

Humanistic Psychology and Education

Based on an interview with Dr. W.R. Coulson, Don Closson discusses the damaging effects of humanistic psychology and the non-directive approach to drug and sex ed programs that it encourages.

Interview with Dr. Coulson

I recently had the opportunity to interview Dr. W. R. Coulson concerning the role that humanistic psychology is playing in education. Dr. Coulson was a long-time associate of Carl Rogers, who is considered to be the father of non-directive therapy, a therapy which has now been incorporated into self-esteem, sex-ed, and drug-ed curricula.

Dr. Coulson saw that this form of therapy had some success with mentally distressed people who knew they needed help, but following failures with locked-ward schizophrenics, normal adults, and a parochial school system in California, Dr. Coulson broke with Carl Rogers and is now trying to undo the damage of what might be called humanistic education.

The results of non-directive therapy in education have been disappointing to anyone willing to look at the facts. We asked Dr. Coulson about these negative results. He said:

Every major study of [non-directive therapy in education] over the last 15 years . . . has shown that it produces an opposite effect to what anybody wants. There are packaged curricula all over the country with names like "Quest," "Skills For Living," "Skills for Adolescents," "Here's Looking at You 2000," "Omnibudsmen," "Meology," and "Growing Healthy." Every one of them gets the same effect, and that is that they introduce good kids to misconduct, and they do it

in the name of non-judgmentalism. They say, "We're not going to call anything wrong, we're not going to call drug use wrong, because we'll make some of the kids in this classroom feel bad because they are already using drugs. Let's see if we can help people without identifying for them what they're doing wrong." What happens is that the kids who are always looking for the objective standard so that they can meet it . . . are left without [one].

We've trained [our children] to respect legitimate authority, and now the school is exercising its authority to say, "You've got to forget about what your church taught you or what your parents taught you; forget about that business about absolutes and right and wrong. Let's put those words in quotation marks— "right" and "wrong"—and let's help you find what you really deeply inside of you want."

We've got youngsters here now who . . . are under the authority of the school [and] are being persuaded that there is a better way. And that way is to make their own decisions. They're being induced to make decisions about activities that the citizenry of the state have decided are wrong—drug use and teenage sex.

Abraham Maslow

My interview with Dr. W. R. Coulson next focused on the work of Abraham Maslow. Dr. Maslow constructed a theory of self-actualization that described how adults reach peak levels of performance. Much of modern educational practice assumes that Maslow's theories apply to children.

I asked Dr. Coulson, who worked with Maslow, about this connection between the theory of self-actualization and education in our public schools. He responded:

Abe Maslow, who invented this thing, said it never applied to the population at large, and most definitely not to children. Anybody who wants to check up on my claim that Abe Maslow did a complete turnabout need only look at the second edition of his classic text called Motivation and Personality. He wrote a very lengthy preface . . . [in] an attempt to say that his followers had completely misused what he had written and that it was going to be applied to exploiting children.

Writing in the late 60s, in his personal journals which were published after his death, Maslow said that this is the first generation of young people who have had their own purchasing power, and he feared that his theories of self-actualization and need fulfillment (that famous pyramid, Maslow's hierarchy of needs) would be used to steal little kids' money and virtue. . . . In the new preface he writes, "It does not apply to children; they are not mature enough; they have not had enough experience to understand tragedy, for example, nor do they have enough courage to be openly virtuous."

Our children tend to be somewhat intimidated by their virtue because every other example they are getting, from the secular media, etc., is something very different from virtue.

As a good kid himself, growing up in a Jewish household, Abe Maslow knew that he tended to hang back in assertiveness. The good kids, I'm afraid, sometimes do that, and he saw everything thrown out of balance when the class was opened up to the kids to teach one another. His fear was in anticipation of the research results, which is that when you teach the teacher not to teach anymore but to become a facilitator, and you turn the chairs into a circle, and you say to the kids, in effect, "What would you like to talk about?"—the troubled kids begin to teach the good kids. The experienced kids, the kids who are doing drugs and having sex, teach the good kids that they are insufficiently

actualized.

Education has adopted its view of moral and intellectual development from Dr. Maslow, an atheist who argued his views shouldn't be applied to children. The results are exactly what he predicted: our children are being exploited both economically, by tobacco and beer companies, and sexually by the Playboy mentality.

Self-Esteem

Parents are awakening to the disturbing fact that many educators see their children as mentally or emotionally in need of therapy. What is their illness? Low self-esteem. Low self-esteem is now named as the cause for everything from low grades to drug abuse. The solution being offered is to teach children how to acquire a healthy self-esteem.

Programs have been implemented for developing self-esteem at every grade level. DUSO (Developing Understanding of Self and Others) and Pumsy are two of the most popular elementary-school curricula. Most senior high drug-ed and sex-ed programs focus on self-esteem as well.

I asked Dr. Coulson about the use of these programs, and how parents should react to their children's placement in them. He said:

I would raise a red flag . . . every time the word values is used. That's been a difficult word, because for a long time Christians were asking for value-oriented education. The problem is that values has become a relativistic word—it's subjective.

In California we taught people going through our encounter groups to say, "Well, you have your values, but who's to say your values should be my values?" We taught mothers and

fathers to fear that they were selfish if they imposed their values on their children. There are children now who have become sufficiently sophisticated in this mock psychological wave that they can say to their parents, "We appreciate your value of church-going, it just doesn't happen to be mine. My experience is other than your experience. After all, Mom and Dad, you did grow up in a different era."

We've taught our children to be clumsy developmental psychologists who are capable of accusing their parents of wanting to oppress them by teaching them the truth. So what we have to do is turn the questions back to those who offer these curricula, like the people who wrote the DUSO curriculum or the Pumsy curriculum, and say, "Is this curriculum just your value? And if so, why should it be our value? Or is your curriculum somehow true? Do you claim to have knowledge in some way of the way things should be everywhere? Do you think you have a grip on a universal [truth], and, if you can grant that you do, can you not grant that we might, and that there might be some kind of competition between our understanding of what our universal obligations are in this world and your own understanding; that there is some kind of universal or absolute that we are seeking?"

Because, in fact, they don't think that their values are relativistic. They think that everybody ought to be doing this. And that's precisely their error. I'm a non-directive psychotherapist, and if I were doing therapy, I would still be doing it like Carl Rogers, my teacher, taught me to do it. But I would not be doing it in classrooms, and I would not be doing it with people who could not profit from it. DUSO is an example of a method that's been taken out of the counseling room and into the classroom, and they're giving everybody medicine that's appropriate for a few.

Cooperative Education

Another important topic is the growing popularity of cooperative education programs, programs which place students into groups and allow them to use their own skills of critical thinking to arrive at conclusions about various issues.

Dr. Coulson observed:

Cooperative learning just strikes me as another one of those ways to prevent mothers and fathers and their agents, the public schools and private schools, from teaching effectively what is right and wrong to their children. In a cooperative class the questions are put to the kids, and once again we're going to find that the impaired children are going to wind up being the teachers of the unimpaired, because the unimpaired tend to have in them somewhat the fear of the Lord. They do not want to give offense, and the other kids don't care. . . . They'll go ahead and say whatever is on their minds.

Research, for example, from the American Cancer Society shows that teenage girls who smoke are far more effective in these classroom discussions than teenage girls who don't smoke, because the teenage girls who smoke have outgoing personalities, party-types. Just let them take over the class and they really will; they'll run with the ball. And so again, the outcome of this kind of education is always the reverse of what anybody wants.

Central to virtually all of these programs is teaching children a method of decision-making. We asked Dr. Coulson to comment on these decision-making skills.

They teach what the moral philosophers call "consequentialism" as though the only morality is, "How's it going to work out?" They teach the children a method that they call "decision-making." Typically, there are Five Steps.

Quest is a good example: In the First Step you identify the problem with killing someone for somebody for financial gain. The Second Step is to consider the alternatives. Immediately the Christian, the Jewish, the Muslim, or the God-fearing kid is at a disadvantage because he doesn't think there is an alternative. The only answer is "No!" It's an absolute "never"—"Thou shalt not kill." But the school says, "No, you can't be a decision-maker, a self-actualizing person, without looking at the alternatives."

The Third Step is to predict the consequences of each alternative. We know that teenagers particularly feel invulnerable. They think . . . those things adults warn them are going to happen if they misbehave won't happen, and adults are going to try to fool them and keep them under control for their own convenience. The Fourth Step is to make the decision and act upon it. The Fifth Step is . . . to make an evaluation of the outcome, and, if you don't like the outcome, then try again. And I say there are kids who have never gotten to Step Five because Step Four killed them. There are kids who have literally died from making a wrong decision in Step Four or gone into unconsciousness, and there is no possibility of evaluation.

The Religious Nature of Humanistic Education

Why would educators implement a curriculum so damaging to what we as Christian parents want for our children? We must consider the religious assumptions held by those who created the theoretical foundations for these programs.

Schools have argued that self-esteem programs are fulfilling parental demands for values education without violating the so-called strict separation of church and state. In other words, they claim that programs such as Pumsy and DUSO are

religiously neutral.

As we will hear from Dr. Coulson, the men who originated the theories behind these programs felt it their mission to influence others to see things through their particular worldview.

I asked Dr. Coulson to address the religious nature of humanistic education. He responded:

There are four major streams of influence on what I grew up calling humanistic education. . . . Today these influences remain. They are (1) Abe Maslow's work with self-actualization and hierarchy of needs; (2) Carl Rogers's work with non-directive classrooms based on his model of psychotherapy; (3) the work of Lewis Rath and his students—Sidney Simon, Howard Kirshenbaum, Merrill Harmon—called values clarification; (4) the work of Lawrence Kohlberg.

*All of these men independently attribute their fundamental insight to John Dewey. In 1934 John Dewey wrote a book called *The Common Faith*. John Dewey wanted a religion which could be held in common by everybody in America, and, in order for that to happen, it had to be a religion which excluded God. He called it religious humanism—that was Dewey's term for it, not my term.*

Carl Rogers and Abe Maslow admitted to being religious humanists. Carl was from a fundamentalist, Protestant home; Abe was reared in a Jewish home, a somewhat observant home. Both of them got the religion of Dewey. Rogers was a student at Columbia when Dewey was in his Senate seat in the twenties, and Maslow was a doctoral fellow in the next decade. Maslow said in his journals, of the churchgoers, "They're not religious enough for me." And Rogers said to Richard Evans, "I'm too religious to be religious." What

these men meant was, "I'm more religious than you are if you affirm a creed and if you go to church. I'm so religious I don't go to church."

Dr. Coulson went on to state that there is a fundamental incompatibility between Christianity and these programs. The two belief systems begin with different views of man and God.

As parents, we need to know what kind of therapy is being used on our children. If your child is receiving self-esteem training or non-directive therapy, he or she is losing time needed to become academically competent. That alone constitutes educational malpractice. But even more frightening is the possibility that your child's faith in the God of Scripture is being replaced with John Dewey's religious humanism.

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Economic Issues

Minimum Wage

Although the minimum wage law is more than 50 years old, it is still a very controversial measure. In fact, a battle over the minimum wage occurs every time Congress tries to increase it. Minimum wage seems like one of those political issues that compassionate people should support. But the opposite is true. The minimum wage leads to maximum unemployment for people with few job skills trying to enter the work force.

My own experience is illustrative. I started job hunting as a teenager during a rather depressed economy. The minimum wage requirement nearly kept me from getting a job because, as an unskilled laborer entering the job market for the first time, I had nothing more to offer than a strong back and conscientious work habits. Whether I was worth the minimum wage in my first job is questionable. But after working in a machine shop and as a ditch digger, I developed skills that made me more valuable to my employer.

Back in 1938, establishing a minimum wage of 35 cents an hour seemed admirable. But today it effectively shuts less-skilled people out of the work force. In essence, the minimum wage law requires employers to discriminate against young people with few job skills. A teenager whose services are worth, say, only \$3 an hour is not going to be hired at \$4.25 an hour (plus benefits like Social Security, which raise the cost to the employer to over \$5 an hour). The choice is not between working for \$3 an hour and working for \$4.25 an hour. The real choice is between working for \$3 an hour and not working at all.

The effect of minimum wage on young people is devastating. When the lowest rung on the ladder is higher than your head, that necessary first step into a job will never be taken. The high rate of unemployment among teenagers is due in large part to the minimum wage laws that place the rungs on the ladder too high. Eliminating the minimum wage would allow more young people to get on-the-job training.

Minimum wage's effect on the poor is also troubling. Research indicates that for every 10 percent rise in the minimum wage, there is a 3 percent drop in employment among workers covered by the Fair Labor and Standards Act. In other words, if seven workers get their wages increased, three workers either get fired or can't find work. Notice how the minimum wage law has changed the nature of employment in America. More and more restaurants are switching from waiter service to self-service.

Gas stations have followed suit. It explains why you see fewer ushers at movie theaters and fewer “bag boys” at supermarkets. In the past, these jobs allowed young people to develop job skills. Today, many don’t exist, and young people are the losers.

Raising the minimum wage may seem compassionate. But in the end, those with limited job skills in need of work experience are the ones hurt by good intentions.

Comparable Worth

Although the idea of comparable worth has been roundly criticized, it is still gaining proponents. Like the minimum wage, it seems at first glance like an issue we should back. But it has not exactly generated a groundswell of support.

Clarence Pendleton (former chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights) called comparable worth “the looniest idea since Looney Tunes came on the screen.” But even so, its proponents are resolved to make it the law of the land.

The seeds of comparable worth first found fertile ground in the judicial system. A number of years ago, Federal Judge Jack Tanner, citing a consulting firm’s comparable-worth study, ruled that the state of Washington was guilty of sex discrimination. His judgment of nearly \$1 billion against the state provided impetus for a similar suit in California.

Proponents of comparable worth argue that the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 are not enough and urge the adoption of comparable worth legislation. But underlying this movement are some questionable assumptions.

First is the dubious assumption that differences between male and female wages are due to discrimination. But sexism has less to do with the wage differences than with the way women participate in the economy. Many work part-time, and most leave the job market to raise children. Economist Walter

Williams estimates that women on the average spend about one-third of their potential working years in the labor market and therefore have less job-related experience than men. When relevant criteria such as education, experience, and seniority are factored in, many wage disparities vanish.

A study released by the Rand Corporation demonstrates that the gap between male and female wages is decreasing steadily, and the rate of decrease has begun to accelerate in the last few years. Economists James Smith and Michael Ward show that this rise in wages is commensurate with improvements in women's education and job experience, "rather than legislation, government commissions, or political movements."

Second, the approach assumes that personnel studies can adequately compare different kinds of jobs. Yet there is no such thing as an objective scale of economic values. Economists from Marx to Ricardo have tried to devise non-market criteria for the value of labor, and there is still no consensus after 100 years of work on the project.

What will happen when the studies disagree, as they inevitably will? The potential for disputes is endless. Should nurses earn as much as doctors or paramedics? How about a secretary who can drive a car? Should she make more than a truck driver who cannot type? There simply are not enough courts to handle the many kinds of questions that will surely follow.

Third, comparable worth assumes that governmental bureaucrats should decide pay levels. Even in situations of obvious discrimination, we should question whether a bureaucracy is the best way to rectify the problem. In fact, in light of the last 25 years of research into the nature of governmental bureaucracies, one might wonder whether bureaucracies are the best way to deal with any social problem.

Wage inequity deserves attention, but the solution is not to force employers to pay wages established by bureaucrats rather

than by the free market. We need better implementation of existing laws and prosecution when discrimination occurs.

Comparable worth plays a game of “worthier than thou” by trying to compare vastly dissimilar occupations without utilizing the market system and depending solely upon subjective judgments. We would do better without it.

Budget Deficits

A theme in recent campaigns has been the budget deficit. And for good reason. We are drowning in tides of red ink, and something must be done. Some candidates suggest that the way to balance the budget is to increase taxes. But that won't solve the problem and most likely will make it worse.

The problem is not that we are undertaxed but that we are overspent. Consider these budget statistics. First, taxes have continued to increase throughout this century. That's not so surprising since the cost of living has increased as well. But tax receipts as a percentage of the GNP have also steadily increased over time.

A second way to look at the problem is to plot the increase of the federal government's budget. In 1938 the budget was \$7 billion. Today the budget exceeds \$1 trillion. That's an increase of over 14,000 percent. In comparison, in 1938 a Hershey bar cost 5 cents, a first-class stamp 3 cents, a new Ford \$600, a good suit \$40, and gold \$35 per ounce. However, if these costs increased by the same proportion as the cost of government, the prices would be astronomical. A Hershey bar would be \$7, a first-class stamp would be \$4.20, a car would sell for \$84,000, a suit for \$5,600, and an ounce of gold would be \$4,900.

Moreover, a tax increase is not a solution; it is part of the problem. Economist Walter Williams has shown that the facts simply do not square with the oft-repeated assumption that

more taxes will reduce the deficit.

Williams has studied the federal budget figures for the last 25 years and found the following. The budget has been in the red 24 of the last 25 years. And in 19 of those years there have been tax increases. His studies show that for each \$1 in tax increase during that period, there was a \$1.58 spending increase. In other words, when taxes rose, deficits skyrocketed.

In 1982, when Congress passed the largest peacetime tax increase in U.S. history, the new revenues were not used to decrease the deficit. Instead, they were used to increase spending in a number of budget categories.

The solution is to cut the federal budget. Bloated bureaucracies drain America's economic competitiveness and often dole out grants to things ranging from obscure scientific projects to obscene art. Certainly it is time to begin cutting the federal budget in significant ways.

A major budget category is federal pensions. There is nothing wrong with providing pensions to civil service employees and military retirees. But some of these pensions have grown much more lucrative than anything found in the private sector.

For example, retired Senator Al Gore was making more than his son, Al Gore, Jr., until the younger man was given a Congressional pay increase in the mid-1980s. When Gore senior retired from Congress in 1970, his salary was \$42,000. But, thanks to federal cost-of-living increases, his pension was over \$78,000, while his son's salary was only \$77,000. When a current member of Congress makes less than a retired one, something is wrong with pensions. The Grace Commission found that if federal pensions were trimmed to resemble the "best" private sector pension programs, \$58 billion in taxes could be saved over a three-year period.

The federal budget is a problem, but many are looking in the

wrong places for solutions. Americans are not undertaxed. The American government is overspent. We need to cut expenses, not raise taxes.

Housing

In recent years, Congress has made significant changes in the way it funds public housing. As the next budget considerations loom in the future, we can learn a great deal from the successes of the past.

One of the most important successes was the adoption of the housing voucher concept. The argument for housing vouchers is simple. Many current federal housing policies focus on bricks and mortar. These programs provide incentives to private developers and thus place an emphasis on buildings. Direct rent assistance in the form of housing vouchers is used to replace construction subsidy programs, which often benefit contractors more than the poor. These voucher programs, therefore, direct government resources at people, not projects.

Housing vouchers given to renters utilize the free market system to bring about desired changes. When rent subsidies are allocated for construction of housing projects, we create a seller's market. When we give housing vouchers to renters, we create a buyer's market. A housing voucher system encourages landlords to improve run-down apartments.

Government housing policies make families dependent upon governmental subsidies and lock them into inadequate housing situations. In our effort to win the war on poverty, we have lost the war on independence.

To be poor is to be caught in a culture of poverty, frustrated and without choices. The voucher system provides not only a roof and walls, but choice and dignity. Although government pays only the amount of rent that exceeds 30 percent of a

family's income, the family can choose to pay more than that and is free to move to a different housing situation.

A second program success has been the privatization of public housing. A few years ago a bill encouraging privatization was sponsored by conservative Jack Kemp and liberal Walter Fauntroy. Kemp, invoking memories of the Homestead Act of 1862, referred to this legislation as the "urban homesteading bill."

The bill offered tenants of the nation's 1.25 million public housing units the chance to buy their own homes and apartments at 75 percent below market value with no money down and at greatly reduced interest rates. Only units that were "modernized" were offered for sale.

The bill also empowered public housing tenants to run their own projects. Legislators recognized that tenant management would provide better management of public housing.

Inspiration for resident management came from the example of the Kenilworth-Parkside project in Washington, D.C. In 1982, Mayor Marion Barry granted self-management to the residents. An analysis by an international accounting firm indicated that the tenants cut operating costs significantly, boosted rent collections by 77 percent, reduced the vacancy rate by two-thirds, and halved the rate of welfare dependency, thanks to jobs in the project created by the management team. These savings and new revenues, say the accountants, added close to \$10 million to Washington's tax collections.

These have been constructive changes in public housing policy. Housing vouchers provide choices and dignity and arm the poor with a mechanism to improve housing. Resident control of public housing provides for initiative and independence. We need more housing programs like this in the future.

Churches and Taxes

One of the oft-cited criticisms of Christians is that they attend churches that should be forced to pay their fair share of taxes. But once you understand the history of this issue, it is easy to see why critics of tax-exempt institutions miss the point.

When the United States was founded, the framers of the constitution wanted to protect churches from governmental influence. The first amendment to the Constitution specifically states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion nor prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” This protected the churches from the intrusive hand of the state.

But when Congress began to tax its citizens, a question arose. Could it tax churches? The answer then was very simple.

The first two modern income-tax statutes were the Revenue Act of 1894 and the Revenue Act of 1913. In both the laws, only “net income” was to be taxed. Churches and all other non-profit organizations had no “net income,” so they were not taxed. The author of the 1913 Act, Cordell Hull, even resisted the call for establishing explicit categories of exemptions. He argued that the law was designed to impose explicit categories of taxation, therefore, all organizations not listed would be exempt.

But that was not sufficient for many in the bureaucracy, and so, over time, the Internal Revenue Service began to define what a tax- exempt organization might be. In the IRS code, it is defined as a 501(c)(3) organization.

From the IRS’s point of view, it made sense to define a church, because they began to see the rise of bogus churches with names like the “Church of the Marijuana” or the “Hot Tub Church.” But from the Christian point of view it seems most

unwise to have IRS agents define in legal language what the Bible provides in explicit detail. Sometimes there was a significant confrontation.

Fortunately, Congress has passed a bill which more clearly specifies the role the IRS can have in securing church records and determining whether a church qualifies under the IRS code.

Many critics of churches argue that they can unfairly compete in the marketplace because of their tax exemption. But most of that objection was answered years ago.

The Tax Reform Act of 1969 ended churches' tax exemption for income from profit-making enterprises. Before 1969, churches exempt under the IRS code did not have to pay corporate income tax on unrelated business income, but Congress closed that loophole.

Critics also argue that exemptions are given as a legislative grace in return for specified public services which government would have to provide. But the U.S. Supreme Court held in a 1970 case that traditional property-tax exemptions for churches are constitutional and rejected the notion that exemption is a legislative grace. The argument may have its merits in reference to colleges, hospitals, libraries, or parks. But it is not applicable to churches, since government could not constitutionally set up or operate a church to provide the religious services churches provide. Despite allegations to the contrary, churches are not "getting away with something." They do not pay taxes because they do not have net income. When they do make a profit in a business enterprise, they pay taxes on it. The rest of the time, they should be tax exempt.

Civil Disobedience

Biblical Examples

In Romans 13:1-7 we read that every person should be in subjection to governing authorities because there is no authority except from God. Those who resist authority have opposed the ordinance of God and will receive condemnation upon themselves. The Apostle Paul then concludes this section by saying that believers are to render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

The Apostle Peter likewise says, Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right (1 Pet. 2:13-14). So it is against this backdrop of biblical obedience to civil authorities that we discuss the issue of civil disobedience.

Francis Schaeffer said in the *Christian Manifesto* that if there is never a case in which a Christian would practice civil disobedience, then the state has become Lord. He said, One either confesses that God is the final authority, or one confesses that Caesar is Lord. The Bible clearly teaches that there are times when a believer must disobey civil law so that he or she can obey God's higher law.

In the Old Testament there are a number of prominent examples of civil disobedience. In Exodus 1 and 2, when Pharaoh commanded the Hebrew midwives to kill all male Hebrew babies, they lied to Pharaoh and did not carry out his command.

The book of Daniel has a number of instructive examples. In Daniel 3, for example, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down to the golden image and were cast into the fiery furnace. In Daniel 6 the commissioners and satraps had King Darius make a decree that no one could make a petition to any god or man for thirty days. Daniel nevertheless continued to pray to God three times a day and was cast into the lion's den.

The most dramatic example of civil disobedience in the New Testament can be found in Acts 4 and 5. When Peter and John were commanded not to preach the gospel, their response was, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Notice that in each of these examples there are at least two common elements. First, there was a direct, specific conflict between God's law and man's law. Pharaoh commanded the Hebrew midwives to kill male Hebrew babies. Nebuchadnezzar commanded his subjects to bow before the golden image. King Darius ruled that no one could pray. And, in the New Testament, the High Priest and the Council forbade the apostles from proclaiming the gospel.

Second, in choosing to obey God's higher law, believers paid the normal consequence for disobedience. Although most of those previously cited escaped the consequence through supernatural intervention, we know from biblical and secular history that others paid for their disobedience with their lives.

Operation Rescue

Operation Rescue describes itself as a group of God-fearing people peacefully but physically placing themselves between the killer [the abortionist] and his intended victims [the baby and the mother]. Members of Operation Rescue explain that

to rescue someone is to physically intervene on their behalf

when they are in danger. We have an obligation before God to try to rescue these children and these women. We do this in a spirit of repentance for our many years of apathy and lack of action.

The foundational scripture for Operation Rescue is found in Proverbs 24:11-12. These verses read:

Rescue those being led away to death. Hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, But we knew nothing about this, does not He who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not He who guards your life know it?

One brochure produced by Operation Rescue explains these verses by saying,

It is evil to know that children are about to be murdered and just let them die (Matthew 24:45). The abortionist is committing murder. He will not be able to appeal to Romans 13 on the day of judgment, and neither will we if we remain silent and allow this holocaust to continue.

Another very important verse for Operation Rescue is James 4:17. It is frequently cited with any commentary on the previous verses in Proverbs. And it is also used to answer the question of whether it is sin if a person does not engage in a rescue. James 4:17 reads, Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin. Evidently, anyone who does not participate in Operation Rescue is committing sin.

When asked how going to jail can save a baby, members of Operation Rescue respond that it doesn't. But, they say, preventing the mother and baby from entering the killing center saves the baby and the mother.

When asked why they have to get arrested, members of Operation

Rescue respond as follows.

There is an immovable moral ground upon which we stand. The murder of innocent people is wrong—absolutely wrong (Proverbs 6:16-17). Therefore, the appropriate response (based on Jesus' example) is to firmly and non-violently resist the evil by placing our bodies between the abortionist and his victims, which we do until we are carried away. This is called intervention. Intervention is a reasonable and proper response to murder. We are not there to get arrested. This is not a protest or a media stunt. We are there to follow God's command to rescue those being led away to death (Proverbs 24:11). We are to obey God's law even when it conflicts with the laws of men (Acts 5:29).

Finally, members of Operation Rescue are often asked why they don't rescue every day. They respond,

We would if we could. We are committing all we can to this task. If more in the Christian community would respond and be willing to be broken and spilled out we could close every abortuary in this city everyday (Mark 14:8).

Critique by Dr. Charles Stanley

As pastor of the First Baptist Church in Atlanta, Dr. Charles Stanley was confronted with the activities of Operation Rescue in his city and thus provided one of the first critiques of the movement. While he is pro-life and agrees that the Supreme Court precedent of Roe v. Wade must be changed, he disagrees with the tactics and methodology of Operation Rescue.

In his analysis of the relevant scriptural passages, Dr. Stanley identifies a general biblical principle and the biblical exception. In developing the general biblical principle, he lists three major passages: Romans 13:1-7, 1 Peter 2:11-17, and Titus 3:1. He then concludes that these

passages clearly teach that a believer has a biblical responsibility to submit to and obey the governing authorities.

The underlying premise on which this general principle is founded is that government is a divinely ordained institution for the maintenance of order, the punishment of evil, and the promotion of good in the world. This premise, according to Dr. Stanley, is supported by the following ideas. First, all authority is from God. Second, governing authorities are God's ministers. Third, observing the law is a positive, public testimony for Christ. Fourth, observing the law is the right thing to do. And finally, observing the law is ordered by God.

Having stated the general principle, Dr. Stanley then articulates the biblical exception. He says, It is right to break the laws when there is a direct, specific conflict between God's law and man's law because God's law is higher. He lists three major examples: Exodus 1 with the Hebrew midwives, Daniel 6 with Daniel and King Darius, and Acts 4 and 5 where Peter and John are commanded not to preach the gospel.

As I noted earlier, each of these examples has two elements in common with the other. First, there was a direct, specific conflict between God's law and man's law. Second, in choosing to obey God's higher law, the law-breakers paid the normal, natural consequences of their disobedience.

Dr. Stanley therefore concludes that a believer has a biblical responsibility to obey God's higher law when there is a direct, specific conflict with man's law. He then goes on to say that the civil disobedience advocated by Operation Rescue does not fit the biblical exception for three reasons.

First, the law being broken has nothing to do with abortion. Those arrested are not being arrested because they are protesting abortion but because they are trespassing. Dr. Stanley says that if anti-God protesters blocked the entrance

to First Baptist Church, he would use the same ordinance to have them arrested.

Second, Roe v. Wade neither requires abortions nor prohibits them, but makes them permissible with certain restrictions. Third, the women who choose to have abortions are free moral agents responsible before God for their actions, including the exercise of the rights of their innocent, unborn children.

Dr. Stanley adds that if the law required abortions or prohibited the preaching of the gospel, his response would be different. The biblical exception would be met and the battle lines would be drawn.

Additional Critique

In our survey of biblical instances of civil disobedience, we have found that in each situation there was a direct conflict between God's law and man's law. In every situation a command from someone in authority directly conflicted with a biblical command.

In these cases, breaking civil statutes is biblically permitted. But what about instances where there is no direct command that conflicts with Scripture? This is where proponents and opponents of Operation Rescue generally differ.

Proponents argue that because abortion is immoral and unbiblical, we must exercise civil disobedience. Opponents instead say that breaking civil statutes is biblically permissible only when we are forced to choose between God and Caesar.

Ken Myers, editor of the newsletter *Genesis* and former editor of *Eternity* magazine, summarizes the argument this way. He says Christians are permitted before God to disobey those laws that, if obeyed, would involve sin. But laws that can be obeyed without sin should be obeyed.

The fundamental principle is this: Christians are never permitted to disobey a just law in order to minimize the effects of unjust laws. In the case of Operation Rescue, the law being broken is a just law that prohibits trespassing. Rescuers are not being arrested because they are protesting abortion; they are being arrested for trespassing.

When there is a clear contradiction between God and Caesar, we have to obey God. But in other cases, we are to render obedience to civil authority. If we do not, then a state of anarchy would quickly develop in which each person did what was right in his own eyes. Christians must resist our culture's tendency to rebel at the first provocation, especially in light of the numerous scriptural admonitions to obey those in authority. These verses place the burden of proof on those advocating civil disobedience. Ken Myers suggests that rather than being argued out of breaking the law, we should be argued into breaking the law. Those advocating civil disobedience should successfully argue their case for disobeying the law. If they do not or cannot, then we should obey civil authority.

This principle is especially important in light of our sin nature. All of us have some rebellion in us because of our sin nature, and we want to break the law. So a good check on our carnal desires is to ask if breaking a civil law is biblically required. If not, we should give obedience to the law the benefit of the doubt.

Finally, opponents of Operation Rescue have objected to its use of physical force. Proponents believe that physical force (blocking entrances to abortion clinics) should be used to restrain the evil of abortion. But this raises two questions.

First, what are the limits to the use of physical force? If blocking clinics is justified, what about burning them down or blowing them up? Once any form of physical force is justified, how do we define the limits of its use?

Second, if physical force can be justified in fighting abortion what about its use in restraining other evils like idolatry or adultery? Should Christians block the entrances to New Age bookstores or porno shops?

These are important questions that need to be resolved. Although the Bible does permit civil disobedience, proponents of Operation Rescue leave many unanswered questions at a time when their actions should bear the burden of proof.


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See Also *Probe Answers Our Email:*

["How Should a Christian View Civil Disobedience?"](#)

How to Be Successful and Satisfied

How belief in Jesus Christ can help you realize your potential and help you find real satisfaction.

This article is also available in [Spanish](#). 

Success is:_____. How would you fill in the blank?

"That's easy," you might say. "Success is ... for an athlete, winning the Super Bowl, the World Series, or a gold medal; for an entertainer, winning an Oscar, a Grammy, or an Emmy; for a businessperson, being a top executive with one of the Fortune 500 companies; for a university student, being elected to Phi Beta Kappa or student government." But is it always so easy to define?

Several years ago Ranier, a German friend, spent three months with me in the U. S. Once, while he was watching his first baseball game on TV, the batter hit the ball out of the park for a home run. The fans went wild! Ranier turned to me with a puzzled look and asked, "Why are they cheering? They've lost the ball?" To the hometown fans the batter was a great success. To someone from another culture, the home run was a mystery.

The meaning of success also varies with individuals. One dictionary defines success as "the satisfactory accomplishment of a goal sought for." To be successful, you must achieve the goal and be satisfied with the outcome. With this definition one wonders if "success" that does not include personal satisfaction—a sense of well-being—is really true success at all.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Several factors contribute to success. Consider a few:

1. Positive Self-Concept. Imagine that you wake up one morning and your roommate is waiting to tell you something. He or she says, "I've been wanting to tell you what an outstanding roommate you are. You're so kind, so thoughtful; you always keep the room so neat. Just being around you motivates me to be the most positive person I can be."

After you recover from your cardiac arrest, you head off toward your first class of the day. Whom should you run into but your date of the previous evening, who says, "Am I ever glad I ran into you! I'd been hoping I'd get a chance to tell you again what a terrific time I had yesterday. My friends are so jealous of me. They think that I'm the luckiest person in the world to go out with someone like you, and I agree! You're so friendly, so intelligent. You have a great sense of humor and good looks to boot! Why, when I'm with you, I feel like I'm in a dream!"

Then you float into your first class. Your professor is about to return the midterm exams you took last week, but before he distributes them he says, "I have an announcement I'd like to make. I want everyone to know what an outstanding job this student has done on this test." He points to you in the front row and says, "You are a breath of fresh air to me as a professor. You always do your assignments on time. You often do even more than is expected of you. Why, if every student were like you, teaching would be a joy. I was even considering leaving teaching before you came along!"

Wouldn't that help you have a great attitude about yourself? And wouldn't it motivate you to be a better roommate, a better date, a better student? You'd say to yourself, "Why, I'm one sharp person. After all, my roommate, my date and my prof all think so ... and they're no dummies!" You wouldn't argue with them for a minute! [{1}](#)

Of course, some people think so highly of themselves that their egos become problems. Nevertheless, many psychologists agree with Dr. Joyce Brothers when she says, " . . . a strong, positive self- image is the best possible preparation for success in life." [{2}](#)

2. Clearly Defined Goals. Aim at nothing and you'll surely hit it. Aim at a specific goal and, even if you don't hit it, chances are you'll be a lot farther along than if you'd never aimed at all.

The U. S. Space Program has produced many successes and, sadly, a few tragic failures. The successes of NASA help illustrate the importance of goal setting. Perhaps you've heard of the three electricians who were working on the Apollo spacecraft. A reporter asked each what he was doing. The first said, "I'm inserting transistors into circuits." The second answered, "I'm soldering these wires together." The third explained, "I'm helping to put a man on the moon."

Which one was more motivated and satisfied? Probably the one who saw how his activities fit into the overall goal.

Without a clear life's goal, daily duties can become drudgery. Knowing your life's goal can increase your motivation and satisfaction as you see how daily activities help accomplish that goal.

In the early 1960's, President John F. Kennedy set a goal of putting an American on the moon by the end of the decade. In 1969, Neil Armstrong took his "one small step." A specific goal helped NASA achieve a major milestone in history. Someone who desires success will set specific goals.

3. Hard Work. Any successful athlete knows that there would be no glory on the athletic field without hard work on the practice field. A true test of character is not just how well you perform in front of a crowd, but how hard you work when no one notices—in the office, in the library, in practice. President Calvin Coolidge believed "nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not ... Genius will not ... Education will not ... Persistence, determination, and hard work make the difference." {3}

**"A true test of character is not just
how well you perform in front of a crowd,
but how hard you work when no one notices."**

"What is success?" asks British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. "I think it is a mixture of having a flair for the thing that you are doing ... hard work and a certain sense of purpose.... I think I had a flair for ... (my work), but natural feelings are never enough. You have got to marry those natural feelings with really hard work." {4}

The heavyweight-boxing champion of another era, James J.

Corbett, often said, "You become the champion by fighting one more round. When things are tough, you fight one more round."

[{5}](#)

Success requires hard work. Of course you can overdo it and become a workaholic. One workaholic businessman had a sign in his office that read, "Thank God It's Monday!" We all need to balance work and recreation, but hard work is essential to success.

4. A Willingness to Take Risks. Theodore Roosevelt expressed the value of this asset in one of his most famous statements: "Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much because they live in the great twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat, " [{6}](#)

Ingemar Stenmark, the great Olympic skier, says, "In order to win, you have to risk losing." Consider this question: "What would you do if you knew you could not fail?" That question can expand your vision and enlarge your dreams. Maybe your desire is to be a great political leader, an entertainer, a top businessperson or academician, a star athlete. What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?

Now ask, "Am I willing to risk a few possible failures in order to achieve that goal?" Success often involves risks.

AN OBSTACLE TO SUCCESS AND SATISFACTION

A positive self-concept, clear goals, hard work, and a willingness to take risks ... all contribute to success. But there is a major obstacle to experiencing success and satisfaction in life.

In 1923 a very important meeting was held at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. Attending this meeting were seven of the world's most successful financiers-people who had found

the secret of making money.

Consider what had happened to these men 25 years later. The president of the largest independent steel company, Charles Schwab, died in bankruptcy and lived on borrowed money for five years before his death. The president of the greatest utility company, Samuel Insull, died a fugitive from justice and broke in a foreign land. The president of the New York Stock Exchange, Richard Whitney, spent time in Sing Sing Penitentiary. A member of the President's cabinet, Albert Fall, was pardoned so he could die at home. The greatest "bear" on Wall Street, Jesse Livermore, died a suicide. The head of the greatest monopoly, Ivan Krueger, died a suicide. The president of the Bank of International Settlements, Leon Fraser, died a suicide. All these had learned well, the art of success in making a living, but apparently they all struggled with learning how to live successfully. {7}

Pollster and social commentator Daniel Yankelovich quotes a \$100,000/ year full partner in a public relations firm: "I have achieved success by the definition of others but am not fulfilled. I appear successful ... I have published, lectured, exceeded my income goals, achieved ownership and a lot of people depend on me. So, I've adequately achieved the external goals but they are empty." {8}

Dustin Hoffman is an extremely successful movie actor. His film career seems almost dazzling and includes an Oscar for his performance in "Kramer vs. Kramer." Yet consider what he says about happiness and satisfaction: "I don't know what happiness is ... life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness? I'd strike out happiness ... Walk down the street and look at the faces. When you demand happiness, aren't you asking for something unrealistic?" {9}

Success in one area does not guarantee satisfaction in life. You can reach all your goals and still not be at peace with yourself. How can you both achieve your goals and be

satisfied? And even if you feel a degree of satisfaction, could there be something more?

**“You can reach all your goals,
and still not be at peace with yourself.”**

SUCCESSFUL AND SATISFIED

More and more psychologists and psychiatrists are seeing the need to develop the total person physically, psychologically, and spiritually—to produce real satisfaction. Often in our struggle for success, we focus on physical and psychological development at the expense of the spiritual.

Not long ago a group of counselors spent quite a bit of time in New York City interviewing some of the nation’s most successful executives. They interacted with editors of newspapers and magazines, executives with advertising agencies, banks, the TV networks, seeking to understand these leaders’ ideas about success.

One question these counselors asked involved the spiritual area: “What place do faith and spiritual values have in your life?” In response, 75% conveyed that spiritual values were “important” or “very important” to both personal and professional development. Remarked one, “If they could be strengthened, a lot of these other things would fall into place.” Yet, surprisingly few of these leaders had clearly defined convictions in the spiritual area. As one radio broadcaster noted with a smile, “I am inspirable, but I can’t find anyone to inspire me!” [{10}](#)

Then these executives were told about someone who could inspire them, one of history’s most influential personalities, a person who stressed the importance of spiritual development

as well as the physical and psychological. The life and teachings of this influential and very successful leader have made quite a positive impact on my own life, as well. Perhaps a bit of background will put my discovery in perspective.

In high school I looked for success through athletics, academics and student government. And I found it. I lettered in basketball and track ... our track team was undefeated. I ranked in the top of my class academically, was involved in student government, and was attending one of the nation's leading prep schools. John F. Kennedy and Adlai Stevenson were graduates as were playwright Edward Albee and actor Michael Douglas.

I mention these details not to boast but to draw a contrast. Success in these areas had not brought the personal satisfaction I'd wanted. I was still an introvert, sometimes afraid to introduce myself to a stranger or ask a young woman for a date. My attitudes were often inconsistent with my behavior. Outwardly I could appear very positive and loving, while inwardly I might be negative and resentful of someone I didn't like. Guilt, anxiety and a poor self-image often hindered me from taking risks or from being vulnerable in relationships.

Later, in college, I was still wrestling with these areas. Then I ran into a group of students who had something special about them, a love, joy, and enthusiasm I found very attractive. I especially appreciated the fact that they accepted me just the way I was. I didn't have to try to impress them with a list of accomplishments, though they were sharp, attractive, and successful. Even in dating I didn't feel the normal pressure to display a macho image. They seemed to like themselves and they accepted me, too.

These were Christian students and I knew that I wanted what they had. They told me they had found a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I couldn't accept all that right away, yet

I kept going back to their meetings because I was curious and because it was a good place to get a date. Especially because it was a good place to get a date!

AN OPEN DOOR

The more I spent time around them, the more I saw how their faith affected their lives and relationships. They told me that God loved me unconditionally, but that I was separated from Him by a condition of alienation called sin. They said that He had sent His unique Son, Jesus, to die on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins and rise from the grave to offer new life. When I placed my faith in Him, they explained, He would enter my life, forgive me of my sin, and begin to produce the fulfillment I'd been looking for.

Finally, through a simple, silent attitude of my heart, I said, "Jesus Christ, I need you. Thanks for dying and rising again for me. I want to accept your free gift of forgiveness. I open the door of my heart and invite you in. Give me the fulfilling life you promised." There was no thunder and lightning. Angels didn't rise in the background singing the "Hallelujah Chorus" and I didn't become perfect. But gradually, I began to see change. I had a new inner peace that didn't fluctuate with circumstances. I found a freedom from guilt and a new purpose for living. I saw my self-image improve and felt freer to take risks, to love others less conditionally.

There are many examples of Christians who are both successful and satisfied: Roger Staubach, former quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys; Julius Erving, star professional basketball player; J. C. Penney, founder of the department store chain; Dr. Charles Malik, past president of the UN General Assembly; Mark Hatfield, U. S. Senator from Oregon; Janet Lynn, a figure skater; Jerome Hines, Amy Grant, Pat Boone and Debby Boone as entertainers: and many more. Being a Christian doesn't guarantee supreme success. Christians have their failures,

too. But a relationship with God can enhance your self-concept, help clarify your goals, strengthen your determination and help you improve whatever you do. The personal satisfaction Christ provides can make a positive difference, too.

**“What a tragedy to ... climb the ladder
of success, only to reach the top
and find the ladder leaning against the wrong wall.”**

Here's how: Remember the earlier illustration about your roommate, date and professor showering praise on you? Unfortunately, that doesn't happen every day. But God thinks you are very special, so special that He sent His only Son to die in your place. When you come to know Christ personally and realize the magnitude of His love for you, you can find strength to accept yourself and greater freedom to take prudent risks. You can face rejection with the security that even if everyone else turns on you, God still loves you. Knowing He wants the best for you can increase your determination to work hard for worthwhile goals.

What about you? Does your definition of success include personal satisfaction? Have you found success? Will your success be enough to sustain you through any rough times that may lie ahead? Have you found personal satisfaction?

What a tragedy it would be to spend an entire lifetime climbing the ladder of success only to reach the top and find the ladder was leaning against the wrong wall. Are you willing to consider how Jesus Christ can make a difference in your life?

Notes

1. Illustration adapted from Zig Ziglar, *See You at the Top* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Co., 1979), p. 46.
2. Ibid., p. 49.
3. Ibid, p. 319.
4. Prince Michael of Greece, "I Am Fantastically Lucky," *Parade Magazine*, July 13, 1986, p. 4.
5. Ziglar, op. cit.
6. Hugh Sidey, "To Dare Mighty Things," *Time*, June 9, 1980, p. 15.
7. Adapted from Bill Bright, *"The Uniqueness of Jesus"* (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1968) pp. 14-15.
8. Daniel Yankelovich, *New, Rules*, p-69.
9. Gerald Clarke. "A Father Finds His Son," *"Time,"* December 3, 1979, p. 79.
10. Patty Burgin, "A View From the Top," *Collegiate Challenge*, 1980, p. ii.

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A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the End

Hundreds of cases have been recorded of people who returned from the brink of death to report on "the other side." But are out-of-body experiences really encounters with the afterlife ... or something more deceptive?

A man is dying.

As he lies on the operating table of a large hospital, he hears his doctor pronounce him dead. A loud, harsh buzzing reverberates in his head. At the same time, he senses himself moving quickly through a long, dark tunnel. Then, suddenly, he finds he is outside of his own physical body. Like a spectator, he watches the doctor's desperate attempts to revive his corpse. Soon, he sees the spirits of relatives and friends who have already died. He encounters a "being of light." This being shows him an instant replay of his life and has him evaluate his past deeds. Finally, the man learns that his time to die has not yet come and that he must return to his body. He resists, for he has found his afterlife experience to be quite pleasant. Yet, somehow, he is reunited with his physical body and lives. [\[1\]](#)

You may be one of the many who have read this account of a near-death experience in the best-selling book, *Life After Life*, by Dr. Raymond A. Moody, Jr. Dr. Moody is a psychiatrist who pieced together this picture from the reports of numerous patients he had studied. He notes that not all dying patients have these "out-of-body experiences" (OBE's) and stresses that this is a *composite account* from some who have. Not every element appears in every experience, but the picture is fairly representative, he says.

The last few years have seen a flurry of books and articles on these OBE's as an increasing number of doctors report similar findings. My own curiosity led me to several fascinating interviews with surviving patients.

One interview was with a woman in Kansas, who developed complications after major surgery. She told me that she sensed herself rising out of her body, soaring through space and hearing heavenly voices before she returned to her body.

A man in Arizona was in a coma for five months following a

severe motorcycle accident. He said that during that time he saw his deceased father, who spoke to him.

Interpreting the OBE's

How should we interpret these out-of-body experiences? Are they genuine previews of the afterlife? Hallucinations caused by traumatic events? Or something else?

Let's evaluate.

First, the people who have death-related OBE's fall into different categories. Some have been pronounced clinically dead and later are resuscitated. Others have had close calls with death, but were never really thought dead (such as survivors of automobile accidents). Still others did die—permanently—but described what they saw before they expired.

Second, the determination of the point of death is a hotly debated issue. In the past, doctors relied merely on the ceasing of the heartbeat and respiration. More recently they have used the EEG or brainwave test. Some argue that death must be *an irreversible* loss of all vital signs and functions. These would say that patients who were resuscitated did not really die because they were resuscitated. But whatever one considers the point of death, most would agree that these folks have come much closer to it than the majority of people living today.

A number of possible explanations for the OBE's have been offered. Different ones may apply in different situations. Here are a few of the main theories:

The physiological explanations suggest that a "physical" condition may have caused some of the out-of-body experiences. For instance, cerebral anoxia (a shortage of oxygen in the brain) occurs when the heart stops. The brain can survive for a short while (usually only a few minutes) without receiving

oxygen from the blood. Anoxia can produce abnormal mental states.[{2}](#) Thus, patients who recover from heart failure and report OBE's may be merely reporting details of an "altered state of consciousness," some say.[{3}](#)

The pharmacological explanations say that drugs or anesthetics may induce some of the near-death experiences. Some primitive societies use drugs to induce OBE's in their religious ceremonies.[{4}](#)

LSD and marijuana sometimes generate similar sensations. [{5}](#) Even many medically accepted drugs have produced mental states akin to those reported by the dying. Ether, a gaseous anesthetic, can cause the patient to experience "sensations like that of being drawn down a dark tunnel."[{6}](#)

The drug ketamine is an anesthetic that is injected into the veins.[{7}](#) It is used widely and produces hallucinatory reactions 10% to 15% of the time." UCLA pharmacologists Siegel and Jarvik report the reactions of two subjects who took this drug:

"I'm moving through some kind of train tunnel. There are all sorts of lights and colors, mostly in the center, far, far away; way, far away, and little people and stuff running around the walks of the tube, like little cartoon nebbishes; they're pretty close."

"Everything's changing really fast, like pictures in a film, or television, just right in front of me. I am watching it happen right there."[{9}](#) The tunnel, lights, people and film scenes in these accounts bear some resemblance to the OBE images.

The psychological explanations suggest that the individual's mind may generate the unusual mental experience. Sigmund Freud, writing about the difficulty of coping with the thought of death, said it would be more comfortable in our minds to picture ourselves as detached observers.[{10}](#) Some modern

psychiatrists, following this theme, theorize that the OBE is merely a defense mechanism against the anxiety of death. That is, since the thought of one's own death is so frightening, the patient's mind invents the OBE to make it seem as if only the body is dying while the soul or spirit lives on.

Dr. Russell Noyes, University of Iowa psychiatrist, has done extensive research into the experiences of people in life threatening situations. He says that the OBE is "an emergency mechanism . . . a reflex action, if you like." [{11}](#)

Noyes and his associate, Roy Kletti, write, "In the face of mortal danger we find individuals becoming observers of that which is taking place, effectively removing themselves from danger." [{12}](#)

Other psychologists wonder if the patient may be confusing his or her *interpretation* of the experience with what actually happened. [{13}](#) The conscious mind seems to need an explanation for an unusual vision; therefore, it interprets the event in familiar terms. Thus, say these psychologists, the resuscitated patient reports conversations with deceased relatives or religious figures common to his culture.

**It is possible that an OBE
could be completely spiritual and yet
not be from God.**

Spiritual Theories

The spiritual explanations grant the existence of the spiritual realm. They view many of the OBE's as real manifestations of this realm. Dr. Moody, while admitting his inability to prove his belief, feels that the OBE's represent genuine previews of the afterlife. [{14}](#) The famous Dr.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, well-known writer on death and dying, says she became convinced of the afterlife through her study of OBE's and related phenomena.[{15}](#)

Many have noted that the experiences in Dr. Moody's first book, *Life After Life*, seem to contradict some of the traditional Christian beliefs about the afterlife. All of the patients—Christian and non-Christian—report feelings of bliss and ecstasy with no mention of unpleasantness, hell or judgment.

However, Dr. Moody's first book was based on limited observation. Further research yielded new information that he presents in a second book, *Reflections on Life After Life*, which came out in 1977 (two years later).

He has now talked with numerous patients who refer to a "city of light" and describe scenes that are reminiscent of biblical material.[{16}](#) Some of his other patients report seeing "beings who seemed to be 'trapped' in an apparently most unfortunate state of existence."[{17}](#)

One woman who was supposedly "dead" for 15 minutes said she saw spirits who appeared confused. "They seemed to shuffle," she reports, "as someone would on a chain gang . . . not knowing where they were going. They all had the most woebegone expressions. It was quite depressing."[{18}](#)

Dr. Moody now states, "Nothing I have encountered precludes the possibility of a hell."[{19}](#) Some have felt that the OBE's are inconsistent with the biblical concept of a final judgment at the world's end. No one reports standing before God and being judged for eternity. Dr. Moody responds in his second book by pointing out that "the end of the world has not yet taken place, "so there is no inconsistency." There may well be a final judgment," he says. "Near-death experiences in no way imply the contrary."[{20}](#)

Life After Death?

How should one view the OBE's and their relationship to the issue of life after death? Scientific or experimental methods are currently unable to solve the riddle (as a number of scientists will admit).[{21}](#) Not only is it difficult to provide controlled situations during medical emergencies; the scientist has no instruments to determine the *content* of events in the spiritual or mental realms.

Personal testimony alone is insufficient as a test of truth in these cases. Subjective mental experiences can be deceptive and are susceptible to influence by injury, drugs, psychological trauma, etc., as stated previously. Also, what would we conclude when the experiences differ?

Another approach involves the spiritual realm. Presumably, a qualified spiritual authority could accurately inform us about the afterlife. But with so many differing authorities on today's spiritual scene, whom should we believe?

An increasing number of educated men and women are concluding that Jesus of Nazareth is a trustworthy spiritual leader. A major reason for this conclusion is that He successfully *predicted* His own out-of-body experience—that is, His own death and resurrection. Consider the evidence:[{22}](#)

Jesus was executed on the cross and declared dead. His body was wrapped like a mummy and then placed in a tomb. An extremely large stone was rolled against the entrance. A unit of superior Roman soldiers was placed out front to guard against grave robbers. On the third day, the stone had been rolled away and the tomb was empty, but the grave clothes were still in place. The Roman guards came out with the feeble story that the disciples had stolen the body while they were sleeping. But how could they know who had done it if they were asleep?

Meanwhile, hundreds of people were saying they saw Jesus alive and were believing in Him because His prediction had come true. Both the Romans *and* the Jews would have loved to have produced the body to squelch the movement. No one did. The tomb remained empty and Christianity spread like wildfire. Jesus' disciples were so convinced that He had risen that they endured torture and even martyrdom for their faith.

Jesus Christ successfully predicted His own resurrection. This was not a mere resuscitation after His heart had stopped beating for a few minutes. It was a dramatic physical resurrection after several days in the grave.

Why is this incident so important? The resurrection shows that Jesus has power over death. It establishes Him as a spiritual authority. Because He remains consistent on statements we can test (such as His resurrection prediction), we seemingly have solid grounds for trusting Him on statements we *cannot* test (such as those He made about life after death).

One statement Jesus made was that all who believe in Him will have everlasting life, an eternity of joy. As one early Christian wrote: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him."

Jesus also explained that God loves us and desires our happiness both now and after we die.[{24}](#) However, we all initially exist in a condition of separation or alienation from God. This condition is called sin, and it prevents us from achieving maximum fulfillment in this life and from spending eternity with God.[{25}](#)

Jesus claimed to be the solution to our sin problem. By His death on the cross He paid the penalty for our sins so that we might be forgiven and live forever with God.[{26}](#) The Bible explains, "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son (Jesus). He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life."[{27}](#) If we

refuse this free gift in Jesus, we are choosing to exclude ourselves from God, opting instead for an eternity of suffering. [{28}](#)

OBE Interpretation

In light of the above, how should one interpret the OBE'S? Here are some guidelines I use.

Because I have concluded that historical evidence supports both the authority of Jesus and the accuracy of the biblical documents, accept them as a standard.

If a given OBE contradicts biblical statements or principles, I do not accept it as being completely from God. If the experience does not contradict biblical statements or principles, then it *could* be from God. (I say "could" because there is always a possibility of influence from one of the other factors—body, drug or mind.)

It is also possible that a given OBE could be completely spiritual and yet not be from God.

Jesus clearly taught the existence of an evil spiritual being, Satan.

We are told that Satan "disguises himself as an angel of light," [{30}](#) but Jesus said that he is "a liar, and the father of lies." [{31}](#)

One of Satan's favorite deceptions is convincing people that they can achieve eternal life by doing good. That way, they don't see their need for receiving Christ's pardon.

Could this be the reason that sometimes the "being of light" in the OBE's tells the patient to go back and live a good

life, but makes no mention of a commitment to Christ? (I'm not accusing everyone connected with OBE's of deliberately being in league with the devil. Rather, I'm offering a word of caution, a suggestion to consider satanic influence as one of several possible alternatives in individual cases.)

Obviously death is a common denominator of the human race. Some seek to avoid the issue or to insulate themselves from it through possessions and pursuits, popularity or power. Many feel that whatever belief makes you comfortable is okay. Do any of these descriptions fit you?

In the spring of 1977, a nightclub near Cincinnati was packed to the brim. Suddenly, a busboy stepped onto the stage, interrupted the program and announced that the building was on fire. Perhaps because they saw no smoke, many of the guests remained seated. Maybe they thought it was a joke, a part of the program, and felt comfortable with that explanation. When they finally saw the smoke, it was too late. More than 150 people died as the nightclub burned.[\[32\]](#)

As you consider death, are you believing what you want to believe, or what the evidence shows is true? Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live, even if he dies."[\[33\]](#)

I encourage you to place your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior. Then you, too, will live, even if you die.

Notes

1. Paraphrased from Raymond A. Moody, Jr., M. D., *Life After Life*, Bantam, New York, 1976 (first published by Mockingbird Books in 1975), pp. 21, 22.
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3. Daniel Goleman, "Back from the Brink," *Psychology Today*, April, 1977, p. 59.

4. Michael Grosso, "Some Varieties of Out-of-Body Experience," *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, April, 1976, pp. 185, 186.
5. Grof and Halifax Grof, pp. 193-195; Stanislov Grof, "Varieties of Transpersonal Experiences: Observations from LSD Psychotherapy," *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 4: 1, 1972, p.67; Russell Noyes, Jr., M.D., and Roy Kletti, "Depersonalization in the Face of Life-Threatening Danger: An Interpretation," *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying*, 7: 2, 1976, p. 108.
6. Raymond A. Moody, Jr., *Reflections on Life After Life*, Bantam/ Mockingbird, New York and Covington, Georgia, 1977, p. 108.
7. Moody, *Life After Life*, p. 157.
8. Louis Jolyon West, M.D., "A Clinical and Theoretical Overview of Hallucinatory Phenomena" in R. K. Siegel and L. J. West (eds.), *Hallucinations Behavior, Experience, and Theory*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1975, p. 292.
9. Ronald K. Siegel, Ph. D. and Murray E. Jarvik, M.D., Ph.D., "Drug-Induced Hallucinations in Animals and Man," in Siegel and West, pp. 116-118.
10. Sigmund Freud, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death" (1915), *Collected Papers*, Vol. 4, Basic Books, 1959; quoted in Russell Noyes, Jr., M.D., "The Experience of Dying," *Psychiatry*, May 1972, p. 178.
11. Joan Kron, "The Out-of-Body Trip: What a Way to Go!" *New York Magazine*, December 27, 1976-January 3, 1977, p. 72.
12. Noyes and Kietti (1976), loc. cit.
13. Dr. Charles Tart in Robert A. Monroe, *Journeys Out of the Body*, Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1971, pp. 6, 7.
14. Moody, *Reflections on Life After Life*, p. 111.
15. James Pearre *Chicago Tribune*, "Ghost Story: How a long dead patient talked doctor into continuing work with the dying," *San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle*, November 14, 1976, section B, p. 7.
16. Moody, *Reflections on Life After Life*, pp. 15-18.
17. Ibid, pp. 18-22.

18. Ibid., pp. 19-21.
19. Ibid., p. 36.
20. Ibid., pp. 36, 37.
21. Ibid., pp. 132-135; A. Susan Mennear, "Life After Death?" *Good Housekeeping*, September, 1976, pp. 187, 188; J. B. Rhine, Ph. D., "Parapsychology and Psychology: The Shifting Relationship Today," *The Journal of Parapsychology*, June, 1976, pp. 131-133.
22. For a more thorough documentation of resurrection evidences, see Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Campus Crusade for Christ International, 1972, pp. 185-273; see also pp. 15-79 for evidences for the reliability of the biblical documents.
23. 1 Corinthians 2: 9, NIV.
24. John 3: 16; John 10:10.
25. Romans 1:23; 6:23.
26. Luke 19:10; Mark 10:45; 1 Peter 2:24; John 3:16.
27. 1 John 5: 11, 12.
28. John 3:36; Revelation 20:15.
29. McDowell, loc. cit.
30. 11 Corinthians 11:14.
31. John 8:44.
32. "They Didn't Believe It," *The New York Times*, May 30, 1977, p. 16; Hal Bruno, "The Fire Next Time," *Newsweek*, June 13, 1977, pp. 24, 27.
33. John 11:25.

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The New Testament: Can I

Trust It?

Rusty Wright and Linda Raney Wright examine how the New Testament documents measure up when subjected to standard tests for historical reliability.



This article is also available in [Spanish](#).

“How can any well-educated person believe the New Testament? It was written so long after the events it records that we can’t possibly trust it as historically reliable.” This is a common question on the university campus and deserves an honest answer.

How does one determine the authenticity of an ancient book? C. Sanders, a military historian, outlines three basic tests used by historians and literary critics.^{1} These are the internal, external and bibliographic tests. Let’s consider briefly how the New Testament stands up to each one.

1. The Internal Test

Here our question concerns the trustworthiness of the writers as revealed by the text itself. One of the chief issues is whether or not we have eyewitness testimony. The New Testament accounts of the life of Christ were written by eyewitnesses or by people relating the accounts of the eyewitnesses of the actual events. John wrote, “what we have seen and heard [concerning Christ], we proclaim to you also.”^{2} Peter stated that he and his associates were “eyewitnesses of His majesty.”^{3} Luke claimed that his gospel was based on accounts compiled from eyewitnesses.^{4} In a court of law, eyewitness testimony is the most reliable kind.

Another issue in the internal test is the consistency of the reports. If two writers present testimony that is contradictory, doubt is cast on the integrity of one or both

records.

Many have charged that the New Testament contains contradictions. To deal with such charges, it is important to understand that “contrary” is defined by Webster as “a proposition so related to another that, though both may be false, they cannot both be true.” Thus, the statement, “Joe and Bill are in this room” contradicts the statement, “Only Joe is in this room.” It does not, however, contradict the statement, “Joe is in this room.” *Omission does not necessarily constitute contradiction.*

With this in mind, consider several alleged New Testament contradictions. Some observe that Luke writes of two angels at the tomb of Jesus after the resurrection^{5} while Matthew mentions “an angel.”^{6} The observation of the statements is accurate, but the interpretation of them as contraries is not. If Matthew explicitly stated that only one angel was present at that time, the two accounts would be dissonant. As it is, they are harmonious.

Others note an apparent discrepancy in the accounts of the birth of Jesus. Hans Conzelmann, a German theologian, writing of Matthew’s and Luke’s accounts of the nativity, states that “in every detail they disagree.”^{7} He focuses on apparent geographical inconsistencies.

Simple observation shows that the two accounts do differ. Luke tells of Joseph and Mary starting in Nazareth and traveling to Bethlehem (for the census and the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem). He then records the family’s return to Nazareth.^{8} Matthew’s account begins with the couple in Bethlehem (and Jesus’ birth there) and records their flight into Egypt to escape King Herod’s wrath, and relates their travel to Nazareth after Herod’s death.^{9}

Contradictory vs. Complementary

Conzelmann regards these details as contradictory, but are they? The Gospels never claim to be exhaustive records of the life of Christ. Any biographer must of necessity be selective. Could not Matthew have chosen to omit the census journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem and Luke the flight into Egypt? As such, the accounts are complementary, rather than contradictory.[{10}](#)

Often such critics seem unable to carefully discern the content of biblical texts because of their own negative presuppositions and lofty speculations. One is inclined to agree with C. S. Lewis' criticism of these skeptics when he writes, "These men ask me to believe they can read between the lines of the old texts; the evidence (that they cannot) is their obvious inability to read (in any sense worth discussing) the lines themselves."[{11}](#) Consider a final (and more difficult) example of alleged inconsistency. Many have noted a difference between the synoptic accounts (those in Matthew, Mark and Luke) and John's account of the dating of the death of Jesus. Specifically, the issue concerns the chronological relationship of the crucifixion to the celebration of the Passover meal by the Jews. Mark refers to some Jews observing the Passover the evening before the crucifixion.[{12}](#) John seems to indicate a Passover celebration *after* the crucifixion.[{13}](#) In a recent definitive article, Dr. Harold Hoehner of Dallas Theological Seminary solves the puzzle.[{14}](#) Citing evidence from the *Mishnah* and the scholars Strock-Billerbock, Hoehner shows that the Pharisees and Sadducees (two contemporary religious parties) disagreed about the day of the week on which the Passover should fall. The result was that the Pharisees celebrated the Passover one day before the Sadducees did. This makes it entirely plausible that the synoptics use the reckoning of the Pharisees, while John presents that of the Sadducees, thus accounting for the difference.

2. External Test

This test asks whether other historical and archaeological materials confirm or deny the internal testimony provided by the documents themselves. Several authors of antiquity wrote of Jesus as a person of history. Among them were Tacitus, Josephus, Seutonius, and Pliny the Younger.[{15}](#) Sir William Ramsey, an eminent archaeologist, once held that Luke's writings were not historically sound. His own subsequent investigation of near-eastern archaeology forced him to reverse his position and conclude that "Luke is a historian of the first rank."[{16}](#)

Nelson Glueck, former president of Jewish Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, one of the greatest archaeologists, and a Jew, wrote: "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference."[{17}](#)

Archaeological Evidence

Consider a few examples of archaeological confirmation of the New Testament. In I Corinthians, Paul refers to the meat market in Corinth.[{18}](#) An inscription from ancient Corinth has been discovered which refers to the "meat market."[{19}](#) Luke refers to the temple of Artemis in Ephesus and speaks of a riot that occurred in a theater in the same city.[{20}](#) The temple was excavated in 1803 and measured 100 by 340 feet.[{21}](#) Twentieth-century Austrian archaeologists unearthed the theater and found it could hold nearly 25,000 people.[{22}](#)

Mark writes of Jesus healing a blind man as He left Jericho.[{23}](#) Luke, apparently writing of the same event, says it happened while Jesus was *approaching* Jericho.[{24}](#)

Excavations in 1907-09 by Ernest Sellin, of the German Oriental Society, showed that there were "twin cities" of Jericho in Jesus' time—an old Jewish city and a Roman city separated by about a mile.[{25}](#) Apparently Mark referred to one

and Luke referred to the other, and the incident occurred as Jesus traveled between the two.

William F. Albright, one of the world's leading biblical archaeologists, adds a helpful comment: "We can already say emphatically that there is no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after about A.D. 80, two full generations before the date of between A.D. 130 and 150 given by the more radical New Testament critics of today."[\[26\]](#) This statement is crucial because it means that some of Christ's opponents, who were living when He was on earth, were undoubtedly still around when the New Testament books were penned. Their presence would have prompted the New Testament writers to give careful attention to the veracity of the statements. And we can be certain that if any errors were made in their accounts the opponents of Christ (of which there were many) would have been quick to expose them.

3. Bibliographic Test

This final test is necessary because we do not possess the original manuscripts of most ancient documents. The question that must be asked, then, is: "How many early copies do we have and how close in time are they to the original?" A. T. Robertson, author of one of the most comprehensive grammars of New Testament Greek, wrote, "...we have 13,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament."[\[27\]](#) Many of these copies are dated only a short time (80-400 years) after the original.

When the New Testament documents are compared with other writings of antiquity for the numbers of early copies and the chronological proximity of the copies to the original, the New Testament is far superior. (For instance, we have only 10 good copies of *Gallic Wars* and they are 1,000 years after the original; seven copies of Plato's *Tetralogies*, 1,200 years after the original. Similar results hold for the writings of Thucydides, Herodotus and a host of others.)[\[28\]](#)

The late Sir Frederic Kenyon, former director and principal librarian of the British Museum, was one of the leading authorities on the reliability of ancient manuscripts. He drew this conclusion:

"The interval then, between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."[{29}](#)

If one concludes that the New Testament documents are historically reliable, it stands to reason that he should seriously consider the message they present. In the Old Testament and the New, the message of the Bible is the message of Jesus Christ. And He offers an abundant and eternal life to anyone who will consider and respond to His claims: "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life...and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."[{30}](#)

Notes

1. Sanders, C. *Introduction to Research in English Literary History* (New York: MacMillan, 1952), pp. 143ff; quoted in Montgomery, John. "History and Christianity," *His Magazine* reprint, Chicago, December 1964-March 1965, pp. 6-9.

2. I John 1:3.

3. 11 Peter 1:16.

4. Luke 1:1-3.

5. Luke 24:1-4.

6. Matthew 28:1-8.

7. Conzelmann, Hans. *Jesus*. The classic article from the RGG expanded and updated (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), pp. 26-27.
8. Luke 1:26, 2:40.
9. Matthew 2:1-23.
10. Cheney, Johnston. *The Life of Christ in Stereo*. (Portland, OR: Western Seminary Press, 1971), pp. 6-14, 243.
11. Hooper, Walter (ed.). *Christian Reflections* (William B. Eerdmans) quoted in McDowell, Josh. *More Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc., 1975), p. 342.
12. Mark 14:12ff.
13. John 18:28.
14. Hoehner, Harold W. "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, Part IV" *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, July, 1974), pp. 241-264.
15. Bruce, F. F. *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), pp.19-41.
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17. Glueck, Nelson. *Rivers in the Desert History of Negev*. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publications Society of America, 1969); quoted in McDowell, Josh. *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*. (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc., 1972), p. 68.
18. 1 Corinthians 10:25.
19. Bruce, *Christian Origins*. p 200.

20. Acts 19:27-29.

21. Free, Joseph P. *Archaeology and Bible History*. (Wheaton: Scripture Press, 1951), p. 324.

22. Ibid.

23. Mark 10:46-52.

24. Luke 18:35-43.

25. Free, op. cit., p. 295; the old Jewish Jericho may have been a “ghost town” or merely a mound in Jesus’ day.

26. Albright, William. *Recent Discoveries in Biblical Lands*. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1955), p. 136; quoted in McDowell, op. cit., p. 65.

27. Robertson, A. T., *Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1925), p. 70; quoted in Montgomery, op. cit., p. 6.

28. McDowell, op. cit., pp. 46-56; Montgomery, op. cit., p. 6; Bruce, op. cit., pp. 10-20.

29. Kenyon, F. G. *The Bible and Archaeology*. (New York and London: Harper, 1940), pp. 288, 89; quoted in Montgomery, op. cit., p. 6.

30. John 8:12, 32.

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Who's Got the Body?

Rusty Wright and Linda Raney Wright provide a short documented examination of evidences for Jesus' resurrection.



This article is also available in [Spanish](#).

Who cares? What difference does it make if Jesus rose from the dead? It makes all the difference in the world. If Christ did not rise, then thousands of Christians have lived and died for a hoax.

If, however, He did rise, then He is still alive and can act now to straighten out our chaotic world. Facts always speak louder than opinions. Let's take a look at some of the historical evidence for the resurrection and see where the facts lead.

One preliminary consideration: countless scholars—among them, the apostle Paul, St. Augustine, Sir Isaac Newton and C. S. Lewis—believed in the resurrection. We need not fear committing intellectual suicide by accepting it also.

Paul wrote that “Christ died for our sins, He was buried, He was raised on the third day. He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that, He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now. [{1}](#)

Consider also these four pieces of evidence:

1. The Explosive Growth of the Christian Church

Within a few weeks after the crucifixion a movement arose which, by the later admission of its enemies, “upset the world.” [{2}](#) Something happened to ignite this movement a very short time after its leader had been executed. What was it?

2. The Changed Lives of the Disciples

After Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, most of the disciples were frightened. Peter, for instance, denied Christ three times (twice to two servant girls!) Yet 10 out of the 11 disciples were martyred for their faith. Peter was crucified upside down; Thomas was skewered; John was boiled in oil but survived. Something had happened to revolutionize these men's lives. Each believed he had seen the risen Christ.

3. The Empty Tomb

Jesus' dead body was removed from the cross, wrapped in graveclothes like a mummy, covered with 100 pounds of aromatic spices and placed in a tomb.^{3} The tomb had been hewn out of rock^{4} and apparently contained only one cavern.^{5} An extremely large stone^{6} was rolled into a slightly depressed groove at the tomb's entrance.^{7} Some have conservatively estimated the weight of the stone at one-and-a-half to two tons.

A crack "Green Beret" unit of Roman soldiers was placed out front to guard the grave.^{8} The military discipline of the Romans was so strict that severe corporal and often capital punishment awaited the soldier who left his post or failed in his duty.^{9} Sunday morning, the stone was found rolled away, the body was gone, but the graveclothes were still in place.^{10} What happened?

Some say that Christ's friends stole the body. This means that either one of the women sweet-talked the guards while the other two moved the stone and tip-toed off with the body, or else guys like Peter (remember how brave he was) and Thomas (how easily convinced he was) overpowered the guards, stole the body, and fabricated a myth.

These theories hardly seem plausible. The guard was too powerful, the stone too heavy, and the disciples, not yet

experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit were too spineless to attempt such a feat.

Others say that Christ's enemies stole the body. Yet if the Romans or Jews had the body, they would have exposed it publicly and Christianity would have died out. They didn't and it didn't.

Then there is the "swoon theory," that Christ didn't really die but was only unconscious. The expert Roman executioners merely thought He was dead. After a few days in the tomb, without food or medicine, the cool air revived Him. Then, according to this theory, He burst from the 100 pounds of graveclothes, rolled away the stone with His nail-pierced hands, scared the daylights out of the Roman soldiers, walked miles on wounded feet, and convinced His disciples that He'd been raised from the dead. This one is harder to believe than the resurrection itself.

In other words, if Jesus was put to death, who's got the body? All that we do have is an empty tomb.

4. The Appearances of the Risen Christ

For 40 days after His death, Christ was reported to be seen alive on earth. Some say these were hallucinations, but do the accounts show that?

Only certain high-strung and imaginative types of people usually have such psychic experiences. Yet a woman, a stubborn tax collector, several fishermen and more than 500 people at one time claimed they saw Him. Hallucinations are very individualistic—contrasting with the fact that over 500 people saw the same thing at the same time and place.

Two other facts undermine the hallucination idea. Such imaginations are usually of expected events, yet the disciples had lost hope after the crucifixion. Also, psychic phenomena usually occur in cycles, but the appearances came in no set

patttern.{11}

Attempts to explain away the appearances run into a brick wall of facts. The facts point to one conclusion: Christ is risen.

The above does not constitute an exhaustive proof, but rather a reasoned examination of the evidence. We must each consider and evaluate the evidence ourselves to determine the truth of the resurrection claim. (Of course, the truth or falsity of the resurrection is a matter of historical fact and is not dependent on any individual's belief.)

If the facts support the claim, then we can conclude that He arose. In any case, a mere intellectual assent to the facts does nothing for one's life.

A major evidence comes experientially, in personally receiving Christ as Savior and Lord. Jesus said, "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him." {12}

Care to give Him a try?

Notes

1. 1 Corinthians 15:3-6.
2. Acts 17:6.
3. John 19:38-40.
4. Eusebius of Caesarea. *Theophania*; quoted in Latham, Henry. *The Risen Master*. (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1904). pp. 87,88; quoted in McDowell, Josh. *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino, CA.: Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc., 1972), p. 209.
5. Ibid.
6. Mark 16:4.

7. Holloman, Henry W. "An Exposition of the Post Resurrection Appearances of Our Lord" (Unpublished Th.M. Thesis: Dallas Theological Seminary, May, 1967). p. 38, quoted in McDowell, op. cit. p. 216.
 8. Matthew 27: 65,66.
 9. McDowell, op. cit. pp. 218-224.
 10. Matthew 28:1-6; Mark 16:1-6; Luke 24:1-3; John 20:1-11.
 11. Anderson, J. N. D. The Evidence for the Resurrection. (Chicago: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968). pp. 20-23.
 12. Revelation 3:20.
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A Short Story

There was once a rich man, who dressed in purple and the finest linen, and feasted in great magnificence every day. At his gate, covered with sores, lay a poor man named Lazarus, who would have been glad to satisfy his hunger with the scraps from the rich man's table. Even the dogs used to come and lick his sores.

One day the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, where he was in torment; he looked up, and there, far away, was Abraham with Lazarus close beside him.

"Abraham, my father," he called out, "take pity on me! Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue, for I am in agony in this fire." But Abraham said, "Remember, my child, that all the good things fell to you while you were alive, and all the bad to Lazarus; now he has his consolation here and it is you who are in agony. But that is not all: there is a great chasm fixed between us; no one from our side who wants to reach you can cross it, and none may pass from your side to us."

"Then, father," he replied, "will you send him to my father's house, where I have five brothers, to warn them, so that they too may not come to this place of torment?" But Abraham said, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them listen to them." "No, father Abraham," he replied, "but if someone from the dead visits them, they will repent." Abraham answered, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets they will pay no heed even if someone should rise from the dead." (Luke 16:19-31, New English Bible)

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Jesus: The Divine Xerox – Reasons to Believe

Probe's founder Jimmy Williams provides a compelling set of reasons to believe that Jesus is in fact the Son of God. By asking questions one would expect of God on this earth, we see that Jesus is the only one who fulfills them all. Jesus' characteristics are His own apologetic.

You know, today when you walk across the campus and begin to talk about the New Testament, the claims of Christ, and how He is relevant to high school or college life, often you get this expression of amazement, as if you have committed intellectual suicide, because you actually believe His claims. Some tell us that becoming a Christian involves a blind leap with little or no evidence to support it. In fact, the blinder the leap and the more lacking the evidence, the more noble the faith. It is certainly true that any philosophy or belief cannot be proved;

I would not try and insult anyone's intellect by saying I could *prove* to him that Jesus Christ is God. However, I think when we look into the history of this unique person, we see some things that have to grasp the mind of any thinking man and impress upon him the strong consideration that Jesus may be who He claimed to be...namely, God incarnate in human flesh.

Now whatever we may say about Jesus Christ, most everyone would agree that in the person of Christ we view one of the most unique personalities of all the centuries—whether He is God or not. The unbeliever, atheist, Moslem, Hindu and Buddhist alike all generally agree on this one central fact, that Jesus Christ is indeed a unique personality.

“Here was a man born of a peasant woman in an obscure village. He grew up in another obscure military camp town where He worked as a carpenter's son. He never wrote a book; He possessed neither wealth nor influence. He never ran for political office; He never went more than 200 miles from His home town; He never even entered a big city. In infancy He startled a king; in childhood He puzzled doctors; in manhood He ruled the course of nature and hushed the sea to sleep. During the last three years of His life He became an itinerant preacher, roaming the land of His birth, healing the sick and comforting the poor. At the end of this three years of ministry the tide of public opinion began to turn against Him. He was betrayed by one of His closest friends and arrested for disturbing the status quo. All of His followers deserted Him; one denied Him three times. He went through six trials, each of which was a mockery of jurisprudence. Prior to one of the trials He was beaten to the point of death with leather strips imbedded with studs of iron. A crown of thorns was then rammed down upon His head, tearing the flesh so that blood poured down the side of His face. The Roman procurator officiating at His trial was nervous. The uniqueness of this man made Pilate want to wash his hands of the whole affair. But the crowds cried for

His death.

"As the Roman procurator brought this insignificant, now mutilated and beaten carpenter's son before the crowds, he hurled a challenge to them which has resounded across twenty centuries: he said, "Behold the man." Pilate was impressed. He had never before seen such quiet dignity, intrepid courage, noble majesty. Never had any other who had stood before his bar carried himself as this One. The Roman was deeply impressed, and avowed his captor's uniqueness. But the mob shouted, 'Crucify Him.' So He was taken outside the gates of the city and nailed to a cross to die the death of a common criminal.

"Yet the story doesn't end here. For something happened after that strange, dark day that has changed the entire course of human history. He came forth from the tomb in resurrection power. His greatness has never been paralleled. He never wrote a book, yet all the libraries of the country could not hold the books that have been written about Him. He never wrote a song, and yet He has furnished the theme for more songs than all the songwriters combined. He never founded a college, but all the schools put together cannot boast of having as many students. Every seventh day the wheels of commerce cease their turning and multitudes wind their way to worshiping assemblies to pay homage and respect to Him. The names of the past proud statesmen of Greece and Rome have come and gone. The names of the past scientists, philosophers, and theologians have come and gone, but the name of this man abounds more and more. Though over 1900 years lie between the people of this generation and the time of His crucifixion, He still lives. Herod could not destroy Him, and the grave could not hold Him. He stands forth upon the highest pinnacle of heavenly glory.

"Never had any other who had stood before his bar carried himself as this One. The Roman was deeply impressed, and avowed his captor's uniqueness. But the mob shouted,

‘Crucify Him.’ So He was taken outside the gates of the city and nailed to a cross to die the death of a common criminal. Still today He is the cornerstone of history, the center of human progress. I would be well within the mark when I say that all the armies that have ever marched, all the navies that have ever sailed, all the parliaments that have ever sat, and all of the kings that have ever reigned, put together, have not influenced the course of man’s life on this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life, Jesus of Nazareth. History has been called His story. He split time: B.C., before Christ; A.D., *Anno Domini*, in the year of our Lord.{1}

When, some 20 centuries ago, Pontius Pilate said, “Behold the man,” I doubt that he had any idea of who it was that stood before him. He certainly wouldn’t have dreamed that this humble peasant would launch a movement (indeed, already had) that would change the course of Western civilization. In view of the claims that He made and the impact He had upon history, it behooves us to “Behold the man.” Who was He? Those who knew Him best were convinced that He was God. What do you say? I am convinced that the only reasonable conclusion that can be drawn from a fair examination of the evidence is that He was and is, indeed, God, the Saviour of the world. Let’s consider some of these evidences together.

I would like to consider several lines of historical evidence that suggest that Jesus Christ is God. The first line of evidence is:

Because the Hypothesis Fits the Facts.

Now what I would like to do in terms of presenting the first line of evidence for His claim that He is God is to ask the question, “What would God be like, if God became a man?” If the facts about Jesus Christ fit the answers to the above question—pre-eminently so, uniquely so, we will have offered

evidence, that He may be who He claimed to be. So I would like to suggest four things that I think we would all agree would characterize God if God became a man.

If God were a man, we would expect His words to be the greatest words ever spoken.

What is great literature or great oratory? The masterpieces of one generation often appear stilted and artificial to another. The words which endure are the words which have something to say about that which is universal in human experience, that which doesn't change with time.

Statistically speaking, the Gospels are the greatest literature ever written. They are read by more people, quoted by more authors, translated into more tongues, represented in more art, set to more music, than any other book or books written by any man in any century in any land. But the words of Christ are not great on the grounds that they have such a statistical edge over anybody else's words. They are read more, quoted more, loved more, believed more, and translated more because they are the greatest words ever spoken. And where is their greatness? Their greatness lies in the pure, lucid spirituality in dealing clearly, definitively, and authoritatively with the greatest problems that throb in the human breast; namely, Who is God? Does history have meaning? Does He love me? Does He care for me? What should I do to please Him? How does He look at my sin? How can I be forgiven? Where will I go when I die? How must I treat others?

This amazing purity of the words of Christ became more real to me in a forceful way while I was studying the Greek language in graduate school. The New Testament is written in Greek. I was taking a course called Rapid Greek Reading in which we did nothing but read the Greek New Testament and recite in class. We read about eight pages of Greek a week or about the equivalent timewise of 600 pages of English. We struggled night and day while reading the Gospels in order to be able to read

them out loud in class directly from the Greek text to our professor. It was sometimes humorous to hear one another struggle with the text of Matthew or Luke. The interesting thing was that when reading one of the Gospels aloud, we would stumble and toil with the sections where Matthew was simply recounting narrative, but as soon as Matthew began to quote the words of Christ the struggle ceased. His words were the easiest to translate. They were so simple and yet profound. To labor with the narrative portions and then come to the words of Christ was like moving from the intensity of the hurricane to the calm serenity of the eye of the storm. It was the difference between sailing on rough tempestuous seas and on a glassy lake at eventide.

Certainly, no mere man could impregnate such simple words with such sublime thoughts. Consider the volumes of truth stored up in the phrase, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"^{2}, and "Whosoever would find his life, must lose it"^{3}. Libraries could be filled with works which simply develop those concepts.

No other man's words have the appeal of Jesus' words. They are the kind of words we would expect God to utter if God were a man.

The second line of evidence is:

If God were a man, we would expect Him to exert a profound power over human personality.

One of the greatest impacts among human beings is the impact of personality upon personality. Most human beings are rather ordinary in their impact upon other human beings. I can't think of anyone in my life whose personality has made an impact upon me; strong influence, yes, but impact, no. Periodically in history a Churchill, Hitler, or a Caesar comes along and impact is made. Certainly, if God were a man, His personality would be so dynamic it would have unprecedented

impact on His contemporaries. Is this the case with Jesus of Nazareth? We find most emphatically that it is. Whether Jesus be man or God, whether the Gospels be mainly fiction or fancy, certainly a historic person named Jesus made such an impact on a small band of men as to be unequaled by far in the entire annals of the human race. Consider for a moment the historic nucleus from which Christianity sprang: Peter, a weak-willed fisherman; John, a gentle dreamer; Thomas, who had a question mark for a brain; Matthew, a tax collector; a few peasants and a small cluster of emotional women. Now I don't want to minimize the character of these men, but seriously, does this rather heterogeneous group of simple folk look like the driving force that could turn the Roman Empire upside down, so that by 312 A.D., Christianity was the official religion of the Empire? Frankly they do not. The impact of the personality of Christ upon these people turned them into flaming revolutionaries who launched a movement that has changed the history of Western Civilization.

The amazing thing is that these men were the very ones who ate with Him, slept with Him, and lived with Him for over three years and still concluded that He was God. How could a person live with someone for that period of time and come to that conclusion unless it were a valid conclusion? You could spend less than an hour with the greatest saint mankind has ever produced and be thoroughly convinced that he was not God. How could you spend three years with a mere man and become absolutely convinced that He was God, in fact, be so convinced that you would be willing to die a martyr's death to punctuate your belief? Listen for a moment to the traditional deaths of the apostles: Matthew, martyred by the sword in Ethiopia; Mark, dragged through the streets of Alexandria until dead; Luke, hanged on an olive tree in Greece; John, put in a caldron of boiling oil but escaped death and died in exile on the island of Patmos; Peter, crucified upside down (he said he wasn't worthy to be crucified in the same manner as His Lord); James, beheaded in Jerusalem; Philip, hanged against a pillar

in Phrygia; James the Less, thrown from the pinnacle of the temple and beaten to death down below; Bartholomew, flayed alive; Andrew, bound to a cross where he preached to his persecutors till he died; Thomas, run through by a spear in India; Jude, shot to death with arrows; Barnabas, stoned to death by Jews in Salonica; and Paul, beheaded at Rome by Nero. Even more incredible is the fact that James and Jude, our Lord's own brothers, believed that He was God. You may for a time, be able to pull the wool over the eyes of those outside your own family, but certainly your own brothers would not swallow such an unbelievable claim unless there were unimpeachable reasons to do so.

Christ's personality had a tremendous impact upon these men. And after nearly two thousand years the impact is not at all spent. Daily there are people who have tremendous revolutionary experiences which they attribute to personal encounters with Jesus Christ.

The personality of Jesus, then, is without parallel. It is unique and incomparable. Wherever He is, He is the Master. When surrounded by hungry multitudes or by hating Pharisees, when questioned by clever theologians or besought by stricken sinners, whether examined by stupid disciples or by a Roman governor, He is the Master.

If God were robed in human flesh, then He would possess a personality that would have revolutionary impact, indeed, unique impact, upon His contemporaries. Like no other man in history, Jesus made that kind of unique and revolutionary impact.

If God were a man, we would expect supernatural acts.

If God were a man, not only would we expect His words to be the greatest ever spoken, and the impact of His personality to be unique, but we would also expect that His life would be characterized by wonderful deeds. We would expect Him to do

the things that only God could do. Now obviously the very act of God becoming a man involves something supernatural. But if God became a man, it makes sense that He was going to convince men that He was indeed who He claimed to be, that men deserved to see Him do things that only God could do—namely miracles, suspensions of natural law. Everything about the life of Jesus Christ confronts us with the miraculous. At the outset of His ministry He appeared at a wedding feast and turned water into wine. He demonstrated His power over disease by healing the nobleman's son and the lame man at the pool of Bethesda and many more. He fed 5000 people and said, "I am the bread of life." He walked on the water. He claimed to be the light of the world; then He healed a man who had been blind since birth. One of His most startling claims was made to the despondent sister of Lazarus (Lazarus had been dead for four days) when He said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Then He said, "Lazarus, come forth," and the dead man came out of the tomb. Someone has noted it was a good thing Jesus called Lazarus by name or all the dead since the dawn of time would have come forth. When Christ made these astounding claims, more than ordinary means were necessary to impress men with their truthfulness.

Now there's a funny kind of thinking going on today concerning miracles. It all started with a fellow by the name of Hume. Paradoxically, this may surprise you, Hume was an orthodox Christian. But, Hume said some things about miracles that have been used as an attack on miracles. Hume argued that miracles are the most improbable of all events. Ever since Hume's essay, it has been believed that historical statements about miracles are the most intrinsically improbable of all historical statements. Now, what then is the basis of probability? What makes a miracle a more probable or a less probable event? Hume says, and so do other secular critics today, that *probability rests upon what may be called the majority vote of our past experiences*. The more often a thing is known to happen, the more probable it is that it should

happen again; and the less often, the less probable. He goes on to say, the majority vote of our past experience is firmly against miracles. There is in fact, "uniform experience" against miracles. A miracle is, therefore, the most improbable of all events. It is always more probable that the witnesses were lying or mistaken than that a miracle occurred.

Now here is the foolishness in Hume's whole argument. We must agree with Hume that if there is absolutely "uniform experience" against miracles, if they have *never* occurred, then there is no such thing as a miracle. But, that is exactly the point in question. Is there absolute uniform experience against miracles? We only know that the majority vote of past experience is against miracles if we know that all reports of miracles are false. And, we can know all the reports to be false *only* if we know already that miracles have never occurred. This is a circular argument. Let me repeat it again. The critic of miracles today says with Hume, "We know that all historical reports of miracles are false because miracles never happen, and we know that miracles never happen because all historical reports of them are false." Get that? We know that miracles have never happened, because all reported instances of them are false, and we know that all reported instances of them are false (such as the Bible) because we know that miracles never happen.

Very frequently today we hear or get the impression that brilliant scholars, after examining all the evidence, have scientifically proven that miracles never happen. This is totally untrue. The rejection of the miraculous is not their conclusion; it is their starting point, their presupposition. It's interesting to note that as you study the literature of the first and second century, even some of the literature of the critics of Christianity grant the miracles. In fact, it was not until the 19th century that the major attacks against the miracles began when the omniscient modern critics got on the scene and began to look back 2,000 years and say miracles

never happened. But, the attackers of the first century generally grant them. In *Jesus and His Story* by Ethelbert Stauffer, a professor of New Testament at the University of Erlangen—and not an evangelical scholar—cites the following: “In 95 A.D. Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus of Lydda speaks of Jesus’ magic arts.”{4} “In 100 A.D.—Jewish ritual denunciation—‘Jesus practiced magic and led Israel astray.’”{5}

In the second century (according to F. F. Bruce) Celsus, a philosophic critic of Christianity, acknowledged his miracles but attributed them to sorcery.{6}

Josephus, a first century Jewish historian, also acknowledges the fact that Jesus performed miracles in his *Antiquities of the Jews*. A basic principle of evaluation of evidence states that when enemies agree on a common point, it may be regarded as certain that the point is commonly accepted. Stauffer states this with clarity in *Jesus and His Story*:

The sharper the clash, the wider the gulf, the more vital does this alteration of testimony and counter-testimony become to the historical investigator. For if a confrontation of witnesses yields statements that agree on some points, then these points must represent facts accepted by both sides.{7}

In addition to the testimony of the secular historians, we have in the four gospel documents themselves, the personal testimony of hundreds of eyewitnesses that the miracles of Christ are true events. All of the evidence we have indicates that He is indeed God manifest in the flesh.

If God were a man, we would expect Him to be sinless and incomparably holy and divine.

Here lies, perhaps, one of the most convincing evidences for the deity of Christ. No man has ever lived such a noble, pure, and sinless life. Those who knew Him for three years, said “He

was without sin.”{8} The Roman centurion commented as Christ hung on the cross, “Surely, this was the Son of God.”{9} Paul, the brilliant intellect of the first century, perceived, “He knew no sin.”{10} Pilate called Him, “that just man,” and said, “I find no fault in Him.”{11} He Himself claimed to be sinless and challenged the religious leaders of His day to find fault in Him.{12}

There is no comparison between the person of Christ and the most saintly of the saints of the human race. To them confession of sin and painfully laborious efforts toward saintliness were daily fare. In fact, the closer they came to God, the more vivid became their consciousness of their sinfulness.

But Jesus never appears to us as One who struggled to obtain saintliness. He never felt the need to confess a sin, and yet He pointed out the sin in others and urged them to confess. Christ never admitted a need of repentance. We can’t even imagine Him dying the death of saintly Augustine of daily confession and repentance. Jesus possessed perfect sinlessness and purity, not by struggle, privation, asceticism, or pilgrimage. It was by His birth and nature.

The greatest saints of other religions are not even in the same category as Christ. Mohammed, for instance, was apparently a neurotic. Gandhi, whom many have acclaimed as the most saintly man of the century, does not even compare with Jesus Christ. Gandhi himself claimed that he didn’t even know God and that the reason for it was his own sinfulness. He said, “It is a constant source of sorrow to me that I am so far separated from the one whom I know to be my very life and being; and it is my own wretchedness and sin that separates me from him.”{13} How different this is from the words of Jesus, “I and the Father are one,”{14} or “He who has seen me has seen the Father,”{15} or even more direct, “All men should honour me, even as they honour the Father. He that does not honour me does not honour the Father which sent me.”{16} Can

you even imagine Calvin, Luther, Paul, or any other great saint making a claim such as this? Frankly, I cannot.

Jesus Christ is not a great man among great men. He is uniquely the greatest man of all history. His divine quality of life can be verified from the mouth of the atheist, infidel, and unbeliever, not to mention the enormous testimony from the Christian Church. Thinking men the world over who have examined the evidence will all agree that Jesus of Nazareth is the greatest personality of the centuries. He is the greatest teacher, leader, and influence for good in the history of the human race.

Rousseau, the French Deist said of him,

If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God. Shall we say the Gospel history is mere invention. My friend, it is not such that men invent. And the facts concerning Socrates, of which no one entertains any doubt, are less attested than those concerning Jesus Christ.{17}

He goes on to say a little later that "the facts concerning Jesus of Nazareth are so striking, so amazing, so utterly inimitable, that the invention of them would be more astonishing than the hero."{18}

Byron, the profligate poet, whose philosophy of life was eat, drink, and be merry said, "If ever a man were God, or God were man, Jesus was both."{19}

Renan, the skeptic, who wrote a classic life of Christ in which he tried to prove the myth of the Gospels, nevertheless concluded with this last line: "Whatever surprises the future may bring, one thing is certain, Jesus will never be surpassed."{20}

When exiled on the lonely isle of St. Helena, the emperor Napoleon was once discussing Christ with General Bertrand, a

faithful officer who had followed him into banishment and who did not believe in the deity of Jesus. Napoleon said,

I know men, and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions, the distance of infinity. Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and His will confounds me. Between Him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by Himself.{21}

If God were a man, we would expect Him to be sinless and incomparably Holy and Divine. We see that the hypothesis fits the facts of the life of Jesus Christ. Should we now conclude something other than Jesus is God? The Apostle John said, "No man has ever seen God, but the only begotten Son, who is at the Father's side, has made Him known." {22} Jesus is the Divine Xerox of the invisible God. The Original is invisible, but His earthly Reproduction is visible for all to behold in the unprecedented life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Notes

1. Author unknown, although a portion of this essay is attributed to Dr. James Allan Francis.
2. Matt. 7:12.
3. Luke 9:24.
4. Ethelbert Stauffer, *Jesus and His Story* (New York: Alfred P. Knopf, 1959), p. 9.
5. Ibid., p. 10.
6. F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents; Are They Reliable?* (5th ed. rev.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), p. 68.
7. Stauffer, p.x.
8. 1 Pet. 2:22.
9. Matt. 27:54.

10. 2 Cor. 5:21.
11. Luke 23:14.
12. John 8:45-47; 10:37-39.
13. Fritz Ridenour, *So What's the Difference?* (Glendale, California: G.L. Publications, 1967).
14. John 10:30.
15. John 14:9.
16. John 5:23.
17. John Ballard, *The Miracles of Unbelief* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1908), p. 251.
18. Ibid.
19. Lord Byron.
20. Renan, *The Life of Jesus* (New York: Carolton Publishers, 1863).
21. Frank Mead, *Encyclopedia of Religious Quotations* (Westwood: Fleming H. Revelle, 1965), p. 56.
22. John 1:18.

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Anxious for Nothing (magazine article)

Why are we anxious, and what is the cure? Four possible causes and a glimpse at a solution.

This article is also available in [Spanish](#).



"Death is the only joy, and the only release."

"Contrary to popular belief, there is no hope."

What gloomy thoughts. The first came from the classified

section of a college newspaper, the second from an anonymous inscription on a classroom blackboard. Both exhibit what psychologists call “existential anxiety”—frustration with a meaningless existence.

I was plagued by similar anxiety as a college freshman until some friends exposed me to the claims of Jesus Christ as found in the Bible. After accepting Him as Savior and Lord, I found that He freed me from slavery to anxiety. As a psychology major, I was fascinated, first to observe that many serious psychological disorders stem from smaller problems, and in turn to watch Jesus deal with these problems in my life.

Let’s consider two definitions and then examine four main causes of anxiety.

“Anxiety” represents a state of emotional turmoil characterized by fearfulness and apprehension.^{1} It is not external stress, but an internal reaction to strenuous circumstances.^{2} A “Christian” is an individual who has recognized his lack of fellowship with God and placed his complete trust in Jesus Christ as the only means of restoring that relationship.

Four causes of anxiety are guilt, fear, lack of interpersonal involvement and lack of meaning in life.

Guilt

Failure to achieve standards (internally or externally imposed) often results in guilt feelings. Often psychologists attribute these feelings to problems in the past or to following legalistic moral codes. Many persons do have these problems, but a more plausible explanation for guilt feelings is that a person has them because he is guilty. If this is true, then therapy for a person experiencing guilt feelings would include admitting his guilt. This, however, can be rather difficult.

O. H. Mowrer, a psychologist at the University of Illinois, points out the dilemma:

Here, too, we encounter difficulty, because human beings do not change radically until first they acknowledge their sins, but it is hard for one to make such an acknowledgement unless he has "already changed." In other words, the full realization of deep worthlessness is a severe ego "insult," and one must have a new source of strength to endure it.{3}

Jesus provides the strength needed to endure it. We must come to Him, admitting our sin and worthlessness, but the moment we accept Him as Savior, God forgives all our sins past, present and future. The Bible says that "He (Jesus) personally carried the load of our sins in His own body when He died on the cross . . . "{4}and ". . . paid the ransom to forgive our sins and set us free...{5} Each year we spend thousands of dollars in the hope that psychology and psychiatrists will solve our guilt problems. Yet the complete forgiveness—freedom from guilt—Jesus offers is free of charge.

Fear

Let's consider two types of fear: of death and of circumstances. Fear of death is perhaps man's greatest fear. When I was a sophomore in college, the student rooming next to me was struck by lightning and killed. His death shocked the men in my house, and they began to consider seriously the implications of death. Anxiety struck.

The person who accepts Christ as his Savior has no problem with death. The moment he receives Christ, his eternal relationship with God begins. The apostle John writes to Christians, ". . . God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life. . .{6} For the Christian, death loses its terror.

Fear of circumstances can also produce anxiety. Daily

anxieties common to all of us include fear of inadequate finances, of social inadequacy, and fear for our personal safety and health.

All of these fears tend to occupy our minds and to keep us from enjoying the privilege of being alive. Enough worry and we soon find ourselves merely existing. But can we really be secure?

Financial security is tenuous, injury and danger are as near as the car whizzing by on the highway, and we can never be certain that everyone likes the way we act.

One summer I drove from Washington, D. C., to California with four girls. After that experience, I know the meaning of fear. Facing this responsibility, I became somewhat apprehensive. What would I do if a car broke down or one of the girls got sick? What if we had an accident? Also, the girls expected me to make all the decisions for the group.

At times, I became fearful, until I remembered what Jesus told His disciples: "Men, don't worry about what you are going to eat or drink or wear. Your Father in heaven loves you and knows what you need. Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."[\[7\]](#) And it works.

Lack Of Involvement

William Glasser, a medical doctor, writes in his book, *Reality Therapy*, that every man experiences two basic needs—the need to feel a sense of worth to himself and to others, and the need to love and to be loved. He says that the best way to satisfy these needs is to develop a close friendship with another person who will accept him as he is, but who will also honestly tell him when he acts irresponsibly.

Interpersonal relationships are important, but people are only human and do let us down and err in judgment. Wouldn't the

ultimate therapy be to become involved with our creator? He is faithful and righteous,{8} never lets us down, and always has the best advice. Because He loves us, the Christian experiences freedom to love others.{9} We are worth much to Him: “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”{10} A person forgiven values himself, because he is “a new creature.”{11} He is secure in Christ. The apostle Paul writes: “I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,{12}

Lack Of Meaning

Another doctor conducted studies of 31,000 Allied soldiers who were imprisoned in Japan and Korea during the 1940's. He found that, although sufficient food was offered to them, more than 8,000 died.{13} He diagnosed the cause of many deaths as “despair.”

Contrast this situation to that of thousands of Christians who have spent years in prison for their faith in Christ, only to be released to continue sharing God's love, especially to those who persecuted them.

The Savior's love sustains them and motivates them as “ambassadors for Christ.”{14} What greater purpose could there be than serving as an ambassador for the King of kings?

A Common Question

Frequently it is suggested that Christianity could be merely a psychological “trick” or gimmick. After all, the reasoning goes, if someone thinks that the Bible is God's Word, couldn't he convince himself that what it says sounds true, and that through following the Bible he has found a groovy lifestyle?

After doing some research, I must conclude that Christianity could not be an illusion. There are three reasons for this.

The first concerns the object of the Christian's faith—Jesus Christ. The evidence for His deity, His resurrection, the prophecies He fulfilled and the lives He has changed present an overwhelming case for the validity of His claims. Because the object of my faith is valid, I believe faith in that object to be valid as well.

The second reason has to do with the nature of human personality, which is composed of intellect, emotion and will. Psychologists feel that our will does not have complete control over our emotions.[\[15\]](#) Nor does it seem likely that our intellect can completely control them. Yet some like those who have been imprisoned find it possible to love those who tortured them. Such behavior seems impossible, apart from supernatural intervention.

The third reason concerns the book that presents Christ's answers to our problems—psychological and otherwise. The Bible, although written over a period of 1,500 years, in three languages and by 40 different authors (most of whom never met), has proved itself to be thematically coherent, internally consistent and historically accurate. Completed more than 1,800 years ago, it contains the cure for the psychological problems experienced by countless thousands of people today. The Bible is a supernatural book!

As a college student, I was curious to see what a professional psychologist would think of these views. Having written a term paper for my abnormal psychology course investigating how Jesus treats anxiety (this article contains some thoughts from that research), I sent a copy of my paper to the author of our textbook.

In his reply, he expressed an interest in the content. Several months later, I visited him personally, and he told me that he

would like to have a personal relationship with Christ. After I shared with him the claims of Christ as contained in the "Four Spiritual Laws," he prayed inviting Jesus Christ to come into his life. The latest edition of his text includes a short statement about the fact that many people today are finding psychological help through Christ.

Men everywhere are searching for freedom from fear and guilt. They need to know that God loves them. If you have never asked Christ to be your personal Lord and Savior, I encourage you to do so today. If you have, tell others how they can know Him.

He frees us to "be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus"[\[16\]](#)

Notes

1. Coleman, James C. *Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life*, 3rd edition, p.657.
2. McMillen S. I. *None of These Diseases*, p. 106.
3. Mowrer O. H. "Sin, the Lesser of Two Evils," quoted in Henry Brandt's *The Struggle for Peace*.
4. I Peter 2:24, Living Bible.
5. Colossians 1:14, Beck.
6. I John 5:11,12.
7. Matthew 6:31-33, paraphrased.
8. Psalms 36:5,6.
9. I John 4:19.
10. Romans 5:8.
11. II Corinthians 5:17.
12. Romans 8:38,39.
13. "A Scientific Report on What Hope Does for Man," (New York State Heart Assembly, 105 East 22 St, N.Y.), quoted in McMillen's *None of These Diseases*, p 110.
14. II Corinthians 5-20.

15. McMillen, p. 77.

16. Philippians 4:6,7.

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