

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF "THE CASE FOR CHRIST", THE BEST-SELLING BOOK BY LEE STROBEL

Lee Strobel along with "experts" tries to show that the gospel story of Jesus is true.

STROBEL'S LIE:

Blomberg's assertion that if the gossellers were inventing a religion they would not make lust as bad as adultery for that would not suit themselves for the moral standard in the books would condemn them for they are very high, is approved.

THE TRUTH:

Why not? They never claimed to be perfect and you can't see lust a lot of the time anyway. They probably kept their lives private when they wouldn't even put their names to the gospels. Blomberg is assuming evidence into existence.

STROBEL'S LIE:

In the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus saying that women have to become male to be saved and saying that if a stone is broken he is found there indicates the heresy of pantheism so the early Church was right to eliminate the Gospel of Thomas from the canon (list of Bible books considered to be the infallible word of God) for heresy.

THE TRUTH:

Christians assume the New Testament books are inspired. This presupposes that not only was what was written right but the apostles were inspired to interpret Jesus' teaching properly and the writers who were not apostles were inspired to interpret the apostles correctly. What it boils down to is this: They interpreted correctly because Jesus said they would and they infallibly interpreted him correctly when he said that. So what we are doing is reasoning in circles. So what we are doing is assuming that these men interpreted Jesus right and knew when they were exercising the gift. But how could they know? We all have impulses that we think come from God. To be infallible they would have to be God in order to know that they are infallible.

The bad logic used by Christians shows that the canon is just a man-made list and not a divine authority and the canonical books that make an illogical claim to inspiration should be thrown on the same refuse tip as the Gospel of Thomas. To follow human interpretations is to follow men not God. Christians wage war in the name of God while in reality and they know it is really man's musings on God that they are following. Their faith is man-made.

Rejecting a book because its doctrine is not liked means the agenda of the Church was more important than anything the scriptures said. The Church was full of mysteries like the Trinity (three persons being one God) and the idea that Jesus took the death penalty for sins though he was innocent and the early Church and had the nerve to say it rejected books from the New Testament because they were absurd. And Thomas claimed to be a cryptic gospel so its absurd statements cannot be taken as proof of absurdity. What about the Book of Revelation in the Bible with its absurd symbols and its unreadability?

Most Christians today deny that the Bible is totally infallible. They see error in it.

STROBEL'S LIE:

The book agrees with Metzger about the canon of 27 books being God's word in the New Testament.

THE TRUTH:

No gospel is ever said by any other book of the Bible that it is the word of God. How then could the Church have reliably decided that the four gospels are divinely inspired?

STROBEL'S LIE:

The Jews never denied the miracles of Jesus but said they were the Devil's works even in their own writings so Jesus did do miracles.

THE TRUTH:

In their own writings that came along after the time of Jesus they did state that Jesus did signs by the power of magic but they never said that these signs were unquestionably supernatural. The Devil could have helped people to believe in, say, the resurrection more easily so Jesus could have used crude trickery and cast spells on people's minds to not see this or not want to see this.

The Jews did not have much interest in Jesus - he barely gets mentioned in their writings and even then it's not always clear that it is Jesus who is meant.

And the gospel of Matthew states that the Jews wanted Jesus' tomb protected in case his body would be stolen and a fraud far worse than any of Jesus' own frauds could start in the form of a resurrection story.

STROBEL'S LIE:

The book claims that Josephus wrote so little about Jesus and much about the Baptist for the Baptist was a greater political influence and threat and Josephus tended to focus on politics. We should use Josephus and other secular writers to provide corroborate evidence that Jesus existed.

THE TRUTH:

Not true. Jesus took the political titles King of the Jews and Messiah and John never interfered with politics and though Herod was afraid John could cause a sedition there is nothing to suggest that Herod was anything other than being paranoid. Jesus was the biggest political threat or would have been perceived by the Romans to be. He would have been jailed faster quicker than John could write his name.

Josephus may have never mentioned Jesus for everybody agrees that Christian editors put in material to make it seem that Josephus confessed Jesus as the Christ and said that he rose. That is possible meaning that his later reference to James might be real but the words saying that James was the brother of the so-called Christ are an interference for he would not just mention Jesus and say nothing about him in that place.

The book quotes Tacitus who wrote that the Christians took their name from Christus who was crucified under Tiberias as a reliable testimony to the death of Jesus and his view that Christianity had a history of abominations is taken as unreliable. If Tiberias could be so wrong about a religion in his midst then he could have been wrong about the existence of Jesus Christ. He is not reliable and Christians would not be using him if they had any honesty. The fact remains is that there is no credible non-Christian witness to Jesus' existence which means the gospels are devoid of corroboration.

STROBEL'S LIE:

The Jesus Seminar's scepticism towards the Bible is not caused by their research but by their assuming that supernatural events don't happen and therefore that the gospels are unreliable because they say they do happen. That is the fatal flaw of the seminar.

THE TRUTH:

That is a question for philosophy. If philosophy says that miracles are not signs or that the supernatural is very unlikely or never happens then it is perfectly right to do what the Jesus Seminar is doing. Strobel has no concern for truth when he is willing to believe in the supernatural just because the Bible says so. A miracle needs to be plausible before it can be believed in for heaven's sake even if the Bible does want it believed in. You should believe in the miracles because they are plausible not because the Bible says they happened. Christians say that miracle by definition is a very very improbable event. Case closed! The evidence needs to be so strong that you need to see the miracle happening with your own eyes. That they, don't admit.

STROBEL'S LIE:

The Jesus Seminar believing that a saying of the gospels should only be believed as authentically from Jesus if it is stated in at least two gospels is rejected.

THE TRUTH:

The Law of Moses which Jesus said was right demanded two witnesses at least so Christians should be content with this approach.

The words of God must be supported by two witnesses. The only fault with the Jesus Seminar's approach is that there is no reason to believe that the gospels were not copying from one another or from some source available to all of them. There is no evidence of two eyewitness reports anywhere in the gospels.

STROBEL'S LIE:

The Identity evidence in the book's Chapter 7 argues that since Jesus saw himself as God and the Son of God it shows he was really both. One clue of this is that Jesus chose 12 apostles to create a new Israel like God did from the twelve sons of Israel and did not include himself in this group meaning he must have been claiming to be God. Another is that he called God Abba, which indicates a uniquely close relationship with God meaning that he was God for that would be the only way his could be unique. In Judaism two witnesses were needed but Jesus just depended on his own authority like God would so he was God.

THE TRUTH:

The Identity evidence does not do what the book says.

So Jesus just needed his own authority? It is odd then that Jesus would have to do miracles to prove he was such an exalted being! And especially when the people who could be making the claim for him, the New Testament writers, didn't need to prove their books were true by miracles! Rather than Jesus doing miracles we should see the dead rising when the books of the gospels are placed upon them. No New Testament author used another witness to verify his alleged divine inspiration through which he wrote his book, so does that mean they thought they were God too?

Jesus is being proclaimed God and the Son of God because they think they see this in a book. This really means that books saying it is enough even though it is not that difficult to produce books as convincing as the gospels.

Jesus' apostles were not like the sons of Israel who were the origins of the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus was planning to die a horrible death while leaving them to be the missionary workers so he could not make himself one of the twelve. Israel was the prophet who set up his sons as the origin of the Israelite nation and Jesus may have seen himself as corresponding to him.

Paul said we can call God father or Abba because of Jesus. Jesus did not mean that he was uniquely close to God by using the term as applicable to himself. He was rejecting the Jewish superstition that it was wrong to call God that. The Jewish Scriptures contradicted the superstition for God in Isaiah calls Israel as a nation his son. Jesus did not ask anybody to believe in him just because he claimed authority. He used his miracles and the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit as justification for his claims.

STROBEL'S LIE:

Jesus was given God's name in the writings of Paul so the Church knew from the start that Jesus was God so the objection of critics that the divinity of Jesus was a later invention is dubious.

THE TRUTH:

He was given God's title the Kyrios. Titles can be given as a mark of honour. Jesus was hostile to man-made Jewish tradition so he would not have had the same reserve towards using the name of God or a divine title as the Jews had.

STROBEL'S LIE:

Jesus saying that John the Baptist was the greatest man ever is taken to indicate that Jesus thought himself to be better and even to be God.

THE TRUTH:

Jesus could be better than John without being God and nothing Jesus ever said about himself in the gospels indicated that John could not be the superior man for John might have refused in his humility to be promoted to being the Son of God.

STROBEL'S LIE:

Jesus complaining when a man called him good is taken to mean, "Why do you suck up to me and call me good though I am good and perfect?" or "Do you mean I am as good as God?" because no other interpretation matches what Jesus said

about himself being holy and sinless.

THE TRUTH:

So “I’m going to kill you” is not a threat because the person saying this once said, “I would never kill anybody”? What Jesus said elsewhere is not important – it is the context of what he said to the man that is relevant here. The man did not believe Jesus was God and Jesus told him that God alone was good and asked him why he said he was good. The context definitely indicates that Jesus was denying that he should be called good in comparison to God. The original Jesus was not envisaged as sinless. The man was not accused of sucking up and Jesus agreed with the man when the man said he kept all the commandments so the man did know what good really was.

Finally:

Some would say that their Christianity depends on faith and that the same is true of my scepticism. For example, they might say that when I argue that the Matthew genealogy of Jesus and the Luke one are contradictory this is faith for Christians say they can reconcile them. Now in an issue like that what should be done is to go for the belief that is the most likely to be true or the one that does the least harm and involves the least mysteries. This belief is the one that they do contradict one another. And in every other case where two conflicting genealogies is given, Christians do say there is a contradiction and do not try to reconcile them. It is certainly wrong to believe in a form of Christianity just on faith for that is like wishing people would go to Hell forever for dying in serious sin.