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Becoming All Things, Part 2

By Adrian VanVactor,
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I stood there, at just twenty years of age, staring out into a crowd of 850 people, the majority being members of a local church. Of unchurched visitors present, **56 made a commitment to follow Jesus** as Lord and Savior that evening. The event affirmed my vocation, my calling into a life of evangelism. Just months before I had won the international competition and received an award for “The Most Promising Magician of the Future.” Therein lies the problem: “magician.” **Can God use a magician?**



In part 1, I discussed how the church became “*all things*” (1 Corinthians 9:22) to all people for a more effective witness. When I first wrestled with my love for the art of illusion and my newfound faith, I quickly learned from the Bible how important it is to understand that words have both meaning and context.

The Bible clearly **condemns the occult practices** of attempting to communicate with the dead, sacrificing children, consulting spirits, or making predictions in the name of false gods (cf Deuteronomy 18:10-14). Yet, it seemed silent on the modern role as an entertainer. The New American Standard Bible uses the title “magician” sixteen times in the Old Testament, mostly of the Egyptian or Babylonian priest-like class who were considered experts in interpreting dreams and extracting meaning from events and the stars. While some did practice the occult, they were also well acquainted with herbs and healing ailments and could read and write. In fact, the root word means to write or engrave. The prophet Daniel was

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FAITH – Threatening Extinction

By Dr. Don Bierle, *FaithSearch* President

Following His parable on prayer, Jesus asked, “...when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8b). Did He intend this to be yet another sign of the end times: **the extinction of biblical faith?**

In a recent article,* author Travis Dickinson relates a conversation between an atheist and a Christian college student:

Atheist: What do you mean by faith?

Christian: Like, belief that God is God, that He is the almighty Savior.

A: Are you saying faith is just belief?

C: Uh huh.



“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15).

A: Does just believing in something make that something true?

C: No. Just believing in Santa Claus doesn’t make it true. [laughing].

A: So, if someone just believed in Santa, this doesn’t make Santa true?

C: No, there’s no evidence for Santa.

A: Is there evidence for a God?

C: Uh huh.

A: What’s the best one?

C: There’s a lot. Like I said, there’s a lot. [Thinking to herself] I have to think. You are putting me on the spot. I have them written down.

A: I’m not saying that the evidence is not true, but if all that evidence was found to be nonreliable, would that change your

confidence that the [sic] God is real?

C: No. [laughs] It really wouldn’t.

A: So, it is not really about evidence either for you?

C: No, it’s just about faith.

A: What is your definition of “faith”?

C: I think faith is an internal feeling. I have this feeling in me that I know God is real. I can’t explain it.

The author calls the Christian’s response “cringeworthy.” I’d call it painful! Perhaps an even worse description of faith is the caricature I had in my own agnosticism years ago, “Faith is believing what you know isn’t true!” Many Christians today have little conviction about the need to defend faith with evidence and reason.

Christian philosopher and theologian, **Francis A. Schaeffer**, quoted J. S. Bezzant’s response to Christians who say their faith is immune from proof [reason]: “When I am told that it is precisely its immunity from proof which secures the Christian position from the charge of being mythological, I reply

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IN THE NEWS

No Thanks...I’ll Pass

It’s hard to imagine the new ice cream flavor developed in **Quito, Ecuador**. Maria del Carmen Pilapana said she believes she has “the first **guinea-pig-flavored ice cream**.” My family and my husband thought I was crazy, but now it’s my main product.” Her offerings also include bug- and mushroom-flavored ice cream.



Source: *World Magazine*, Vol. 34, No. 21; Nov. 9, 2019; p. 15.

FAITH – Threatening Extinction

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that immunity from proof can ‘secure’ nothing whatever except immunity from proof and call nonsense by its name” (Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, p. 120, quoting Bezzant’s writing in *Objections to Christian Belief*, 1963).

The premise of the **new street epistemologists**, an atheist activist group, is that the Christian faith is irrational. Equipped with an array of tools to negate religious faith, their goal is to cause Christians to abandon their faith and embrace reason. The Christian college student quoted above only reinforced their premise.

Wait a Minute!

Must we “trash” the college student’s faith because she could not come up with an apologetic reason to support it? Well, yes and no. **“No,”** in consideration of one very important biblical truth: the apostle Paul makes clear that *“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God”* (Romans 8:16). Perhaps that was the confidence she was “feeling.” A life-transformation occurs when a person becomes a Spirit-filled Christian, a truth taught throughout the New Testament. Many Christians have experienced this. **“Yes,”** because she should have been prepared (1 Peter 3:15) to say that. The testimony of our changed life is **foundational apologetic evidence** which the atheist can’t deny.

Can FAITH be REASONABLE?

The key to distinguishing the faith of Christianity from the faith of every other religion is its **faith OBJECT**. Without an object, faith is only “faith in faith,” a subjective feeling. There can be no lasting confidence for the holder, and it is not persuasive to anyone else either. That kind of faith is doomed to extinction no matter how sincerely it is held.

For over forty years I have traveled the country (and the world) doing presentations on faith. I always ask, “What is the object of your faith?” The appeal to faith itself is evangelistically ineffective; faith without an object is destined for extinction. Jesus’ question above was clearly seeking for something more.

In the next issue of the *Paraclete* I will explain **what the Bible means by “faith.”** I will show how it is reasonable and unique compared to every other religion in the world. (continued to right —>)

Becoming All Things

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called the chief of the magicians (Daniel 4:9). In that sense, I’m in good company.

In the New Testament (NASB) the English word “magician” is used twice. The Greek word is also translated as “magi” for the wisemen who visited the Christ child in Matthew 2.


According to the online Oxford English US dictionary, there are two different meanings or uses for the noun “magician.” First, “A person with magical powers.” Second, “A person who performs magic tricks for entertainment.” The first meaning is typically condemned in the Bible. In westernized countries, the second definition is usually intended. I describe what I do as the art of illusion: **I am a Gospel illusionist.** In my program I never portray myself as being able to interpret dreams, consult astrology charts, or commune with the spirit world. In fact, I typically give a detailed disclaimer that **I’m using natural means to create a su-**



pernatural “effect” or illusion. I often use the movie *Superman* as an example. We are not expected to believe in a real Superman; the character does not exist. It is merely an actor playing the role of Superman. So how do they create the “illusion” of this actor’s invincibility and flying skills? Movie Magic! Special effects. Similarly, in my program I’m merely an actor playing the role of a fictitious character called “magician” and instead of creating my special effects on screen, I create them on stage.

In 2 Corinthians 10:5, the Apostle Paul exclaims, *“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”* **This is the defining passage of what I do as an illusionist** and why having this skillset is so valuable. The world is filled with false claims of the supernatural. Throughout the **fifty countries I have visited during my fifty-nine international tours**, I’m amazed how often a person’s faith is tethered to a false supernatural worldview. The only way to unshackle these beliefs is by demonstrating and debunking the “effects” naturally in a way that only a professional magician could.

In South Africa, for example, my program was designed to expose the local—and much feared—witchdoctors. I had countless students approach me afterwards in tears exclaiming how free they felt to no longer have to live in fear.


The world is filled with false claims of the supernatural. I destroy these arguments by way of natural demonstration. During my debunking speech and presentation of modern deceivers and false claims of the supernatural, I make the argument for the uniqueness of Christ and why my audiences can legitimately put their faith in Him. In part 3 of my series, I will share details of this **effective apologetic method.** 

IN THE NEWS


“Can I give her a hug, please?”

BRANDT JEAN, younger brother of murder victim Botham Jean, asked the judge in the trial of former Dallas Police Officer Amber Guyger, who had been convicted of murdering his brother, Botham Jean, if he could give her a hug.

During his victim impact statement, Jean forgave Guyger and said, “I want the best for you, because that’s exactly what Botham would want for you, and the best would be to give your life to Christ.” The judge allowed the hug.

“For if you forgive others the wrongs they have done, your heavenly Father will also forgive you...” (Matthew 6:14, NEB) 

Source: *World Magazine*, Vol. 34, No. 20; 10.26.19; Quotables p. 10

I want Jesus to find faith on the earth when He comes again! 

* “Street Epistemology: The New Atheist Evangelism.” *Christian Research Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 06, p. 36

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