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Tel: 503-375-5323
fourthr@westarinstitute.org
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Cover image: The Doubting of Thomas, an eleventh-century depiction from St. Sophia of Kyiv, a UNESCO World Heritage site in Kiev, Ukraine. Artist unknown.
A Devil’s Exercise

About eighteen months ago a colleague invited me on an adventure. Would I be willing to reimagine the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius in a team of two women and two men? Although I had intimate knowledge of the Exercises constructed by the sixteenth-century Basque courtier, soldier, and mystic, my experience of the thirty-day Ignatian retreat and the ideological assumptions structuring the Exercises gave me pause.

Iñigo de Loyola had been a man on the make, using court life and soldiering as a way to get ahead in the Spain of the Conquistadors. Only a severe battle injury prevented his career plans. His prolonged convalescence gave him a chance to profoundly reassess his life. He decided that, even with a limp, he could do “great things” for his newly chosen sovereign, Jesus. He would soon thereafter put together notes of his ascetical and mystical experiences into a small volume that would lead a person to discover, in conversation with a retreat guide, one’s true desire and whether an encounter with a narrative of the life of Jesus would go anywhere. This intensive and guided meditation, conducted over a few weeks, produced remarkable results. The earliest companions of Iñigo all went through these Exercises. They founded a company focused on Jesus, earning the name “Jesuits.” In fact, it was the Exercises that provided the motivational basis for the various counter-reformation attempts by the Jesuits throughout Europe.

I agreed to join only under certain conditions. I would bring to the conversation my longstanding research on the historical Jesus as well as an appreciation of historical limitations and an abiding critical skepticism. My colleagues actually hoped that that would be my angle of approach. So we began.

From the outset I was acutely aware of Iñigo’s latent machismo from the world of the Conquistadors. His use of the New Testament, not unexpectedly, was naïve and literal. But perhaps the most perplexing aspect of the Exercises is that, while they concentrate on the life of Jesus, not one of the sayings of Jesus appears. Of course, various retreat directors over time have introduced various sayings, and those making the retreat are encouraged to imagine what Jesus might be saying in a scene. But it is quite telling that the Exercises actually make no mention. It was action, not words, that seemed to count.

And so the devil entered into me as we discussed the Exercises. I suggested that we take seriously some of the wisdom sayings of the historical Jesus. We began examining what happens to us when we test “What you treasure is your heart’s true measure.” I pointed out that as an itinerant sage Jesus would have challenged his listeners to determine whether what he was saying had any merit. They had to figure it out. It was up to them to “get it.” If they saw wisdom in his words, they would remember them, live out of them, and pass them on to challenge subsequent audiences. This was how the conspiracy of the atmosphere of God grew.

The aphorisms and parables of Jesus provided a number of incandescent moments. When my colleagues began to read the saying of “God sending sun and rain upon the good and bad, just and unjust” (Matt 5:45) from the point of view of a first-century peasant, their imaginations began to catch fire. Here was a vision of a God unrestrainedly showering benefits on those who “don’t deserve it” according to the norms of the first century. The story of “A man going down from Jerusalem” (Luke 10:30–35) no longer served as an example story, but as a shocking revelation that your enemy could be human, indeed human enough to entrust your life to. Such words transgressed boundaries, just as the God envisioned by Jesus could mercifully encompass just and unjust. Even the “eye of the needle” aphorism (Mark 10:25) was perceived no longer as a simple critique of wealth, but as a comic undermining of a cultural assumption shared by poor and rich alike—that wealth was an indicator of God’s favor. Rather, one could live life out of a fundamental trust, as simply as the wild lilies in the field (Luke 12:27).

Working with the words of Jesus is not everyone’s cup of tea. The results are not predictable; the engagement is not simple. Some of my students who have joined me in the Exercises resisted the task of working with the words. They would rather have me tell them what the words mean. Others did not like that some sayings run sharply against their presumed image of Jesus. They did not want words that can bite. Moreover, they resisted the burden of putting these words in historical context and having to ask whether the words still have any meaning for the present. Why not simply imitate “buddy Jesus” and leave the thinking out of the picture?

On the other hand, my experience with my colleagues and many students who have dared to struggle with the words and put them into play has convinced me that something quite real is afoot. We do not simply repeat the words of Jesus when we remember them. Instead, we chew on them, taste them, discover in them possibilities that fly against and beyond the fearful constrictions of our world. In knocking our heads together over those fragmentary utterances from a hauntingly creative voice, we pick something up. We discover how to reframe the very conditions of our life together.
Marcion, Forgotten Church Father and Inventor of the New Testament

Jason David BeDuhn

The first generations of Christians formed diverse, local groups with several distinctly different understandings of their experience of Jesus Christ, and divergent interpretations of the meaning of his instruction. In the words of B. H. Streeter, “There was no unifying authority, no world-wide organisation, however informal, to check the independent development of the various local churches each on its own lines.” These local Christian communities had a complex relationship to the broader Jewish community—itself diverse—within which they first developed, and which passed through a series of violent uprisings against the Roman order in 66–70, 115–117, and 132–134 CE. With each successive wave of Jewish restiveness and anti-Jewish repression, local Christian communities would have been faced with fundamental questions of identity and association with respect to the Jewish roots of their faith. They fell under social and cultural pressure: from without, for their links to Jewish identity; from within, for their nonconformity to newly emerging Jewish orthodoxies.

Onto this scene stepped Marcion. Following what he believed to be the views of Paul, he pushed for a clean break with the Jewish religious tradition. Marcion applied his intellectual and organizational gifts to working out a resolution of the troubled relationship between the parent religious culture and its wayward offspring. If Paul was correct that the message of Christ ultimately transcended the boundaries of the Mosaic covenant, what role remained for the Jewish scriptures that enjoined, celebrated, and promoted that covenant? And if those scriptures were obsolete, as this line of understanding might be taken to imply, where could one look for authoritative guidance? What were to be the distinctly Christian scriptures?

Who was Marcion?
The historical role of Marcion at this crucial turning point in the development of Christianity has been obscured by his traditional reputation as a “heretic.” Later Christianity traced itself back—in hindsight—to certain views among the great variety expressed by early Christians. Theological propositions, such as Marcion’s, that had not been adopted into that so-called orthodoxy were branded as heretical (literally, “sectarian” or not going along with the majority opinion). Of course, this entire way of looking at Christian history was anachronistic, since it judged Marcion’s time by opinions that only became the majority view much later.

Marcion shared with most Christians of his time the idea, from the teachings of Jesus, that there was something fundamentally wrong with a world full of violence and injustice, where the wicked prospered and the innocent suffered. Many Christians before Marcion, including Paul, had understood this to mean that God was not in direct, immediate control of the world, but that, through Jesus, he was announcing a plan to intervene in the world’s affairs and “save” those who wished to be rescued. Marcion saw a fairly stark contrast between this Christian God and the portrayal of God in the Jewish scriptures, and he concluded that the God of Moses was not the God of Jesus. For Marcion, the God of the “Old Testament” was part of the problematic character of this world, not the source of the solution brought by Jesus.

For Marcion, the God of the “Old Testament” was part of the problematic character of this world, not the source of the solution brought by Jesus. Marcion was far from alone in this opinion. Among Marcion’s followers and the various communities of so-called “Gnostic” Christians, it was probably the majority opinion in the second century. Eventually, however, most Christians found enough continuities between the teachings of Jesus and the Jewish scriptures to conclude that the same God stood behind both, and that Marcion had overemphasized the differences.

But it was not enough simply to say that Marcion’s theological views had not prevailed. It became habitual to accuse him and all other “heretics” of bad motives, of deliberately misleading people into “error.” Why else would they have resisted “truth” so stubbornly and defended their own conclusions till their dying breath? With this frame of mind, later Christians quite naturally found it difficult to accept that Marcion had contributed anything positive to making Christianity what it had become. That is why it takes a neutral historical perspective to recover the story of Marcion as a key figure in his own time and to identify the lasting impact he had on Christianity—not through his
Marcion came from the Roman province of Pontus, on what is today the north coast of Turkey. He began in the sea trade as a shipmaster or shipowner. His profession may be the most significant thing we know about him personally. Ships were the fastest and most effective means of communication and transport of goods in the Roman Empire. Through the organization of his business, Marcion would have had agents or contacts in many major ports throughout the empire and would have visited these far-flung places for business reasons. This would have given him a tremendous advantage when it came to spreading his message rapidly and organizing communities on an empire-wide scale. Those engaged in the sea trade were one of the only segments of the population to have channels of communication independent of government control. The role they may have played in spreading Christianity must remain for now mostly speculation. But it may be pertinent to note that, precisely at the time when Marcion was active, the Roman government found it necessary to issue laws against admitting people who were not actually involved in the sea trade into membership in its professional associations. That may suggest that the latter were being employed for some sort of networking beyond the original purpose of such associations.

We do not know if Marcion was born into the Christian movement or converted to it. We have no way of knowing whether he was raised in a Christian community already disconnected from its Jewish roots, later joined such a community, or was himself an innovator in that direction. In fact, the whole question of just how distinct Christianity had become from Judaism by Marcion’s time is very actively debated today. The first Christians were Jews, and the first non-Jewish Christians almost certainly came from the so-called “God-fearers”—Gentiles who attended Jewish synagogues as a kind of affiliated community of “fans,” so to speak, of Jewish religious traditions. The Christian movement crossed into Gentile awareness from its Jewish roots. That may suggest that the latter were being employed for some sort of networking beyond the original purpose of such associations.

What then happened, when through a series of socio-political crises the dependence of these Gentile Christian groups on a Jewish Christian core became untenable and Gentile Christians either willingly or unwillingly went their own way? The Jewish War of 66–70 CE, the Jewish urban insurgencies and anti-Jewish riots of 116–117 CE, then the Bar Kokhba rebellion of 132–134 CE repeatedly made association with Jews very problematic. Each of those wars was followed by decades of anti-Jewish laws and social prejudice. Jewish religion itself went through traumatic adjustments that made it less tolerant of dissident groups like the Christians. As the Gentile Christian groups detached from the synagogue, they developed in different directions. Some led toward Marcion, in which the Jewish background of Christian thought and practice was minimized. Others led toward what Marcion encountered in Rome, where Gentile Christians felt entitled to appropriate the Jewish tradition as a whole and to claim to be Verus Israel, the True Israel.

Marcion may have grown up in a Gentile Christian community already substantially detached from its Jewish roots. We have a rare source of information on the state of Christianity in the Bithynia-Pontus region at the time when Marcion would have been a young man there, in a letter from the Roman governor Pliny to the emperor Trajan, circa 112 CE. Pliny considered Christianity “a depraved and extravagant superstition,” which apparently had been present in the area for as long as twenty years. Under interrogation, some of the Christians provided Pliny with an account of their religious observances:

On an appointed day they had been accustomed to meet before daybreak and to recite a hymn antiphonally to Christ, as to a god, and to bind themselves by an oath, not for the commission of any crime but to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery and breach of faith, and not to deny a deposit when it was claimed. After the conclusion of this ceremony it was their custom to depart and meet again to take food; but it was ordinary and harmless food.

What is striking about this description is that it sounds like a garden variety Greco-Roman cultic association. Pliny’s report lacks any reference or resemblance to Jewish religious practice. If this community saw itself as Jewish, Pliny certainly would have said so. We also miss any reference to Jewish scriptures or to any written texts, which we would expect to have caught Pliny’s attention as a source of information on the secretive group.

Marcion’s Christian Conflict

Eventually, Marcion made his way to Rome, probably early in the reign of the emperor Antoninus Pius (138–161 CE), at which time he sought communion with the established Christian communities there. Yet his understanding of Christianity differed enough from that of the Roman Christian leaders that they could not tolerate each other. Sources report arguments over the significance of such things as Jesus’ analogy of the old and new wineskins (Luke 5:36–37), reflecting questions of how the new Christian movement should relate to the older Jewish tradition.

Marcion framed a series of contrasts (“Antitheses”) between the God and values found in the Jewish scriptures and those represented in the teachings of Jesus. A few informative fragments of this lost work survive, such as the following.
It says in the Law, “Eye for eye and tooth for tooth” (Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21); but the Lord, because he is good, says in the Gospel, “If anyone should strike you on the cheek, turn the other one to him” (Luke 6:29).

The prophet of the god of creation, when war came upon the people, went up to the top of the mountain and stretched out his hands to god so that he might destroy many in battle (Exod 17:8ff.). Yet our Lord, because he is good, stretched out his hands not to destroy, but to save men (see Luke 5:13). So where is the similarity? One, by stretching out his hands destroys, the other saves.

The creator, at Elijah’s demand, brings down a plague of fire upon that false prophet (2 Kgs 1:9–12); and, on the contrary, Christ . . . reproves the disciples when they call for the same punishment upon that village of the Samaritans (Luke 9:54–55).

[The god of creation says,] “I make the rich and the poor” (Prov 22:2), whereas Jesus says, “Blessed are you poor” (Luke 6:20), and “Whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33).

From such contrasts of values, Marcion went on to identify other apparent contradictions that suggest that Jesus’ God was not the same as the God of the Jewish tradition.

The creator was known to Adam and his contemporaries, that is made known in the scriptures; [and to] Ezekiel [he] says, “I was known to your fathers in the wilderness” (Ezek 20:5). But the Father of Christ is unknown, just as Christ himself declared when he said of him, “No one knew the Father, except the Son, neither does anyone know the Son, except the Father” (Luke 10:22).

Marcion concluded that the creator of this world was a lower divine being, and that human beings are all “children of a lesser god,” rescued by an all-good and benevolent higher god, who sent Jesus as the mediator of salvation, from the harsh commands and expectations—and almost certain damnation as sinners—reflected in the “Old Testament.”

Marcion became the organizer and leader of a separate Christian community that rapidly drew in adherents from across the Roman Empire. These “Marcionite” Christian churches were characterized by celibacy among baptized initiates, pacifism, and pesco-vegetarianism, and they offered up their share of martyrs in the persecutions that periodically swept over the Christian movement. They were also unique in having something no other Christian community had in the mid-second century: a canon of Christian scriptures.

Marcion’s Invention of the New Testament

Many modern Christians think of the New Testament as a book outside of history, something that was just suddenly there. Historians of Christianity, though able to trace its gradual authorship and formation, nonetheless typically find themselves describing the composition and collection of New Testament writings as an anonymous process, a spontaneous evolution accomplished by the nameless and faceless members of ancient communities of faith. But when it comes to the origin of the New Testament, we know the name of the individual responsible, the circumstances of his work in compiling it, and even a date that bears some relation to his momentous decision to establish a textual foundation for the fledgling Christian communities of his time: 144 CE.

Marcion defined for the first time a biblical canon—that is, in the useful distinction made by Bruce Metzger, not just a “collection of authoritative books” such as a circulating set of Pauline letters, but an “authoritative collection of books” with set limits that clearly signaled a unique status for the texts included. Marcion clearly intended his first New

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Marcion collected, for the first time in history, an authoritative set of Christian writings intended to be afforded a status above that of other Christian literature.

In the first one and a half centuries of the Church’s history there is no single Gospel writing which is directly made known, named, or in any way given prominence by quotation. Written and oral traditions run side by side or cross, enrich or distort one another, without distinction or even the possibility of distinction between them.¹

We can see a clear difference in how early Christian writers informally handled material later included in the New Testament, compared to their more formal, precise citation of Jewish scriptures. The two sources of instruction simply did not share the same level of sacredness and authority for these authors. Marcion’s contemporary, Justin Martyr, for instance, made use of a collection of stories and sayings of Jesus culled from various gospels both known and unknown to us today, with little indication that he considered it important to preserve the exact wording of anything other than Jesus’ own statements.² A bit earlier, Papias of Hierapolis felt free to criticize the sequence of the Gospel of Mark, and to prefer oral traditions to written ones generally.³

We can affirm, therefore, four points Adolf von Harnack made ninety years ago about Marcion’s contribution to the formation of the Christian Bible.⁴

1. Christians owe to Marcion the idea of a New Testament. It had occurred to no one before and can best be understood as originating in the context of Marcion’s rejection of an Old Testament base for Christianity.


The conviction that Jesus was raised from the dead is among the earliest of all Christian beliefs. Paul, the earliest known Christian author, reports the resurrection of Jesus was proclaimed by those who came before him in the Jesus movement (1 Cor 15:3–4). How does one account for the rise of this belief if the gospel accounts of a discovered empty tomb and corporeal post-mortem appearances of Jesus are legends, as many scholars propose?

The most popular answer to this question is that belief in the resurrection came about due to a post-mortem bereavement hallucination of Jesus by Peter,* and possibly others. Another largely overlooked possibility for the rise of the resurrection belief is the extraordinary phenomenon of cognitive dissonance reduction.

What is Cognitive Dissonance Reduction?

Many scholars doubt that Jesus ever claimed he was the Messiah. However, Jesus obviously made a big impression on some people. Because of this, some may have thought or hoped he was the Messiah, a sentiment not unlike that expressed in the Gospel of Luke: “We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel” (Luke 24:21). How might people like these, Jesus’ most ardent followers who thought or hoped he might be the Messiah, have reacted to the harsh reality of his death? Jews, at the time of the historical Jesus, expected the Messiah to be a victor, not a victim. The notion that the Messiah would die for the sins of others did not yet exist.

For most people most of the time, the reaction in such a situation would be the depressing realization that expectations were wrong. But sometimes people do not follow that route. We human beings have a tendency, when we deeply believe or want to believe in something, to look for and arrive at conclusions that confirm what we already believe or want to believe. When strongly held beliefs are inescapably disconfirmed by reality, this sometimes leads to extraordinary displays of rationalization. In the case of Jesus’ followers, the strongly held belief was that Jesus was the Messiah, and the disconfirming event was his crucifixion by his enemies. The internal tension caused by a disconfirming event is called “cognitive dissonance” by psychologists, and the release of this tension due to a rationalization (or any other action that releases the tension) is called “cognitive dissonance reduction.”

An individual holds beliefs or cognitions that do not fit with each other (e.g., I believe the world will end, and the world did not end as predicted). Nonfitting beliefs give rise to dissonance, a hypothetical aversive state the individual is motivated to reduce. . . . Dissonance may be reduced by changing behavior, altering a belief, or adding a new one.1

The first attempt to study how cognitive dissonance can lead to a new belief was conducted by the highly respected social psychologist Leon Festinger in the 1950s. In this study, Festinger infiltrated a small cult group and observed firsthand their behavior when their religious beliefs were disconfirmed by the harsh reality of events. This study will be summarized below. It both serves as an initial explanation and the first of four examples of the extraordinary effects of cognitive dissonance and cognitive dissonance reduction, and demonstrates how they can give birth to a new belief.

Festinger’s Small Cult Group Study

Before summarizing Festinger’s small cult group study, I want to emphasize that the beliefs of the cult group below, which are quite bizarre and no doubt related to the UFO craze of the 1950s, are not being compared to Christianity in any way. My discussion of Festinger’s study aims only to illustrate that people can sometimes come up with ingenious and complex explanations in order to make sense of a disconnect between deeply held beliefs and the harsh reality of events.

The cult group consisted of eleven hardcore members and numerous less committed participants. It was led by a woman who believed she was receiving mental messages from spacemen on another planet. The cult received a message in August 1954 that, on December 21 of that same year, a great cataclysm would ensue around the world. The

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* See “Peters’ Mourning and His Easter Vision,” by Gerd Lüdemann (Fourth R 27-1, Jan–Feb 2014).
cult publicly declared this belief and attracted much media attention. Additional messages from the spacemen led the cult to believe that at midnight on the eve before the cataclysm they would be removed from Earth and spared from the destruction. In order for this to happen, they were instructed to wait inside certain identified parked cars and that spacemen would then transfer them from the parked cars to a flying saucer. Imposter cult members (three social psychologists) infiltrated the group and were able, over a period of weeks, to observe the buildup to these expectations and the reaction of the hardcore believers to the shock of disconfirmation, on December 21, when none of the events occurred as they had expected.

Two of the hardcore cult members rejected their beliefs and left the group. But the other nine did not. Instead, they went through a period of intense rationalization over a matter of hours. As members of the group wrestled with their catastrophic disappointment, they floated many explanations. For example, they reasoned that the spacemen must have given them the wrong date. Another explanation was that the events had been postponed, possibly for years, so that more people could prepare to “meet their maker.” Yet another was more complex: the message from the spacemen, which had them waiting in parked cars from which they would be moved to the flying saucer, must be symbolic because parked cars do not move and hence could not take anyone anywhere; therefore, the parked cars must symbolically refer to their physical bodies, and the flying saucer must symbolically refer to the importance to their rescue of their own inner “strength, knowing, and light.” The small group even considered leaving the disconfirmation unexplained while insisting that the plan had never gone astray, accepting that they did not have to understand everything for it all to still be essentially true.

During this rationalization period, one of the social psychologists feigned frustration and walked outside. One of the hardcore members, a physician, followed and offered verbal support. Here are the words of a sane, rational, and intelligent believer in the cult all the way through the disconfirmation event. For all we know, belief in their rationalization might have lasted only a month and then faded away. Because of this, Festinger’s experiment will be addressed shortly when we turn to three other examples of cognitive dissonance in much larger religious movements. The second problem sometimes cited with Festinger’s study is that it did not follow the cult members for longer than one month after the disconfirmation event. For all we know, belief in their rationalization might have lasted only a month and then faded away. Because of this, Festinger’s experiment will be addressed shortly when we turn to three other examples of cognitive dissonance in much larger religious movements. The second problem sometimes cited with Festinger’s study is that it did not follow the cult members for longer than one month after the disconfirmation event. For all we know, belief in their rationalization might have lasted only a month and then faded away. Because of this, Festinger’s experiment will be addressed shortly when we turn to three other examples of cognitive dissonance in much larger religious movements. The second problem sometimes cited with Festinger’s study is that it did not follow the cult members for longer than one month after the disconfirmation event. For all we know, belief in their rationalization might have lasted only a month and then faded away. Because of this, Festinger’s experiment will be addressed shortly when we turn to three other examples of cognitive dissonance in much larger religious movements.

“\textit{I’ve given up just about everything. I’ve cut every tie. I’ve burned every bridge. I’ve turned my back on the world. I can’t afford to doubt. I have to believe.}”

In the end, the group settled on a rationalization provided by the group’s leader, which was based on a timely message she received from the spacemen. She said that the steadfast belief and waiting by their small group had brought so much “good and light” into the world, that God called off the pickup and the cataclysm. This rationalization was received with jubilation. According to Festinger, “The group was able to accept and believe this explanation because they could support one another and convince each other that this was, in fact, a valid explanation.”

Although the mental health of all the cult members was not open for examination, there was an opportunity for professional psychiatrists to evaluate one of the hardcore cult members, the physician quoted above. The only reason this psychiatric examination was conducted was because relatives questioned his sanity and sought to gain custody of his children. This doctor, a believer in the cult all the way through the disconfirmation and beyond, was cleared by two court-appointed psychiatrists. They concluded that although the physician had some unusual ideas, he was “entirely normal.”

There have been two objections to Festinger’s experiment. First, since the cult group studied was very small, there is no way to rule out the possibility that the three imposter cult members influenced the cult in a way that actually caused the results. To avoid this possibility would require infiltrating a much larger cult group and being present during a disconfirmation of beliefs. While I am sure there are many social psychologists who would love to do just that, I assume such opportunities are rare. This limitation of Festinger’s experiment will be addressed shortly when we turn to three other examples of cognitive dissonance in much larger religious movements.
Suppose an individual believes something with his whole heart; suppose further that he has a commitment to this belief, that he has taken irrevocable actions because of it; finally, suppose that he is presented with evidence, unequivocal and undeniable evidence, that his belief is wrong; what will happen? The individual will frequently emerge, not only unshaken, but even more convinced of the truth of his beliefs than ever before. . . . The dissonance [conflict between belief and reality] would be largely eliminated if they discarded the belief that had been disconfirmed. . . . Indeed this pattern sometimes occurs. . . . But frequently the behavioral commitment to the belief system is so strong that almost any other course of action is preferable. . . . Believers may try to find reasonable explanations and very often they find ingenious ones. . . . For rationalization to be fully effective, support from others is needed to make the explanation or the revision seem correct. Fortunately, the disappointed believer can usually turn to others in the same movement, who have the same dissonance and the same pressures to reduce it. Support for the new explanation is, hence, forthcoming.5

The Millerites
The second example of cognitive dissonance reduction leading to a new belief involves a large religious movement called the Millerites. The Millerite movement began in 1818 with a man named William Miller. By the 1840s, the movement had membership in the thousands across many cities. Miller believed that the Bible predicted that Jesus’ second coming would be sometime between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844. When the later date came and went without incident, the movement did not crumble. Instead, despite heavy ridicule, the group’s founder and his apostles rationalized that there must have been some minor error in calculating the exact time, but that the end was nevertheless still near. A corrected date came from a follower within the movement, Reverend Samuel Snow. Despite the objections of the group’s leaders that the exact date could not be known, Snow declared October 22, 1844, as the new date for Jesus’ second coming. Belief in this date by the Millerites took on a life of its own, as described by a Millerite newspaper editor:

At first the definite time was generally opposed; but there seemed to be an irresistible power attending its proclamation, which prostrated all before it. It swept over the land with the velocity of a tornado, and it reached hearts in different and distant places almost simultaneously, and in a manner which can be accounted for only on the supposition that God was [in] it. . . . The lecturers among the Adventists were the last to embrace the views of the time. . . . It was not until within about two weeks of the commencement of the seventh month [about the first of October—the editor is using the Jewish calendar], that we were particularly impressed with the progress of the movement, when we had such a view of it, that to oppose it, or even to remain silent longer, seemed to us to be opposing the work of the Holy Spirit; and in entering upon the work with all our souls, we could but exclaim, “What were we, that we should resist God?” It seemed to us to have been so independent of human agency, that we could but regard it as a fulfillment of the “midnight cry.”6

Based on this new date, things reached an incredible pitch of fervor, zeal, and conviction. One of the elders in the Millerite movement described it this way:

The “Advent Herald”, “the Midnight Cry”, and other Advent papers, periodicals, pamphlets, tracts, leaflets, voicing the coming glory, were scattered, and broadcast everywhere like autumn leaves in the forest. Every house was visited by them. . . . A mighty effort through the Spirit and the word preached was made to bring sinners to repentance, and to have the wandering ones return.7

But October 22, 1844, came and went with no second coming of Jesus. This second disconfirmation almost killed the movement, but still, yet another, and this time much

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more complex, belief emerged—the date had been correct, but Jesus’ second coming had occurred in heaven, not on earth. Jesus had begun an investigative judgment of the world, and when he is done he will return to earth, but no one knows exactly when. This rationalization was sustained and continues to this day with membership in the millions. It is known as the Church of Seventh-day Adventists.

Sabbatai Sevi
The third example of cognitive dissonance reduction leading to a new belief is documented in a one thousand page tome by the late President of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Gershom Scholem. This example of cognitive dissonance reduction occurred in the seventeenth-century Jewish messianic movement of Sabbatai Sevi (sometimes spelled “Zevi” or “Zvi”), a Jew who publicly proclaimed himself to be the Messiah in 1665. Sevi, an adherent to a popular Jewish theology called Lurianic Kabbalism, was a charismatic manic-depressive who would deliberately and spectacularly break the law of Moses, eat forbidden foods and utter the sacred name of God, and then claim he had been inspired to do so by special revelation. Sabbatai gained a huge following spanning Italy, Holland, Germany, and Poland. His followers thought he would usher in a new age of redemption for Israel. However, when Sabbatai traveled to Istanbul in 1666, he was arrested and imprisoned by Muslim authorities. The Sultan gave him a choice: conversion to Islam or death. Sabbatai chose Islam. Gershom Scholem explains the effect of Sabbatai’s shocking choice on his followers:

Sabbatai’s apostasy burst like a bombshell, taking by surprise the messiah’s closest associates as well as the most vehement unbelievers. Neither literary tradition nor the psychology of the ordinary Jew had envisaged the possibility of an apostate messiah. . . . In order to survive, the movement had to develop an ideology that would enable its followers to live amid the tensions between inner and outer realities. . . . The peculiar Sabbatian doctrines developed and crystallized with extraordinary rapidity in the years following the apostasy. Two factors were responsible for this, as for many similar developments in the history of religions: on the one hand, a deeply rooted faith, nourished by a profound and immediate experience . . . and, on the other hand, the ideological need to explain and rationalize the painful contradiction between historical reality and faith. The interaction of these two factors gave birth to Sabbatian theology, whose doctrine of the messiah was defined by the prophet Nathan in the years after the apostasy.8

In a nutshell, the theology defined by the prophet Nathan after Sevi’s apostasy was that it was part of an intentional strategy to assume evil’s form and then kill it from within. As Scholem notes, “When discussing the Sabbatian paradox by means of which cruel disappointment was turned into a positive affirmation of faith, the analogy with early Christianity almost obtrudes itself.”9

The Lubavitch
The fourth and final example of cognitive dissonance reduction leading to a new belief is the most applicable to Christian origins and involves another Jewish Messiah movement, this one from the 1990s. A group of Hasidic Jews called Lubavitch (or Chabad), a subgroup of Orthodox Jews, was headquartered in New York City and had approximately two hundred thousand followers worldwide. Beginning in 1991, there grew an increasing fervor among the Lubavitch that their spiritual leader, the Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson (“Rebbe” is the formal title for the Lubavitch spiritual leader), might be the long-awaited Messiah, the one who would usher in the end times redemption. Like Jesus, Rebbe Schneerson never explicitly claimed that he was the Messiah, but he made such a big impression on so many of his followers that many thought he might be.

In March 1992, the eighty-nine year old Rebbe Schneerson had a stroke that rendered him paralyzed on
I n the November-December 2013 issue of The Fourth R, Stephen J. Patterson argues that Paul hated sex. According to Patterson, Paul (a) regarded sex as “just raw passion” that one “ought to be able to resist,” (b) saw those who were unable to resist it (and that meant most of us) as “spiritual sissies,” and (c) reluctantly condoned marriage—and thus sex—only because “it is better to marry”—and presumably to engage in sexual relations with one’s spouse—“than to be aflame with passion.”

I concede that Paul’s attitude toward sex falls far short of our modern understanding of its positive value in the enrichment and enjoyment of human life, but, in this regard, he is no different from many of his contemporaries. I also acknowledge that, in one passage (First Corinthians 7), Paul states a preference for celibacy over marriage and speaks of marriage as a safeguard against porneia—a Greek word that, for him, would refer to any sexual activity outside of marriage, including, at least by implication, what is known today as homosexual activity. Nevertheless, it is my judgment that the evidence regarding Paul’s attitude toward sex is considerably more complex and nuanced than Patterson suggests and by no means indicates unambiguously that Paul hated sex. What Paul hated was not sex per se but rather porneia.

As I have already indicated (see note 2), there are passages in First Corinthians, Second Corinthians, and Galatians that indicate Paul’s “hatred” of porneia (that is, sex outside of marriage), but it is only in First Corinthians, Romans, and perhaps First Thessalonians that we find evidence regarding Paul’s attitude toward sex within the marriage relationship. At least five and perhaps six passages in these letters are relevant to any discussion of Paul’s attitude toward sex, and, for whatever reason, Patterson fails to mention four of these passages.

First Thessalonians 4:3–8
A passage in First Thessalonians (probably the earliest of Paul’s extant letters), not referenced by Patterson, may indicate something regarding Paul’s attitude toward sex. The passage is First Thessalonians 4:3–8, which reads as follows:

For this is God’s will: your sanctification—for you to abstain from fornication (porneia), for each one of you to know [how] to take his own vessel in holiness and honor, not in passion of lust like also the nations that do not know God, for [each of you] not to transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because [the] Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as also we forewarned and testified to you. For God did not call us to uncleanness but in holiness. Therefore the one disregarding [this] is not disregarding a human but God, who gives his holy spirit to you.

Because it immediately follows a reference to abstaining from fornication (porneia) and is immediately followed by a reference to “passion of lust,” most commentators assume that the Greek phrase translated above as “take his own vessel” also has a sexual connotation. Thus, it has been variously interpreted to mean “acquire his own wife,” “take control of his own body,” or “take control of his own penis.” If it means “acquire his own wife,” then the reference is clearly to marriage (and presumably sex). In no way, however, does the passage suggest that Paul hates sex. Quite to the contrary, if the passage does refer to sex, it associates marriage (and presumably sex) with “sanctification,” “holiness,” and “honor.” To be sure, the translation and interpretation of the key phrase in this passage are uncertain, and it is thus to other passages that we must look to find a more certain expression of Paul’s attitude toward sex.

First Corinthians 16:19 and Romans 16:3–4, 7
The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, greet you warmly in the Lord. (1 Cor 16:19)

* Porneia is typically translated as “fornication” or “impurity,” but it can refer to any type of illicit or forbidden sexual activity, including especially prostitution or sexual relations with a prostitute.
† I am assuming that Paul almost certainly was not the author of the Pastoral Letters (First Timothy, Second Timothy, and Titus) and that Ephesians, Colossians, and Second Thessalonians are also most likely non-Pauline. Only Romans, First Corinthians, Second Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, First Thessalonians, and Philemon are authentically Pauline in origin, and it is to these letters alone that we must look for evidence regarding Paul’s attitude toward sex.
Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, for whom not only I but also all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks, and [greet] the church in their house. . . . Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinspeople and fellow-prisoners, who are prominent among the apostles and who were in Christ before I was. (Rom 16:3–5a, 7)

Patterson also fails to mention two of Paul’s more-or-less incidental references to male-female couples (presumably married and thus presumably involved in a sexual relationship) with whom he has been associated in his work among the churches. These references provide a more certain indication of Paul’s attitude toward marriage (and thus, presumably, toward sex) than does First Thessalonians 4:3–8. In First Corinthians 16:19 and particularly in Romans 16:3–4, he speaks highly of Prisca and Aquila as his “fellow workers in Christ Jesus” who “risked their necks” for his life and in whose house a church meets. He also refers in Romans 16:7 to another presumably married couple, Andronicus and Junia, as his “kinspeople,” his “fellow prisoners,” and “noted apostles” who were “in Christ” before he was.5 In neither of these references does Paul suggest that marriage (presumably including sexual relations) interferes with the effectiveness or value of the work of these two couples as leaders in the churches or that marriage (presumably including sexual relations) is to be seen in anything less than a positive light.

**First Corinthians 9:5**

A final passage that Patterson fails to mention is First Corinthians 9:5, which reads, “Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a sister-wife as also the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?”6 Here, Paul indicates that “the other apostles,” “the brothers of the Lord,” and “Cephas” are married and suggests that they are accompanied by their wives as they engage in the work of the churches. In no way does he intimate that marriage (presumably including sexual relations) interferes with the work of ministry in the churches. Indeed, this verse could even be seen as expressing Paul’s own wish that he might be accompanied by a wife.

**Romans 1:26–27**

Because of this, God gave them up to dishonorable passions, for their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones, and the men likewise left behind the natural relations with women and were consumed with their passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the penalty that was necessary for their error.

Patterson does discuss Romans 1:26–27, which clearly does refer to sex or, more specifically, to what we would today call homosexual activity. It is my own judgment that these verses are part of a later non-Pauline interpolation—that is, written by someone other than Paul and secondarily inserted into Paul’s letter to the Romans—and thus should not be seen as indicating Paul’s attitude toward sex.7 Whether the verses are Pauline or non-Pauline, however, it is important to note that they make an important distinction between sexual relations that are viewed as “natural” (that is, between men and women) and those that are regarded as “unnatural” (that is, between persons of the same sex). It is clear that the author regards “unnatural” sex as “improper,” but there is nothing in the verses that would indicate a negative attitude toward “natural” sex; indeed, the reference to “impurity” in verse 24, followed by the words about “unnatural” sex, suggests, by way of contrast, that “natural” sex is “pure.” This is quite in keeping with the possible association of marriage (and presumably sex) with “sanctification,” “holiness,” and “honor” in First Thessalonians, with what Paul says about the two couples (presumably married and thus involved in a sexual relationship), Prisca and Aquila, and Andronicus and Junia, and with his reference to the married status of other leaders in the churches.

**First Corinthians 7**

Patterson also refers briefly to First Corinthians 7, which is the only passage containing possible evidence that Paul “hated” sex *per se*. It is only in this chapter that he expresses a preference for the celibate state, and it is only here that he appears to condone marriage simply as a safeguard against sexual immorality (*porneia*). This may suggest that it was only in Corinth that Paul encountered a situation calling for such a response. Moreover, it may well be the case that Paul, to some extent, accommodates what he says about sex and marriage in this chapter to what the Corinthians are saying and doing and that this chapter, therefore, represents Paul’s response to a specific situation or set of circumstances and does not express his balanced views regarding sex.

In any case, however, the evidence even in First Corinthians 7 is by no means as unambiguous as Patterson appears to assume. I note the following points:

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* The Greek phrase translated as “a sister-wife” is *adelphēn gynaika* (accusative singular of *adelphē gynē*) and is sometimes rendered “a sister (that is a believer) as wife.” It is true that *gynē* can mean simply “woman,” but most commentators agree that it here means “wife.” Thus, the phrase *adelphē gynē* would mean “a wife who is a believer.”

† It is not the “unnatural” sexual activity, however, that is the basic sin; rather, such activity is viewed as the result of, or even as God’s punishment for, the more basic sin of idolatry (Romans 1:24, 26, 28: “God handed them over . . .”).
1. Scholars are increasingly of the opinion that the words in verse 7:1b, “It is good for a person not to touch a woman,”* are not Paul’s own words but rather a “slogan” in vogue among some of the Corinthians that Paul quotes in order to provide a backdrop for his own views, which are somewhat different. Thus, Paul cannot be held responsible for the words in verse 1b.

2. Verse 2 reads, “But because of the instances of fornication, let each [man] have his own wife and let each [woman] her own husband.” The opening words would be translated literally as, “But because of the fornications (Greek: τὰς πορνείας) . . .” The definite article and the plural forms suggest that Paul may have in mind certain specific situations in Corinth and that what he says in the chapter is addressed not to believers generally but, at least in large part, to these specific situations. This possibility is strengthened by the fact that he has already mentioned a case of incest (5:1–5) and, immediately before chapter 7, the presence of prostitution (6:12–20) among the Corinthians.

3. In verses 3–5, Paul appears to speak quite positively regarding the role and indeed the necessity of sex within the marriage relationship. Indeed, he requires it:

 Let the husband give to the wife what is owed [i.e., her conjugal rights], and likewise also the wife to the husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a time in order that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and again come together in order that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

In these verse, it is assumed that both men and women desire to have sexual relations, and nothing is said that would tend to denigrate such desires or such relations. To be sure, he sees sexual relations within marriage as a safeguard against porneia, but there is also at least the implication that he sees sexual relations within marriage as a way of strengthening and thus preserving the marriage.

4. In First Corinthians 7, Paul does not call for the dissolution of marriages, as one might expect if he really hates sex. Quite to the contrary, he urges that marriages be

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* Commentators have for the most part ignored the fact that the Greek word here is “person” (ἀνθρώπος), not “man” (ἄνδρα), as would be expected in association with “woman” (γυνῆ). I have no explanation for this, but it is noteworthy.
preserved if possible—even marriages between believers and nonbelievers (1 Cor 7:10–24, 39). Regarding such “mixed” marriages he goes so far as to say that the unbelieving spouse is “consecrated” through the believing spouse and that the children of such mixed marriages are “holy” rather than “unclean.” These are hardly the words of someone who hates sex!

5. In First Corinthians 7:7, Paul appears to regard both the celibate state and the married state as gifts from God: “I wish all people were as I myself am; but each one has his or her own gift, one of one kind and one of another.” Again, this is difficult to reconcile with the view that Paul hates sex.

6. Paul’s preference for the celibate state appears to be based, at least largely, upon purely pragmatic considerations: the imminent end of the world and a wish for “undivided devotion to the Lord.”

Conclusion

In my judgment, an examination of all of the relevant evidence by no means indicates unambiguously that Paul hated sex. On the one hand, he clearly hated porneia, and, in one passage (First Corinthians 7), he expressed a preference for the celibate state, spoke of marriage as a safeguard against porneia, and suggested that there were pragmatic reasons for remaining unmarried. On the other hand, he did not call for the dissolution of marriages; he spoke of the importance and even necessity of sexual relations between married spouses; he appears to have associated marriage (and thus, presumably, sex) with such terms as “purity,” “holiness,” and “honor”; he speaks highly of couples (presumably married and thus engaged in sexual relations) who were active leaders in the churches; and, noting that other leaders in the churches are married, he at least hints that he himself might like to be accompanied by a wife as he carries out his responsibilities as an apostle. In short, the evidence regarding Paul’s attitude toward sex is mixed. 

Notes

1. Stephen Patterson, “Saint Paul Hated Sex.”

2. See 1 Cor 5; 6:13, 18; 7:2; 2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19. For the related verb porneuō (“to fornicate”), see 1 Cor 6:18; 10:8; for the related noun porne (“prostitute”), see 1 Cor 6:15; for the related noun pornos (“fornicator”), see 1 Cor 5:9, 10, 11; 6:9.

3. Most of Patterson’s article deals not with what Paul has to say about sex per se but rather with the two passages in which he appears to address what today would be called “homosexual” activity (1 Cor 6:9 and Rom 1:26–27). I am in agreement with most of what Patterson says about these two passages; see my “What the New Testament Says about Homosexuality.” As Patterson points out, an assessment of Paul’s attitude toward homosexual activity depends in part upon the translation and interpretation of the Greek words malakos and arsenokoitai in 1 Cor 6:9 (see Patterson, “Saint Paul Hated Sex,” 13). It also depends, however, in part upon whether Rom 1:26–27 was written by Paul (see my discussion of these verses below).


5. In the past, many translators and commentators, simply assuming that a woman could not have been an “apostle,” have argued that the Greek Junia must be the accusative case of an abbreviated form for a masculine name; Eldon Jay Epp (Junia), however, has shown conclusively that Junia is the accusative form of the feminine name “Junia.”

6. For the argument that Romans 1:18–2:29 is a non-Pauline interpolation, see William O. Walker, Jr., Interpolations in the Pauline Letters. For a general discussion of interpolations in the Pauline letters, see William O. Walker, Jr., “Interpolations in the Letters of Paul.”

Works Consulted


Steven Patterson Replies

I’m afraid Bill misreads me. Perhaps the hyperbole in my title was misleading. My point was not to undo the sexual revolution by appealing to a prudish Paul, but to explain the two odd things he says about same-gendered sex in Romans 1:26–27 and 1 Corinthians 6:9. Paul did not think of same-gendered sex as homosexual sex, but as excess sex. Paul himself was a sexual ascetic (hence my title), so excess sex was for him an especially good example of Gentile sinfulness. My concern was not with sex in general, but with those who use the Bible to bully those whose sexual orientation makes them different from the heterosexual majority. As for Paul’s own sex life, I remain as ignorant as everyone else. As to whether Paul thought people should have sex, I am little interested in taking advice about sex from a sexual ascetic. But his advice in 1 Corinthians 7 is not bad: if you’re feeling amorous, hook up with someone who feels similarly and have frequent monogamous sex.

William O. Walker, Jr., is Jennie Farris Railey King Professor Emeritus of Religion at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas.

Stephen J. Patterson is Geo. H. Atkinson Professor of Religious and Ethical Studies at Willamette University, Salem, Oregon.
An Interview with Raheel Raza

Raheel Raza is the President of the Council for Muslims Facing Tomorrow. A fierce advocate for human rights and gender equality and a frequent speaker at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Raza was featured in the award-winning documentary Honor Diaries. She will be a featured speaker at the Westar fall 2014 meeting. She was interviewed by Westar Fellow David Galston.

The Fourth R: For many people in North America the words “progressive” and “Muslim” do not go together, yet for years you have maintained that Islam is a progressive, open religion. Please explain.

Raheel Raza: I have to take you back to seventh-century Arabia where the message of Islam was revealed. Pre-Islamic Arabia was a place where slavery was rampant, women were bought and sold as chattel, newborn girls were buried alive, and tribal warfare was the norm. When Mohammad received the revelation, it was a visionary and progressive message for that time because it freed slaves, gave women rights and aspired to create a society based on social justice. Mohammed’s charter for the city of Medina gave rights to minorities. The earliest Muslims truly practiced the Qur’anic verse, “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:256).

Obviously, something went wrong. After the death of the Prophet, Islam spread, and with it came innovations in science and art, but progress in faith matters came to a standstill after four hundred years. Sunni Muslims closed the gates to “Ijtihad” (reason and knowledge) and, by the tenth century, questions about religion were considered dangerous to the political rulers.

4R: You have expressed some strong and, to outsiders, surprising opinions about wearing a niqab (face covering) or a hijab (head covering). I understand that you are not against them as cultural expressions but critical of them as representations of Islam. What is the basis of your criticism, and how did these garments enter into the tradition as icons of Islam?

RR: The niqab is not a religious requirement under Islam. As Muslims we take guidance from our holy scripture the Qur’an, especially in cases where there might be human-made secondary texts that are ambiguous or contradictory.

The Qur’an does not ask us to cover our face. In fact, when we go for the pilgrimage to Mecca, women are not allowed to cover the face, as I experienced when I was there.

Since we don’t have a formal priesthood in Islam, we are asked to take counsel from credible religious scholars. One such scholar, Sheikh Mohamed Tantawi, dean of al-Azhar University in Cairo, which is the highest seat of learning for Sunni Muslims, has said that face-veiling is a custom that has nothing to do with the Islamic faith or the Qur’an. He stated that this practice is widely associated with more conservative trends of Islam. In fact, he has asked students in Egypt to remove the niqab in educational institutions.

We are told repeatedly in the Qur’an to keep a balance. The Qur’an describes the Muslim community as “a moderate nation” (2:143). The word “moderate” here is a translation of the Arabic word wastan, which means “in the middle,” but it can also mean “fair” or “balanced.” Prophet Mohammad has been quoted to have said, “The best of things is what is in the middle,” that is, what is being done in moderation. One of the fundamental underpinnings of Islamic law is the requirement that a just balance between the rights of individuals and the interests of the society as a whole be maintained.

A few years ago when the niqab debate was at its height, I was on a radio show with Steve Rockwell, who calls himself an imam. He brought along a huge edition of the Qur’an and I asked him to show me where it says that the face needs to be covered. He could not, because in terms of dress the Qur’an asks both men and women only to dress modestly. Later, on another show, after Sheikh Tantawi and some other scholars gave fatwas (authoritative rulings) that the niqab is not an Islamic requirement, Mr. Rockwell backpeddled and said, “Well it’s not religious but cultural.”
4R: So let’s examine the niqab issue from some cultural perspectives.

RR: When my grandmothers migrated from India to Pakistan decades ago, they used to wear a chador as a cultural dress, but they discarded it for a simple head covering over time because the chador was all enveloping, hard to manage, and impractical. Similarly, when I came to Canada twenty-two years ago, I was used to wearing a shalwar Qameez (traditional Pakistani dress) made of thin material, not at all suited to this harsh climate. It didn’t take me long to change to long warm trousers to adapt to the weather. Had I insisted on my own cultural dress, I would have suffered.

Cultures need to evolve and change. Those of us stuck in centuries old customs bring excess cultural baggage with us. The niqab is essentially a tribal custom that has been imported into the West. It’s a mask. So how does it impact society? It’s obvious that it’s a barrier to communication because you can’t see the face of the person behind the veil. In some ways, the niqab discriminates against me. If the person under the niqab can see me, and I can’t see her, it’s discrimination.

Driving while wearing the niqab creates a problem with peripheral vision. When a woman driving in a niqab hit a cyclist some years ago, I had to wear a burqa in a cultural sensitivity training session to show the judges that a face covering does reduce peripheral vision.

The niqab is also a direct clash with security because in a post 9/11 world, faces need to be shown at airports. Female security personnel are not always available to check the ID of these passengers, as they insist. Which brings me on my own cultural dress, I would have suffered.

4R: Part of your talk this fall at the Westar Institute meeting will explain that the Qur’an is difficult to comprehend because of the way it is arranged. Why is this an important issue? Also, for people used to the critical study of the Bible, it is not shocking that there are variant readings, contradictions, and other writings that were never included in the canon. Is any of this true and relevant to the Qur’an? Are there variant readings, writings not included, and contradictions in the Qur’an?

RR: Thomas Carlyle, on reading George Sale’s English translation of the Qur’an in 1734, said that the book is a “wearisome confused jumble, crude, incondite; endless iterations, long-windedness, entanglement . . . insupportable stupidity, in short!”

For Muslims the Qur’an is the word of God as revealed to the Prophet Mohammad over a period of twenty-three years. The message was an oral message and, since Mohammad was unlettered, the words were written on scraps of paper, tree bark, and animal skins. It was only after the death of the Prophet that his companions compiled the Qur’an into book form. For reasons known only to them, instead of compiling the revelations in chronological order, they assembled them in order of length, from longest verse to shortest. Therefore, trying to understand the historical and social contexts of passages in the Qur’an is a challenging task. Furthermore, in many passages the train of thought is difficult to discern. Passages can move quickly from topics such as praising nature as created by God to thunder and lightning on the day of judgement.

Having said this, there is a sublime beauty in reading and listening to the Qur’an—which is always recited in Arabic—even if one does not understand the language. The poetry and rhythm are mesmerizing.

There are many interpretations, so if you open copies of the Qur’an side-by-side, you will read slightly different understandings, which is fine until someone takes sentences out of context. Besides, Arabic is a language in which one word can have two or more meanings, so the intent of the translation is left to the translator.

Over 1400 years, most translations have been made by men. It was only in 2007 that the first translation was done by a woman, Dr. Laleh Bakhtiar,* and its key difference is that in the chapter on women, most men have translated the text to say that men can beat women...
An Interview with Jodi Magness

Jodi Magness, Kenan Distinguished Professor for Teaching Excellence in Early Judaism of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a renowned veteran of the archaeology of ancient Palestine, was a featured speaker at the Westar spring 2014 meeting. She was interviewed by Westar Fellow and accomplished archaeologist Milton Moreland.

on the relationship between archaeology, history, and the Bible

The Fourth R: How contentious do you see the relationship between the biblical stories and the results of modern archaeology in the Ancient Near East?

Jodi Magness: I do not consider this relationship as inherently or necessarily contentious. I believe that archaeology and the Bible can be used in a complementary manner as sources of information about the past. The contentiousness results from unrealistic expectations about the types of information archaeology and the Bible can provide, or their uncritical use as sources of historical information.

The Fourth R: What is the biggest misconception about “biblical archaeology” that you would like to dispel?

Jodi Magness: That archaeology is a tool to validate or disprove the Bible.

The Fourth R: Why is it essential for biblical scholars to keep abreast of archaeology? Put the other way around, what mistakes can scholars make if they ignore archaeology? Can you give a specific example of something that scholars got wrong because they were not attentive to archaeological evidence?

Jodi Magness: Archaeology—like history—is the study of the past. It’s just that the two disciplines focus on different types or sources of information about the past: human material culture versus literary sources/written texts. Because archaeologists and historians seek to understand the past, it is incumbent upon us to use all of the available information, not part of it. Therefore, archaeologists should seek to incorporate literary information where relevant, and vice versa. The alternative theories about Qumran (the claims that Qumran was not a sectarian settlement) illustrate what happens when scholars refuse to consider all available evidence, literary and archaeological, together. Only by divorcing the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran can one argue that the settlement was not sectarian.

The Fourth R: Give an example of archaeological results that forced biblical scholars to rethink something they thought they knew.

Jodi Magness: The first discovery—in the early twentieth century—of monumental synagogue buildings decorated with figured art indicated that ancient Jewish art was not aniconic.\(^1\)

The Fourth R: How can non-archaeologists think critically about issues over which specialists disagree?

Jodi Magness: I am not sure this is really possible. Even I have trouble evaluating the different sides in the minimalist-maximalist debate over the kingdom of David and Solomon, as I do not specialize in the Iron Age and am not familiar enough with the sites and pottery. So, it would be even more difficult for a non-archaeologist. I think it’s important for the general public to become educated about archaeology, although I think that without specialist training one can only go so far.

on Qumran\(^2\)

The relationship between the site of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls that were found in the nearby caves has been a hot topic for the past several decades. You have laid out a strong case for the integral connection between Qumran and the scrolls. How has archaeology helped us to better understand who produced the Dead Sea Scrolls and why they were deposited in the caves?

\(^1\) This technical term (from the Greek, meaning “without images”) denotes art that does not depict animals or human beings. Scholars had assumed that Jewish art was aniconic because of the commandment prohibiting the making of “idols (literally, ‘images’) whether in the form of anything in the heaven above, or on the earth beneath, or in the water” (Exod 20:4).

\(^2\) Qumran is the site of an ancient Jewish settlement by the Dead Sea.
JM: Archaeology establishes the connection between the scrolls in the caves and the Qumran settlement, and archaeology indicates that this was a Jewish settlement with distinctive features. However, only the literary (textual) evidence (the scrolls and our outside authors such as Josephus) can shed light on the identity of those who lived at Qumran and point to why the scrolls were deposited in the caves (although both of these points are the subject of debate).

**on the excavation at Huqoq**

4R: Your recent work at Huqoq has revealed some spectacular mosaic floors from an ancient synagogue. What can we learn from this excavation about the ancient people who lived near the Sea of Galilee?

JM: We are learning that Jewish diversity continued well after 70 CE, that rabbinic influence was limited even in Galilee in the fourth–sixth centuries, and that some Jewish congregations in lower Eastern Galilee expressed messianic and apocalyptic hopes and expectations in their synagogue art.

4R: Why are the mosaic representations of Samson so interesting?

JM: These representations are important because they are so rare and because they suggest that these congregations were not under rabbinic control or influence (as the rabbis disapproved of Samson). They also suggest that these Jews viewed Samson as a prototype of a messianic figure.

4R: Why are the mosaic representations of Samson so interesting?

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4R: Many progressive Christians are called, by extremist Christians, heretics or false Christians—among other things. Rarely, though, is the matter taken beyond name calling. In the Muslim world this is not the case. What is the cost for you of being an outspoken defender of human rights and progressive understandings of Islam?

RR: I have been an outspoken critic of violence in the name of my faith. I have spoken out at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva against the blasphemy law in Pakistan and against the ease with which Muslim extremists take lives. This is why Islamist extremism (political Islam using violence as a tool) is so dangerous. There is no dialogue, no discussion—just death and destruction as we see around us today.

I have the honor of being the recipient of a death threat, a fatwa, and hate mail. My name is # 6 on the list of the most hated Muslims in the world (according to an earnest blogger) and I plan to become # 1.

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3. Huqoq was a town in ancient Galilee. Prof. Magness’s archaeological team has discovered the remains of a synagogue there.

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An Interview with Raheel Raza  Continued from page 16

lightly, Dr. Bakhtiar has translated it to mean “move away.” Translations and interpretations are only as blessed as their authors.

Similarly, both Muslim (extremists) and non-Muslims have quoted lines out of context to justify jihad, for example. It’s only in the past decade that there has been some critical study of the Qur’an by scholars like Dr. Ziauddin Sardar.*

There is also some talk about newly discovered texts and scrolls (such as the Sana’a manuscript found in 1972), but none of this has been verified yet. Those who have attempted to dig deeper into the origins of the Qur’an, like ex-Muslim Ibn Warraq, have been branded heretics.

4R: One important comment that you have made in the past concerns Western “tolerance” backfiring when it comes to extremism. Can you indicate some of the background of this concern? Western democracies are built on openness, citizenship, and common human rights. How do these values backfire in the face of extremism, and what can be done to prevent this situation?

RR: You are right. Western democracies are built on openness, citizenship and human rights. However, there are many societies where tribal alliances trump human rights, and some of the immigration into Western countries is from those societies.

The Western concept of tolerance has sometimes backfired, when under the influence of political correctness, Westerners will tolerate the intolerant. There are many examples of this and a misapplication of “multiculturalism” is one. To speak bluntly, all cultures are not equal. A culture that doesn’t respect women or give women equal rights is not equal to a culture that has evolved to give women full rights. Westerners need to understand and accept that culture is no excuse for abuse of any kind. Cultural relativism should not trump human rights.

You also need to keep in mind that the extremists believe this life to be temporary and that the real life is in the hereafter, so they would love to “expedite” the journey of many people to the hereafter using violence as a tool.

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*www.theguardian.com/books/2011/jul/01/reading-quran-ziauddin-sardar-review
The introduction of Elizabeth Wright Knust’s book *Unprotected Texts: The Bible’s Surprising Contradictions about Sex and Desire* notifies the reader “Why the Bible is not a Sexual Guidebook.” An associate professor at Boston University School of Theology, Knust canvasses a number of biblical texts on issues of sex, marriage and body parts to demonstrate that the Bible and its early Jewish and Christian interpreters do not speak with one voice. Attempts by contemporary Christians to extract the “truth” from the Bible’s text will be frustrated. A few examples must suffice.

Knust begins chapter 2, “Biblical Marriage,” by noting laws in America that banned marriage between white persons and those of various other ethnic and racial groups. These old laws suggest that state sponsored marriage is not a matter of morality and piety but of privileges meted out to some and denied to others. Marriage certificates distribute goods and bodies in such a way that certain resources are kept “in the family,” or “among the citizens.” (48)

Against this background, Knust demonstrates that biblical laws on marriage presume that women were the property of men. A particularly frightening example is Deuteronomy 22:28–29 and Exodus 22:16–17. According to this law, if a man seizes an unbetrothed virgin and lies with her, he is required to pay her father the full bride price and marry her. To a modern reader this seems highly immoral, but it makes sense within the context of ancient Israelite society. The moral principle at issue for this biblical law is the (economic) value of the virgin daughter to her father. By having sex with the virgin (whether consensual or not), the man has rendered the young woman unmarriageable and the father stands to lose all profit that would have accrued from a marriage. The requirement that the man pay the father the bride price ensures that the woman’s economic value is realized (61–62).

Christian discussions of marriage usually start with Genesis 2 and 3. According to Genesis 2:24, a man leaves his father and mother and becomes “one flesh” with his wife. Knust quotes contemporary authors who express the view that the Genesis account promotes a positive understanding of marriage: it celebrates maleness and female-ness and sexual longing between married couples. But Knust observes that such positive assessments of Genesis 2–3 overlook the implications of Genesis 3:16. As punishment for her sin, God tells Eve that she will bear children “in pain” and that her desire will be for her husband who will rule over her. For Knust, the desire of the woman for her husband is not rooted in complementarity, nor does it originate in a recognition of the flesh she once shared with the man, nor does it celebrate her commitment of love. Instead, desire accompanies her subordination to her husband. . . . Female desire is therefore a punishment, not a blessing. (51)

Neither does the contemporary view that Genesis 1:27* espouses gender complementarity square with some rabbinic interpretations of this passage. Knust cites a rabbinic text, *Genesis Rabbah* 8.1, which interprets the first human as an androgynous being possessing male and female genitalia. In Genesis 2, when God takes one of the human’s ribs, the androgyous being is split in two (52). Some early Christian authors took up this view and interpreted the moment of gender separation as the moment when death and sorrow entered the world (52). Knust concludes, “The claim that together the creation stories necessarily serve as a warrant for heterosexual love and marriage is therefore a modern invention” (52).

Several of her discussions of biblical texts open windows on some very odd beliefs. This is especially the case with chapter 5, “Strange Flesh,” wherein Knust examines texts about sexual encounters between human women and angels. Genesis 6:1–2 recounts how the “sons of God” took human women as their wives. This strange story was elaborated in a Jewish work known as 1 Enoch. 1 Enoch recounts how these angelic beings rebelled against God’s authority by lusting after human women. Their intercourse with human women introduced violence and evil on the earth. Knust follows the influence of this story through several other Jewish texts and some New Testament ones as well. One of the reasons Paul urges the Corinthian women to wear a veil on their heads is “because of the angels” (1 Cor 7:10). Apparently, Paul thought the head covering provided some

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* “God created humankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”
According to Simon Dein:

the following rationalization: [Rebbe Schneerson’s] faithful followers saw this [the second stroke] as a prelude to his messianic revelation and the arrival of the redemption. As he lay dying in intensive care, several hundred followers assembled outside Beth Israel Medical Centre singing and dancing—anticipating the imminent arrival of the redemption. . . . Supporters and believers signed petitions to God, demanding that he allow their Rebbe to reveal himself as the long-awaited Messiah and rise from his sickbed to lead all humanity to their redemption.12

Three months after this second stroke, on June 12, 1994, Rebbe Schneerson died. This still failed to extinguish the belief that he could be the Messiah. Dein, who was still with the Lubavitch community in Stamford Hill when Rebbe Schneerson died, observed yet another and this time even more startling rationalization: “Many Lubavitchers expressed the idea that he would be resurrected.”13 Dein watched the funeral procession in New York City via satellite on the same day that Schneerson died and saw Lubavitchers “dancing and singing in anticipation of his resurrection and imminent redemption.”14 One observer on the street said of these people celebrating, “They were certain that any second, the hoax would end and the Rebbe would get up and lead us to the redemption right then.”15

Although exact numbers are unknown, the idea that Rebbe Schneerson would resurrect from the dead soon swept through the Lubavitch community worldwide and gained a significant following. In Stamford Hill, Dein reported, “Very soon, the overwhelming feeling in the community was that the Rebbe would resurrect and that the redemption would arrive.”16 Five days after the Rebbe’s death, a full-page advertisement in a widely circulated Jewish Orthodox weekly in New York City (the Jewish Press) declared that Rebbe Schneerson would be resurrected as the Messiah.17 Two years after Rebbe Schneerson’s death, the International Campaign to Bring Moshiach proclaimed Rebbe Schneerson was the Messiah.18 Seven years after the Rebbe’s death, David Berger, professor of Jewish History, past president of the Association for Jewish Studies, and outspoken critic of the Rebbe Schneerson movement gave this assessment of the movement:

[A] large majority of Lubavitch hasidim believe with perfect faith in the return of the Rebbe as Messiah son of David. . . . The dominant elements among hasidim

I do not suggest that Knust dismisses the Bible from considerations of sexual morality. She urges that ultimately readers must decide “what a biblically informed and faithful sexual morality might look like” (213). Knust shares that when she discusses such issues with groups, she asks the participants “what they wish the Bible said about the topic at hand”(208). I recommend this book because it will help readers take stock of their own views of biblical authority and the “longings and commitments” they bring to the text. IR

Perry Kea
University of Indianapolis
in the major Lubavitch population centres of Crown Heights in Brooklyn and Kfar Chabad in Israel—perfectly normal people representing a highly successful, very important Jewish movement—believe that Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson will return from the dead . . . and lead the world to redemption. In explaining the difficulty Rebbe Schneerson’s followers would have had rationalizing a dead Messiah, Berger notes, [Lubavitch is] a major movement located well within the parameters of Orthodox Judaism. . . . There is no more fundamental messianic belief in Judaism than the conviction that the Davidic Messiah who appears at the end of days will not die before completing his mission. . . . [A person] is invalidated as a potential Messiah the moment that he dies in an unredeemed world. This expectation about the Messiah explains Berger’s reaction when he saw his fellow Jews rationalize Rebbe Schneerson’s death:

My sense of puzzlement, bewilderment, disorientation began to grow. The world appeared surreal, as if I had been transported into Alice’s Wonderland or a Jewish Twilight Zone. The rules of Judaism seemed suspended. . . . Here was a movement of posthumous false messianism self-evidently alien to Judaism that no generation of mainstream Jewish leaders would ever have countenanced even for a fleeting moment. . . . Any appeal to Maimonides’ criteria seemed clearly impossible. But it was not impossible. Rebbe Schneerson’s followers rationalized that their dead Messiah would complete his mission later, after he resurrected from the dead. Putting aside whether or not this rationalization is coherent, Berger’s reaction illustrates how big a gap there can be between what we think is possible with a cognitive dissonance reduction rationalization and what actually is possible. Leon Festinger explains this in general terms:

Where there are a number of people having the same cognitive dissonance, the phenomenon [of cognitive dissonance reduction] may be much more spectacular, even to the point where it is possible to withstand evidence which would otherwise be overwhelming. . . .

There is a tendency to seek explanations of these striking phenomena which match them in dramatic quality; that is, one looks for something unusual to explain the unusual result. It may be, however, that there is nothing more unusual about these phenomena than the relative rarity of the specific combination of ordinary circumstances that brings about their occurrence. Explaining the Lubavitch rationalization from the perspective of a social scientist, Simon Dein says:

[The Lubavitch are not a group of fanatics . . . They are sane people trying to reason their way through facts and in the pursuit of understanding . . . Like many groups whose messianic expectations fail to materialize, resort is made to eschatological hermeneutics to explain and reinforce the messianic ideology . . . The Rebbe’s illness and subsequent death posed cognitive challenges for his followers. They made two predictions that were empirically disconfirmed: that he would recover from his illness and that he would usher in the Redemption. In accordance with cognitive dissonance theory . . . they appealed to a number of post hoc rationalizations to allay the dissonance. Dein goes on to say, “Not surprisingly, these new beliefs have attracted a lot of derision from the wider Jewish community and, on account of their proclamations of the imminent resurrection of Schneerson, some have labeled [them] . . . ‘Christians . . . Of course, the Lubavitchers’ rationalization is not quite the same as that of Jesus’ followers, who claimed that Jesus had already been resurrected from the dead, but there is a good reason for this difference. In Lubavitch theology, a “prince,” in this case Rebbe Schneerson (who did not designate a successor), must be present in this world in some physical capacity in order to mediate the world’s divine force or the world would cease to exist. Since the world still existed, Rebbe Schneerson had to still be physically present in the grave; he could not have been resurrected from the dead and transported up to heaven as Jesus’ followers believed about him.

The Lubavitcher example is especially relevant to the study of Christian origins because of how close it comes to Christian beliefs. Although Dein says there is no empirical evidence that the Lubavitch were influenced by Christian beliefs, even if they were, all that would mean is that they needed a little nudge from others who went first in rationalizing a dead Messiah who would resurrect from the dead.

The significance of the Lubavitch example to the study of Christian origins is summed up by David Berger: “Though largely ignored thus far, this is a development of striking importance for the history of world religions, and it is an earthquake in the history of Judaism.”

Conclusion
In conclusion, cognitive dissonance reduction is a powerful human phenomenon that seems fully capable of explaining the rise of the resurrection belief among Jesus’ followers. It is also worth noting that a significant amount of rationalization by Jesus’ followers would still have been necessary even if a post-mortem bereavement hallucination of Jesus marked the beginning of the resurrection belief. We can
say this because we know that many other Jews before the time of Jesus must have experienced post-mortem bereavement hallucinations of lost loved ones, and yet there is no record of such people concluding that their lost loved ones had been resurrected from the dead. The rationalization component of the hallucination hypothesis seems necessarily so large that the hallucination seems secondary to the point of not even being necessary. It is also worth noting that if the resurrection belief came about purely through rationalization, the resultant highly charged religious environment would seem to make hallucinations of Jesus more probable than they would be in just a post-mortem bereavement environment. In short, cognitive dissonance may have given rise to the resurrection belief and then the appearance experiences followed only after the resurrection belief was in place.  

**Notes**

22. Berger, *The Rebbe*, 13, 24. Maimonides’ criteria tied the arrival of the Messiah to the end times redemption in the same way that Jews always have: utopia, the resurrection of the dead, the end of persecution, and the joyful gathering of all Jews in Israel.

**Works Consulted**


**Kris Komarnitsky** works in the aviation industry and has been studying Christian origins as a side interest for the past fifteen years. He has written articles for *The Fourth R*, *The Bible and Interpretation* website, the Huffington Post, *Free Inquiry* magazine, and the Secular Web. He is the author of *Doubting Jesus’ Resurrection* (2nd ed, 2014).
Paul with the memoirs of Christ’s life is something that would not be expected in a sacred literature from any precedent up to that time.

3. Christians owe to Marcion the prominence of the voice of Paul in the New Testament, and consequently in the subsequent Christian tradition generally. Many of Marcion’s contemporaries had all but forgotten Paul, or subsumed him within the broader apostolic mass.

4. Christians owe to Marcion the push towards a Christianity rooted in its own distinctive scripture, rather than in an oral tradition of interpreting Jewish scripture, or in a scriptureless system of authority and practice like most Greco-Roman religions of the time.

Despite Harnack’s positive appraisal of Marcion’s achievement, he was willing to accept the accusation of Marcion’s enemies (such as Tertullian and Epiphanius) that Marcion had edited his biblical texts to make them conform to his views. In doing so, Harnack made a fundamental error of historical judgment. First, Tertullian and his associates in this charge against Marcion were working from an anti-Marcionite bias that shapes their assumptions. They were unable to quote Marcion himself saying anything about editing (or for that matter “correcting,” “purifying,” or “restoring”) texts. Second, they were writing from a position in time that makes it impossible for them to have had any sure knowledge of the state of anything like a New Testament canon or its constituent books at the time of Marcion. Third, we know for a fact that several of their assumptions are incorrect: there was no existing New Testament canon from which Marcion rejected parts unsuited to him; there was no larger Pauline corpus from which Marcion excised the Pastoral Letters (1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus); there was no universal, undisputed orthodoxy from which Marcion diverged. All of these are anachronisms that Marcion’s later critics project back into the circumstances of his activity. Fourth and finally, the content of the texts included in Marcion’s New Testament does not show signs that they were edited to conform with Marcion’s ideology.

The Importance of Marcion’s New Testament

Once we recognize the baseless character of the suspicions about Marcion as a collector of Christian texts, we can restore him to his proper place as a very early witness to those texts. The oldest relatively complete New Testament manuscripts date to the first half of the fourth century CE. Incomplete portions of earlier New Testament collections survive in fragmentary papyri from about a century earlier, the early third century. Reconstructions culled from the quotations of early Christian writers can be pushed back about as far. It is largely on the basis of these sources that the modern New Testament is edited and translated. But Marcion’s New Testament, reconstructible to the same degree as those early third-century manuscripts and sources, dates back another century earlier to the mid-second century, which is within a generation or two of the original composition of the texts themselves. In fact, given his dates, Marcion joins the ranks of the so-called Apostolic Fathers as a witness to the very earliest recoverable forms of New Testament texts. Yet, because he did not merely make occasional quotations from or allusions to their content as other Apostolic Fathers did, but compiled and disseminated complete editions of them, Marcion far exceeds such other early witnesses in the extent of evidence he provides for the state of New Testament texts in that time.

Freed from the cloud of suspicion, Marcion’s New Testament texts have the potential to solve problems that have long plagued text criticism of the New Testament. They can act as a securely datable check on proposals of interpolation or redaction history and perhaps oblige us to reconsider what is or is not the authentic voice of “Luke” or Paul. A couple of interesting examples illustrate this.
Marcion’s *Evangelion* had no birth story, no genealogy, and no account of Jesus being baptized by John or tempted by the devil. Instead, it began as follows:

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, when Pilate was governing Judaea, Jesus came down to Capharnaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them, and they were amazed at his teaching, because his speech was (delivered) authoritatively. . .

And “The Lord’s Prayer” appeared in a much simpler form, with some intriguing differences from the more familiar version:

Then he said to them, “Whenever you may invoke, say, ‘Father, let your sacred spirit come upon us . . . . Let your realm come. Give us your sustaining bread day by day. And dismiss for us our faults. And do not permit us to be brought to a trial.’”

In the Apostolikon, Paul’s letter to the Romans was considerably shorter, and the famous Christ hymn in his letter to the Colossians lacked a crucial controversial element found in later versions of the letter. Jesus is “an image of the unseen God . . . before all . . . the head of the body of the assembly . . . firstborn from the dead,” but he is not “the first-born of all creation . . . by means of whom all things were created in the heavens and upon the earth.” The latter idea of Christ as creator, found nowhere else in Paul’s letters, was likewise not found in Marcion’s text of Colossians.

But if Marcion did not edit these texts, why are they different from the more familiar versions found in modern Bibles? I think the answer regarding the differences between the *Evangelion* and Luke is clear: these two alternative versions of the gospel have been tailored (perhaps by the original author) for separate Jewish (Luke) and Gentile (*Evangelion*) audiences, separated by cultural background, but not yet by ideology. In other words, their differences served a practical purpose in two different mission fields, which later hardened into distinct religious communities. The answer may be similar with regard to Paul’s letters, that is, the different versions do not reflect significant ideological differences. But in this case I suspect that we are dealing not so much with two clearly defined editions, but with a more fluid history of compiling the letters from bits and pieces of Paul’s correspondence, with the possibility of non-Pauline interpolations being introduced into some of the copies in circulation. These answers will need to be tested, and the full significance of the variant readings of Marcion’s copies of the texts explored further in research still to come.

Marcion’s act of canonization appears to have served as a catalyst for discussions and debates about which Christian writings should be accorded this status. Arguments were made, new sources were sought out, and lists were drawn up. This process went on for another two hundred years before any of the proposed canons matched what modern Christians consider to be the New Testament. Any talk of a “New Testament” apart from Marcion’s in the second and third centuries is anachronistic and must be treated as a shorthand way to refer to individual books or sub-sets of texts, recognized as authoritative amid an indeterminate larger set of Christian literature. By issuing a delimited set of Christian texts considered exclusively authoritative as early as the mid-second century, Marcion was far ahead of his time. Yet ultimately he had a profound influence on Christianity becoming a “religion of the book.”

**Notes**

2. Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* (Against Marcion) 1.18.4, 3.6.3, 4.9.2, 5.1.2; *De praescriptione haereticorum* (Prescription against Heretics) 30.1; Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* (Ecclesiastical History) 5.13.3.
3. Digesta 50.6.6.6; 50.6.6.9.
8. Rupert Annand (“Papias and the Four Gospels”) points out that Papias’s remarks about the literary work of Mark and Matthew are critical, and serve to indicate the need for Papias’s own exposition. This means that Papias does not regard their work as scripture, but something to be improved upon, and that he saw himself as belonging to an age where novel constructions of “the Gospel” had no onus attached to them. Tatin clearly was still of the same frame of mind in the later second century, as were the authors of all of the apocryphal gospels that proliferated in that time.

**Works Cited**


Jack Kelly represents the rich mother lode of intellectuals that runs through the Westar population of scholars. He could be seen at nearly all the meetings since 2000—leaning back in his chair, glasses perched on top of his head, computer at hand—carefully noting what was being said. Jack is one of Westar’s mainstays, and he is looking forward to being part of the new God and the Human Future seminar that begins this fall in San Diego.

This native Chicagoan went to the College of Wooster in Ohio intending to become a Presbyterian minister, but he found himself gravitating toward university teaching. Two courses influenced his future direction. The first was a year-long study of the Bible, which had two benefits: he met his future wife, Clara, and he was introduced to the historical-critical method. “Professor Eugene Tanner,” Jack explained, “made no attempt to criticize or debunk Christian doctrines, but simply showed us how to read the Bible from a historical-critical perspective, and that had a deep and lasting affect on both of us.”

Jack was intending to do more work on the philosophy of religion in his senior year when a young Ph.D. from Columbia, Frank Tillman, insisted he had to study Willard Van Orman Quine’s work on analytic philosophy. Tillman maintained that “it was the most important work in philosophy at the time, and he was right,” says Kelly. “Quine became one of the major figures in analytic philosophy in the second half of the twentieth century. He opened up contemporary Anglo-American philosophy for me, which had a long-term impact on my understanding of religion.”

Having decided against the ministry, Jack opted to pursue a Ph.D. in religious studies, and he was influenced by a friend to enroll in the Chicago Theological Seminary at the University of Chicago. “The theology faculty at Chicago was in a period of transition from early twentieth-century religious liberalism to what was then called ‘neo-orthodoxy.’ Barth, Bultmann, and Tillich were becoming important figures at Chicago (Tillich, in particular, because he was in residence as a more or less permanent visiting professor).”

Jack actually passed his prelims in religious studies, but in the course of completing his work he took a number of courses in the Philosophy Department, just one floor above the Religion Department. “I gradually came to understand that I no longer believed that traditional orthodox Christianity was credible. I was unconvinced by what I saw as the apologetic efforts of thinkers such as Bultmann and Tillich.” This conviction led him to walk up the stairs and to declare that he really wanted to teach philosophy.

In his Ph.D. philosophy studies he encountered another analytic philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein, who became a seminal influence. Wittgenstein had died in 1951, and his *Investigations* was just getting into the intellectual current when Jack took a class taught by Vere Chappell. “It was a life-changing experience for me. I should say that I think that most of the conventional readings of Wittgenstein, including those taken up by philosophers and theologians, such as Richard Rorty and Don Cupitt, are quite wrong-headed.

“The other philosophical thinker who has had a major impact on my thinking is Plato. I read next to nothing of Plato’s work while in graduate school, but like virtually every junior faculty member I taught lots of introductory classes, which inevitably included some of Plato’s dialogues. My initial reaction to Plato, which was typical of analytic philosophers fifty years ago, was that he was a part of a bankrupt intellectual tradition. However, in teaching Plato I began to see that he was a serious philosophical thinker, whose ideas continued to be relevant.

“Though it may sound paradoxical, Wittgenstein was of great help in this, in that his approach to philosophy actually opened up the philosophical tradition for me by clearing away the dense undergrowth of centuries of academic philosophy. There is an analogy here with Westar’s study of Christian origins. Once we clean out the ahistorical pieties of Christian orthodoxy, we are in a position to understand and appreciate the issues faced by the early followers of Jesus.”

Jack did early teaching stints at Washington University in St. Louis and the University of Missouri, but the lion’s
share of his career has taken place at the University of Nevada, Reno, where he arrived as chair of the department in 1973. He served until 1980, and then did another stint as chair from 1996–98. In 1998, he was appointed as the first Sanford Distinguished Professor of the Humanities for a two-year term, and focused on the university’s core humanities program, which he had helped develop. In 2005, he retired as Associate Professor of Philosophy and Sanford Distinguished Professor of Humanities, Emeritus.

Jack’s involvement with Westar began in 1998 as a consequence of his work as a professor of humanities. “Our core included a one-semester class on the ancient Greco-Roman world with some required readings from the New Testament. I had heard of the Jesus Seminar from a colleague and some articles in the San Francisco Chronicle. I had also read Dom Crossan’s The Historical Jesus. So I thought I ought to go to a meeting of the Jesus Seminar in Santa Rosa to try to educate myself about what was going on in the study of the historical Jesus and Christian origins. I met Bob Funk and Char, and shortly afterwards had them come to Reno to talk to the faculty involved in teaching our core course about the work of the seminar.

“Since then I have been continuously involved with Westar. Why? I have been convinced since college that the natural sciences provide us with the most accurate and reliable knowledge of our universe, including human beings who are a part of this universe. I also think that orthodox Christianity is not credible as an account of either the cosmos as a whole or of human nature. However, I have also been blessed, or afflicted, all of my life with what Thomas Nagel has characterized as the ‘religious temperament.’ The most succinct description of the religious temperament can be found in a remark Nagel quotes from William James: ‘One might say that it consists of the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto.’

“Christianity, with all of its ideals and flaws, is deeply embedded in Western culture. Those of us who wish to preserve—and perhaps transform—what is best in these ideals, and eliminate—or at least minimize—the flaws and perversions present in Christianity have to work through this tradition. We cannot simply repudiate or ignore it. To give but one example: I have become convinced that the best hope we, in the United States, have of responding sensibly and appropriately to the dangers of global warming is by enlisting the support of evangelical Christians in this task. Hence, I hope to be able to contribute to the work of Westar.”

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Through an estate gift to Westar Institute, you can help ensure the future of religious literacy. In addition, planned gifts can provide substantial tax benefits for you and your family.

**BEQUEST**
A designated gift to Westar Institute in your will or living trust is the simplest form of planned giving. Westar can also be named the death beneficiary of specific CDs, retirement accounts, or IRAs.

**LIFE ESTATE GIFT**
You may transfer the ownership of a home to Westar Institute and retain the right to occupy the premises for the rest of your life, while receiving an immediate tax deduction.

**LIFE INSURANCE**
Consider including Westar Institute as a beneficiary on a life insurance policy. This can be as a percentage of the policy or for the entire amount. Just contact the issuing life insurance company to make Westar a beneficiary.

**CHARITABLE REMAINDER TRUST**
Assets may be transferred into a trust that names Westar Institute as beneficiary. You receive tax benefits during your lifetime and retain the income generated from the assets given to the trust.

**STOCK & REAL ESTATE**
By donating stock or mutual funds to Westar Institute, you can avoid capital gains tax and receive a tax deduction. A gift of real estate can also have substantial tax benefits.

Unless otherwise specified, planned gifts will go to the Robert W. Funk Director’s Chair. Your gift may also be restricted for a particular purpose that you specify. For more information, or to let us know that you have included Westar in your estate plan, please contact us at 503-375-5323 or westar@westarinstitute.org.
AAR/SBL Program Highlights

Full registrants for the fall 2014 Westar@AAR/SBL meeting will have complete access to the programs of both the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature—a practically inexhaustible smorgasbord of topics related to the study of religion. Here is a sampling:

In a session chaired by Robert Miller, Paul Verhoeven will present, “Why the Historical Jesus Cannot Be Shot,” part of a wide-ranging discussion on the historical Jesus and popular culture. Jason BeDuhn’s The First New Testament will be featured in a panel discussion as “a fresh look at the circumstances surrounding canon content and formation . . . [that] upends some long-standing claims about Luke.” (See BeDuhn’s article on p. 3.)

In a session on Qumran—the Dead Sea Scrolls community—Jodi Magness will challenge the standing scholarly consensus that the Qumran sect did not conduct animal sacrifices. She sees evidence they did, which suggests new insights into their theology and lifestyle.

For links to the programs, visit westarinstitute.org/national-meetings/fall-2014 and click “AAR/SBL Highlights.”

Westar Fellows on the Blog

Westar Fellows Bernard Brandon Scott and David Galston are adding their voices to the Westar blog this Fall. Expect to see posts on Westar seminars and a variety of other religion topics, along with reviews of books such as L. Michael White’s From Jesus to Christianity and Amir D. Aczel’s Why Science Does Not Disprove God. In addition, Scott and Galston will coordinate contributions by other Westar Fellows.

Brandon Scott, the Darbeth Distinguished Professor of New Testament emeritus at the Phillips Theological Seminary, co-chairs the Christianity Seminar. Westar Academic Director David Galston is organizing a new Westar Seminar on God and the Human Future.

Cassandra Farrin, Associate Publisher and Director of Marketing, will continue to represent an Associate voice on the blog with national meeting reports and new resources for personal and group study. In July she began a hosted chapter-by-chapter reading of Embracing the Human Jesus.

Ready to start reading? Visit westarinstitute.org/blog

New Fellow Jodi Magness

Westar’s newest Fellow is a familiar face from the Spring 2014 national meeting. Jodi Magness is the Kenan Distinguished Professor for Teaching Excellence in Early Judaism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Her research interests include ancient pottery, ancient synagogues, Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Roman army in the East, and Diaspora Judaism in the Roman world. She co-directed excavations in the Roman siege works at Masada (1995) and in the Late Roman fort at Yotvata (2003–2007), and since 2011 has directed excavations at Huqoq in Galilee (see interview in this issue). Her many books include Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit: Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus (2011) and The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls (2002), selected as an Outstanding Academic Book for 2003 by Choice magazine.

Westar Fellows on the Radio

Did you know Westar Associate John Shuck hosts an online radio program called Religion for Life that features interviews with religion scholars and public figures? Included are several Westar authors, most recently Joseph Tyson and Dennis Smith, who introduced the work of the Acts Seminar and its final report, Acts and Christian Beginnings (2013): “Acts . . . talks about the rise of a single community of Christians . . . all acting in harmony with very little contention and goodwill all around,” Tyson explained to an audience largely unfamiliar with the work of Westar seminars. “Serious readers of the Bible, it seems to me, have known all along this was not an adequate description. If you read what Paul wrote about those times, you know he saw things differently. He showed there was much less goodwill, less unanimity. There was controversy. People didn’t always agree with each other. . . .” To listen to both interviews in full, visit the book page: westarinstitute.org/store/acts-and-christian-beginnings/

Other featured Fellows include Jason BeDuhn (The First New Testament), Joseph Bessler (A Scandalous Jesus), David Galston (Embracing the Human Jesus) and Lloyd Geering (From the Big Bang to God). To browse more Religion for Life interviews, visit religionforlife.podomatic.com and search Westar Fellows on the Radio

Electronic Forum Going Strong

Just over a year ago, Westar announced the launch of its academic journal Forum in electronic format under the leadership of Fellows Nina E. Livesey and Clayton N. Jefford. Since that time, Forum has come into its own. Now, not only can individual subscribers download PDFs with just a couple of clicks, but patrons of subscribing institutions—mainly academic libraries—can instantly view the journal via IP access. And just recently, Forum was nominated for inclusion in the academic database EBSCO Information Services, which will make articles in the Forum accessible to academic researchers around the world.

To peruse tables of contents, read prefaces with overviews of each issue, and learn more about subscribing to Forum online, visit westarinstitute.org/resources/forum.
The Fall Westar Institute meeting will convene at the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature meeting in San Diego, CA (see the story on p. 23).

To accommodate the multi-meeting format, we have streamlined the Westar registration process. There are two registration options for Fall 2014:

Option 1
Register for full Westar meeting*
A Westar full meeting registration gives registrants—including Fellows—full access to the Westar meeting, including academic seminars and public lectures, and full access to the AAR/SBL program, including exhibits and the reception. This is an all inclusive registration.

Register online
• Go to westarinstitute.org/national-meetings/fall-2014
• Choose register online
• Answer the questions that lead to the appropriate registration options
• Choose Option 1: Full meeting registration

On receipt of your registration, Westar will send you a link to a page on the SBL website along with a code that will let you complete your registration for the AAR/SBL meeting, at no additional charge. This is an essential part of the process, as it not only gets you an SBL badge but also access to the hotel room block.

Register by mail or phone
You are welcome to register by mail or phone with Westar, using the form in this issue or by calling 503-375-5323. If you provide an email address, we will send you a link to complete your AAR/SBL registration and access hotels online (see paragraph above).

If you do not have online access, the next steps will evolve as follows:
• Westar staff will complete an online SBL registration on your behalf. You will receive a receipt from Westar and a badge from the SBL.
• Along with your receipt, Westar will include a map of convention hotels and a form to let us know your choice of hotels, in order of preference. We will forward your choices to the SBL staff who will make your reservation.

Option 2
Sign up for public lectures only
Those who do not wish to attend Westar academic seminars or the AAR or SBL programs, and who do not want access to the exhibits or the hotel block, may sign up just for the public lecture(s). Sign-up options are:
1. Go to westarinstitute.org/national-meetings/fall-2014
   Choose sign up for lecture(s)
2. Sign up by mail or by phone
3. Sign up at the door

*Already registered through AAR/SBL?
Your AAR/SBL registration lets you audit Westar academic seminars. It does not, however, give you access to Westar public lectures. To sign up for the public lectures, follow the instructions above.

Fellow participation in seminars
Westar Fellows who registered through AAR/SBL may join in Westar academic seminars. But, in order to estimate how many places to set at the seminar table, we need you to fill out the Westar online registration form. Clicking three boxes—(1) I have registered thru AAR/SBL, (2) I am an academic, and (3) I am a Westar Fellow—will let you tell us in which seminars you plan to participate. This is for planning purposes only. There is no charge.

Seminar papers
PDFs of papers for Westar seminars will be posted on the website as they become available. Follow the links on our Fall meeting pages. There is no charge.
REGISTRATION

Please indicate kind of registration.
*If ordering seminar papers only, leave both options unchecked.

Primary Registrant Name _______________________________ Option 1 ☐ 2 ☐

Address ____________________________________________

City __________________ State ______ Zip ____________

Day Phone __________________________

E-mail ____________________________

Spouse/Partner Name ____________________________ Option 1 ☐ 2 ☐

Member’s Spouse/Partner may register at the member price.

I would like to become a Westar member and am registering at the member price. ☐

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Total $

☐ Check or money order enclosed—payable to Westar Institute (U.S. dollars drawn on a U.S. bank only)

Please bill my ☐ Visa ☐ M/C ☐ Discover ☐ AmEx

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Exp. Date __________ Day Phone ___________

Security Code _________________

(Last three digits in the signature block on back of card)

Signature __________________________

Refunds Refunds are available if requested in writing by November 1 minus a $40 administrative fee. No refunds will be given after that date.

Mail this form and payment to:

Westar Institute, Willamette University, 900 State Street, Salem, OR 97301
(503) 375-5323
events@westarinstitute.org
Register online at westarinstitute.org

or fill out and mail the form below

I would like to register for:

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Register online at westarinstitute.org

or fill out and mail the form below

Name* ______________________________________________________

Address ______________________________________________________

City __________________________ State __________________________

Zip __________________________ Day Phone __________________________

*Please also provide the names of additional persons for name tags.

Name 1. ___________________________________ Name 2._____________________

Please register me for:

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Additional donation in support of JSOR program

Total Enclosed ____________

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- Check or money order enclosed, payable to Westar Institute (U.S. dollars drawn on a U.S. bank only)

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For information: (503) 375-5323 • events@westarinstitute.org
Bill To:
Name ___________________________________________

Address __________________________________________

City________________________State____________________

Zip________________________Country___________________

Day Phone_____________________

Email_________________________

Ship To:
Name

Address

City________________________State____________________

Zip________________________Country___________________

Day Phone_____________________

International specify

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Subtotal $__________

Less Member Discount (20% off) – $__________

Total $__________

Shipping* $__________

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Security Code _________________________________________

Signature ___________________________________________

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Individual Orders

Orders from individuals must be prepaid (check or money order, credit card).

*Shipping

U.S. Shipping: $6.00 for first item; $1.00 for each additional item. Canadians order from Scholarly Book Services, www.sbookscan.com, 1-800-847-9736. Australians and New Zealanders may order from Rainbow Books, www.rainbowbooks.com.au, 61 3 9481 6611. In the UK, Europe, Africa and the Middle East orders should be directed to Eurospan, www.eurospanbookstore.com, 44 (0)1767 604972, or, in the UK, by calling their freephone number 0800 526830.

The Fourth R 27–5

September–October 2014
Memberships & Donations

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Day Phone _________________________ Email _________________________________________

☐ Enroll me as a Westar Member
   (includes a $30 subscription to The Fourth R). $45 U.S. & Foreign

☐ I do not want to become a Westar Member but would like to subscribe to The Fourth R. $30 U.S. & Foreign

☐ I am enclosing a gift of

☐ $_________ ☐ $5,000 ☐ $1,000 ☐ $500 ☐ $250 ☐ $100

☐ I wish to pledge a single gift of $_________ payable ________________

☐ I wish to pledge a monthly gift of $_________ for _____ months.

☐ Please bill my pledge automatically to my credit card.

☐ I give my permission to have my name and address released to other Westar members in my area who are forming local study groups.

☐ Check or money order enclosed, payable to Westar Institute.
   (U.S. dollars drawn on a U.S. bank only)

Please bill my: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover ☐ American Express

Card Number ____________________________ Expiration Date __________________

Security Code _________________________________________

(The last three digits in the signature block on the back of the card)

Signature __________________________________________________________________________

☐ Please send me information about ways to make a planned gift to Westar Institute.