marvel that our age, with its modern technology and great wealth of solid scientific learning, could remain rooted in the primitive fables of past ages; they will marvel that we could not see the evil and danger of worshipping an historic failure.

If mankind survives this religious age future generations will look upon our instruments of war and doubt our sanity, just as we look upon the torture instruments of a past religious age and doubt their sanity.

Already the delusion that the Bible is "the word of God" has dangerously corrupted America's rightful purpose in the world.

The overabundance of religious propaganda in America today would lead us to believe that the primary purpose of this nation is the preservation and expansion of the Christian religion. But that is not true.

Our nation is not, and must not become, the battleship of the Christian religion. Our struggle in the world is in defense of LIBERTY. To preserve our own, and, if possible, to help others gain and keep theirs.

This nation is not fighting "Godless Atheism" nor "Atheistic Communism," nor any other group or nation that has had Christian hate terms applied to them.

We, as a nation, are opposed to Communism because Communism, like Christianity, is an ideological force that is destructive to human rights and freedom. It is, in fact, none of our business whether another nation, or another individual, believes in a God or not. Our only concern is that every individual must have the liberty to decide just what he, or she, can and will believe. And that they have the freedom to express, publish and pursue those beliefs in perfect safety.

In short, our only concern in the world is exactly those ideals that this great nation of ours was originally founded upon.

Such a statement is in no way a concession to Communism. It is a statement of our determination to be, and to remain, a free people. Those who have tasted real freedom can never return to the mental slavery of an oppressive belief. It is entirely correct to say:

"I would rather be dead than Christian or red."

When George Washington was president in 1796 he wrote "a treaty of peace and friendship" with Tripoli. That treaty reads "As the government of the United States is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion; it has, in itself, no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquillity of the Musselmen (Muslims) . . . no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries."

That treaty, signed into law by President John Adams, proves the Founding Fathers recog-

nized religion to be the source of hate and war. It also proves the United States was not, is not, and must not become, a Christian nation.

Why can we not write a treaty today that has the great wisdom that Washington put into the treaty with Tripoli? Why can we not say to Russia: "As the Government of the United States is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion; it has, in itself, no character of enmity against the Laws, Religion, or Tranquillity of the Communists (Atheists) . . . no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries."

Such a treaty today would remove the main source of hate and we could get on with the business of understanding each other and establishing a hope for peace and human survival.

The greatest obstacle to our peace and survival is the foolish, irrational, delusion that the Bible is "the word of God."

If we are to save our children and our world we must accept the fact that the Bible is not the word of God.