

We will be engaging in an unusual fund-raising event on the blog in a week or so. A well-trained Anglican priest named Matthew Firth had issued a challenge that no one could point out any contradictions in the Gospels of the New Testament that could not be explained. As I understand it, he offered an award of \$1000. OK then! Someone on the blog contacted me to see if I'd be willing to take up the challenge.

Of course, there is not a contradiction in the known universe that someone cannot explain away to his or her own satisfaction, given sufficient ingenuity and the deep inclination or desire to think that contradictions do not exist. So in a sense the outcome is pre-determined. Rev. Firth will not be convinced, nor will his followers, nor anyone on either side of the pond who comes into the question with mind already made up. So in one sense, at least, it's a pointless exercise.

On the other hand, outsiders might be interested in a back and forth. There's no way Rev. Firth will pay up — he has a degree in Theology from Oxford and nothing anyone says will change his mind, I'm relatively sure. So I wouldn't take up the challenge thinking it might pay something. But the blog is all about discussing issues of the NT/early Christianity to raise money for charity. So I was asked by this interested third party: what would it take in terms of donations? Simple! I said I'd do a blog debate for \$1000, in hopes of raising much (much) more!

And so it is in place. We will be having a blog debate. I will propose several contradictions in the Gospels and explain why they *are* contradictions; Rev. Firth will respond to show why they are not; I will reply arguing they are; he will give further evidence they are not. And so on.

I know all of you are already paying to be on the blog. But would you be willing to make an additional donation in honor of the event? We'd like to raise oodles of money for the good causes we support, helping the hungry, homeless, and needy. Important endeavors! Not to mention the important endeavor of trying to understand the New Testament better.

Many thanks to Tim Cottingham, a blog member who first proposed and then organized the debate; and to Nathan Gordon who has generously contributed already to make the funding possible and has set up the fund-raising efforts. And to both of them for working out the logistics (which ended up being a bit complicated)

Here is a brief video (2 minutes) about the debate and its purpose; following that is a couple of sentences on who Rev. Firth is; following that is the format etc. that we've agreed on for the debate. Please give!

First the video! (Note: it indicates that it is about contradictions in the NT: but we will be talking *only* about the Gospels)

Now: on Matthew Firth.

Matthew Firth did degrees in Natural Sciences at Cambridge and Theology at Oxford. After completing his title post in Ipswich, he went on to be Chaplain to the University of Cumbria and Young Adults Church Pioneer for Carlisle Deanery. He is currently Priest in Charge of St Cuthbert's and Holy Trinity, Darlington, and he has wide ranging interests in the areas of science, theology, contemporary mission and politics.

Topic: Are there contradictions in the New Testament Gospels?

Principals:

- Dr. Ehrman - affirmative stance (yes)
- Rev. Firth - negative stance (no)

Forum/Audience: Posts on the member section of the blog, with accompanying blog member comment section

Format: 3 rounds of back and forth posts, potential for answering comments (with an eye to not overextending your time commitment; NB: I myself will of course deal with all the comments; Rev. Firth will have the opportunity to do so as well, as much as he chooses)

Round 1

- Dr. Ehrman proposes 3-4 candidates for contradiction in one post
- Rev. Firth counters each in one post

Round 2

- Dr. Ehrman responds in one post
- Rev. Firth counters in one post

Round 3

- Dr. Ehrman responds in one post
- Rev. Firth counters in one post

Post Length: targeting approx. 1000 words each post; 1200 word hard limit per post

Time Limit: 3-4 days between volleys

Cordiality:

- **Principals:** the aim is for informative and collegial engagement on the issues between the principals in the debate
- **Comment Section:** the blog member community is generally welcoming and friendly. In addition, the comment section is proctored by Dr. Ehrman

Commencement: nearest mutually convenient timing after April 15, 2019

Charitable Giving: in addition to stimulating dialogue, this is the project's true purpose

- Dr. Ehrman
 - **Amount:** at least \$1K
 - **Recipient:** Bart Ehrman Foundation (<https://ehrmanblog.org/philanthropy/>; EIN [45-4810987](#)), entirely for the benefit of:
 - The Urban Ministries of Durham
 - Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina
 - CARE
 - Doctors Without Borders
 - **Sources**
 - Tim Cottingham - Keswick Half Marathon sponsorship donations via [justgiving.com](https://www.justgiving.com) (<https://www.justgiving.com/bartehrmanfoundation/>; EIN match needs final confirmation)
 - Nathan Gordon - direct to Bart Ehrman Blog site
 - Anyone else who would like to contribute via the blog
- Rev. Firth
 - The intent: Should Rev. Firth desire to also raise funds, the recipient is entirely his choice of

charitable cause(s) (e.g., church community outreach, some or all of the blog causes listed above, etc.)



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