

I am missing the final section of the following. It is lost in cyberspace!

Subj: Good evening
Date: 4/28/01 9:25 AM Pacific Daylight Time
From: Kallespolander@hotmail.com (kalle Spolander)
To: gjensen549@aol.com

Good evening,

I stumbled across one of your articles on www.christiananswers.net, called, "How do we know that Jesus really rose from the dead?"

Never have I seen such stupidity and twisting and picking and mixing of facts.

Would you care to debate me about the contents of the articles? Tell me if you have the time and energy to do it.

Regards

Kalle, Stockholm University

April 28, 2001, 11:00 AM

Yes, Kalle, I am interested in debating you. I must say at the outset, that I am not slightly impressed with your charges. Wherever people come down on this question, even if, in the end, they remain unpersuaded, it is silly to make the kind of attacks represented by your e-mail. I am expecting the level of discussion for your side will rise. What you read on Christiananswers.net is a rather heavily edited version of an essay I have prepared. My paper edition I distribute on street corners here in Seattle, including the University of Washington, and several other colleges. I am, however, sending you, as an attachment, a somewhat longer edition that can go over the internet so that you both can read my argument in context and consider my notes and sources. I am eager for substantive response from you that rises above mere name-calling. Sincerely, Gary Jensen

April 29

Good morning

How interesting. I must admit that this came as quite a shock for me. I wasn't prepared to rebut a 125kb text. But I will take the time, of course. But it will of course take longer than I intended. I hope you understand that.

I must also ask for your permission to present this debate in full on a website for others to read. I think I have to take back my stupidity claim, since I didn't read your text in full. I apologize for that.

Now I will begin to deal with your essay. Though I am a working man, I hope to be able to finish it this week at least.

April 29, 2001

Good morning Kalle,

I hope I have your name correct. Not only am I interested in debating you, but I give you full permission to make the debate public on your website. Do you intend to post my essay so that people can read my position in context?

Sincerely, Gary Jensen

April 30

Good evening.

Yes, you have my name correct. My full name is Kalle Spolander, as you probably can tell by my e-mail.

I will be glad to post the essay. Doing otherwise wouldn't be sincere. The website I plan to publish it on will be my own website, that's coming up soon. It will have different areas, such as a private one with pictures of my family etc. one regarding politics, one for my students and one regarding religion. I will of course publish your answers unedited and in full.

Do you think it would be wise to have a word limit?

Of course you have my full permission to post my statements and responses wherever you'd like, as long as you let me know.

Now I'm going to work. I've begun to deal with your essay. It might take some time. Please have patience.

Regards
Kalle

Good morning, Kalle,

I agree to and with every you just said. But I do have a few additional comments. As to the word limit, I would like to keep it open at this point. It appears we are both limited as to time. Yet, I would like to address limits only if length actually becomes a problem for either of us.

One limitation I do request is that discussion be confined to my central claim, that Jesus rose from the dead. I am not saying that there should be no latitude. Only that the discussion in some way be relatable to the central point. If the focus of the debate is to be shifted down the road, I think we should both be clear about the change in direction.

It also seems to me that since our communication began with your disagreement with me, that it is for you to begin by stating some objections.

Finally, I would like the discussion to be civil. I have no animosity toward you, and I hope that you have none toward me. Now my point is not to tone down a spirited discussion. To the contrary, I love a debate. I take this matter seriously. Be we are, after all, human beings together. I like people, even those who see things differently from me. I happen to be curious about you, your situation, and your family. So, if you share about your personal life, I am eager to hear.

I am a Lutheran pastor, have a wife, and four teenagers, including a set of triplets, in total, two boys and two girls. We also have a student with us from Hamburg, Germany. And incidentally, a dog and a cat. Family life is great, if not stressful at times.

Sincerely, Gary

May 1

Good evening.

I agree with you on your thoughts of the word limit. I don't think we should have one, since I planned to place my comments after your text in brackets.

I also think it's fair that I'll send my objections first. And I agree to your limitation you requested.

So then, let me tell you a little about my life. I am 47 years old, and I live in Stockholm, Sweden. I'm married and I have two kids that are 16 and 18 years old. I also had a cat until recently.

I worked as a spiritual counselor for many years, but I resettled after losing my faith. Now I work as a psychologist, and I also teach at Stockholm university. When I'm not with my family or working I am a musician. I play piano in a jazz band, and I play electric guitar in a rock band. I've also written a few chapters in some infamous books.

I am really looking forward to this opportunity. I've started working on your text, and I will be done soon.

Regards, Kalle

May 3

Kalle, I am posting family and friends of our conversations. There is a great deal of interest from my end. I look forward to our conversations. Thanks for sharing a bit about yourself. Gary

May 4

Good evening/

.

Thank you Gary. I'm glad to see that you have high expectations from this debate, just like me. I see this opportunity as an honor for me.

I must warn you not to have high expectations from my first reply. The comments will be brief for the sake of argument.

Regards, Kalle

May 16

Good morning,

I've begun to rebut your essay, only to find that I can't do it. It's not that I don't have the capacity to do it, it's just that it takes too long. When I first e-mailed you I wasn't ready to rebut a full length essay. I have a demanding job and a family to share my time with as well. Rebutting your essay including the footnotes would be a life-time project.

This doesn't mean that I don't want to debate the question with you. My suggestion is that we both write a short opening statement, and that we then start to discuss from those arguments. I recommend a word limit of, say 1000-2000 words for the opening statement for the sake of debate. You could sum up your essay, and we could make sure to link to the full length essay on the website, for the sake of honesty. I've written a similar essay on why I think that Jesus is a myth, and I could sum up those arguments and link to that essay as well.

I hope you appreciate my position, and I hope you understand that I'm not trying to run away. I do not want to miss this opportunity for intellectual stimulance (sic) and education from both sides, and I hope that you feel the same.

If you don't think that this is a good idea, please tell me, and I'll do my best to your essay anyway and send it over.

No date

Kalle,

Thanks for writing. I never intended a full rebuttal to my essay. I wanted the essay posted so that you would understand the context for my words and be able to see that there is a significant amount of scholarship behind my position. I am off to church to preach now, so I am not able to give your e-mail my full attention. But my initial thinking is, I agree with your proposition, and so do not regard it as "fleeing." I will have further thoughts when I return home.

Sincerely, Gary

FOR NOW I HAVE LOST KALLE'S FIRST CHALLENGE TOGETHER WITH MY RESPONSE TO HIM. I AM SEEKING TO RECOVER THIS MISSING SECTION.

June 11, 2001

IN WHAT FOLLOWS I HAVE COLLATED FIRST OF ALL KALLE'S STATEMENT TOGETHER WITH MY REBUTTAL, INTO THE SAME DOCUMENT. I HAVE DONE THIS IN ORDER TO CONSERVE SPACE. KALLE'S STATEMENT (June 11) IS IN REGULAR TEXT. MY RESPONSE (JUNE 22) FOLLOWS (generally after each paragraph) IN *ITALICS*.

Good morning.

KALLE: Thank you for your stimulating attempts to respond to my criticism. Let me get down to business right away.

You claim that there is no room for a spiritual resurrection in the Jewish culture. But you don't have to go any farther than to the New Testament itself, which was, as you said, written by Jews. Some of the Jews in the New Testament were saying that Jesus was the resurrected John the Baptist. [Mark 6:14-15]. They had thought that John the Baptist had resurrected. Jewish people had thought that a dead man was resurrected in a different form. And you know those verses that are in the bible (sic). So that contradicts.

GARY: *There is no contradiction here since what is asserted in Mark is that people thought John the Baptist had come back from the dead bodily. Yet as I have already said, if there was room for a spiritual resurrection, then you are left without a motive for the Gospel writers to have invented a bodily resurrection. For the notion of a bodily resurrection was a problem for Paul in his preaching in Athens in Acts 17. According to your timetable (which I don't accept) the Gospels would have come later in time than the Apostle Paul. Why would the Gospel writers have created, out of nothing, a teaching which would bring ridicule from the Gentile audiences?*

KALLE; You're asking about the motives for adding elements to their faith. We can't know, for obvious reasons. We can't know, for obvious reasons. We can't go back in time and psychoanalyze Peter. But Peter and the disciples had given up everything to follow Jesus. They expected their Messiah to set up a kingdom on earth. This did not happen. Jesus died. This created a cognitive dissonance." Add to this that Peter felt bad. What if you had a bad argument with your wife and she died in a car accident before you had the opportunity to apologize? Not only will you be dealing with the trauma of the death of someone you love very much, changing your entire future, but you will be dealing with the guilt of what you had said and were unable to make right. Peter must have felt like this when Jesus died. Peter must have needed some way to "make everything right." Perhaps he prayed to Jesus and felt that he had received forgiveness, and later told this to his friends. Perhaps he "saw" Jesus in an agonizing vision, and told this to his friends, who misinterpreted what he said, easily imagining that he had really seen the physical Jesus, eager to believe that their years of following the Messiah had not been wasted after all. We don't need an actual historical event in order to produce a belief in credulous, hurting people.

GARY: *You seem to believe that producing alternative hypotheses in itself undermines the New Testament claim about Jesus' resurrection. But this will not do. It is not enough merely to assert alternative points of view. Your assertions must plausibly account for a whole host of things. You are effectively asserting that Peter's sense of guilt adequately accounts for not only his own conversion, but for the persuasion of every other disciple to belief that their dead friend had come back to life. You are further effectively asserting that Peter's guilt is adequate to account for belief that a crucified "failure" was the risen Lord of life, even though Jesus Messianic hope was in a military-like leader who would end the Roman domination of their people. Indeed, it was a part of their religious belief that crucifixion marked one out as actually cursed by God (Galatians 3:13). You are further effectively asserting that Peter's sense of guilt was adequate to account for the Christian deification of the human Jesus, in opposition to the entrenched Jewish monotheism, which insisted in God's oneness and His transcendent. And you are asserting, in effect, that Peter's sense of guilt is adequate to account not only for the disciples' transformation from cowards to bold proclaimers of Jesus, but also their willingness to go to their death for their new-found faith in Jesus Christ. The list can go on and on. You utterly understate these hurdles (of which my list is only partial) that were involved in this massive shift in faith. It is significant that in your next paragraph you call the people in Jesus' day "easy to fool." I, for one, am left wondering how in the world you believe your own assertions. Of course, since you don't believe*

Jesus existed at all, I am left to wonder just who it was Peter is supposed to have felt guilty about betraying.

KALLE: I also claim that the people in those days were easy to fool. Remember Josephus. He told us in Jewish War 2.259-60 that the area was filled with swindlers, claiming to be from God. He also said that those people led people like sheep to their doom. In Acts 28:3-6 we see that the mere fact of Paul's survival of the snake bite made people see him as someone sent from God. Both Hermas and Eusebuius claimed to be liars. You seem to claim that it would have to take a lot to convince the people back then that Jesus resurrected bodily instead of spiritually. I disagree. I can actually imagine a "Life of Brian" scenario where people are convinced by the mere word of someone credible.

GARY: *To pick up on what I just said, it is not enough to say that there are gullible people in the world. The negative ramifications of following Jesus (persecution on a number of fronts, alienation from the Jewish community death, etc.) were so extensive as to demand thinking that went beyond the trivial and the curious. I encourage you to give special attention to Simon Greenleaf's observations on page 10 of my essay, ["Hoax? Myth? or Literally True?"]. I am prepared to send you a much more extensive portion of the same quote [although you can easily find it for yourself by referring to the endnote].*

KALLE: *There are other possibilities. Perhaps they were influenced by other religions. Perhaps they got the idea of a bodily resurrection from Krishna or Mithras? Perhaps Paul got the idea from one of his journeys to Rome where he was introduced to Osiris?*

GARY: *Krishna probably didn't influence Paul since he lived in the 1800's A.D. [I now realize I am mistaken in my dating here. On the other hand, there is still not the slightest evidence Paul was, or would have been influenced by thinking in India]. The notion that Paul was influenced by either Mithraism or Osiris, is rebutted in note 40 of my essay. Michael Grant, renowned Oxford scholar of Classical Roman history has stated, "Modern critical methods fail to support the Chris-myth theory. It has again and again been answered and annihilated by first rank scholars." (Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels. (Scribner's 1977), p.200).*

KALLE: And finally, why can't we just admit these people were human beings, and they made mistakes. What's the problem? Why can't you admit that they were trying their best, but they goofed a little bit? Were they exempt from human error? Were they exempt from exaggerations? Peter was hot-headed, uneducated, and he was under immense emotional distress. We're supposed to believe testimony of this kind of person. I don't think so.

GARY: *You are asserting not merely a mistake, but a colossal mistake. Why not believe the testimony of one who was sometimes a hothead? History is filled with brilliant hotheads. Lacking in formal education is no sign of stupidity. On the other hand, all the academic degrees in the world, alone, are no ultimate guarantee that the holder of such degrees acts with common sense or honesty.*

KALLE: I claimed that *etaphe* never means tomb. The word for tomb is *mnema*. The word for Sepulchre is *mnemeion*. The word *etaphe* comes from the word *Taphos*, which means burial. In Deuteronomy, Moses is thrown in a grave in Moab, and later in Matthew 17 he's seen on the mountain with Elijah. Do you suggest that we should assume that there's an empty tomb of Moses because he's seen after his death? Of course not. Paul isn't saying that he has a belief in an empty tomb. To suggest otherwise is to compare him to later writers who did, which is a historical no-no.

So where were Jesus buried? Probably in a common grave, just like the Romans did with every other victim. And what's the point with that? Well, if there's no body missing there can't be a bodily resurrection, can there?

GARY: *For the record, etaphe is a verb and not a noun. It is not asserted that Moses was actually resurrected, but that he appeared spiritually in a vision on the Mount of Transfiguration. I repeat that Paul, as a Jew, would not have believed in the resurrection of Jesus without a body. So, the tomb is implied. Incidentally, it is believed by most scholars that the first verses of 1 Corinthians 15 are not Paul's, but instead a creed that is dated (even by the Jesus Seminar) from three to five years after Jesus' resurrection. As for whether Jesus was buried at all, the truth is, most who were crucified weren't buried at all, but left to hang for the birds to eat. But there were exceptions, as is well documented. Indeed, even archaeological remains have recently been uncovered of one who had scars from crucifixion, who had yet been buried (see note 48 of my essay). Granting the rarity of burying those who were crucified doesn't work in your favor since this reality makes it far less likely Christians would have attempted to create Jesus' burial out of nothing. And as I also mention in my essay, the mention of such a public figure as Joseph of Arimathea (a prominent member of the Jewish Sanhedrin) makes it even more incredible that the story of Jesus was invented.*

KALLE: You claim that *egeiro* sometimes means to come back from the dead bodily. That calls for an explanation as to why Paul didn't use the word *anastasis* instead, which means resurrected. It also calls for an explanation to why the word *Egeiro* is used in a "wake up" context in Romans 13:11 and Ephesians 5:14.

GARY: *Egeiro is used in the New Testament in a variety of contexts, which not only includes "to wake up," but also "to raise the dead." My Greek Lexicon includes a whole listing covering the whole range. Language allows for a variety of uses so that it is wooden and artificial to insist that Paul use only a single word of your choosing to affirm Jesus' resurrection.*

KALLE: You claim that *ophthe* doesn't forbid a bodily resurrection. But Paul has got a lot of visions in the Bible, and in all cases (5?) he uses the word *ophthe*. In Matthew 17 do you suggest that Moses bodily appeared to Peter? I don't think that most Christians believe that Moses resurrected from the dead before Jesus died for our sins.

GARY: *I do not claim, and neither does Paul, that Jesus appeared to him in bodily form. As for Moses, there is no claim by the New Testament that he had yet been resurrected. What happened in Matthew 17 was a vision, not a resurrection.*

KALLE: Paul makes this clear a few verses later. In 1 Cor. 15:50 tells us that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. He obviously intends that Jesus resurrected bodily, not spiritually.

GARY: *1 Corinthians 15 is difficult material. But the bottom line is that Paul is affirming the resurrection of the body, not a raising of the spirit apart from the body. His point is that our current mortal bodies will be resurrected as immortal bodies. Yet it is still in the body that we will be raised.*

KALLE: The dating of the Gospels doesn't mean that much for my hypothesis.

GARY: *To the contrary, the best evidence regarding the dating of the Gospels is fatal to your position. Give attention to my notes, numbers 37, 38, and 40. Scholars are in virtual unanimous agreement that just a few decades is vastly too short of time for mythical and legendary tendencies to prevail in the portrait of Jesus we are provided in the Gospels.*

KALLE: I cannot see how the results of the Habermas-Flew debate lends weight to your hypothesis. Is this debate more relevant than the Craig-Parsons, in which the atheist won?

GARY: *If the "twelve widely-acknowledged historical facts"—in other words, facts that are accepted by virtually all scholars—give no weight at all to my hypothesis, then I don't know why we are bothering to discuss anything. It is one thing for you to take each of these "facts" and succeed in explaining them away. But this you have not done. It is quite another matter to claim, as you apparently are, that I have offered no arguments, which I find absurd. As for Keith Parsons, I have not read the book you are describing, though I have read other works of his. If you have read the C-P debate, I am curious where his ideas are found in your arguments?*

KALLE: I also fail to see how an empty tomb entails a physical resurrection.

GARY: *An empty tomb, by itself, doesn't prove a physical resurrection. But it is something that calls for explanation and it is consistent with Jesus' physical resurrection.*

KALLE: I find Craig's arguments, which you refer to in your footnotes, unconvincing and question begging. It's not as if people haven't lost bodies. As if bodies haven't been stolen. Check with some museum if some mummies have been stolen before the archaeologists came there.

GARY: *Craig's observations are but one piece of a much larger section. It is not at all clear why you find question begging about his position. You may declare yourself*

unconvinced, but your comments that follow actually suggest you haven't read my essay on this manner in a serious way. Jesus' body stolen. I'm sorry, but you have to answer by whom, and also give a plausible account how they could have pulled it off. Again, plausibility is the operative word here. If it was supposed to have been by the disciples, you would have to account for their willingness to go to their own deaths for a lie. If it was to have been by anyone else, you would have to account for the silence of these thieves, who had it in their power to enable the Roman and Jewish officials to silence the early Jesus believers.

KALLE: He also sidesteps the fact than none saw Jesus resurrect from the dead. I do not mean to imply here that Craig never discusses any other evidence (like the appearances), but that he sidesteps the fact that no one saw Jesus rise from the dead.

GARY: No one says otherwise. Craig doesn't sidestep this matter. To the contrary, he argues that, in contrast to legend and myth, the Gospels understate Jesus' resurrection. Have you noted my comments plus their notes referring to the objection, "The Easter Accounts are Myth and Not History."? You ought also to consider the opinion of Eric Auerbach, which accompanies that section in note 41.

KALLE: And the evidence strongly suggests that there may have been no early tradition of physical appearances at all.

GARY: Where do you get this idea? You are virtually alone in your position. In all of my reading the one position that is unanimously accepted is that the first disciples were utterly convinced that they had met the risen Jesus. Consider note 52 where just a few, out of many scholars, concede this truth.

KALLE: His arguments, in all his works, dismiss both interpretations at once, by appealing to the empty tomb. There is also another possibility: it might not have originally been a theft at all—the body may have simply been legitimately moved, before guards were posted or Mary visited the tomb. Finally, it is not so hard to doubt the account of the empty tomb in the first place.

And even if Paul is talking about a physical appearance the evidence for this bodily resurrection is still under criticism. It consists of ad hoc ideas and third and fourth hand testimonies by anonymous writers. This is not strong evidence. The four Gospels are anonymous.

GARY: You have no proof that the Gospels are anonymous and on the other side there is a great deal of evidence that the names are correct. There is also a great deal of evidence in support of the Gospels being put together while eye-witnesses to Jesus, both hostile and sympathetic, were still alive. Consider again notes 37, 38, and 40. You might also consider John Wenham's Redating Matthew, Mark, and Luke. (Intervarsity, 1992).

KALLE: We have names attached to them at all only by Irenaeus in about 170 A.D. Papius writing a bit earlier than that is sometimes supposed to have talked about Mark

and Matthew. But I'm not convinced he's even talking about the same documents. But these are writers that also purvey ideas such as that Judas Iscariot, after he betrayed Jesus, swelled up to the point that he could not pass through a street because his head was bigger than a truck. We get the evidence about the authorship of the Gospels from guys that purvey cartoons as history. There is no evidence that they were eyewitnesses, nor do their works read that way. It just seems to me, to be blunt, that you're reading of the Gospels is completely deductive based on dogmas about inspiration that are not even suggested in the Bible.

GARY: *Your logic escapes me. The Gospels are supported on grounds far larger than the citations you mention above. It is amazing to me that the Gospels are supposed to be held hostage because of the bizarre views of a confusing jumble of writers you haven't documents. Even if you did manage to produce documentation, you would still prove nothing. I am sure that mentally deranged people can be found who would agree with every position held by every person on the face of the earth. You use the term "cartoon" in reference to the Gospels. Such language is unworthy of comment. I am prepared to share many references by world-renowned scholars, leaders in the field of New Testament studies, that would affirm that the Gospels do read like history. As for your final comment, I am not offended by your bluntness, but I would reply that you are simply wrong. Nothing in my essay rests on belief in divine inspiration. I defy you to cite one example to the contrary. On the other hand I do make the charge that critics come to the Bible with those kinds of bias that lead to absurd conclusions. Pay close attention to note 30 where I list eight biases that straight jacket the critic [in the direction of their wrong conclusions.] I would also encourage you to pay especially close attention to the words of G.K. Chesterton. Here it is significant to remember your self-claim that you are an atheist who does not believe Jesus even existed. Right on the surface it is clear that you come to the New Testament with dogmatic belief that its central claim is false and that miracles can't possibly happen. Given your bias, all of the evidence to the contrary will be discounted by you in advance since it does not fit in with your sense of the world. Would you care to respond?*

KALLE: I conclude that my hypothesis is better simply because we aren't faced with any problems with it. It accounts for the contradictions in the Gospels. We can account for the lack of eye-witnesses and lack of historical corroboration. We can support it on better historical and biblical grounds. I haven't yet seen good evidence for your hypothesis. I have dealt with the problems you presented with my hypothesis.

GARY: *The above ideas have been more than adequately addressed elsewhere.*

KALLE: You have to account for the contradictions in the Gospels. I challenge you to harmonize the events of the last Easter. Just tell me what happened at what time, who said what etc. For examples, could you tell me if the tomb was open when they arrived?

GARY: *First of all, no actual contradictions have been proven [See page 8 and its accompanying notes]. I don't believe they exist. Second, even if it were demonstrated that there were a few contradictions, they do not discount whether the Gospel accounts*

are true. Again, I have to say it appears that you have not read my essay on this manner. If you had, you would have attempted to respond to Simon Greenleaf, one of the greatest authorities on evidence our nation has produced who noted that perfectly consistent testimony is not required to demonstrate truthfulness on the part of the witnesses. To the contrary, where there is perfect consistency among witnesses, collaboration is suspected. It is true that if the Gospels were proved to be significantly contradictory, that they would have to be disqualified. But that is not the case at all.

KALLE: You also have to explain why there is no historical confirmation at all for anything about the life of Jesus.

GARY: *You are incorrect. Please re-read page 4 and notes 23, and 24.*

KALLE: You also have to explain why Luke got his dates wrong, why the geography in the Gospels is wrong, where the Roman records of Jesus crucifixion is today, why there are no eye-witnesses to Jesus' resurrection or to Jesus existence and why there aren't any historical confirmation from non-believers.

GARY: *Which dates are wrong? If you are talking about the time of Jesus' birth, it is by no means certain Luke is wrong. I have studied the matter quite thoroughly and am convinced that Luke knew what he was talking about and will be vindicated. Luke's historical accuracy has in fact converted such a skeptical scholar as Sir William Ramsey (note 17). As for Luke's geography, take note of I.H. Marshall's rebuttal of Luke's critics in note 21.*

KALLE: Therefore I find your hypothesis impossible to swallow. I do agree that there are some problems with my hypothesis. But compared to your hypothesis they are insignificant.

GARY: *Kalle, I wish to put this as gently as possible. I think the reason you find my hypothesis "impossible to swallow" is because neither your mind nor your heart is open to consider the claims of Christ on your life. Is this not true? It is not true that your entire posture is to reject Him at all costs?*

There is nothing wrong with the evidence I have presented. It would be one thing for you to say, "this is worthy to consider, but I am not fully persuaded." That kind of response I understand and respect. But to say, as you have, that my hypothesis is "impossible to swallow," actually says far more about you than it does about me.

KALLE:
Regards,
Kalle Spolander

GARY: *(sent June 23, 2001)*
I wish to clarify my closing comments. You said that my hypothesis is "impossible to swallow." In response, it can be said that it is impossible to swallow a steak if you don't

even open your mouth. In the same way, it is impossible to swallow a set of ideas if your mind is not even slightly open to them. I am claiming that you are not coming to this debate with an open mind. I don't believe this is a cheap shot on my part. I am not saying this because in the end you are still not fully persuaded. That position is understandable, though I happen to find my position very persuasive. Rather, I am saying this because you have out-of-hand rejected a large body of facts that are widely-acknowledged to be true, even by those who finally do not accept the Easter message [see Gary Habermas and Antony Flew. Did Jesus Christ Rise From the Dead? (Harper and Row, 1987), p.19,20]. So, you are boldly claiming that the broad range of scholars know nothing at all. But you go even farther. When you say I have presented no arguments you are saying, in effect, that such facts do not even exist. This does not strike me as open-minded engagement.

KALLE: June 24, 2001

(from Gary) "I think the reason you find my hypothesis "impossible to swallow" is because neither your mind nor your heart is open to consider the claims of Christ on your life. Is this not true?"

(from Kalle) If this is about me accepting Jesus into my life there is nothing more to discuss.

I'm disappointed in you. I am also offended. My last e-mail might have been a bit harsh and outrageous, I agree. But that was for a purpose. I was and I'm still ready to back up my claims. But now you sent me a terribly rude answer, and I'm not sure that you're someone I want to waste precious time on. Don't bother to reply unless you want to apologize.

Regards

KALLE: June 25, 2001

I'm interpreting your silence as a refusal to apologize.

I can't begin to tell you how disappointed I am in you. I was expecting a debate based on mutual respect, but you have failed to do this. Not only have you displayed a closed mind and a stunning ignorance, you have also been insulting since the first e-mail. May I remind you of the "Your intentions" e-mail or the e-mail that even you admitted to dislike the tone of? I suggest you take a look in the mirror, or abstain from debating in the future. I suspect an "opportunity to flex your righteous muscles" attitude from your side. I have also seen some disturbing signs on your behalf. Might I carefully suggest a visit to one of my colleges (sic.—I think he means "colleagues") in America? I suggest a basic analyze (sic.) to make sure everything is in order.

Kalle Spolander, MD

GARY: June 25, 2001

Dear Kalle,

*My "silence" has to do with the simple fact that I am weighing my words carefully.
Cordially, Gary*

GARY: June 25, 2001

Dear Kalle,

It is amazing that I am charged with being "insulting since the first e-mail," since you were the one who opened with the charge of my "stupidity and twisting and mixing of the facts." Now you have just charged me with a "closed mind" and "stunning ignorance." I neither asked for an apology back at the beginning, nor do I now. I have simply asked that the debate lay out the best evidence from both sides. The name-calling has come from you.

You know very well that I was not asking you to become a Christian. I was simply making the very reasonable point that an open-minded discussion depends on a reasonable level of openness to following where the facts lead. I quite frankly am astonished that you were offended by my simply asking the question. For my side I will follow the Apostle Paul with respect to the facts. For example, if it were actually demonstrated that Christ was not raised, I would be left to admit there is no Christian faith (1 Corinthians 15). Is it not fair to raise that same question for you? It is not in my interest to believe in Christ if he is a hoax. So, I seek the relevant data with the best of my intellectual ability. I try to take seriously the challenges the critics lay before the Gospel, rather than pretend those challenges don't exist. Is it too much to ask if you are willing to face the evidence Christians bring to the debate, as opposed to cavalierly brushing it aside?

But what if I actually had invited you to become a Christian? Your reaction still leaves me in the dark. I can't comprehend why that questions raises the kind of paranoia that shuts down all discussion. Don't we all meet people who hold differing points of view who wish to commend their position to others? Even the staunchest relativist parades their position as the correct view of the world. What is it about inviting one to become a Christian that is so offensive to you?

Finally, you say of yourself, "I'm still ready to back up my claims." Well, that is the source of my frustration. I have been waiting for some time for substantive arguments on your part. I agree with your earlier e-mail that to proceed would amount to a waste of time. It is time to close the debate. I do not apologize. But I truly do wish you well.

Sincerely, Gary Jensen, M.Div. and Pastor

KALLE: June 26, 2001

Good evening. You still don't get it. I can only marvle (sic). Have a nice life. I will notify when I post our efforts on the website.
Kalle Spolander, MD

GARY: June 26, 2001

Dear Kalle,

Make sure you post it in its entirety. I have been asking my associates about whether my insurance covers the kind of therapy you have so professionally decided I need. As for my rudeness, I am eager to receive help from people on both sides of the ocean, so that I may see, perhaps, for the first time. Let me know what your students think.

Sincerely, Gary

GARY: November 12, 2001

Greetings, Kalle!

You had said you would be posting our debate regarding Jesus' resurrection on your website. How is that coming? Have your students commented on the contents of our debate? If you indeed have the debate posted on the internet, may I have the address? I admit that I have not yet found counseling from one of your colleagues on this side of the ocean.

Gary

KALLE: November 13, 2001

Good morning. The website is delayed due to a change of servers. I will let you know when and if I post it.

I just reread our debate and I have to say that I think we both sucked. I'm not sure there's anything to gain for my students in it, though I have discussed the topic frequently, and I have included your counterarguments in my lectures. Me and my students sometimes reaches different conclusions (sic. Sic.), but we all agree that Paul was talking about a spiritual resurrection.

I hope life is treating you well. Life is treating me well. 7 days ago my daughter Camilla was born.

Regards, Kalle

Gary Jensen
© April 28, 2001

