

Bede on the Bedwetting of Tweedledee and Tweedledum

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Sculy,... these writings express a kind of raw, unrestrained childlike pattern and manner of expression. I argue that the crude ecstasy this author experiences in writing these ideas is comparable to a child wetting their bed: its a mixture of the pleasure due to release while at the same time the author is not equipped to process the ideas...or to channel their flow...the paper, like the bed, provides a comfortable background to release their feelings

Fox Mulder, quoted from an *Inexistent Script of X-Files*

Opening Remarks

This article is a response to Bede's review of *The Jesus Mysteries* by Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy. Bede assigned his article the comical, humpty-dumpty sounding title: *Tweedledee and Tweedledum on the Christian Faith*, A review of Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy's *The Jesus Mysteries* [1].

I use the expression 'bedwetting' to refer to Bede's characterization of F&G (who he refers to as Lewis Carroll's Tweedledee and Tweedledum) as tactless amateurs writing a 'wah wah' book and who employ 'shady practices' and commit irredeemable mistakes. Thus, in the scholarly ballpark, in Bede's mind, F & G are like toothless intellectual infants merely wetting themselves.

Bede's review is a scathing attack whose main focus is not the positive contribution of the book *Jesus Mysteries*, but a focused effort at painting the authors as unqualified conspiracy theorists whose work is so unscholarly that HarperCollins "has even decided to use a special imprint called 'Thorsons' for everything they publish in the field."

This article will focus on Bede's review and not on his object of attack and sarcasm, or the works of JP Holding or Glen Miller. Bede has recently peddled his review on this forum as a rebuttal of the ideas in the *Jesus Mysteries*. My intention is to show that Bede's review fails to qualify as a serious debunking effort and that his public claim that through his review, the "*assemblage of outdated and incorrect ideas compiled in an effort to revive the discredited 'pagan borrowing' thesis*" is not in fact "*disassembled like a spring chicken*."

Bede's article is in JP Holding's Tektonics website (link [1] below). Holding, known to be a former prison librarian, is known for his hostile, rough-and-dirty unscholarly approach at dealing with critics. Unbridled sarcasm, satirization and ad hominemization are his stock-in-trade and Bede, the Venerable bede, a christian votary and and self-professed apologist, seems to have generously employed Holding's tactics in handling F & G and their work.

JP Holding, who has got himself christened JP Horsemanure from his mud fights,

must be proud to have fast-learners like Bede who bloat Holding's chest-thumping website with such articles as an expression of solidarity.

Having said that, let us now examine Bede's article.

Does the Jesus Mysteries get Disassembled Like a Spring Chicken?

In other words, is Humpty Dumpty right to laugh at Tweedledee and Tweedledum for having wet themselves? and does he get to have the last laugh?

Bede starts by lamenting that in England, there will be "no end to the line of pseudo-historical books about Jesus" and he purports to apologize to his countrymen (presumably on behalf of F & G). After drying his crocodile tears, he then starts attacking the personalities of F & G who he says "haven't got a peer reviewed paper or scholarly monograph between them". Bede also alleges that "HarperCollins, who publishes The Jesus Mysteries, has even decided to use a special imprint called 'Thorsons' for everything they publish in the field."

Simply put, Thorsons collections are books for mind, body and spirit. And the collection includes many respectable books. Authors like C. S. Lewis and Timothy Freke are in the list of Thorsons authors. It is more probable that the 'spiritual' messages in Jesus Mysteries led the publishers to group it under Thorsons, as opposed to the reasons Bede ascribes to that. Peter Gandy is not listed among the authors of Hortons and has up to twenty books under his name. Secondly, F & G are graduates of Classical Civilization and Philosophy. What that means is that these are people who know what scholarly work entails and have a good grasp of how civilizations and cultures rise and fall. Bede, of course fails to mention these. The little he can give to their credit is an ambiguous: "Their university degrees are not relevant to the task at hand or especially bedazzling (a BA and MA)". Not that certificates mean more than the merits of arguments themselves, but its uncharitable for Bede to give only a bracketed and content-free "BA and MA" to F & G.

But before we can further examine Bede's work, he abruptly aborts his purported mission and says: "Glenn Miller has nailed this idea* to our almost total satisfaction here, and now J. P. Holding himself is piecing together the rebuttal to end all rebuttals here. So rather than repeat these great men's work, I'd like to concentrate on some of the specific howlers and shady practices in the present book."

* the idea that Christianity is a product of various pagan myths

So, Bede's newly chosen mission is to "concentrate on some of the specific howlers and shady practices in the book". Let us read on.

Bede proceeds by declaring: "...neither Gandy nor Freke have ever before demonstrated much grasp of critical history or biblical interpretation". He offers no indication about how he arrived at this conclusion. He leaves the reader wondering 'when did he conduct a survey of their works?'. Bede says that a Masters degree from a British University is not impressive because it is easy to come by, unlike in North America. The reader is of course left wondering 'how so?'. After rubbishing the academic qualifications of F & G, Bede proceeds to characterize Peter Gandy as a mealy-mouthed crank (or crackpot). Bede claims, through a questionable anecdote, that he buttonholed Gandy and asked him "if any academics at respectable universities supported his thesis" and says Gandy gave the standard

response 'wah-wah' book authors like him always give. The standard response being "that real scholars secretly agree with them but dare not speak out and face the scorn of their colleagues."

It is unclear to the reader whether Bede and Gandy already had a common understanding on what "respectable universities" referred to during their alleged conversation. In any event, Bede doesn't list them in his article or let the reader get his meaning other than "British Universities [not respectable] and Universities in North America [respectable]."

Bede proceeds to claim that even the academy (represented by the Jesus seminar) which is not a friend of Christianity, is "willing to discard all notions of objectivity to recreate a Jesus who is to their liking" yet, even in their hostility towards Christianity, the academy "has no time for the Jesus myth". Bede then asks the reader rhetorically: "And if even the enemies of orthodox Christianity do not take it seriously, why on earth should we?"

Here, Bede portrays Christ myth hypothesis as an expression of hostility towards Christianity. This is misleading and false. His article is evidently written to Christians who, perhaps due to theological commitments, cannot see the logical fallacies and emotive appeals Bede employs here.

For the sake of clarity lacking in Bede's article, it is important to explain how the Christ myth arose. The Christ myth hypothesis is the result of dedicated efforts towards understanding the puzzling roots of Christianity and has emerged as a result of those research efforts. It is not a belief like the historicity of Jesus. It is the result of painstaking research work. Bede presents the Christ myth thesis as a weapon forged to damage Christianity: a weapon whose development, according to Bede, is so desperate and ill-founded that even true 'enemies of Christianity' do not employ it. This is a sophisticated form of the No True Scotsman fallacy. Due to the uniqueness piggybacking nature of this fallacy, perhaps it will one day be given a name and earn itself a place in the list of logical fallacies. Maybe a name like "no true challenge of Christianity fallacy."

Bede notes that the Jesus Mysteries has "a long bibliography and lots of notes" then shortly starts complaining. He laments: "...very many of the books referred to in the notes are extremely old and very hard to get hold of for any one without a first class library at hand."

Now the reader can then ask Bede, "is Freke and Gandy also supposed to also provide the books they list in their bibliography?" Since when is that a scholarly requirement? Is it their mistake that the libraries Bede can access don't have the books? Should they omit them because Bede cannot locate them?

Bede recounts mournfully how he went to "a summer school at the University of Wales" and "the unfeasibly large University of London Library to look for the books" where he found some of the books listed but not all of them. Then, pouting like a spoilt child who has found the cookie jar empty, Bede complains that since he could

not find some of the books, the bibliography is bad because it references very old books.

Instead of demonstrating how he decided how old is old, he instead shirks that responsibility and runs and clings on the coattail of his mentor JP Holding (the foul-mouthed ex-prison Librarian) and opines: "as J. P. Holding has demonstrated, modern Mithras studies have moved on a good deal."

Now, readers of this article better note that, based on a scholarly and authoritative source, (*cough* prison librarian *cough*) "modern Mithras studies have moved on a good deal" and those old books should not appear in bibliographies of any serious book (*cough * cough*).

After his prima-donna tantrum (after failing to find 'old books' in a non-respectable university library - what did he expect - isn't University of London a 'British university'? *cough*), Bede then claims that F & G are not "objective scholars" (I thought he already declared them non-scholars - he's forgotten that too?) but says they are "people who are willing to pull the wool over the eyes of their readers". He then asserts that "they refer many times to *The Mysteries of Mithra* by Francis Cumont and published in 1903. Yet we find that in his comparison of Mithraism and Christianity, Cumont (certainly no friend of Christianity himself) specifically states that unlike Mithras, Jesus was a real person."

It is patently fallacious to argue that since one refers to a certain author severally, he/she must therefore agree on every point the author makes or arrive at the same conclusion. But this is the kind of absurdity Bede expects the readers to believe when he makes such arguments.

Bede then states: "On the basis of some third century pictures of crucifixions, the authors claim Bacchus was crucified and Christians copied the idea. This is their *piece de resistance* and they even put one of the pictures on the cover of their book. But suppose there existed an earlier source who stated categorically that no pagan godman was crucified. That would destroy their case and reading the Jesus Mysteries you would assume that neither Freke or Gandy knew of such a source even if it existed. You would be wrong."

What Bede is arguing above is that if he can provide evidence that "an earlier source stated categorically that no pagan godman was crucified" like Jesus, that would falsify the idea that crucifixion was copied by Christians from the Pagans.

Having set the stage, we are now prepared to see how Bede, what was that...yes, "disassembles the idea like a spring chicken". The reader leans closer in rapt attention and expectation.

Bede writes that Justin Martyr "is a second century writer who therefore predates all the pictures of pagan godmen being crucified"

Bede proceeds to quote Justin Martyr:

"But in no instance, not even in any of those called sons of Jupiter, did they imitate the being crucified; for it was not understood by them, all the things said of it having been put symbolically. Justin Martyr 's First Apology LX"

There are so many errors and weaknesses to this argument and I will only examine a few.

The first and most obvious one is that Justin Martyr, like Bede (21st century) was a Christian apologist (mid second century) - this means that we cannot rely on him as an objective source about whether Christianity borrowed from the pagans or not: he had a theological agenda.

Secondly, *The First Apology*, which was addressed to Emperor Antoninus Pius (and his sons Lucas Marcus Aurelius), is by definition, a defense (however poor) of Christianity as a unique religion while watering down the pagan similarities. It was also meant to reify Christianity above the Pagan religions. To refer to this document to support Bede's argument is like referring a scientology book confirm the veracity of scientologist claims.

We do know that Justin, in *Dialogue with Trypho*, 69, expressed his surprise that Satan had imitated the prophecy announced by the patriarch Jacob, and recorded by Moses by having Pagans believe/say that Bacchus, son of Jupiter, was begotten by [Jupiter's] intercourse with Semele and having died, he(Bacchus) rose again, and ascended to heaven.[2]

Thirdly, at least from the sources I have checked ([3], [4]), what Bede quotes is not from *First Apology LX*. To prove this, I quote *First Apology LX* : PLATO'S DOCTRINE OF THE CROSS in full, below:

And the physiological discussion(1) concerning the Son of God in the Timoeus of Plato, where he says, "He placed him crosswise(2) in the universe," he borrowed in like manner from Moses; for in the writings of Moses it is related how at that time, when the Israelites went out of Egypt and were in the wilderness, they fell in with poisonous beasts, both vipers and asps, and every kind of serpent, which slew the people; and that Moses, by the inspiration and influence of God, took brass, and made it into the figure of a cross, and set it in the holy tabernacle, and said to the people, "If ye look to this figure, and believe, ye shall be saved thereby."(3) And when this was done, it is recorded that the serpents died, and it is handed down that the people thus escaped death. Which things Plato reading, and not accurately understanding, and not apprehending that it was the figure of the cross, but taking it to be a placing crosswise, he said that the power next to the first God was placed crosswise in the universe. And as to his speaking of a third, he did this because he read, as we said above, that which was spoken by Moses, "that the Spirit of God moved over the waters." For he gives the second place to the Logos which is with God, who he said was placed crosswise in the universe; and the third place to the Spirit who was said to be borne upon the water, saying, "And the third around the third."(4) And hear how the Spirit of prophecy signified through Moses that there should be a conflagration. He spoke thus: "Everlasting fire shall descend, and shall devour to the pit beneath."(5) It is not, then, that we hold the same opinions as others, but that all speak in imitation of ours. Among us these things

can be heard and learned from persons who do not even know the forms of the letters, who are uneducated and barbarous in speech, though wise and believing in mind; some, indeed, even maimed and deprived of eyesight; so that you may understand that these things are not the effect of human wisdom, but are uttered by the power of God.

I am unable to locate the exact passage that Bede quotes in the other parts of *First Apology*.

Further, and contrary to Bede's line of argument, Justin admits (at least in *First Apology*), that, with respect to Jesus' virgin birth, death and resurrection, he (Justin) "finds nothing different" from what the pagans propounded about their gods. I quote him below:

First Apology CHAPTER XXI -- ANALOGIES TO THE HISTORY OF CHRIST.

And when **we say also that** the Word, who is the first-birth of God, was produced without sexual union, and that He, **Jesus Christ**, our Teacher, **was crucified and died, and rose again**, and ascended into heaven, **we propound nothing different from what you believe regarding those whom you esteem sons of Jupiter**. For you know how many sons your esteemed writers ascribed to Jupiter: Mercury, the interpreting word and teacher of all; AEsculapius, who, though he was a great physician, was struck by a thunderbolt, and so ascended to heaven; and Bacchus too, after he had been torn limb from limb; and Hercules, when he had committed himself to the flames to escape his toils; and the sons of Leda, and Dioscuri; and Perseus, son of Danae; and Bellerophon, who, though sprung from mortals, rose to heaven on the horse Pegasus.

Now, at this point, I leave it to the readers to judge whether any spring chicken was actually disassembled and by who.

In continuation, Bede states that F & G "claim that the ancients 'knew' the earth went around the sun" and Bede claims that its untrue and adds that "To hint that the heliocentric model was knowledge lost because of Christianity is simply daft".

Of course I don't need to inform the reader that calling an idea daft does not make it daft. Bede simply isn't up to the job of providing a critique to the work he claims to have set out to review. Maybe he is writing from the assumption that his audience is uncritical, mentally lazy and already shares the position he holds. Perhaps it is because of this that he so extravagantly squanders an opportunity to terminally debunk an idea he loathes. Note that this does not entail that I agree with the argument F & G make: just that Bede's critique is appallingly hands-off and bereft of content.

Bede, presumably his 'spring chicken' largely 'disassembled', proceeds to fault F&G for quoting GA Wells and Ian Wilson and he belittles away GA Wells as a mere professor of German. He now proceeds to nibble small fry (not that he sank his teeth on any meat so far), or he is already tired because his approach at this point is less thorough and lackadaisical. Or his smugness is beginning to show through. Or maybe he has come to the realization that the job requires more than one grunt? Wait - or is he falling asleep on the job?

The small fries include the claim that "early Christians destroyed ancient pagan texts wholesale." To which Bede writes in response: "In fact the *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* makes it clear that there was no policy of destruction and the church was active in preserving ancient texts". Now, it is unclear to me whether F & G argued that the church had a policy of destroying arguments. What is clear to me is that lacking a policy of destroying documents does not entail that the church was not destroying documents. The Catholic Church had no policy of child molestation yet we have had numerous cases of exactly that taking place in the recent past. Secondly, that the church was actively preserving texts does not entail that they weren't destroying other heretic texts. So, in essence, Bede handles the argument that the church destroyed arguments by introducing a red herring. And we have identified his hand waving above.

Bede then proceeds, without citing specific arguments , that "Glenn Miller has fully investigated this widespread and baseless accusation." Unfortunately, it is not enough to claim it has been done elsewhere by somebody else. Another content-free response from Bede whizzes past.

Another small fry is the question of Pauline epistles. Bede writes: "In their survey of the New Testament, the authors say that only seven of Paul's letters are genuine and that the Acts of the Apostles is a second century fiction. They explain that the Paul revealed in the genuine letters was a Gnostic and that the spurious letters and Acts were written to cover it up. The allegation that the letters are fakes is dealt with elsewhere but just suppose it is true. In that case, we would not expect to find Freke and Gandy quoting from Acts and the spurious letters to make their ridiculous point that Paul was really a Gnostic. But that is exactly what they do using both Colossians and Ephesians."

It is unclear whether, where and how "...the allegation that the letters are fakes is dealt with". Another *ipse dixit*.

Robert M. Price, a Professor of Biblical Criticism and New Testament (who, by the way, is a former Christian apologist and a defender of the evangelical faith) writes:

Paul, for instance, never even mentions Jesus performing healings and even as a teacher. Twice he cites what he calls "words of the Lord," but even conservative New Testament scholars admit he may as easily mean prophetic revelations from the heavenly Christ. Paul attributes the death of Jesus not to Roman or Jewish governments, but rather to the designs of evil "archon," angels who rule this fallen world. Romans and 1 Peter both warn Christians to watch their step, reminding them that the Roman authorities never punish the righteous, but only the wicked. How they have said this if they knew of the Pontius Pilate story?

The two exceptions, 1 Thessalonians and 2 Timothy, epistles that do blame Pilate or Jews for the death of Jesus, only serve to prove the rule. Both can easily be shown on other grounds to be non-Pauline and later than the gospels [5].

For clarity, I Thessalonians 2:15-16 is argued to have been interpolated because the last statement, "...for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" is regarded as an allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem which occurred many years after the epistle was written. I Timothy 6:13 (and the pastorals in general) are not accepted as Pauline for good reasons, some of which have been indicated in [6].

I don't want build up on the question of the forgery of 'Pauline epistles' because it is unimportant and because its not a major point in Bede's review. I include links for the curious readers (mythicists generally accept the basic authenticity Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, 1 Thessalonians, Phillipians, and Philemon)

The tiny bit of morsel that Bede lastly licks up gingerly is what he claims is the anachronistic fashion he claims F & G treated the Roman Catholic Church in their book. He ends his review with a grammatically incorrect sentence: "Still, if anachronism is the greatest crime a historian it is probably the least of the sins of Messrs Freke and Gandy". But that is a venial error. We can let it slide. He doesn't back up his accusation with any relevant quotes so we cannot really comment on whether F & G refer to the RC anachronistically, in any event, its not central to their thesis, I am sure.

Do all theologians regard Freke and Gandy's work the way Bede does? Paul William Barnett, who is an Anglican Bishop of North Sydney (Theological scholar and professor) said this in an interview: "...Freke and Gandy are more formidable than Thiering or Spong. Thiering's Qumran-based reconstruction is just too fantastic to be taken seriously and Spong merely rehashes Michael Goulder's midrash line which R.T. France and others demolished years ago."

Take that for whatever its worth.

Conclusion

Bede disassembles no spring chicken as he claims at the top of the page. The imagery of spring chickens makes his article a sad irony. His review is weak, faulty, shallow and riddled with logical fallacies and lacks any good reasons for discrediting F & G or their work.

References

- [1] http://www.tektonics.org/TF.JM_060960581X.html
- [2] <http://www.geocities.com/zuiqqa/j04.htm>
- Dialogue with Trypho in full: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0128.htm>
- [3] <http://www.ccel.org/fathers/ANF-01/j...html#Section60>
- [4] <http://www.eucharisticlife.com/ELima...0/Apology.html>
- [5] <http://www.infidels.org/library/moder...e/fiction.html>
- [6] http://firstnewtestament.netfirms.co...arth_jesus.htm