

Evidence for *Controlled Deception*: A Long List of Observations - Part II**By James Bennett****Abstract**

In these papers we provide evidence of deliberate deception by groups purporting to call for “truth” in 9/11 investigations. We show there are clear patterns of misdirection, quote mining/slaloming, misleading comparisons, propaganda tactics, appeals to authority and other signs of deception too long to list in this abstract. We believe a careful review of the evidence will show that these groups are manipulating their readers with half truths for religious proselytizing and political gain.

Introduction

In recent years, the 9/11 conspiracy theorists have launched an aggressive PR campaign questioning the U.S. governments roll in the events on that sad and terrifying day. Conspiracy theorists have invaded many message boards and forums and have enlisting readers as unwitting spokesmen. This technique has been somewhat effective to the point radio hosts are reluctantly airing some of their views. They have a spokes person who has gone on the talk show circuit to “Educate” the public. But are the leaders of this movement and issues they raise credible?

Observations continued from Part I**7) The use of religion as part of the Conspiracy theories.**

Going through speeches of the members of the 9/11 conspiracy community, particularly the Scholars for 9/11 Truth, one is struck by the entanglement of religion with their supposedly scientific and academic theories. In fact, in many circumstances their movement has more characteristics of religious fundamentalists, than academics who coldly analyze evidence and base conclusions off of it. Such characteristics include, but are not limited to:

- Belief in the infallibility of your cause
- Feeling of superiority to non-believers
- Paranoia that others are persecuting you for your beliefs
- Belief in proselytizing and spreading the faith
- Belief in the paranormal
- Veneration of messianic leadership

While I certainly would not begrudge anyone holding religious beliefs, there is definitely a danger of basing your beliefs on some type of religious-like calling, rather than the passionless examination of evidence, and it is this type of biased passion, which has caused these “scholars” to conduct research with such low academic standards, involving one sided research, and obvious and easily

debunked errors to be included in supposedly “peer reviewed” papers. History, back to the days of Galileo and Copernicus, shows us the danger of combining religion zeal and science. And while someone may be inspired by religious faith to discovery, he must not let this faith color his conclusions.

It is no coincidence then, that a great many of the members of the “Scholars”, have prominent religious roles. David Ray Griffin, who has written several books on his theories and is considered by many to be a key founder of the movement, is professor, not of engineering or science, but of theology. He has even writing a book titled, “Christian Faith and the Truth Behind 9/11: A Call to Reflection and Action”ⁱ Described in its Amazon listing as:

In this, his latest book, he analyzes the evidence about 9/11 and then explores a distinctively Christian perspective on these issues, taking seriously what we know about Jesus’ life, death, and teachings. Drawing a parallel between the Roman Empire of antiquity and the American Empire of today, he applies Jesus’ teachings to the current political administration, and he explores how Christian churches, as a community intending to be an incarnation of the divine, can and should respond.

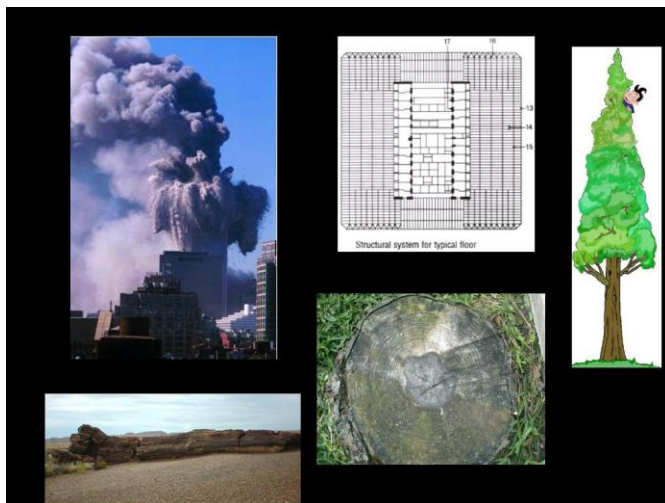
Likewise fellow member Steven Jones, although a physicist by trade, teaches at the Mormon institution Brigham Young University, where he has recorded a speech comparing 9/11 to events in the Book of Mormon.ⁱⁱ In this speech he spends almost as much time talking about the religious implications, as the science. Dr. Jones, also in the past has published a paper, arguing that Jesus visited the New World shortly after his death, a theological belief held by the Mormon Church, but not backed by any accepted archeological record. ⁱⁱⁱ While I would not deny him his religious beliefs, one wonders if the same fervent beliefs and standards of evidence spill over into his “scholarly” work.

Kevin Barrett, whose job as a part time lecturer at the University of Wisconsin- Madison has come under fire lately, is another example. He also does not hold a scientific or engineering post, he is a professor of folklore. In fact he started an 9/11 “skeptics” organization based entirely on religious belief called Muslim-Christian-Alliance for 9/11 Truth^{iv} and has made no secret that much of the inspiration for his views of 9/11 is caused by his study of religious faith, citing the contributions of Islam, Kabala, and Buddhism among others.^v

Another prominent member of the “Scholars” retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Robert Bowman, who recently appeared on the FoxNews’ program Hannity & Colmes in defense of Barrett, also makes clear the ties between his politics and religion. Bowman, who is currently running for a

Congressional seat in Florida, and is a bishop in an offshoot of the Catholic Church, has a paper posted on his website titled “Toward a ‘Jesus’ Society”^{vi} in which he advocates pursuing, “a government based on Christian principles”. He also argues that under such a society, “Acts of terrorism against us will cease.” and “At that time our transitional moral policy can be transformed into a truly Christian policy and our armed forces disbanded completely.” It doesn’t take a wild imagination to tie these beliefs in with the 9/11 conspiracy movement.

Given this, it should come as no surprise, that out of the 76 “full members” in the organization “Scholars for 9/11 Truth”, the most popular field of study, is not in the hard sciences or engineering, but in philosophy, with 9 members. An additional 3 members, including the aforementioned David Ray Griffin, are theologians. In comparison there are only a total of two engineers from any field, a French member Jean Pierre-Petit, who is mostly known for his belief that the US military is testing anti-matter weapons on Jupiter^{vii}, and Clemson mechanical engineer Judy Wood, who is most famously known for giving a presentation comparing the planes colliding with the World Trade Center, with Keebler Elves building a house in a tree.^{viii}



To date the “Scholars” have yet to produce a single credentialed member in the fields of structural or civil engineering, which would seem an important omission, given that the bulk of their argument lies in the field of explaining the collapse of the World Trade Centers, as well as the facts of the crash at the Pentagon. They do, however, have an overabundance of “experts” qualified to discuss the meaning of life and man’s place in the universe.

While there is nothing inherently wrong with being a professor of philosophy or theology, this combined with other evidence does indicate that their search is more for spiritual truth, than scientific truth, and does show why they produce work of such questionable academic standards. Trying to pass off this spiritual quest as rigorous academic work is inherently misleading.

8) Propaganda tactics

Another characteristic of this “scholarly” movement is that it is not interested in merely researching the events of 9/11, its stated goal is to propagandize its beliefs about what happened. They even explicitly state this on the “Who Are We?” section of their website^{ix} (emphasis added):

They believe that the government not only permitted 9/11 to occur but may even have orchestrated these events to facilitate its political agenda.

S9/11T encourages its members to vigorously express their concerns on this score through lectures, conferences, symposia, articles, and books as well as other access routes that publicize their findings.

While any college professor will tell you the merits of being published, one has to question the academic merits of an organization whose stated goal is to publicize its predetermined conclusions in a field. Would one take a “scholarly” group seriously, whose stated objective was to “express their concerns that the government was perpetrating a hoax in spreading the belief in global warming”? They might still have legitimate points to make, but this is the propagandistic practice of an issue advocacy group, not of a group of unbiased researchers.

Part of this propaganda program involves a conscious effort on the part of the “Scholars” to concentrate their attention on the theories which are most palatable to the public at large, while hiding their more bizarre viewpoints, in the fear that people will label them (correctly) as “conspiracy theorists”. An exchange between Kevin Barrett and radio host Joe Hawkins demonstrates this well:

Barrett: Conserve your energy for what is most productive. 9/11 is such an open and shut case that once we nail them on that, then these other things might be easier to resolve. And also, in terms of our audience, we shouldn't be preaching to the converted. We should be trying to reach the people who haven't understood yet and in order to do that we have to work with their attention span that's out there. The 9/11 evidence is fairly straight forward, but it is a challenge to people with an ordinary attention span, and if we start throwing in every other issue. If we start throwing in Illuminati bloodlines, JFK...

Joe Hawkins: It's endless...

Barrett: UFO's, that will just confuse people with too much on their plate, and they will shutdown and think we are paranoid whackos, so-called conspiracy theorists. So I really recommend trying to stick with the clearest evidence and talk about it in the calmest possible way, kind of follow the David Griffin approach.^x

Mr. Barrett is correct, if he went on a popular television program ranting on about Illuminati bloodlines and UFOs, people would label him a conspiracy theorist. His solution, obviously, is not to stop proposing such theories, but to stop talking about them publicly.

One common tactic employed, as hinted at above, is to make specific, often outrageous, accusations while in the safe confines of the conspiracy theory community, and then fall back to the “we are just asking questions” position when in an environment where their views might be challenged. The “asking questions” strategy is a common, albeit rather disingenuous and intellectually dishonest, method used by conspiracy theorists to get out of having to defend their assertions, since strictly speaking a “question” does not have to be backed up by evidence. So in the tradition of “When did you stop beating your wife?” they can ask the most outrageous questions, without any factual basis. Robert Bowman shows this tactic, while on Hannity & Colmes^{xi}, where he proclaims to not be a believer in these conspiracy theories, but instead he tries to portray himself as just trying to find out the truth about what happened:

Sean Hannity: So do you believe that this was an inside job, do you believe that this was a controlled demolition as he [Barrett] does? Do you believe that Madrid and Bali, Zarqawi were carried out by military intelligence? Do you believe in these conspiracy theories?

Robert Bowman: No, as a matter of fact I believe the truth about 9/11 is that we don't know the truth about 9/11 and we should. I am agnostic about these conspiracy theories. I think Professor Barrett has every reason to say his... to expound his theories, just as you do yours.

But we see that this is completely dishonest, because less than 3 weeks before, while making a speech at the 9/11 conspiracy theorist gathering, the American Scholars Symposium in Los Angeles^{xii}, he was nowhere near agnostic, in fact he had so little doubt that the US government was behind this conspiracy that he was calling for indictments for treason:

When I get to Congress we are going to demand a truly independent investigation. We are going to demand full disclosure of all the evidence that they haven't already destroyed.

And we're going to demand that those who are responsible in our government be removed from office and indicted for treason! (wild applause)

When I joined the Air Force, it's a long time ago, I took an oath, to protect and defend the constitution of the United States, against all enemies, foreign and domestic. And that includes a renegade president!^{xiii}

It is worth pointing out, that he was not just a random speaker at this conference, he made the keynote address. To make these statements, in front of an audience which obviously embrace these theories with a religious fervor, and then go in front of a wider audience and proclaim agnosticism, is the height of dishonesty, and vividly demonstrates that their goals are not dispassionate academic research and truth seeking, but propagandizing their views by any means possible, no matter how dishonest or deceptive.

In support of this propaganda, the vast majority of their work does not involve first hand research, talking to witnesses to the events, performing experiments and tests, consulting experts in the fields involved, but publishing papers and articles based on news events and rumors off of conspiracy websites. Much time is spent going on radio talk shows discussing these events, but I have never seen a single example of any of the scholars contacting the first responders who pulled bodies out of the Pentagon still strapped into their seats^{xiv}, the firefighters who decided that the World Trade Center 7 was beyond saving, or the Port Authority Police who were on duty at the World Trade Center, and presumably must have been involved, either wittingly or unwittingly in the plot to emplace explosives.

9) Appeal to Authority

While one could point to questionable tactics employed by many in the 9/11 "skeptical" community, which range anywhere from holocaust deniers to 20-something aspiring filmmakers, the "Scholars for 9/11 Truth" add a special dimension to this movement, the "appeal to authority". While most "truth seekers" make no effort to hide the fact that they base their theories off of conspiracy websites, blogs, and third-hand rumors of events, it is only the "scholars" who attempt to cloak this in a veneer of academic research. In fact it is the characteristic that they emphasize the most. Just take a look at their press releases^{xv}, most of which feature "expert" and "scholar" prominently in the headlines and the text of the article, even in articles on subjects for which they have no experts in the group. Ironically, this still does not keep them from basing their theories off of conspiracy websites, blogs and third-hand rumors.

Significant in this is the fact, is that there are only 76 “full members”, defined as “hav[ing] or have had academic appointments or the equivalent”, in the group^{xvi}, out of over 400,000 active college professors in the United States.^{xvii} Additionally, many of the members are not actively teaching tenured professors who are currently doing research in applicable fields. Just among the people I have mentioned, David Ray Griffin and James Fetzer are both retired “professor emeritus” of theology and philosophy respectively. Many, such as Kevin Barrett are just part time lecturers or adjunct professors. One full member listed, Jeffery Farrar^{xviii}, is not a professor at all, he is a lab manager at BYU, apparently granted full membership by merit of working with Steven Jones. Many members, at least 10 of the 76 by my count, are connected with foreign, not US universities, and some, Robert Bowman for example, have never held any academic position at all. All together this shows that the “scholars” represent a tiny fraction of one percent of practicing US scholars, and an even smaller percentage of those in relevant fields.

In fact, if you peruse their “published” works, you will find that the entire credibility of the groups claims in their most prominent area, the collapse of the World Trade Center buildings, comes down to the work of two “experts”; physicist Steven Jones of BYU, and mechanical engineer Judy Woods of Clemson. Given that they are dealing with the mechanics of building collapse, one would imagine that having an “expert” in civil or structural engineering would be more relevant, but in fact, out of the 139,000 members^{xix} of the American Society of Civil Engineers, the most prominent civil engineering organization in the country, not a single member has publicly joined the “Scholars” or endorsed their findings.

While it is possible that a physicist and a mechanical engineer could produce quality work in the field of building collapse, this group has not shown that it has the experts in this field to call on to review their work. Quite to the contrary, the group appears to engage in nothing more than the adulation of these two scientists and their findings, which are then used for their propaganda purposes, without any “peer review” of a vigorous nature necessary to ensure even basic academic standards. Because of this, they can publish work of practically any quality, and the group as a whole will buy off on it and promote it.

10) Character Assassination of Dissent

This lack of appropriate expertise is apparently getting to the group, because instead of appealing for the contributions of structural engineers towards their research, co-founder Jim Fetzer is busy condemning them:

I am disgusted, disgusted with the structural engineers who know the truth about this and are keeping their mouth shut. There’s a special place in hell, reserved for them. And they are going to deserve it.^{xx}

This was not just an example of him losing his temper, he also repeated this condemnation to hell in an on-line chat a week later, adding yet another religious angle to their movement.^{xxi} Normally when all the people who are qualified to make judgments in an academic field disagree with your thesis, the logical reaction is that your thesis is flawed, and should be revised. Deciding that, rather, your thesis is correct, and everyone who is saying it is wrong is either corrupt or scared, is not the mark of an academic, but of conspiracy theorists displaying the signs of paranoia.

A common theory in the community is that structural engineers are either too scared, or to entwined with government financial supporters to state the truth on this. Besides being very insulting to the hundreds of thousands of engineers, who we rely on for the buildings we work in and the bridges we drive on, this is ignoring the fact that philosophy and theology professors apparently are not too scared to state their minds. Do they somehow possess that much more integrity and courage than engineers? When the number of people willing to back a thesis is inversely proportional to their qualifications in that arena, one might start to think that the factor affecting it is the legitimacy of your argument, not the character of the people involved.

This is also ignoring the fact, that even foreign civil engineers, many of whom are from countries which are hardly friendly to the Bush administration and who would not be relying on US government funding, have failed to come forward expressing these viewpoints.

This scorn upon dissenters is not merely held for engineers, it is also displayed for those in the media who do not agree with their viewpoint. As Jim Fetzer says in another radio interview:

Kevin, you know I am so disgusted with the New York Times, these events were happening just downtown from the Times' headquarters. The fact that the Times could not be bothered to assume the responsibility to seriously investigate what happened, the fact that three college kids from upper New York put together a DVD called Loose Change that provides a more thorough comprehensive understanding of what happened than the New York Times will ever publish on its pages simply fills me with dread and disgust. This is our newspaper of record abdicating its responsibility to the nation and the world.^{xxii}

The New York Times incidentally, won 5 Pulitzer Prizes for its coverage of the 9/11 attacks and its aftermath.^{xxiii}

Mr. Fetzer goes on in that same interview to express how troubled he is that the Attorneys General of New York, Virginia, and Pennsylvania are not investigating this crime. How far can you carry out

this argument, that if all the people who are qualified to hold a particular view, hold one contrary to yours, they must be either corrupt or lazy? This is not the argument of an academic, but of a paranoid conspiracy theorist.

11) Reliance on Fake Experts and Unreliable Sources

Another characteristic of conspiracy theorists, as opposed to academics, is their reliance on fake experts, and questionable sources, rather than sources that have been vetted and which would be considered of high academic standards.

Jim Fetzer, among others has relied upon the “technical expertise” of a man named Karl Schwarz^{xxiv}, who claims that an A-3 Skywarrior, rather than a 757 struck the Pentagon. Karl Schwarz bolsters his claims to technological knowledge of aircraft by claiming to be the CEO of two companies which deal with high tech, including developing UAV systems for the US military. A quick web search and a search of business databases will show, however, that these companies are nothing more than shell corporations, which could not possibly do what Mr. Schwarz is claiming^{xxv}. Mr. Schwarz, in addition to being a fraud, does not appear to have any qualifications whatsoever to make judgments as to the identification of aircraft parts. The “scholars” are so quick to latch on to any evidence which may support their views, that they do not even do this quick and superficial research to vet their sources, no matter how ridiculous their claims.

Another questionable resource that the “scholars” make use of is the American Free Press.^{xxvi} Often they cite articles in the AFP, which do not appear anywhere else, and are the sole source of evidence for a argument. What they fail to mention is that the AFP is a fringe newspaper, so far out of the mainstream political viewpoint as to lack any academic credibility. In fact the AFP was started by a man, Willis Carto, who the Anti-Defamation League refers to as “one of the most influential American anti-Semitic propagandists of the past 50 years”.^{xxvii} In between running articles on 9/11 conspiracy theories, the AFP runs ads for white heritage websites, and editorials with inflammatory headlines like “Zionists Benefit from WTC Attack”.

Most prominently, Frank Legge’s paper, “9/11- Evidence Suggest Complicity: Inferences from Action” appearing in the 9/11 Scholars published “Journal of 9/11 Studies”^{xxviii} features a citation to the AFP as the sole source in an argument claiming that the black boxes were found at the World Trade Center. Considering that most academic journals are highly critical of papers which cite anything but the most reputable and rigorously checked sources, such as other peer reviewed and academically sound papers, it is hard to believe that this paper, which featured such an easily identifiable questionable source, underwent any serious “peer review” process at all. This may explain why the “Scholars” could not get their work published in any reputable academic journals

or media sources, and had to create their own journal, with standards and practices known only to themselves.

Although a significant portion of the 9/11 conspiracy movement is connected to anti-Semitism and holocaust denial, there is no particular reason to think that the “Scholars” themselves are neo-Nazis. The preceding Karl Schwarz example indicates that they probably did not cite the AFP out of political affinity, but were merely too careless, or zealous for supporting evidence, to do the necessary research regarding their sources’ credibility in the first place. Regardless, whether it is from carelessness, political bias, or academic fraud, this hardly speaks to the credibility of the organization.

Conclusion

In Part I my colleague demonstrated the willfully deceptive tactics used by the 9/11 conspiracy movement, including quote mining, selective use of photographs and other evidence, and false comparisons with other building collapses such as:

- 1) Quote mining/slaloming and mischaracterizing photos in an effort to claim the fires weren’t hot enough to take down the buildings.
- 2) Quote mining and selective photographs misleading people to believe WTC 7 didn’t have a severe fire.
- 3) Selective photographs and misapplied science to mislead people into believing thermite was used in the towers.
- 4) Selective photographs/video snapshots and misinterpretations misleading people into believing explosives were used.
- 5) Comparisons between the WTC buildings and other buildings in an effort to mislead people into believing they could not have collapsed the way the NIST said
- 6) Conflation of different studies which have passed peer-review in order to assassinate the character of anyone whose work confirms the NIST report.
- 7) No effort to enlist civil engineers in their movement showing they are not serious in finding the truth. This illustrates they do not have faith in their own research.
- 8) They have not tried to get peer-reviewed in any Civil Engineering Journal of impact. It becomes obvious they already know it will never pass critical review by experts in their relevant fields.

In Part II I have extended this argument to demonstrate how the movement is driven by religion, as much as science and how they make false claims to expertise that they do not possess. I have also shown their propaganda techniques, and shoddy academic standards, such as:

- 9) An agenda driven by religious zeal as much as a quest for scientific or academic knowledge

- 10) A conscious effort to proselytize for new believers, while hiding the more controversial beliefs of the group.
- 11) A constant appeal to authority, while not possessing qualified experts in crucial fields
- 12) The character assassination of experts who disagree with them as cowards or possessing some hidden agenda.
- 13) The use of fraudulent and questionable sources in academic papers with pretenses to higher standards.

ⁱ <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0664231179/103-1241019-6801455?v=glance&n=283155>

ⁱⁱ http://www.911truthseekers.org/modules/weblog/details.php?blog_id=29

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.physics.byu.edu/faculty/jones/rel491/handstext%20and%20figures.htm>

^{iv} <http://mujca.com/>

^v Radio interview with Joe Hawkins June 23rd, 2006 <http://www.911podcasts.com/files/audio/or062306.mp3>

^{vi} <http://www.rmbowman.com/ssn/ReligionPolitics.htm>

^{vii} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Pierre_Petit

^{viii} http://www.scholarsfor911truth.org/PPT_Presentations.html#JudyWood

^{ix} <http://www.scholarsfor911truth.org/WhoAreWe.html>

^x Radio interview by Joe Hawkins with Kevin Barrett June 23rd, 2006

<http://www.911podcasts.com/files/audio/or062306.mp3>

^{xi} July 12th Interview on Fox News' program Hannity & Colmes

^{xii} <http://www.americanscholarssymposium.org/info/schedule.htm>

^{xiii} Robert Bowman, Keynote Address to American Scholars Symposium, June 25th, 2006

http://radio.indymedia.org/uploads/911_conference_bowman.mp3

^{xiv} <http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/sept01/2001-09-14-pentagon-usat.htm>

^{xv} <http://www.scholarsfor911truth.org/PressReleases2006.html>

^{xvi} <http://www.scholarsfor911truth.org/WhoAreWe.html>

^{xvii} <http://www.aaup.org/research/FacStatTrends.htm>

^{xviii} <http://www.physics.byu.edu/directory.aspx?personid=23>

^{xix} <http://content.asce.org/annualreport/2005/execmessage.html>

^{xx} June 29th, 2006 Jim Fetzer interview with Judy Wood, <http://mp3.rbnlive.com/Fetzer06.html>

^{xxi} <http://www.abovetopsecret.com/forum/thread214717/pg1>

^{xxii} July 13th 2006 Jim Fetzer interview with Kevin Barrett <http://mp3.rbnlive.com/Stadt06.html>

^{xxiii} <http://www.pulitzer.org/>

^{xxiv} June 14th interview with Karl Schwarz, <http://mp3.rbnlive.com/Stadt06.html>, articles by Schwarz are also linked from the st911.org webpage

^{xxv} <http://screwloosechange.blogspot.com/2006/05/who-is-karl-schwarz.html>

^{xxvi} A search of their website, <http://st911.org> shows 30 references

^{xxvii}

http://www.adl.org/learn/ext_us/carto.asp?LEARN_Cat=Extremism&LEARN_SubCat=Extremism_in_America&picked=2&item=carto

^{xxviii} <http://www.journalof911studies.com/>