

# The Value of Christian Doctrine and Apologetics

Dr. Michael Gleghorn



*Dr. Michael Gleghorn makes a case for why Christian doctrine and apologetics are important for spiritual growth and maturity.*

Just prior to beginning college, I committed my life to Christ. Naturally, as a new believer wanting to grow in my faith, I embarked upon a program of daily Bible reading. When I came to Paul's letter to Titus in the New Testament, I was both struck and inspired by a particular command, which I found nestled among others, there in the first chapter.



Paul reminded Titus, whom he had left on the island of Crete, that he wanted him to “straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders” in the local churches which had been established (Titus 1:5). After listing various spiritual and moral qualifications that an elder was to have, Paul went on to insist that he must also “hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it” (Titus 1:9). When I first read those words, it was as if a light went on inside my head and I thought, “That’s exactly what I would like to do! I want to be able to ‘encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it’” (Titus 1:9). Paul’s words thus encouraged me to take up, in a serious way, the study of Christian doctrine and apologetics.

But what exactly do I mean by “Christian doctrine” and “apologetics”? At its most basic level, Christian doctrine is essentially the same thing as Christian teaching. Such teaching aims at providing a logically consistent and “coherent explication of what the Christian believes.”<sup>{1}</sup> Apologetics is a bit more complicated. It comes from the Greek term, *apologia*, and means “defense.” It was often used in law courts in the ancient world.<sup>{2}</sup> Indeed, the book of Acts records several instances in which the Apostle Paul was called upon to “make a defense” of himself before various governing authorities, like Felix, Festus, and Agrippa (e.g., Acts 24:10; 25:8; 26:1-2).

Of course, when we’re talking about *Christian* apologetics, we’re concerned with “making a defense” of the truth-claims of Christianity. The Apostle Peter tells us, “Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence” (1 Peter 3:15). Christian doctrine and apologetics play an important role in the life and health of the church. So please keep reading as we delve more deeply into these issues.

## The Value of Christian Doctrine

Why is Christian doctrine important for the life and health of the church? The Apostle Paul told Titus that he wanted him to appoint elders in the local church who would be able to “encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it” (Titus 1:9). The teaching of sound Christian doctrine is important for several reasons, but for now let me simply mention two. First, sound Christian doctrine helps us to learn what is true about both God and ourselves. Second, it reminds us of the right way to live in light of such truths. And both of these are essential for the life and health of the church.

First, it’s important to know what is true about God and ourselves. Indeed, our eternal destiny depends on it! Not only must we know that God is holy and righteous and will punish all sin, we must also realize that we are sinners

(Numbers 14:18; Romans 3:23). But this, in itself, would lead to despair. Hence, we must also understand that God loves us and sent his Son to be the Savior of the world (John 3:16; 1 John 4:14). We need to grasp that forgiveness and reconciliation with God are freely available to those who turn to Christ in repentance and faith (Acts 3:19; 16:31). Sound Christian doctrine is thus essential for salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:9-13; 2 John 1:9). Without it, true spiritual life and health is impossible.

But this does not exhaust the importance of Christian doctrine. For once we are saved through faith in Christ, God then calls us to grow up and become like his Son—and this would be exceedingly difficult apart from instruction in sound Christian doctrine. As Christian philosopher Bill Craig observes, “If we want to live correctly for Christ . . . we need to first think correctly about Christ. If your thinking is skewed and off-base, it is going to affect your life and your Christian discipleship.”<sup>{3}</sup> Indeed, the Apostle Paul contrasts Christian *maturity*, characterized by genuine “knowledge of the Son of God,” with spiritual *immaturity*, characterized by a lack of such knowledge and a proneness to being deceived (Ephesians 4:13-14).

God calls us to Christian maturity—and instruction in Christian doctrine plays an important role in our spiritual growth. But there is also a role for Christian apologetics—and we must now turn to consider that.

## A Defense of Christian Apologetics

Many people question the value of Christian apologetics for the life and health of the church.<sup>{4}</sup> They contend that it’s impossible to “argue” anyone into becoming a Christian. Instead of making a defense for the truth of Christianity, we ought rather to invest our limited resources in preaching the gospel of Christ, trusting that God will open people’s hearts and draw them to himself.

Now while I certainly agree that we should be preaching the gospel, and trusting

that God will use it to draw men and women to himself, this negative view of apologetics is frankly unbiblical, untrue, and shortsighted.

In the first place, such a view is unbiblical. Both Jesus and the Apostle Paul used arguments and evidence to convince their listeners of particular theological truths (Matthew 22:15-46; Acts 17:16-34). Moreover, the Apostle Peter tells us to always be ready to “make a defense” (or offer an apologetic) to those who ask about our hope in Christ (1 Peter 3:15). A negative view of Christian apologetics thus runs counter to the teaching of Scripture.

Second, it’s simply untrue that no one ever comes to Christ through apologetic arguments and evidence.<sup>{5}</sup> Indeed, sometimes the Holy Spirit actually uses arguments and evidence to draw people to Christ!<sup>{6}</sup> And while such people may admittedly be in the minority, they can be extremely influential in commending the faith to others, for they are often prepared to offer good reasons for believing that Christianity is really true!

Finally, a negative view of Christian apologetics is shortsighted. The great theologian J. Gresham Machen argued that we should aim to create “favorable conditions for the reception of the gospel.” Along these lines, he noted the difficulty of attempting to do evangelism once we’ve given up offering an intellectually credible case for the truth of Christianity. “We may preach with all the fervor of a reformer,” he said, “and yet succeed only in winning a straggler here and there, if we permit the whole collective thought of the nation . . . to be controlled by ideas which . . . prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion.”<sup>{7}</sup> Machen understood that neglecting apologetics is shortsighted. For unless we offer arguments and evidence, we make it that much easier for people to simply shrug their shoulders and continue ignoring Christianity’s truth-claims.

Having now dismantled the arguments *against* apologetics, we’ll next consider its

*benefits* for the life and health of the church.

## The Value of Christian Apologetics

Christian apologetics is concerned to offer a robust defense for the truth of Christianity. Hence, training in Christian apologetics can be of great value for the life and health of the church. This is because such training helps to instill within believers a deep confidence that Christianity is really true. And when one becomes convinced that Christianity is really true, one is typically more likely to share one's faith with others—and less likely to abandon the faith when confronted with various social, cultural, and intellectual pressures.

Let's consider that first point, that when one becomes convinced of Christianity's truth, one is more likely to share this truth with others. Many Christians admit to being hesitant about sharing their faith because they're afraid someone will ask them a question that they are ill-prepared to answer.<sup>{8}</sup> Training in apologetics can help counteract this fear. Granted, one may still be asked a question that is difficult to answer. But apologetics training can help alleviate the fear associated with such situations by helping believers understand that good answers are available—even if they can't remember what those answers are! To give an illustration, if I learn that there is excellent evidence that a particular drug can cure some disease, then I will be far more confident about sharing this fact with others—even if I can't answer all their questions about *how* the medicine works. I may not remember exactly *how* it works, but I do know that there is very good evidence *that* it works. And knowing this, I will naturally be more confident telling others about it, even if I can't answer all their questions about how or why.

Moreover, training in apologetics can help insulate believers from abandoning the faith, for they now know that there are good reasons to believe that Christianity is really true. Of course, most people who abandon the faith do so for *non*-intellectual reasons. Still, as Paul Chamberlain observes, "A number of

vocal critics who have moved from Christianity to atheism cite intellectual difficulties with Christianity” as a prime reason for quitting the faith.[{9}](#) While apologetics training can’t completely prevent such outcomes, it can make them less likely. After all, it’s far more difficult to abandon a view once you’ve become sincerely convinced of its truth.

## **Our Witness to the World**

Over a hundred years ago, the theologian J. Gresham Machen forcefully argued that, for the faithful Christian, all of life—including the arts and sciences and every sphere of intellectual endeavor—must be humbly consecrated to the service of God.[{10}](#) Indeed, this should be true not only for every individual Christian in particular, but for the entire church in general. Our witness to the world depends on it.

Machen wrote:

Christianity must pervade not merely all nations, but . . . all of human thought. The Christian, therefore, cannot be indifferent to any branch of earnest human endeavor. It must all be brought into some relation to the gospel. It must be studied either in order to be demonstrated as false, or else in order to be made useful in advancing the Kingdom of God. . . . The Church must seek to conquer not merely every man for Christ, but also the whole of man.[{11}](#)

In this article, we’ve been considering the importance of Christian doctrine and apologetics for the life and health of the church. And clearly, Machen’s proposal cannot be effectively implemented apart from a healthy understanding of these issues on the part of the church. After all, how can “all of human thought” be brought “into some relation to the gospel” unless we first understand what the gospel is? How can views “be demonstrated as false” unless we first have some idea of what’s true—and how to reason correctly about it? How can views “be made useful in advancing the Kingdom of God” unless we first understand such

views, along with how and why they can be useful in advancing God's kingdom? If we are ever to have a hope of carrying out a project like this, in a manner that is both practically effective and faithful to our God, then sound Christian doctrine and apologetics must occupy a central role in our endeavors.

Christian doctrine and apologetics are not antithetical to the life and health of the church. They are rather of fundamental importance. Only by knowing what we believe, and why it's really true, can we fulfill Peter's injunction to always be ready "to make a defense" to anyone who asks about our hope in Christ (1 Peter 3:15). And only thus can we progress to true spiritual maturity, avoiding the "craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming" (Ephesians 4:13-14). So if we care about the life and health of the church—along with its witness to the world—we must encourage a healthy dose of respect for sound Christian doctrine and apologetics.

## Notes

1. Molly Marshall-Green, "Doctrine," in *Holman Bible Dictionary*, gen. ed. Trent C. Butler (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 374.
2. Steven B. Cowan, "Introduction," in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Steven B. Cowan (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 8, Kindle.
3. William Lane Craig, "Foundations of Christian Doctrine (Part 1)," *Reasonable Faith*, October 22, 2014, accessed August 22, 2018, [www.reasonablefaith.org/podcasts/defenders-podcast-series-3/s3-foundations-of-christian-doctrine/foundations-of-christian-doctrine-part-1/](http://www.reasonablefaith.org/podcasts/defenders-podcast-series-3/s3-foundations-of-christian-doctrine/foundations-of-christian-doctrine-part-1/).
4. Many of the points made in this section are indebted to the discussion in William Lane Craig, "Foundations of Christian Doctrine (Part 2)," *Reasonable Faith*, October 29, 2014, accessed August 29, 2018, [www.reasonablefaith.org/podcasts/defenders-podcast-series-3/s3-foundations-of-christian-doctrine/foundations-of-christian-doctrine-part-2/](http://www.reasonablefaith.org/podcasts/defenders-podcast-series-3/s3-foundations-of-christian-doctrine/foundations-of-christian-doctrine-part-2/).
5. See, for example, the "Testimonials" section of the Reasonable Faith website, accessed August 29, 2018, [www.reasonablefaith.org/testimonials](http://www.reasonablefaith.org/testimonials).

6. William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 192.
7. J. Gresham Machen, "Christianity and Culture," *Princeton Theological Review* 11 (1913): 7.
8. Indeed, entire books have been written to help believers feel better prepared for such conversations. See, for example, Mark Mittelberg, *The Questions Christians Hope No One Will Ask: (With Answers)* (Tyndale, 2010).
9. Paul Chamberlain, "Why People Stop Believing," *Christian Research Journal* 41, no. 4:11.
10. Machen, "Christianity and Culture," 5.
11. *Ibid.*, 6.

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# Why Every Christian Student Needs Mind Games

Sue Bohlin



You've probably heard or read that the vast majority of young Christians are leaving the church after they graduate from high school. But they don't have to "graduate from God" after they get their diploma.



There are several reasons young adults leave the church, and many of them jettison their faith as well. The biggest reason is that their questions and doubts—which started in junior high school—were not answered by their parents or youth leaders.

Another reason is that they don't believe Christianity is true. Immersed in a cultural brine of religious lies and deceptions, they don't know what the truth is and why biblical Christianity blows the false ideas and religions away.

A third reason is that they caught their unbiblical beliefs and practices from their parents and other adults in the church. It turns out that Mom and Dad were almost as pickled in the cultural brine as their kids!

But Probe offers a great way to push back on these reasons.

Our summer [Mind Games](#) camp is a total-immersion, life-changing week of instruction in worldview and apologetics designed to build students' confidence that Christianity is true, and why Christianity is true. We lay the foundation of three major worldviews to give them understanding of how other people think and why Christianity is better because it matches reality. Then we teach them why they can be sure that God exists, why the Bible can be trusted, and how we can know that Jesus is God and the only way to heaven.

After these basics, campers learn how biblical principles apply to issues they need to grapple with: truth and grace about LGBT, how faith and science work together, why a good God allows pain and evil, the value of suffering, how to watch a movie with their brains turned on, genetic engineering, understanding Islam, and more.

But it's not just lectures. Plenty of free time is built into the schedule for processing what they've learned and developing friendships with other campers. The relationships that students form at Mind Games is one of their biggest takeaways. With a max of 40 participants, everyone can enjoy connecting to other

campers, and many of the friendships endure year after year.

The biggest reason for leaving the church is unanswered questions and doubts. Probe staffers assure students that Mind Games is a safe place to ask any question—anononymously—and address any doubt. Many of the questions campers come with, are answered during the week in our lectures and discussion times. Whether in large group or the many opportunities for one-on-one conversations with Probe teachers, campers have many ways to get help wrestling with obstacles to their faith.

For over twenty years, Mind Games alumni have grown into leaders on campus, in public service, in the military, and in the church. The fruit of their time with us is “fruit that lasts” (John 15:16).

Mind Games Camp 2021 is June 13-19 at Camp Copass in Denton, Texas, in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area. Some scholarships are available. Check out videos and much more information at [Probe.org/mindgames](https://probe.org/mindgames).

Can you think of a high school student who doesn't need Mind Games?

We can't either.

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# **Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or**

# Fiction? - A Clear Christian Perspective

Rusty Wright

*Rusty Wright presents a compelling case for the historicity of Jesus' resurrection. Looking at four outcomes of the resurrection, he presents a brief case supporting a Christian worldview understanding that Jesus actually died and was resurrected from the tomb.*

At Easter, some might wonder what all the fuss is about. 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 believers have died as martyrs for a hoax.

If he did rise, then he is still alive and can offer peace to troubled, hurting lives.

Countless scholars—among them the apostle Paul, Augustine, Sir Isaac Newton and C.S. Lewis—believed in the resurrection. We need not fear committing intellectual suicide by believing it also. Where do the facts lead?

Paul, a first-century skeptic-turned believer, wrote that “Christ died for our sins...he was buried...he was raised on the third day...he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve (Disciples). After that, he appeared to more than five hundred...at the same time, most of whom are still living.” Consider four pieces of evidence:

**1. The explosive growth of the Christian movement.** Within a few weeks after Jesus was crucified, a movement arose which, by the later admission of its enemies, “upset the world.” What happened to ignite this movement shortly after its leader had been executed?

**2. The Disciples' changed lives.** After Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, most of the Disciples fled in fear. Peter denied three times that he was a follower of Jesus. (The women were braver and stayed to the end.) Yet ten out of the eleven Disciples (Judas committed suicide) were martyred for their faith. According to traditions, Peter was crucified upside down; Thomas was skewered; John was boiled in oil but survived. What turned these cowards into heroes? Each believed he had seen Jesus alive again.

**3. The empty tomb.** Jesus' corpse was removed from the cross, wrapped like a mummy and placed in a solid-rock tomb. A one-and-a-half to two-ton stone was rolled into a slightly depressed groove to seal the tomb's entrance.

A "Green Beret"-like unit of Roman soldiers guarded the grave. Sunday morning, the stone was found rolled away, the body was gone but the graveclothes were still in place. What happened?

Did Christ's friends steal the body? Perhaps one of the women sweet-talked (karate-chopped?) the guards while the others moved the stone and tiptoed off with the body. Or maybe Peter (remember his bravery) or Thomas (Doubting Thomas) overpowered the guards, stole the body, then fabricated-and died for-a resurrection myth.

These theories hardly seem plausible. The guard was too powerful, the stone too heavy and the disciples too spineless to attempt such a feat.

Did Christ's enemies steal the body? If Romans or Jewish religious leaders had the body, surely they would have exposed it publicly and Christianity would have died out. They didn't, and it didn't.

The "Swoon Theory" supposes that Jesus 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.

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 he'd been raised from the dead. This one is harder to believe than the resurrection itself.

**4. The appearances of the risen Christ.** For 40 days after his death, many different people said they saw Jesus alive. Witnesses included a woman, a shrewd tax collector, several fishermen and over 500 people at once. These claims provide further eyewitness testimony for the resurrection.

As a skeptic, I realized that attempts to explain away the evidences run into a brick wall of facts that point to one conclusion: Christ is risen.

The above does not constitute an exhaustive proof, rather a reasoned examination of the evidence. Each interested person should evaluate the evidence and decide if it makes sense. Of course, the truth or falsity of the resurrection is a matter of historical fact and is not dependent on anyone's belief. If the facts support the claim, one can conclude that he arose. In any case, mere intellectual assent to the facts does little for one's life.

A major evidence comes experientially, in personally receiving Jesus' free gift of forgiveness. He said, "I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him (or her)."

Worth considering?

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# What Is Apologetics?

Paul Rutherford



*Four Probe staffers answer the question, “What is apologetics?” from their own experience and understanding.*

Apologetics is the defense of the Christian faith, generally speaking. That’s the definition of the word. But, that’s about the extent of the agreement among Christian apologists. From this point on begin many differences.

Many well informed Christians define apologetics differently. When it comes to *how* we defend the faith, there is a lot of discussion on the best method. When it comes to *why* we do apologetics many disagree. Thoughtful Christians do not agree on the best place from which to begin defending our historic Christian faith, and we certainly don’t all agree on who apologetics is for, that is, who is the intended recipient or beneficiary of our defense of Christianity.



However, as we begin a discussion on these questions, it is important to keep in mind these differences occur among faithful Christians, sincere believers, and are well intended. So these differences are not a salvation issue—that’s about faith in Christ. Airing out these differences then, is a fulfillment of Proverbs 27:17, “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” It is our hope and expectation as the writers therefore, that all Christians will be edified by this discussion whether they have walked with Christ for thirty years or thirty days.

In this article, we're going to hear from several Probe staffers answering the question, "What is apologetics?"

So, you Probe fans are going to get to know us Probe staff better. First-time readers, I hope you consider a perspective you may not have considered before. And for all of us, I hope that by considering these different perspectives, we all grow in the way we defend our faith, and carry out the charge from 1 Peter 3:15. That's the passage of Scripture from which we derive our English word "apologetics." It says, "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."

Regardless of how we define apologetics, we are all still called to defend our faith. The point of this discussion is not the discussion itself. The point is to equip us by the Spirit in the action of defending our faith, as we obey the call of our one common Lord Jesus Christ.



## **Dr. Ray Bohlin**

In this article you will become well-acquainted with the idea that apologetics basically means defending the gospel or defending the faith. That is how I have always understood apologetics. But in my nearly forty years with Probe Ministries I understand that my "defense" goes in two directions and I believe that to be the case for every believer.

Apologetics was instrumental in my initial profession of faith while a college student at the University of Illinois. Though I was raised in a religious home, it was primarily a religion of duty and performance. But in my second year of college I became aware that there was real evidence that the gospels could be trusted and that Jesus was a real person who lived and died in early first century Israel. That made a huge difference in my willingness to consider Jesus that was

never there before.

That was just over forty years ago, and evidences for the truth of the history of the Bible have always held a unique place in my thinking. As one trained as a scientist, I learned that data or evidence meant everything. Ideas are fine in science but if you can't support your ideas with evidence, you're wasting your time. Therefore, finding real evidence for my faith put my own thoughts on solid ground. So it can be for every believer. We all struggle with trust in God and in His love for us. But if we are able to see that God fulfills prophecy, that His Word is trustworthy in every respect, then we find it easier to trust Him with our lives.

The other direction for my defense of the faith is outward to other believers who have real questions and find themselves stuck in their walk with God. Their mind is full of doubts about God, Creation, and redemption. While I make it clear that I cannot prove that God exists, I can string together evidences from science and philosophy to demonstrate that belief in God as Creator is quite reasonable. And if the best evidence demonstrates that Jesus physically and historically rose from the dead, then everything He said can be trusted as well.

This also applies to unbelievers who come with honest questions. Those outside the church have many reasons for not believing that this rather fantastic story is true. Especially when it all happened two thousand years ago! There are definitely some unbelievers who ask their questions only to avoid getting down to business about Jesus. But initially, we can't judge a person's heart or motive. When we take those questions and doubts seriously and respond with gentleness and respect, both our manner and our answers can be used by the Spirit to draw someone to the Father.



**Dr. Lawrence Terlizzese**

Apologetics is the most misunderstood word in the Church today! Average



church-goers relegate it to a side category of their minds as a hobby horse for those “smart” Christians who are too cerebral and not practical enough. Apologetics appears to them as the playground of theologians, far removed from the lay Christian who thinks the true gospel ministry consists of “just preaching the Word” irrespective of the Church’s cultural setting.

Theologians contribute to the popular aversion to apologetics through misrepresenting the discipline as a branch of theology that seeks to give a rational justification to the claims of Christianity that is theoretical in nature as opposed to practical. Others separate apologetics entirely from theology: “If theology is the queen of the sciences, apologetics is her handmaid.” This is the Rationalist approach.

All theology is apologetics. The term *apologetic theology* distinguishes it from the Rationalist approach. It stresses the relevance of the gospel to the philosophical needs of a given culture, creating a synthesis. One definition states that “systematic theology is ‘answering theology.’ It must answer the questions implied in the general human condition and special historical situation. Apologetics, therefore, is an omnipresent element and not a special section of systematic theology.” Apologetic theology supplies answers from revelation to the ultimate questions of a given social context, such as “What is the meaning of life?”

Apologetic theology maintains the integrity of the two poles of message and audience. It must never compromise the essential meaning of the gospel, nor can it neglect the spiritual needs of the society it wishes to reach through ignoring or ridiculing whatever ultimate questions it presents.

All theology is apologetics, and by extension all that the Church does is apologetically oriented. The adaptation of contemporary music in the worship service demonstrates an apologetic theology that takes the traditional message of the gospel of Jesus Christ and makes it resonant with the cultural needs of the

younger generation. The same may be said with the use of film or any artistic, religious or philosophical expression. For example the 2013 Superman movie *Man of Steel* retells the story of Christ in modern allegory in the context of American individualism. It asks the question, can individuals practice personal freedom and exercise the self-restraint necessary for a democratic society to survive? Revelation answers that in Christ personal freedom is rooted in the love of God that provides necessary restraint.

As its task, apologetic theology answers the world's questions with the Bible and proves practical and accessible to all Christians, trained in theology or not. It stresses the Bible's universal relevance to every individual, group and circumstance or philosophical system.



## **Rick Wade**

In 1 Peter 3:15 we're told to "give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for your faith." The roots of Peter's exhortation can be found in Isaiah 8 where God warns His people to stand firm when the enemy attacks, and in Luke 12 and 21 where Jesus tells His disciples what to do when persecutions come. In both passages in Luke, Jesus uses the word that is translated "defense" in Peter's epistle. In Luke 21:13 he says something interesting: "This will be your opportunity to bear witness." I see two main exhortations here: faithfulness and witness. Elaborate arguments and evidences can serve that. But defense ought to be conducted for the purpose of proclaiming Christ and winning the lost, not merely to prove Christianity true. That is too low a target.

Apologetics with non-Christians can include the defense of Christian doctrines, challenges to other beliefs, and persuasion. To be done well, these require knowledge of at least basic Christian doctrines and the ability to discriminate between the true and the false. That skill can be applied in a variety of areas such

as theology, philosophy, history, culture, and the broader human experience.

If we should attempt to persuade someone by making a case for the faith, where do we begin? In one respect, we should begin with questions that are being asked rather than with our own pet arguments. But in another respect, we should begin *as* Christians, thinking and speaking within the context of Christian beliefs, rather than attempting to stand on some neutral ground with unbelievers to look at evidences together.

One mistake younger apologists can make is deciding to find some non-Christians and “do apologetics” with them. This is to focus on the arguments and not on the listeners. Apologetics provides tools for Christians to use along with the tools of proper Bible interpretation, counseling, practical hands-on help, and other things as needed in the context of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus and drawing people to Him.

Apologetics serves not only non-Christians but Christians by clarifying the differences between Christian and non-Christian beliefs and by showing why our beliefs are intellectually credible. This should serve to strengthen our faith.



## **Paul Rutherford**

When I tell someone I meet at church that I’m into apologetics, the most common response, I get is, “Huh?” After I tell them what it means, perhaps the next most common response is, “What are you sorry for?”, inferring from the similar sound of the word “apology” that I must be apologizing for something.

While the root word in Greek is the same for both words—*apologia*. these words in English have rather different meanings. So, I will begin my turn at defining apologetics by clarifying what it is not.

Apologetics is not being sorry for Christianity. Let's make that clear right now. I am not sorry I'm a Christian. On the contrary, Christ is the source of all my boasting. He is the source of my joy in my life. It is Christ who gives me purpose, meaning, even significance. No, apologetics is not being sorry for Christianity.

Years ago I had lunch with a friend one Sunday after church and explained to him what I do—apologetics. After using 1 Peter 3:15 to define it as making a defense for the faith, he responded by saying our faith should not be defensive, but offensive. My friend got one thing right—our faith does have an offensive component.

But, my friend also got one thing wrong. The command to defend our faith does not describe the entirety of our experience as a believer. This passage does not mean that our faith should be entirely defensive, or even primarily defensive. We should, however, have the capacity to defend our faith.

To conclude my definition and this series, I will share a recent change in my perspective over the years. When I first began studying apologetics years ago, I did it to seek affirmation of my convictions. To be honest, I studied not to “show myself approved” (2 Timothy 2:15), but rather to satisfy a sense of self-righteousness. I did apologetics in order to show others I was right and they were wrong. Scripture calls that pride. And, although that's no longer my primary motivation, the struggle remains today.

It's not that I no longer think I'm right. I do think the positions I hold are right, but as an apologist my goals have changed. I no longer expect others to take the same positions I do. Now, I desire others to think more biblically than they did before.

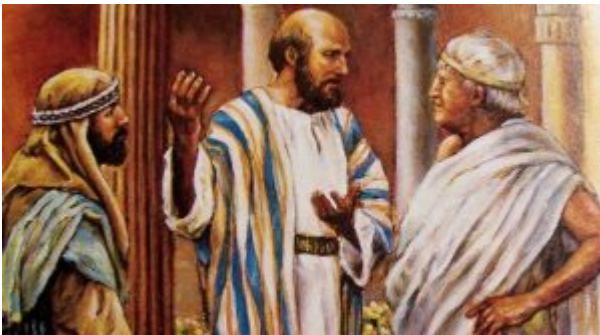
My hope for you reading this article is that your reasons for defending the faith are motivated more by Christ than by culture, and that by considering what it means to defend your faith you are now a more confident ambassador for Christ.

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# Paul and the Mystery Religions - Christianity Defended

Don Closson



*Was early Christian teaching influenced by the mystery religions of the day? Don Closson presents a solid look at this question; concluding that Christian doctrine as taught by Paul and others was grounded in truth and was not influenced by these other religious concepts.*

## Introduction

A common criticism of Christianity found on college campuses today is that its core ideas or teachings were dependent upon Greek philosophy and religious ideas. It is not unusual for a student to hear from a professor that Christianity is nothing more than a strange combination of the Hebrew cult of Yahweh, notions adopted from the popular Greek mystery religions of the day, and a sprinkling of ideas from Greek philosophic thought. This criticism of traditional Christianity is



not new. In fact, its heyday was in the late 1800s to the 1940s and coincides with what is now called the History of Religions movement. This group of theologians and historians accused Paul of adding Greek ideas to his Hebrew upbringing, and in the process, creating a new religion: one that neither Jesus nor His first disciples would recognize.

Was the origin of Christianity dependent on existing Greek philosophical and religious ideas? That question hinges upon how one is using the word “dependent.” Philosopher Ron Nash argues that dependency can be weak or strong and that the difference is a vital one. A strong dependency would mean that the idea of Jesus as a dying and rising savior-god would never have occurred to early believers if they had not become aware of them first in pagan thought. It would be admitting that Paul and the other new Christians came to believe that Christ was a resurrected God-man who made an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world because of pagan ideas. Proving a strong dependency of Christianity on Greek thought would be very damaging to those who hold a high view of Scripture.

A weak dependency means that the followers of Jesus used common religious terminology of the day in order to be understood by the Hebrew and Greek culture surrounding them. This poses no problem for a high view of Scripture. As Nash states, “. . . the mere presence of parallels in thought and language does not prove any dependence in the strong sense.”<sup>{1}</sup> Nash and others argue that only a weak dependency can be shown to have existed between Greek religious thought and the Gospel of Christ.

In this article we will consider arguments against the strong dependency claims of the History of Religions movement and modern critics. Specifically, we will compare the theology of the apostle Paul with ideas found in the popular Greek mystery religions present during the early church period.

Although these ideas rarely surface in everyday discussions, Christians entering

the academic world of our college campuses would benefit from time spent understanding this issue. In the hands of a professor hostile to Christianity, partial truths and exaggerated similarities between Christianity and the mystery religions can overwhelm an unaware teen. Being conscious of these arguments against Christian thought prepares us to give an answer to everyone who questions the hope that we have in Christ.

## Arguments Against a Strong Dependency on Mystery Religions Viewpoint

Previously we noted that the History of Religions movement claimed that Christian thought had a direct and strong dependency on the mystery religions. Although some scholars agreed with this view, many did not. A good example is the famous German historian Adolf von Harnack, who wrote:

*We must reject the comparative mythology which finds a causal connection between everything and everything else. . . . By such methods one can turn Christ into a sun god in the twinkling of an eye, or one can bring up the legends attending the birth of every conceivable god, or one can catch all sorts of mythological doves to keep company with the baptismal dove . . . the wand of 'comparative religion' triumphantly eliminate(s) every spontaneous trait in any religion.*[\[2\]](#)

What were the basic traits of the mystery religions? The annual vegetation cycle was often at the center of these cults. Deep significance was given to the concepts of growth, death, decay and rebirth. The cult of Eleusis and its central deity, Demeter, goddess of the soil and farming, is one example. The mystery religions also had secret ceremonies and rites of initiation that separated its members from the outside world. Every mystery religion claimed to impart secret knowledge of the deity. This knowledge would be communicated in clandestine ceremonies

often connected to an initiation rite. The focus of this knowledge was not on a set of revealed truths to be shared with the world, but on hidden higher knowledge to be kept within the circle of believers.

At the core of each religion was a myth in which the deity returned to life after death, or else triumphed over his enemies. As one scholar explains, the myth “appealed primarily to the emotions and aimed at producing psychic and mystic effects by which the neophyte might experience the exaltation of a new life.” {3} On the other hand, the mysteries were not concerned as much with correct doctrine or belief, but with the emotional state of the followers. The goal of the believers was a mystical experience that led them to believe that they had achieved union with their god.

The various religious movements found throughout the Roman Empire were not united in doctrine or practice, and they changed dramatically over time. Any impact that they may have had on Christianity must be evaluated by the time frame in which the religions encountered one another. When comparing religious systems, Philosopher Ronald Nash warns that caution is advised against using careless language. He states, “One frequently encounters scholars who first use Christian terminology to describe pagan beliefs and practices and then marvel at the awesome parallels they think they have discovered.” {4}

What if someone told you that the root of Paul’s New Testament theology was in obscure Greek mystery religions, rather than his Jewish training and his encounter with Jesus Christ? That’s exactly what the History of Religions movement argued at the end of the 19th century. Many scholars still teach that Paul’s portrayal of Jesus as a dying and rising savior would never have occurred without the presence of the mystery religions. Next, we will continue to consider arguments against what might be called “the strong dependency view.”



## Weaknesses in the Strong Dependency View

The first argument against this view is the logical fallacy of *false cause*. This fallacy occurs when someone argues that just because two things exist side by side, that one must be the cause of the other. As one theologian has written, the History of Religions School had the tendency “to convert parallels into influences and influences into sources.” {5} Causal connection is much harder to prove than proximity. The mere fact that other religions may have had a god who died and then came back to life in some manner does not mean that this was the source of Christian ideas, even if it can be shown that the apostles knew of this other set of beliefs.

Some scholars, hostile to Christianity, tend to exaggerate, or invent, similarities between Christianity and the mystery religions. British scholar Edwyn Bevan writes:

*Of course if one writes an imaginary description of the Orphic mysteries . . . filling in the large gaps in the picture left by our data from the Christian Eucharist, one produces something very impressive. On this plan, you first put in the Christian elements, and then are staggered to find them there.* {6}

An example might be the practice of the taurobolium in the cult of Cybele or Great Mother. This initiation rite, in which the blood of a sacrificed bull is allowed to pour over a neophyte, is claimed by some to be the source of baptism in Christianity. Arguments have been made that the language “blood of the lamb” (Rev. 7:14), and “blood of Jesus” (1 Peter 1:2) was borrowed from the language of the taurobolium and criobolium in which a ram was slaughtered. In fact, a better argument can be made that the cult borrowed its language from the Christian tradition.

The cult of Cybele did not use the taurobolium until the second century A.D.; the best available evidence for dating the practice places its origin about one hundred

years after Paul wrote his epistles.[{7}](#) German scholar Gunter Wagner points out that there was no notion of death and resurrection in the cultic practice.

After noting the change in meaning that the taurobolium experienced over time, scholar Robert Duthoy writes:

*It is obvious that this alteration in the taurobolium must have been due to Christianity, when we consider that by A.D. 300 it had become the great competitor of the heathen religions and was known to everyone.*[{8}](#)

## More Weaknesses in the Strong Dependency View

A simple but powerful argument against the likelihood that Paul would have turned to pagan thought for his theology was his strict Jewish training. In Philippians 3:5 Paul boasts of being a Hebrew of Hebrews. He had studied under Gamaliel, the most celebrated teacher of the most orthodox of the Jewish parties, the Pharisees. And in Colossians he warns against the very syncretism he is being accused of proposing. According to Bruce Metzger:

*[W]ith regard to Paul himself, scholars are coming once again to acknowledge that the Apostle's prevailing set of mind was rabbinically oriented, and that his newly found Christian faith ran in molds previously formed at the feet of Gamaliel.*[{9}](#)

We find no accusations in the New Testament of Paul incorporating pagan thought into his theology, nor does he defend himself against such claims.

The very nature of the mystery cults, with the conflicting pantheon of deities and mythical beings, makes it highly unlikely that the strict monotheism and the body of doctrines found in the New Testament would be their source. Although the

mystery religions did move towards advancing a solar god above all the others, this change began after 100 A.D., too late to impact the theology of the New Testament.

It should also be noted that early Christianity was an exclusivistic religion while the mystery cults were not. One could be initiated into the cult of Isis or Mithras without giving up his or her former beliefs. However, to be baptized into the church one had to forsake all other gods and saviors. This was a new development in the ancient world. Machen writes, "Amid the prevailing syncretism of the Greco-Roman world, the religion of Paul, with the religion of Israel, stands absolutely alone." [{10}](#)

Paul's religion was grounded in real events. The mystery religions were not. They were based upon dramas written to capture men's hearts and passions. Reformed scholar Herman Ridderbos writes:

*Whereas Paul speaks of the death and resurrection of Christ and places it in the middle of history, as an event which took place before many witnesses . . . the myths of the cults in contrast cannot be dated; they appear in all sorts of variations, and do not give any clear conceptions. In short they display the timeless vagueness characteristic of real myths. Thus the myths of the cults . . . are nothing but depictions of annual events of nature in which nothing is to be found of the moral voluntary, redemptive substitutionary meaning, which for Paul is the content of Christ's death and resurrection.* [{11}](#)

Next we will conclude with further arguments against Paul's use of the mystery religions.

## Conclusion

Muslim author Yousuf Saleem Chishti writes that the doctrines of the deity of

Christ and the atonement are pagan teachings that come from the apostle Paul, not from Christ Himself.[{12}](#) He states that, “The Christian doctrine of atonement was greatly coloured by the influence of the mystery religions, especially Mithraism, which had its own son of God and virgin Mother, and crucifixion and resurrection after expiating for the sins of mankind and finally his ascension to the seventh heaven.”[{13}](#) Were these doctrines something Paul made up or borrowed? What did Jesus teach regarding the atonement?

First, both Jesus and Paul taught that Christianity was the fulfillment of Judaism. In Matthew 5:17 Jesus said that He came to fulfill the law and the teaching of the Prophets, not to abolish them. In Colossians (2:16-17), Paul writes that the religious codes of the Old Testament were merely a foreshadowing of the things that were to come, and that the new reality is found in Christ. Both Christ and Paul taught the necessity of the blood atonement for sin. Jesus stated that, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). At the Last Supper He added, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28). Paul affirmed Christ’s teachings when he wrote, “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace” (Ephesians 1:7). Tying the doctrine back to the Old Testament, Paul wrote, “Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

The idea that Jesus was the Son of God, born of a virgin, dying on the cross, and being resurrected are hardly Paul’s ideas alone. They are found in the earliest Christian writings and held consistently wherever the faith spread. The parallels between Christianity and Mithraism claimed by Chishti are hard to evaluate or confirm. He gives us no references as evidence for the similarities.[{14}](#) Other scholars who have looked at the issue find that most of the similarities disappear on close inspection. Where they do occur, it can be argued that Mithraism borrowed ideas from Christianity rather than vice versa. Bruce Metzger writes, “It must not be uncritically assumed that the Mysteries always influenced

Christianity, for it is not only possible but probable that in certain cases, the influence moved in the opposite direction.” [\[15\]](#)

Those who find Christianity hard to accept have offered many reasons for not doing so. The claim that the doctrines of Christianity had a strong dependency on the mystery religions stands on shaky ground and should be investigated thoroughly before one rejects the good news of the New Testament writers.

### Notes

1. Ronald Nash, *The Gospel And The Greeks*, (Probe Books: Dallas, TX, 1992), 18.
2. Ibid, 118.
3. Ibid, 124.
4. Ibid, 126.
5. Ibid, 193.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid, 154.
8. Ibid, 155.
9. Ibid, 196.
10. Ibid, 197.
11. Ibid. 198.
12. Normal Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, (Baker Books, 1999), 490.
13. Ibid.

14. Ibid. 492.

15. Nash, 198.

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# Archaeology and the Old Testament

Dr. Patrick Zukeran



*Dr. Patrick Zukeran surveys the importance of archaeology with regard to its confirmation of biblical history.*



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

## Understanding Archaeology

Christianity is a historical faith based on actual events recorded in the Bible. Archaeology has therefore played a key role in biblical studies and Christian apologetics in several ways.

First, archaeology has confirmed the historical accuracy of the Bible. It has

verified many ancient sites, civilizations, and biblical characters whose existence was questioned by the academic world and often dismissed as myths. Biblical archaeology has silenced many critics as new discoveries supported the facts of the Bible.

Second, archaeology helps us improve our understanding of the Bible. Although we do not have the original writings of the authors, thousands of ancient manuscripts affirm that we have an accurate transmission of the original texts.<sup>{1}</sup> Archaeology can also help us to understand more accurately the nuances and uses of biblical words as they were used in their day.

Third, archaeology helps illustrate and explain Bible passages. The events of the Bible occurred at a certain time, in a particular culture, influenced by a particular social and political structure. Archaeology gives us insights into these areas. Archaeology also helps to supplement topics not covered in the Bible. Much of what we know of the pagan religions and the intertestamental period comes from archaeological research.

As we approach this study we must keep in mind the limits of archaeology. First, it does not prove the divine inspiration of the Bible. It can only confirm the accuracy of the events. Second, unlike other fields of science, archaeology cannot re-create the process under study. Archaeologists must study and interpret the evidence left behind. All conclusions must allow for revision and reinterpretation based on new discoveries. Third, how archaeological evidence is understood depends on the interpreter's presuppositions and worldview. It is important to understand that many researchers are skeptics of the Bible and hostile to its world view.

Fourth, thousands of archives have been discovered, but an enormous amount of material has been lost. For example, the library in Alexandria held over one million volumes, but all were lost in a seventh century fire.

Fifth, only a fraction of available archaeological sites have been surveyed, and

only a fraction of surveyed sites have been excavated. In fact, it is estimated that less than two percent of surveyed sites have been worked on. Once work begins, only a fraction of an excavation site is actually examined, and only a small part of what is examined is published. For example, the photographs of the Dead Sea Scrolls were withheld from the public for forty years after they were uncovered.

It is important to understand that the Scriptures remain the primary source of authority. We must not elevate archaeology to the point that it becomes the judge for the validity of Scripture. Randall Price states, “There are indeed instances where the information needed to resolve a historical or chronological question is lacking from both archaeology and the Bible, but it is unwarranted to assume the material evidence taken from the more limited content of archaeological excavations can be used to dispute the literary evidence from the more complete content of the canonical scriptures.”[\[2\]](#) The Bible has proven to be an accurate and trustworthy source of history.

Noted archaeologist Nelson Glueck writes, “As a matter of fact, however, it may be clearly stated categorically that no archeological discovery has ever controverted a single biblical reference. Scores of archeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible.”[\[3\]](#)

## **The Discovery of the Hittites**

The Hittites played a prominent role in Old Testament history. They interacted with biblical figures as early as Abraham and as late as Solomon. They are mentioned in Genesis 15:20 as people who inhabited the land of Canaan. 1 Kings 10:29 records that they purchased chariots and horses from King Solomon. The most prominent Hittite is Uriah the husband of Bathsheba. The Hittites were a powerful force in the Middle East from 1750 B.C. until 1200 B.C. Prior to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, nothing was known of the Hittites outside the Bible, and many critics alleged that they were an invention of the biblical authors.



In 1876 a dramatic discovery changed this perception. A British scholar named A. H. Sayce found inscriptions carved on rocks in Turkey. He suspected that they might be evidence of the Hittite nation. Ten years later, more clay tablets were found in Turkey at a place called Boghaz-koy. German cuneiform expert Hugo Winckler investigated the tablets and began his own expedition at the site in 1906.

Winckler's excavations uncovered five temples, a fortified citadel and several massive sculptures. In one storeroom he found over ten thousand clay tablets. One of the documents proved to be a record of a treaty between Ramesses II and the Hittite king. Other tablets showed that Boghaz-koy was the capital of the Hittite kingdom. Its original name was Hattusha and the city covered an area of 300 acres. The Hittite nation had been discovered!

Less than a decade after Winckler's find, Czech scholar Bedrich Hronzny proved the Hittite language is an early relative of the Indo-European languages of Greek, Latin, French, German, and English. The Hittite language now has a central place in the study of the history of the Indo-European languages.

The discovery also confirmed other biblical facts. Five temples were found containing many tablets with details of the rites and ceremonies that priests performed. These ceremonies described rites for purification from sin and purification of a new temple. The instructions proved to be very elaborate and lengthy. Critics once criticized the laws and instructions found in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy as too complicated for the time it was written (1400 B.C.). The Boghaz-koy texts along with others from Egyptian sites and a site along the Euphrates called Emar have proven that the ceremonies described in the Jewish Pentateuch are consistent with the ceremonies of the cultures of this time period.

The Hittite Empire made treaties with civilizations they conquered. Two dozen of these have been translated and provide a better understanding of treaties in the

Old Testament. The discovery of the Hittite Empire at Boghaz-koy has significantly advanced our understanding of the patriarchal period. Dr. Fred Wright summarizes the importance of this find in regard to biblical historicity:

Now the Bible picture of this people fits in perfectly with what we know of the Hittite nation from the monuments. As an empire they never conquered the land of Canaan itself, although the Hittite local tribes did settle there at an early date. Nothing discovered by the excavators has in any way discredited the Biblical account. Scripture accuracy has once more been proved by the archaeologist.[\[4\]](#)

The discovery of the Hittites has proven to be one of the great archaeological finds of all time. It has helped to confirm the biblical narrative and had a great impact on Middle East archaeological study. Because of it, we have come to a greater understanding of the history of our language, as well as the religious, social, and political practices of the ancient Middle East.

## **Sodom and Gomorrah**

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah has long been viewed as a legend. Critics assume that it was created to communicate moral principles. However, throughout the Bible this story is treated as a historical event. The Old Testament prophets refer to the destruction of Sodom on several occasions (Deut. 29:23, Isa. 13:19, Jer. 49:18), and these cities play a key role in the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles (Matt. 10:15, 2 Pet. 2:6 and Jude 1:7). What has archaeology found to establish the existence of these cities?

Archaeologists have searched the Dead Sea region for many years in search of Sodom and Gomorrah. Genesis 14:3 gives their location as the Valley of Siddim known as the Salt Sea, another name for the Dead Sea. On the east side six wadies, or river valleys, flow into the Dead Sea. Along five of these wadies, ancient cities were discovered. The northern most is named Bab edh-Drha. In

1924, renowned archaeologist Dr. William Albright excavated at this site, searching for Sodom and Gomorrah. He discovered it to be a heavily fortified city. Although he connected this city with one of the biblical "Cities of the Plains," he could not find conclusive evidence to justify this assumption.

More digging was done in 1965, 1967, and 1973. The archaeologists discovered a 23-inch thick wall around the city, along with numerous houses and a large temple. Outside the city were huge grave sites where thousands of skeletons were unearthed. This revealed that the city had been well populated during the early Bronze Age, about the time Abraham would have lived.

Most intriguing was evidence that a massive fire had destroyed the city. It lay buried under a coating of ash several feet thick. A cemetery one kilometer outside the city contained charred remains of roofs, posts, and bricks turned red from heat.

Dr. Bryant Wood, in describing these charnel houses, stated that a fire began on the roofs of these buildings. Eventually the burning roof collapsed into the interior and spread inside the building. This was the case in every house they excavated. Such a massive fiery destruction would match the biblical account that the city was destroyed by fire that rained down from heaven. Wood states, "The evidence would suggest that this site of Bab edh-Drha is the biblical city of Sodom." [\[5\]](#)

Five cities of the plain are mentioned in Genesis 14: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zoar, and Zeboiim. Remnants of these other four cities are also found along the Dead Sea. Following a southward path from Bab edh-Drha there is the city called Numeria. Continuing south is the city called es-Safi. Further south are the ancient cities of Feifa and Khanazir. Studies at these cities revealed that they had been abandoned at the same time about 2450-2350 B.C. Many archaeologists believe if Bab ed-Drha is Sodom, Numeria is Gomorrah, and es-Safi is Zoar.

What fascinated the archaeologists is that these cities were covered in the same

ash as Bab ed-Drha. Numeria, believed to be Gomorrah, had seven feet of ash in some places. In every one of the destroyed cities ash deposits made the soil a spongy charcoal, making it impossible to rebuild. According to the Bible, four of the five cities were destroyed, leaving Lot to flee to Zoar. Zoar was not destroyed by fire, but was abandoned during this period.

Although archaeologists are still disputing these findings, this is one discovery we will be hearing more about in years to come.

## **The Walls of Jericho**

According to the Bible, the conquest of Jericho occurred in approximately 1440 B.C. The miraculous nature of the conquest has caused some scholars to dismiss the story as folklore. Does archaeology support the biblical account? Over the past century four prominent archaeologists have excavated the site: Carl Watzinger from 1907-1909, John Garstang in the 1930's, Kathleen Kenyon from 1952-1958, and currently Bryant Wood. The result of their work has been remarkable.

First, they discovered that Jericho had an impressive system of fortifications. Surrounding the city was a retaining wall fifteen feet high. At its top was an eight-foot brick wall strengthened from behind by an earthen rampart. Domestic structures were found behind this first wall. Another brick wall enclosed the rest of the city. The domestic structures found between the two walls is consistent with Joshua's description of Rahab's quarters (Josh. 2:15). Archeologists also found that in one part of the city, large piles of bricks were found at the base of both the inner and outer walls, indicating a sudden collapse of the fortifications. Scholars feel that an earthquake, which may also explain the damming of the Jordan in the biblical account, caused this collapse. The collapsed bricks formed a ramp by which an invader might easily enter the city (Josh. 6:20).

Of this amazing discovery Garstang states, "As to the main fact, then, there

remains no doubt: the walls fell outwards so completely, the attackers would be able to clamber up and over the ruins of the city.” {6} This is remarkable because when attacked city walls fall inward, not outward.

A thick layer of soot indicates that the city was destroyed by fire as described in Joshua 6:24. Kenyon describes it this way. “The destruction was complete. Walls and floors were blackened or reddened by fire and every room was filled with fallen bricks.” {7} Archaeologists also discovered large amounts of grain at the site. This is again consistent with the biblical account that the city was captured quickly. If it had fallen as a result of a siege, the grain would have been used up. According to Joshua 6:17, the Israelites were forbidden to plunder the city, but had to destroy it totally.

Although the archaeologists agreed Jericho was violently destroyed, they disagreed on the date of the conquest. Garstang held to the biblical date of 1400 B.C. while Watzinger and Kenyon believed the destruction occurred in 1550 B.C. In other words, if the later date is accurate, Joshua arrived at a previously destroyed Jericho. This earlier date would pose a serious challenge to the historicity of the Old Testament.

Dr. Bryant Wood, who is currently excavating the site, found that Kenyon’s early date was based on faulty assumptions about pottery found at the site. His later date is also based on the discovery of Egyptian amulets in the tombs northwest of Jericho. Inscribed under these amulets were the names of Egyptian Pharaohs dating from 1500-1386 B.C., showing that the cemetery was in use up to the end of the late Bronze Age (1550-1400 B.C.). Finally, a piece of charcoal found in the debris was carbon-14 dated to be 1410 B.C. The evidence leads Wood to this conclusion. “The pottery, stratigraphic considerations, scarab data and a carbon-14 date all point to a destruction of the city around the end of the Late Bronze Age, about 1400 BCE.” {8}

Thus, current archeological evidence supports the Bible’s account of when and

how Jericho fell.

## **House of David**

One of the most beloved characters in the Bible is King David. Scripture says that he was a man after God's own heart. He is revered as the greatest of all Israelite kings and the messianic covenant is established through his lineage. Despite his key role in Israel's history, until recently no evidence outside the Bible attested to his existence. For this reason critics questioned the existence of a King David.

In the summer of 1993, an archaeologist made what has been labeled as a phenomenal and stunning discovery. Dr. Avraham Biran and his team were excavating a site labeled Tell Dan, located in northern Galilee at the foot of Mt. Hermon. Evidence indicates that this is the site of the Old Testament land of Dan.

The team had discovered an impressive royal plaza. As they were clearing the debris, they discovered in the ruins the remains of a black basalt stele, or stone slab, containing Aramaic inscriptions. The stele contained thirteen lines of writing but none of the sentences were complete. Some of the lines contained only three letters while the widest contained fourteen. The letters that remained were clearly engraved and easy to read. Two of the lines included the phrases "The King of Israel" and "House of David."

This is the first reference to King David found outside of the Bible. This discovery has caused many critics to reconsider their view of the historicity of the Davidic kingdom. Pottery found in the vicinity, along with the construction and style of writing, lead Dr. Biran to argue that the stele was erected in the first quarter of the ninth century B.C., about a century after the death of King David.

The translation team discovered that the inscription told of warfare between the Israelites and the Arameans, which the Bible refers to during this period. In this find, a ruler of the Arameans probably Hazael is victorious over Israel and Judah. The stele was erected to celebrate the defeat of the two kings. In 1994 two more

pieces were found with inscriptions which refer to Jehoram, the son of Ahab, ruler over Israel, and Ahaziah, who was the ruler over the “House of David” or Judah. These names and facts correspond to the account given in chapters 8 and 9 of 2 Kings. Dr. Hershel Shanks of *Biblical Archaeological Review* states, “The stele brings to life the biblical text in a very dramatic way. It also gives us more confidence in the historical reality of the biblical text.” [{9}](#)

The find has confirmed a number of facts. First, the use of the term “House of David” implies that there was a Davidic dynasty that ruled Israel. We can conclude, then, that a historic King David existed. Second, the kingdoms of Judah and Israel were prominent political entities as the Bible describes. Critics long viewed the two nations as simply insignificant states.

Dr. Bryant Wood summarizes the importance of this find this way. “In our day, most scholars, archaeologist and biblical scholars would take a very critical view of the historical accuracy of many of the accounts in the Bible. . . . Many scholars have said there never was a David or a Solomon, and now we have a stele that actually mentions David.” [{10}](#)

Although many archeologists remain skeptical of the biblical record, the evidence for the historical accuracy of the Bible continues to build.

## Notes

1. See [Are the Biblical Documents Reliable?](#) available on the Web at [www.probe.org/are-the-biblical-documents-reliable/](http://www.probe.org/are-the-biblical-documents-reliable/)
2. Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out* (Eugene, OR.: Harvest House Publishers, 1997), 46. e, 173.
3. Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert*, (New York: Farrar, Strous and Cudahy, 1959), 136. e, 173.
4. Fred Wright, *Highlights of Archaeology in the Bible Lands*, (Chicago: Moody

Press, 1955), 94-95.

5. Price, 118.

6. John Garstang, *The Foundations of Bible History; Joshua, Judges* (London: Constable, 1931), 146.

7. Kathleen Kenyon and Thomas Holland, *Excavations at Jericho Vol. 3: The Architecture and Stratigraphy of the Tell*, (London: BSA), 370.

8. Bryant Wood, "Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho?" *Biblical Archaeological Review*, March/April, 1990, 57.

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10. Price, 173.

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# Authority of the Bible - A Strong Argument for Christianity

Dr. Patrick Zukeran



*Dr. Pat Zukeran examines some of the compelling evidence for the reliability and the authority of the Bible. The uniqueness and astounding accuracy of this ancient text is an important apologetic for Christianity.*



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

There are many books today that claim to be the Word of God. The Koran, the *Bhagavad Gita*, The Book of Mormon, and other religious works all claim to be divinely inspired. The Bible claims to be the only book that is divinely inspired and that all other claims of inspiration from other works should be ruled out. Does the Bible confirm its exclusive claim to be the Word of God? The totality of evidences presents a strong case for the divine inspiration of the Bible.

The strongest argument for the divine inspiration of the Bible is the testimony of Jesus. Jesus claimed to be the divine Son of God and confirmed His claims through His sinless, miraculous life and resurrection. The events of His life have been recorded in the four Gospels, which have proven to be historically accurate and written by first century eyewitnesses. [\[1\]](#) Since Jesus is God incarnate, whatever He taught is true, and anything opposed to His teaching is false.



Jesus directly affirmed the authority of the Old Testament and indirectly affirmed the New Testament. In Luke 11:51, Jesus identified the prophets and the canon of the Old Testament. He names Abel as the first prophet from Genesis, and Zechariah the last prophet mentioned in 2 Chronicles, the last book in the Jewish Old Testament (which contains the same books we have today although placed in a different order). In Mark 7:8-9, Jesus refers to the Old Testament as the commands of God. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus states that the Law and the Prophets referring to the Old Testament is authoritative and imperishable. Throughout His ministry, Jesus made clear His teachings, corrections, and actions were consistent with the Old Testament. He also judged others teachings and traditions by the Old Testament. He thus demonstrated His affirmation of the Old Testament to be the Word of God.

Jesus even specifically affirmed as historical several disputed stories of the Old Testament. He affirms as true the accounts of Adam and Eve (Matthew 19:4-5), Noah and the flood (Matthew 24:39), Jonah and the whale (Matthew 12:40), Sodom and Gomorrah (Matthew 10:15), and more.

Jesus confirmed the Old Testament and promised that the Holy Spirit would inspire the apostles in the continuation of His teaching and in the writing of what would become the New Testament (John 14:25-26 and John 16:12-13). The apostles demonstrated that they came with the authority of God through the miracles they performed as Jesus and the Prophets did before them. The book of Acts, which records the miracles of the apostles, has also proven to be a historically accurate record written by a first century eyewitness.

## **Prophecy**

Many religious books claim to be divinely inspired, but only the Bible has evidence of supernatural confirmation. We have seen that Jesus, being God incarnate, affirms the inspiration of the Bible. Another evidence of supernatural confirmation is the testimony of prophecy. The biblical authors made hundreds of

specific prophecies of future events that have come to pass in the manner they were predicted. No book in history can compare to the Bible when it comes to the fulfillment of prophecy.

Here are some examples. Ezekiel 26, which was written in 587 B.C., predicted the destruction of Tyre, a city made up of two parts: a mainland port city, and an island city half a mile off shore. Ezekiel prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar would destroy the city, many nations would fight against her, the debris of the city would be thrown into the ocean, the city would never be found again, and fishermen would come there to lay their nets.

In 573 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the mainland city of Tyre. Many of the refugees of the city sailed to the island, and the island city of Tyre remained a powerful city. In 333 B.C., however, Alexander the Great laid siege to Tyre. Using the rubble of mainland Tyre, he built a causeway to the island city of Tyre. He then captured and completely destroyed the city.

Today, Tyre is a small fishing town where fishing boats come to rest and fisherman spread their nets. The great ancient city of Tyre to this day lies buried in ruins exactly as prophesied. If we were to calculate the odds of this event happening by chance, the figures would be astronomical. No, it was not by coincidence. {2}

Here's another example. There are nearly one hundred prophecies made about Jesus in the Old Testament, prophecies such as His place of birth, how he would die, His rejection by the nation of Israel, and so on. All these prophecies were made hundreds of years before Jesus ever came to earth. Because of the accuracy of the prophecies, many skeptics have believed that they must have been written after A.D. 70—after the birth and death of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem. They have thereby tried to deny that they are even prophecies.

However, in 1947 the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. These scrolls contained the book of Isaiah and other prophetic books. When dated, they were found to be

written from 120 to 100 B.C.,[\[3\]](#) well before Jesus was born. It would have been an incredible accomplishment for Jesus to have fulfilled the numerous prophecies. Some say these prophecies were fulfilled by chance, but the odds against this would be exceptionally large. It would take more a greater leap of faith to believe in that chance happening than in the fact that Jesus is God and these prophecies are divinely inspired.

The record of prophecy is thus evidence for the unique and supernatural origin of the Bible.

## **Unity**

The Bible is the only book with supernatural confirmation to support its claim of divine inspiration. The testimony of Christ and the legacy of prophecy are two proofs for inspiration. A third line of evidence is the unity of the Bible.

The Bible covers hundreds of topics, yet it does not contradict itself. It remains united in its theme. Well, what's so amazing about that? you may ask. Consider these facts. First, the Bible was written over a span of fifteen hundred years. Second, it was written by more than forty men from every walk of life. For example, Moses was educated in Egypt, Peter was a fisherman, Solomon was a king, Luke was a doctor, Amos was a shepherd, and Matthew was a tax collector. All the writers were of vastly different occupations and backgrounds.

Third, it was written in many different places. The Bible was written on three different continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe. Moses wrote in the desert of Sinai, Paul wrote in a prison in Rome, Daniel wrote in exile in Babylon, and Ezra wrote in the ruined city of Jerusalem.

Fourth, it was written under many different circumstances. David wrote during a time of war, Jeremiah wrote at the sorrowful time of Israel's downfall, Peter wrote while Israel was under Roman domination, and Joshua wrote while invading the land of Canaan.

Fifth, the writers had different purposes for writing. Isaiah wrote to warn Israel of God's coming judgment on their sin; Matthew wrote to prove to the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah; Zechariah wrote to encourage a disheartened Israel who had returned from Babylonian exile; and Paul wrote addressing problems in different Asian and European churches.

If we put all these factors together—the Bible was written over fifteen hundred years by forty different authors at different places, under various circumstances, and addressing a multitude of issues—how amazing that with such diversity, the Bible proclaims a unified message! That unity is organized around one theme: God's redemption of man and all of creation. The writers address numerous controversial subjects yet contradictions never appear. The Bible is an incredible document.

Let me offer you a good illustration. Suppose ten medical students graduating in the same year from medical school wrote position papers on four controversial subjects. Would they all agree on each point? No, we would have disagreements from one author to another. Now look at the authorship of the Bible. All these authors, from a span of fifteen hundred years, wrote on many controversial subjects, yet they do not contradict one another.

It seems one author guided these writers through the whole process: the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:21 states, "No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." The unity of the Bible is just one more amazing proof of the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible.

## **Archaeology**

We've studied the testimony of Jesus, prophecy, and the unity of the Bible as providing supernatural confirmation of the divine inspiration of the Bible. Another line of evidence is archaeology. Archaeology does not directly prove the Bible's inspiration, but it does prove its historical reliability.

Middle Eastern archaeological investigations have proven the Bible to be true and unerringly accurate in its historical descriptions. Nelson Glueck, a renowned Jewish archaeologist, states, No archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference.[{4}](#) Dr. William Albright, who was probably the foremost authority in Middle East archaeology in his time, said this about the Bible: There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament.[{5}](#) At this time, the number of archaeological discoveries that relate to the Bible number in the hundreds of thousands.[{6}](#)

Archaeology has verified numerous ancient sites, civilizations, and biblical characters whose existence was questioned by the academic world and often dismissed as myths. Biblical archaeology has silenced many critics as new discoveries supported the facts of the Bible.

Here are a few examples of the historical accuracy of the Bible. The Bible records that the Hittites were a powerful force in the Middle East from 1750 B.C. until 1200 B.C. (Genesis 15:20, 2 Samuel 11, and 1 Kings 10:29). Prior to the late nineteenth century, nothing was known of the Hittites outside the Bible, and many critics alleged that they were an invention of the biblical authors.

However, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, archaeologists in Turkey discovered a city which proved to be the capital of the Hittite empire. In the city they discovered a massive library of thousands of tablets. These tablets showed that the Hittite language was an early relative of the Indo-European languages.

Another example is the story of Jericho recorded in the book of Joshua. For years, skeptics thought the story of the falling walls of Jericho was a myth. However, recent archaeological discoveries have led several prominent scholars to conclude that the biblical description of the fall of Jericho is consistent with the discoveries they have made. One of the leading archaeologists on Jericho presently is Dr. Bryant Wood. His research has shown that the archaeological evidence matches

perfectly with the biblical record.[{7}](#)

Archaeology has also demonstrated the accuracy of the New Testament. One of the most well attested to New Testament authors is Luke. Scholars have found him to be a very accurate historian, even in many of his details. In the Gospel of Luke and Acts, Luke names thirty-two countries, fifty-four cities, and nine islands without error.[{8}](#) A. N. Sherwin-White states, For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming. . . . Any attempt to reject its basic historicity must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted.[{9}](#)

There is no other ancient book that has so much archaeological evidence to support its accounts. Since God is a God of truth, we should expect His revelation to present what is historically true. Archaeology presents tangible proof of the historical accuracy of the Bible.

## **The Bible Alone Is God's Word**

We have given several proofs for the divine inspiration of the Bible. These include the testimony of Jesus the divine Son of God, prophecy, unity, and archaeology. Accepting the divine inspiration of the Bible leads to the conclusion that all other works cannot be divinely inspired. This does not mean other works do not contain truth. All people are created in the image of God and can articulate principles that are true. However, only the Bible proves to be divinely inspired by God and therefore, other claims of divine inspiration should be ruled out for several reasons.

The Bible is the only book that gives supernatural confirmation to support its claim of divine inspiration. Other scriptures which contradict it cannot, therefore, be true.

The law of non-contradiction states that two contradictory statements cannot be true at the same time. If one proposition is known to be true, its opposite must be false. If it is true that I am presently alive, it cannot also be true to say that I am



presently not alive. This is a universal law which is practiced daily in every part of the world. Even if you claim, the law of non-contradiction is false, you are asserting this statement is true and its opposite is false. In other words you end up appealing to the law you are trying to deny thus making a self-defeating argument.

Since we have good reason to believe the Bible is the inspired word of God, any teaching that contradicts the Bible must be false. The Bible makes exclusive claims regarding God, truth and salvation that would exclude other scriptures. The Bible teaches that any deity other than the God of the Bible is a false deity (Exodus 20). Jesus declared that he is the divine Son of God, the source of truth, and the only way to eternal life (John 1 & 14:6).

A look at a few works from other religions illustrates this point. The Hindu scriptures include the Vedas and the Upanishads. These books present views of God that are contrary to the Bible. The Vedas are polytheistic, and the Upanishads present a pantheistic worldview of an impersonal divine essence called Brahma, not a personal God.

The Koran, the holy book of Islam, denies the deity of Christ, the triune nature of God, and the atoning work of Christ on the cross (Sura 4:116, 168). These are foundational truths taught in the Bible. The Pali Canon, the holy scriptures of Southern Buddhism, teach a naturalistic worldview (or pantheistic, as some schools interpret it). It also teaches salvation by works and the doctrine of reincarnation. The worldview of the Pali Canon and its view of salvation contradict biblical teachings. Since these works contradict biblical teaching, we reject their claim to divine inspiration.

The Bible alone proves to be divinely inspired and its exclusive claims rule out the claims of other books.

## **Notes**

1. For more information refer to the articles “The Historical Reliability of the Gospels” ([probe.org/historical-reliability-of-the-gospels/](http://probe.org/historical-reliability-of-the-gospels/)) and “The Uniqueness of Jesus” ([www.probe.org/uniqueness-of-jesus](http://www.probe.org/uniqueness-of-jesus)).
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3. Norman Geisler and William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, (Chicago, IL.: Moody Press, 1986), 364-367.
4. Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert: A History of the Negev* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Cudahy, 1959), 31.
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7. *Ibid.*, 152-53.
8. Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), s.v., Archaeology, New Testament.
9. Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino: Here’s Life Publishers, 1999), 66.

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## **Does God Exist? A Christian Argument from Non-biblical**

# Sources

Jimmy Williams



*Probe founder, Jimmy Williams, looks at evidence for the existence of God from multiple, non-biblical sources. He demonstrates that God's creation speaks to his creator. The important apologetic discussion forms the foundation for a complete biblical understanding of God and His purposes.*



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

## Metaphysical Options

Most will agree that the most basic, fundamental question concerning existence is not that *nothing* is here, but rather that *something* is here. I am a part of some kind of *reality*. I possess a consciousness, an awareness that something is transpiring, unfolding, happening. And you and I are part of it. The reality borne out of our personal observation and experience is that we are participants in a space-time universe which is characterized by a *series of events*. The mind naturally asks the question, "What is it?" Where did it come from?" Did the *cosmos*, what we see, simply come into being from nothing, or has this material universe of which we are a part always been here? Or is something or someone which transcends this material universe responsible for bringing it into existence and us with it?

All of these questions relate to the philosophical concept of *metaphysics*. Webster defines it thusly: "*That division of philosophy which includes ontology, or the*

*science of being and cosmology, or the science of fundamental causes and processes in things.*" {1} When we seek to answer these basic questions, then, we are thinking "*metaphysically*" about the origin and the causes of the present reality. And at this basic, fundamental level of consideration we really are left with few options, or possible answers, to account for or explain the universe. The three potential candidates are:

**(1) Something came from nothing.** Most reject this view, since the very idea defies rationality. This explanation to account for the universe is not widely held. Kenny remarks: "*According to the big bang theory, the whole matter of the universe began to exist at a particular time in the remote past. A proponent of such a theory, . . . if he is an atheist, must believe that the matter of the universe came from nothing and by nothing.*" {2} Since nothing cannot produce something by rules of logic (observation, causality), something is *eternal* and *necessary*. Since any series of events is not eternal (thus a contradiction), there is, therefore, an eternal, necessary *something not identical* to the space-time universe.

**(2) Matter is eternal** and capable of producing the present reality through blind chance. Carl Sagan stated this view clearly when he said, "All that ever was, all that is, and all that ever shall be is the Cosmos." {3} This second view has spawned two basic worldviews-*Materialism* (or *Naturalism*) and *Pantheism*. Both hold the premise that nothing exists beyond matter. Materialism therefore is atheistic by definition. Pantheism is similar but insists that since God does not exist, nature is imbued with "god" in all its parts.

**(3) God created the universe.** This view, *Theism*, holds forth the assertion that *Someone* both transcends, and did create the material universe of which we are a part. There are *no* other logical alternatives to explain the *cosmos*. Christians, of course, embrace this third view, along with all other theists, as the most reasonable explanation for what we find to be true of ourselves and of the world. Holding this view is not simply a statement of blind faith. There are sound and rational reasons for preferring this view over the other two. Theism is therefore a

reasonable idea. In fact it is more reasonable to believe that God exists than not to believe He exists. Theologians have posed several lines of “proof” to argue for God’s existence. These arguments, while not *proving* the existence of God, do nevertheless provide insights that may be used to show *evidence* of His existence.

## The Cosmological Argument

This argument centers around the concept of *causality*. Every event has a *cause*, and that includes the universe. It had a beginning. There was a time when it was not, and a time when it was:

An **infinite** number of real parts of time, passing in succession and exhausted one after another, appears so evident a contradiction that no man, one should think, whose judgment is not corrupted, instead of being improved, by the sciences, would ever be able to admit it.” (emphasis mine){4}

Hume is here arguing that time and space are *not* infinite, not eternal. If this is true, the universe, which is an “effect,” had a *cause*. Robert Jastrow comments,

“The most complete study made thus far has been carried out . . .by Allan Sandage. He compiled information on 42 galaxies, ranging out in space as far as six billion light years from us. His measurements indicate that the universe was expanding more rapidly in the past than it is today. This result lends further support to the belief that the universe exploded into being.”{5}

He goes on to say:

“No explanation other than the big bang has been found for the fireball radiation. The clincher, which has convinced almost the last doubting Thomas, is that the radiation discovered by Penzias and Wilson has exactly the pattern of wavelengths expected for the light and heat produces in a great explosion.”{6}

Jastrow also concludes the universe is dying:

“Once hydrogen has been burned within that star and converted to heavier elements, it can never be restored to its original state. Minute by minute and year by year, as hydrogen is used up in stars, the supply of this element in the universe grows smaller.”<sup>{7}</sup> “Astronomers now find they have painted themselves into a corner because they have proven, by their own methods, that the world began abruptly in an act of creation to which you can trace the seeds of every star, every planet, every thing in this cosmos and on the earth. And they have found that all this happened as a product of forces they cannot hope to discover.”<sup>{8}</sup>

Some have argued that an *infinite regress* of causes may not be logically possible. They say the universe is not a “whole” that *needs* a single cause, but rather that it is “mutually dependent” upon itself! Mutual dependence misses the point. The real issue is why there is an *existing* universe rather than a *non-existing* one. Reality and rationality suggest that every event has a cause. Whole series of events must have a cause as well (since the whole is the sum of the parts). If all the parts were taken away, would there be anything left? If we say *yes*, then God exists (i.e. an eternal necessary being that is *more* than the world. If we say *no*, then the whole is *contingent* too, and needs a cause *beyond* it (God).

We will conclude this section with an examination of perhaps the most often-asked question concerning the cosmological argument, “*Where did God come from?*” While it is both reasonable and legitimate to ask this question of the universe which we have just examined, it is irrational and nonsensical to ask that same question of God, since it implies to Him characteristics found only in the finite universe: *space* and *time*. By definition, something eternal must exist *outside* this space/time continuum. The very question posed reveals the inquirer’s fallacy of reasoning from within his *own* space/time context! By definition, something *eternal* must exist *outside* both time and space. God has no beginning; He **IS!** (Exodus 3:14).

## The Teleological Argument

This second argument for the existence of God addresses the order, complexity, and diversity of the cosmos. “Teleological” comes from the Greek word “*telos*,” which means “end” or “goal.” The idea behind the argument is that the observable *order* in the universe demonstrates that it functions according to an *intelligent design*, something undeniable to an open-minded, intelligent being. The classic expression of this argument is William Paley’s analogy of the watchmaker in his book *Evidences*. If we were walking on the beach and found a watch in the sand, we would not assume that it washed up on the shore having been formed through the natural processes and motions of the sea. We would rather naturally assume that it had been lost by its owner and that somewhere there was a watchmaker who originally designed and built it with a specific purpose in mind. Intelligence cannot be produced by non-intelligence any more than nothing can produce something. There is, therefore, an eternal, necessary intelligence present and reflected in the space-time universe.

Until about five hundred years ago, humanity had no difficulty in acknowledging God as the Creator of the natural order. The best explanation saw Him as the divine Designer who created it with a purpose and maintained all things by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:17). But the rise of modern science initiated a process we could call the “demythologizing of nature,” the material world. Superstition and ignorance had ascribed spirit life even to forest, brook, and mountain. Things not understood scientifically were routinely accepted to be unexplained, supernatural forces at work. Slowly, the mysterious, spiritual factor was drained away as scholars and scientists replaced it with natural explanations and theories of how and why things actually worked. After Copernicus, human significance diminished in the vastness of the cosmos, and it was felt only time and research, not God, would be needed to finally explain with accuracy the totality of the natural order. The idea of a transcendent One came to be deemed unnecessary, having been invalidated by the new theory of natural selection.

Ironically, the same science which took God away then, is bringing back the possibility of His existence today. Physics and quantum mechanics have now brought us to the edge of physicality, to a place where sub-atomic particle structures are described by some as spirit, ghost-like in quality. Neuro-physiologists grapple with enigmatic observations suggesting that the mind *transcends* the brain! Psychology has developed an entirely new branch of study (parapsychology) which asserts that psycho-spiritual forces (ESP, biofeedback, etc.) actually function *beyond* the physical realm. Molecular biologists and geneticists, faced with the highly-ordered and complex structures of DNA, ascribe a word implying “intelligence” to the chaining sequences: the genetic “*code*.” And we have already concluded that astrophysicists have settled on the “big bang” which seems to contradict the idea that matter is eternal, and, huge as it is, the universe appears to be finite. Whether we look through the microscope or the telescope it becomes more difficult in the light of experimental science to hold to the old premise that such order and complexity are the products of blind chance. The old naturalistic assumptions are being critically reexamined, challenged, and found to be unconvincing by many of today’s scientists. Dr. Walter Bradley, Professor Emeritus of Mechanical Engineering at Texas A & M University states the case:

“Discoveries of the last half of the 20th century have brought the scientific community to the realization that our universe and our planet in the universe are so remarkably unique that it is almost impossible to imagine how this could have happened accidentally, causing many agnostic scientists to concede that indeed some intelligent creative force may be required to account for it.” [\[9\]](#)

Areas of reconsideration include cosmology and the origin of life, essential elements of design and their recognition, the minimal requirements for a universe to support both life of any type and specifically complex human life, why these requirements are met in our universe, and requirements for a place in that universe uniquely met by planet earth. All of these remarkable features of our



world are being reevaluated and point toward intelligent design.

## The Moral Argument

This argument for God's existence is based on the recognition of humankind's universal and inherent sense of *right* and *wrong*. (cf. Romans 2:14,15). No culture is without standards of behavior. All groups recognize honesty as a virtue along with wisdom, courage, and justice. And even in the most remote jungle tribes, murder, rape, lying, and theft are recognized as being wrong, in all places and at all times. The question arises, "Where does this sense of morality come from?" C. S. Lewis speaks of this early on in his classic work *Mere Christianity*. He calls this moral law "The Rule of Right and Wrong"—"a thing that is *really there*, not made up by ourselves." [{10}](#) For years Lewis struggled against God because the universe to him seemed unjust and cruel. But he began to analyze his outrage. Where did *he* get the very ideas of *just* and *unjust*? He said, "A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line." [{11}](#)

He goes on to suggest that there are three parts to morality. Using the analogy of a fleet of ships on a voyage, he points out that three things can go wrong. The *first* is that ships may either drift apart or collide with and do damage to one another (alienation, isolation: people abusing, cheating, bullying one another). The *second* is that individual ships must be seaworthy and avoid internal, mechanical breakdown (moral deterioration within an individual). Lewis goes on to point out that if the ships keep having collisions they will not remain seaworthy very long, and of course, if their steering parts are out of order, they will not be able to avoid collisions! But there is a *third* factor not yet taken into account, and that is, "Where is the fleet of ships headed?" The voyage would be a failure if it were meant to reach New York but actually arrived in Buenos Aires (the general purpose of human life as a whole, what man was made for)! [{12}](#)

The human conscience to which Paul refers in Romans 2 is not found in any other animal-only man. The utter uniqueness of this moral compass within humans,

along with other exclusively human qualities (rationality, language, worship and aesthetic inclinations) strongly suggest that man not only has a relationship *downward* to animals, plants and earth, but also a relationship *upward* to the God in Whose image he is. As we saw God's great power and intelligence expressed in the first two arguments, we also see here that this sense of morality, not known in the world of nature, comes from the Great Law Giver Who is Himself in *character* the "straight line" (righteous, just, holy) against which all human actions are measured.

## A Word about Atheism and Agnosticism

An *atheist* is a person who makes a bold assertion, "There is no God." It is bold because it claims in an *absolute* manner what we have stated above what is not possible: i.e., the existence or non-existence of God cannot be *proven* absolutely. It is also bold because, in order to make such an assertion, an atheist would literally have to be God himself! He would need to possess the qualities and capabilities to travel the entire universe and examine every nook and cranny of it before he would ever qualify to hold such a dogmatic conclusion!

The most brilliant, highly-educated, widely-traveled human on earth today, having maximized his/her brain cells to optimum learning levels for a lifetime could not possibly "*know*" 1/1000th of all that *could* be known. And knowledge is now doubling by the years rather than by the decades or centuries of the past! Is it *possible* that God could *still* exist outside the very limited, personal knowledge/experience of one highly intelligent human being? Furthermore, before an atheist can identify himself *as* one, he must first acknowledge the very idea, or concept, or possibility of God so he can then deny His existence!

The Bible says that "he who comes to God must believe that He is. . ." (Hebrews 11:6). In other words, there is a "faith" factor relative to a belief in God's existence. But the dogmatic and bold assertion above is itself an expression of faith. It takes faith to believe God *is*, and it takes faith to say God *is not*. In my

judgment, it takes even *more* faith for the atheist to believe in his position because he holds to his faith against overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Christians also affirm God's existence on the basis of faith, but it is a *reasonable* faith based on the true nature of the *cosmos*, not a *blind* faith.

Turning to agnosticism, Webster defines it as a position which states that "neither the existence nor the nature of God, nor the ultimate origin of the universe is known or knowable." [{13}](#) Here again is a bold statement: When the agnostic says, "*I don't know*," what is really implied is "I can't know, *you* can't know, and *nobody* can know." Leith Samuel in his little book *Impossibility of Agnosticism*, mentions three kinds of agnostics: [{14}](#)

Dogmatic: "I don't know, you don't know, and no one can know." Here is a person who already has his mind made up. He has the same problems as the atheist above—he must know *everything* in order to hold this position honestly.

Indifferent: "I don't know and I don't care." It is not likely that God would reveal Himself to someone who does not care to know: "He who has ears, let him hear." (Luke 14:35).

Dissatisfied: "I don't know, but I would like to know." Here is a person who demonstrates an *openness* to truth and a willingness to change his position should he have sufficient reasons. If such were the case, he would also be demonstrating what is true of agnosticism, namely, that it is meant to be a *temporary* path in search of truth which gives way to a more reasonable and less skeptical view of life and all reality.

"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so they are without excuse." (Saint Paul, Romans 1:20).

"Only the fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' " (King David, Psalm 14:1).

## Notes

1. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., Publishers, 1953), s.v. "metaphysics", 528.
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3. Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (New York: Random House, 1980), 4.
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# Evidence for God's Existence

Sue Bohlin

*Romans chapter 1 says that God has planted evidence of Himself throughout His creation so we are without excuse. Sue Bohlin looks at different types of evidence indicating that God really does exist.*

## A “Just Right” Universe

There's so much about the universe, and our world in particular, that we take for granted because it works so well. But Christian astronomer Dr. Hugh Ross has cited twenty-six different characteristics about the universe that enable it to sustain life. And there are thirty-three characteristics about our galaxy, our solar system, and the planet Earth that are finely-tuned to allow life to exist.[{1}](#) I do well to make the meat, potatoes, vegetables, and bread all come out at the same time for dinner; we're talking about fifty-nine different aspects all being kept in perfect balance so the universe hangs together and we can live in it!

Our Earth, for instance, is perfectly designed for life. It's the “just right” size for the atmosphere we need. Its size and corresponding gravity hold a thin, but not too thin, layer of gases to protect us and allow us to breathe. When astronaut John Glenn returned to space, one of the things that struck him was how thin and fragile our atmosphere is (only 50 miles above the Earth). If our planet were smaller it couldn't support an atmosphere, like on Mercury. If it were larger, like Jupiter, the atmosphere would contain free hydrogen, which is poison for us.[{2}](#) Earth is the only planet we know of that contains an atmosphere that can support human, animal, and plant life.

The Earth is also placed at a “just right” distance from the sun and the other planets in our solar system. If we were closer to the sun, we'd burn up. If we were farther away, we'd freeze. Because Earth's orbit is nearly circular, this slightly elliptical shape means that we enjoy a quite narrow range of temperatures, which

is important to life. The speed of Earth's rotation on its axis, completing one turn every 24 hours, means that the sun warms the planet evenly. Compare our world to the moon, where there are incredible temperature variations because it lacks sufficient atmosphere or water to retain or deflect the sun's energy.

Speaking of the moon, it's important that there is only one moon, not two or three or none, and it's the "just right" size and distance from us. The moon's gravity impacts the movement of ocean currents, keeping the water from becoming stagnant. [\[3\]](#)

Water itself is an important part of a "just right" world. Plants, animals and human beings are mostly made of water, and we need it to live. One of the things that makes Earth unique is the abundance of water in a liquid state.

Water has surface tension. This means that water can move upward, against gravity, to bring liquid nutrients to the tops of the tallest plants.

Everything else in the world freezes from the bottom up, but water freezes from the top down. Everything else contracts when it freezes, but water expands. This means that in winter, ponds and rivers and lakes can freeze at the surface, but allow fish and other marine creatures to live down below.

The fact that we live on a "just right" planet in a "just right" universe is evidence that it all was created by a loving God.

## **The Nagging Itch of "Ought"**

As a mother, I was convinced of the existence of a moral God when my children, without being taught, would complain that something wasn't "fair." Fair? Who taught them about fair? Why is it that no one ever has to teach children about fairness, but all parents hear the universal wail of "That's not fa-a-a-a-air!" The concept of fairness is about an internal awareness that there's a certain way that things ought to be. It's not limited to three-year-olds who are unhappy that their

older siblings get to stay up later. We see the same thing on “Save the Whales” bumper stickers. Why should we save the whales? Because we ought to take care of the world. Why should we take care of the world? Because we just should, that’s why. It’s the right thing to do. There’s that sense of “ought” again.

Certain values can be found in all human cultures, a belief that we act certain ways because they’re the right thing to do. Murdering one’s own people is wrong, for example. Lying and cheating is wrong. So is stealing. Where did this universal sense of right and wrong come from? If we just evolved from the apes, and there is nothing except space, time, and matter, then from where did this moral sense of right and wrong arise?

A moral sense of right and wrong isn’t connected to our muscles or bones or blood. Some scientists argue that it comes from our genes — that belief in morality selects us for survival and reproduction. But if pressed, those same scientists would assure you that ultimate right and wrong don’t exist in a measurable way, and it’s only the illusion of morality that helps us survive. But if one researcher stole another’s data and published results under his own name, all the theories about morality as illusion would go right out the window. I don’t know of any scientist who wouldn’t cry, “That’s not fair!” Living in the real world is a true antidote for sophisticated arguments against right and wrong.

Apologist Greg Koukl points out that guilt is another indicator of ultimate right and wrong. “It’s tied into our understanding of things that are right and things that are wrong. We feel guilty when we think we’ve violated a moral rule, an “ought.” And that feeling hurts. It doesn’t hurt our body; it hurts our souls. An ethical violation is not a physical thing, like a punch in the nose, producing physical pain. It’s a soulish injury producing a soulish pain. That’s why I call it ethical pain. That’s what guilt is — ethical pain.” [\[4\]](#)

The reason all human beings start out with an awareness of right and wrong, the reason we all yearn for justice and fairness, is that we are made in the image of

God, who is just and right. The reason we feel violated when someone does us wrong is that a moral law has been broken — and you can't have a moral law without a moral law giver. Every time we feel that old feeling of, "It's not fa-a-a-a-air!" rising up within us, it's a signpost pointing us to the existence of God. He has left signposts pointing to Himself all over creation. That's why we are without excuse.

## Evidence of Design Implies a Designer



If you've ever visited or seen pictures of Mount Rushmore (South Dakota USA), you cannot help but look at the gigantic sculpture of four presidents' faces and wonder at the skill of the sculptor. You know, without having to be told, that the natural forces of wind and rain did not erode the rock into those shapes. It took the skilled hands of an artist.

William Paley made a compelling argument years ago that the intricacies of a watch are so clearly engineered that it cannot be the product of nature: a watch demands a watchmaker. In the same way, the more we discover about our world and ourselves, the more we see that like an expertly-fashioned watch, our world and we ourselves have been finely crafted with intentional design. And design implies a designer.

Since we live in our bodies and take so much of our abilities for granted, it's understandable that we might miss the evidence of design within ourselves — much like a fish might be oblivious to what it means to be wet. Dr. Phillip Bishop at the University of Alabama, challenges us to consider what would happen if we commissioned a team of mechanical engineers to develop a robot that could lift 500 pounds. And let's say we also commissioned them to design a robot that could



play Chopin. They could probably do that. But what if we asked them to come up with a robot that could do both, and limit the robot's weight to 250 pounds, and require that it be able to do a variety of similar tasks? They'd laugh in our faces, no matter how much time or money we gave them to do it. But you know, all we'd be asking them to do is to come up with a very crude replication of former football player Mike Reid.[{5}](#)

Probably the greatest evidence of design in creation is DNA, the material of which our genes are made, as well as the genetic material for every living thing on the planet. One of the startling discoveries about DNA is that it is a highly complex informational code, so complex that scientists struggle hard to decipher even the tiniest portions of the various genes in every organism. DNA conveys intelligent information; in fact, molecular biologists use language terms — code, translation, transcription — to describe what it does and how it acts. Communication engineers and information scientists tell us that you can't have a code without a code-maker, so it would seem that DNA is probably the strongest indicator in our world that there is an intelligent Designer behind its existence.

Dr. Richard Dawkins, a professor of biology who writes books and articles praising evolution, said in his book *The Blind Watchmaker*, "Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose."[{6}](#) Even those who desperately fear the implications of design keep running into it.

Those who deny the evidence of a designer are a lot like the foolish fisherman. If he fails to catch a fish, he says, "Aha! This proves there are no fish!" He doesn't want to consider the possibility that it might be he is an inept fisherman. Since science cannot measure the intangible or the supernatural, there are many people who say, "Aha! There is no Creator."[{7}](#) Foolish fishermen deny the evidence that God exists and has left His fingerprints all over creation.

## **The Reliability of the Bible**

Every religion has its own holy book, but the Bible is different from all the others. It claims to be the very Word of God, not dropped out of the sky but God-breathed, infused with God's power as He communicated His thoughts and intent through human writers.

The Bible was written over a period of 1500 years, by about forty different writers, on three different continents. They addressed a wide variety of subjects, and yet the individual books of the Bible show a remarkable consistency within themselves. There is a great deal of diversity within the Bible, at the same time displaying an amazing unity. It presents an internally consistent message with one great theme: God's love for man and the great lengths to which He went to demonstrate that love.

If you pick up any city newspaper, you won't find the kind of agreement and harmony in it that is the hallmark of the biblical books. A collection of documents that spans so much time and distance could not be marked by this unity unless it was superintended by one Author who was behind it all. The unity of the Bible is evidence of God's existence.

One other aspect of the Bible is probably the greatest evidence that God exists and that He has spoken to us in His holy book: fulfilled prophecy. The Bible contains hundreds of details of history which were written in advance before any of them came to pass. Only a sovereign God, who knows the future and can make it happen, can write prophecy that is accurately and always — eventually — fulfilled.

For example, God spoke through the prophet Ezekiel against the bustling seaport and trade center of Tyre. In Ezekiel 26:3-6, He said He would bring nations against her: "They shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; and I will scrape her soil from her, and make her a bare rock." Ezekiel 26-28 has many

details of this prophecy against Tyre, which would be like Billy Graham announcing that God was going to wipe New York off the map.

Tyre consisted of two parts, a mainland city and an island a half- mile offshore. The first attack came from the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, who laid siege to Tyre for thirteen years. Finally, his battering rams broke through the walls, and he tore down the city's towers. But the island part of the city wasn't yet destroyed, because this prophecy was fulfilled in stages. For 250 years it flourished, until Alexander the Great set his sights on Tyre. Even without a navy, he was able to conquer this island city in what some consider his greatest military exploit. He turned the ruined walls and towers of Old Tyre into rubble, which he used to build a causeway from the mainland to the island. When he ran out of material, he scraped the soil from the land to finish the land- bridge, leaving only barren rocks where the old city used to be. He fulfilled the prophecy, "They will break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses; your stones and timber and soil they will cast into the midst of the waters"(Ez. 26:12).

Fulfilled prophecy is just one example of how God shows He is there and He is not silent. How else do we explain the existence of history written in advance?

## **Jesus: The Ultimate Evidence**

The most astounding thing God has ever done to show His existence to us is when He passed through the veil between heaven and earth and came to live among us as a man.

Jesus Christ was far more than just a great moral teacher. He said things that would be outrageous if they weren't true, but He backed them up with even more outrageous signs to prove they were. Jesus claimed not to speak for God as a prophet, but to be God in human flesh. He said, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father" (John 14:9), and, "The Father and I are one" (John 10:30). When asked if He was the Messiah, the promised Savior, He said yes. [\[8\]](#) He told his

contemporaries, "Before Abraham was, I am"(John 8:58). The fact that His unbelieving listeners decided then to kill Him shows that they realized He was claiming to be Yahweh, God Almighty.

When Jesus told His followers that He was the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-18), they would immediately be reminded of a passage in the book of Ezekiel where Yahweh God pronounced Himself shepherd over Israel (Ez. 34:1-16). Jesus equated Himself with God.

But words are cheap, so Jesus backed up His words with miracles and signs to validate His truth-claims. He healed all sorts of diseases in people: the blind, the deaf, the crippled, lepers, epileptics, and even a woman with a twelve-year hemorrhage. He took authority over the demons that terrorized and possessed people. He even raised the dead.

Jesus showed His authority over nature, as well. He calmed a terrible storm with just a word. He created food out of thin air, with bread and fish left over! He turned water into wine. He walked on water.

He showed us what God the Father is like; Jesus was God with skin on. He was loving and sensitive, at the same time strong and determined. Children and troubled people were drawn to Him like a magnet, but the arrogant and self-sufficient were threatened by Him. He drenched people with grace and mercy while never compromising His holiness and righteousness.

And after living a perfect life, He showed His love to us by dying in our place on a Roman cross, promising to come back to life. Who else but God Himself could make a promise like that and then fulfill it? The literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is the final, greatest proof that there is a God, that Jesus is God Himself, and that God has entered our world and showed us the way to heaven so we can be with Him forever. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except by Me" (John 14:6).

God exists, and He has spoken. He made a “just right” universe that is stamped with clues of its Maker. He placed eternity in our hearts, as Ecclesiastes tells us, and all people have a strong moral streak because we are made in the image of a moral God. The evidence of design in our bodies, our world and the universe is a signpost pointing to a loving, intelligent Designer behind it all. The unity of the Bible and the hundreds of fulfilled prophecies in it show the mind of God behind its creation. And we’ve looked at the way Jesus punched through the space-time continuum to show us what God looks like, and opened the doorway to heaven. Jesus is the clearest evidence of all that God does exist.

## Notes

1. Hugh Ross, *Creator and the Cosmos*. (Colorado Springs, CO.: Navpress, 1995), 111-145.
2. R.E.D. Clark, *Creation* (London: Tyndale Press, 1946), 20.
3. *The Wonders of God’s Creation*, Moody Institute of Science (Chicago, IL).
4. Gregory Koukl, “Guilt and God,” *Stand to Reason Commentary*.  
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5. Phillip Bishop, “Evidence of God in Human Physiology.”  
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6. Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1986), 1.
7. Bishop.
8. Mark 14:61-62; Matthew 26: 63-65; Luke 22:67-70

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# How I Know Christianity Is True - A Defense of the Gospel

Dr. Patrick Zukeran

*Dr. Zukeran presents five major reasons to believe Christianity is the truth. He begins with the Christian worldview and goes on to the authority of the Bible, Jesus' confirmation of His claims to be God, the resurrection of Jesus, and Pat's personal experience as a follower of Jesus Christ.*

## Because Christianity Teaches the Correct Worldview

Among all the religions and philosophies, how do we know Christianity is true? While there are many ways to address the question, let's begin by saying that Christianity makes sense of the world around us. In other words, it presents the most correct worldview based on the world in which we live. There are three worldviews that lie at the foundation of all religions and philosophies: theism, naturalism, and pantheism. Theism teaches there is a personal God who created the universe. Naturalism teaches there is no divine being and that the universe is the result of time and chance. Pantheism teaches that the universe is eternal and that the divine is an impersonal force made up of all things. All three worldviews cannot be true at the same time and if one of them is true, the other two must be false.

The evidence from our study of the universe points to theism. Unfortunately, time will allow me to go over only three lines of evidence.

The first is the argument from first cause or the cosmological argument, which states if something exists, it must have either come from something else, come from nothing, or have always existed. What is the most reasonable conclusion of

the three for the existence of the universe? Scientists confirm that the universe has a beginning. Many call this the “big bang.” Since the universe assuredly has a beginning, the worldview of pantheism bears the burden of proof. Second, to say the universe comes from nothing goes against responsible scientific inquiry and human logic. For example, any invention in human history is not brought about from nothing. It comes from materials and ingenuity that existed before its inception. Therefore, the naturalist worldview has no logical ground to stand on. The best conclusion is that the universe is the result of a cause greater than itself. That cause is God.

Second, we have the proof of design or the teleological argument. Complexity and design point to a designer. For example, although all the parts of a watch are found on the earth, no one would assume it evolved as the result of natural, unguided actions of chance. Why would we conclude otherwise when we look at the human brain or the human anatomy, which is much more complex? The more we discover about the universe and nature, the more we realize how unlikely it is that this could have all happened by accident. Therefore, the burden of proof is on the worldviews of naturalism and pantheism, which hold to a position of evolution.

Finally we have the moral argument. All people have a sense of right and wrong. In every culture, adultery, murder, and stealing are wrong. Where does that universal sense of right and wrong come from? A moral law code requires a moral Lawgiver who is personal and reflects the moral law in His character. Since we are made in God’s image, we reflect His moral law. C.S. Lewis stated, “As an atheist my argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?” [{1}](#) Naturalists and pantheists have difficulty accounting for the human conscience.

For these reasons, theism is the only possible worldview that can remain true to scientific and philosophical scrutiny. [{2}](#)

## **Because the Bible is God's Word**

Among all the books written by man, none have the credentials that equal the Bible. The second evidence for Christianity is the Bible, which proves itself to be true and divinely inspired.

The Bible proves itself to be true because it is a historically accurate document. Thousands of archaeological discoveries confirm its historical accuracy. Numerous civilizations, rulers, and events once thought legendary by the skeptics have been confirmed by archaeology. Even miraculous geographic events in Sodom and Gomorrah, Jericho, and Sennachareb's defeat in the 7th century B.C. have passed the test of archaeological scrutiny.

Another proof of the Bible's truth is in historical records outside the Bible. Numerous historical records from ancient civilizations confirm the historicity of the biblical accounts. Dr. William Albright, who is still respected as probably the foremost authority in Middle Eastern archaeology, said this about the Bible: "There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament." [\[3\]](#) The historical evidence upholds the premise that if an ancient historical work proves to be accurate again and again in its detail, we can be confident that it is accurate on the material we cannot confirm externally.

The Bible's divine inspiration is attested to in its unity. Although the Bible is written over a 1500 year period, written by over forty different authors from different backgrounds, and covers a host of controversial subjects, it maintains a unified theme and it does not contradict itself in principle from beginning to end. This indicates that a divine author supervised the entire process and guided each writer.

Second, we have the remarkable record of prophecy. Hundreds of detailed prophecies are written years before the event takes place. For example the prophet Ezekiel in chapter 26 describes accurately how the city of Tyre will be



destroyed years before it occurs. Daniel predicts the empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Prophecy shows the divine hand of God because only an eternal being could have inspired the writers to leave such a legacy.

Finally, the Bible answers the major questions all belief systems must answer. Where did we come from? What is the nature of the divine? What is our relationship to the divine? What is the nature of man? How do we explain the human predicament? What is the answer to the human predicament? What happens after death? And how do we explain evil? Any system that does not answer these questions is an incomplete system. The Bible gives the most complete and accurate answers to the truly important questions of human existence.

No other book ever written has these credentials. A book written by God would have the fingerprints of God all over it. The Bible alone has His fingerprints. [\[4\]](#)

## **Because Jesus Confirmed His Claims**

How do I know Christianity is true? Another source of confirmation comes from the person of Jesus Christ. Among all men who ever lived, Jesus stands apart from each one. Throughout the gospels, Jesus claimed Himself to be God. He claimed to have authority over the law, creation, sin, and death. John 10:30-33 states,

“‘I and the Father are one.’ Again the Jews picked up stones to stone Him but Jesus said to them, ‘I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?’ The leaders replied, ‘We are not stoning you for any of these but for blasphemy because you a mere man, claim to be God.’”

The Jewish enemies of Christ clearly understood His claims and it is for this reason they killed Him. His disciples also understood His claim and presented it in their message. Not only did He make an extraordinary claim; Jesus confirmed it. There are numerous ways in which Christ proved His claims. I will cover only

four.

The first confirmation of Jesus' claims is His sinless life. Jesus' most intimate companions stated He committed no sin that He needed to repent of. Paul writes of Christ, "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor. 5:21) It would have been hypocritical of Jesus if He had indeed sinned and never repented, for He taught all men this principle. Even His enemies could find no sin in Him. Pontius Pilate, after examining Jesus, stated to the angry mob, "I find no basis for a charge against him." The Bible declares God is holy and Jesus showed Himself to be holy as well.

The second confirmation is the impact of Christ on mankind. More schools and colleges have been built in the name of Christ than any other man. More hospitals and orphanages are built in the name of Christ than any other person. More literature and music are written about Christ than any other person. More laws and ethical codes are built on His teachings than any other man. He has had a tremendous impact on every area of culture like no one else.

The third confirmation is the miracles He performed. God's existence makes it reasonable to assume He would use miracles to confirm His message and messenger. Miracles are a powerful confirmation because it authenticates the creator's authority over His creation. Christ's miracles over nature, sickness, spiritual forces, sin, and death displayed this authority over every realm of creation.

The fourth confirmation is the fulfilled prophecies. Before He set foot on the earth, there were over seventy specific prophecies made by the Old Testament writers about the Messiah. The prophecies included the city of birth, His method of execution, His betrayal, the date of His death, etc. Jesus fulfilled each of these. The probability of His fulfilling just eight of these by chance is very close to a mathematical zero.

No one has both made the claims of Christ and confirmed them, as He did. His life

is another proof Christianity is true.[\[5\]](#)

## Because of the Resurrection

Jesus further confirmed His claims to be God by rising from the dead. Jesus openly proclaimed that as God He had authority over life and death. He states in John 11:25, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and he who believes in me will never die." The resurrection is proof that His claim is true.

Many skeptics have presented alternative theories to the resurrection. Some of the most famous include: the theory that the disciples stole the body, the disciples went to the wrong tomb, the disciples hallucinated the resurrection, Jesus did not die but went unconscious on the cross, and the most recent theory is that wild dogs ate the body of Jesus.

However, these arguments have been shown to be severely flawed and could not account for all the facts surrounding the events of the resurrection. Many have done detailed analysis of the evidence and have concluded that the resurrection must be a historical event. The late Simon Greenleaf, the former Royal Professor of Law at Harvard, performed one of the most famous of these studies. In his book, *The Testimony of the Evangelists, the Gospels Examined by the Rules of Evidence*, he concluded,

They had every possible motive to review carefully the grounds of their faith and the evidences of the great facts and truths which they asserted; . . . It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact.

As an atheist, lawyer and journalist Lee Strobel did a two-year investigation on the resurrection interviewing some of the great scholars on both sides. He finally concluded in his book *The Case for Christ*,

In light of the convincing facts I had learned during my investigation, in the face of this overwhelming avalanche of evidence in the case for Christ, the great irony was this, it would require much more faith for me to maintain my atheism than to trust in Jesus of Nazareth. [\[6\]](#)

No one has been able to conquer death by raising himself or herself from the dead. Jesus by His resurrection proves He is God. For only God, the giver of life has the authority over life and death. Since Jesus substantiates His claims, we conclude He is divine and what He teaches is true and authoritative.

Jesus also taught the Bible to be God's Word. Therefore, the Bible is the foundation for all truth to all of mankind in every culture and for all time. Any teaching that is contrary to those of Jesus and the Bible are false. [\[7\]](#)

## **Because I Have Experienced It**

Jesus Christ and the truths of the Bible are not simply facts to be stored in our minds, they are truths that we are invited to experience in a personal way. God invites us to a personal relationship with Him. The evidence points convincingly toward Jesus Christ. After reviewing the evidence, we each must make the decision to move in the direction the evidence is pointing. It is then that we experience the reality of God in our lives. Although an individual's experience is a subjective thing, it is part of the proofs that authenticate faith.

When I first heard that the God of the universe loved me and desperately wanted a relationship with me, I thought it was the greatest news I ever heard. As I began to share my newfound discovery, I met scholars who seemed to have convincing proof that this was all a religious fantasy.

As I searched for answers I came across several Christian scholars who were able to defend the authority of the Bible and the claims of Christ. As I weighed the arguments and questioned men and women on both sides, I could not deny the overwhelming evidence that supported the Bible and the claims of Christ.

Eventually I came to the conclusion that Jesus Christ is Lord.

I then realized it was time for a decision. Often we do not have all the answers, but we move in the direction in which the evidence is pointing. For example, many of us do not really know for sure if the person we are marrying is the right one. However, we make our decision based on the evidence we see at the time. If I find that I can communicate with my fiancée, our personalities are compatible, and that we share the same values, we move in the direction in which the evidence is pointing. When we make the commitment to marry, then our decision is confirmed definitively. Till we make the commitment, we base our decision on the evidence at hand. The same is true with becoming a Christian. Although we do not have all the answers, we can have enough faith to make a decision. When we commit our lives to Christ, we then experience the fullness of a relationship with the risen Savior.

It was then that I made the conscious decision to believe in Jesus Christ. I asked Christ to forgive my sin and invited Him to be the Lord of my life. Although nothing dramatic happened, I knew I had changed. I experienced the peace that comes from knowing your sins are forgiven. I experienced the joy of knowing I was placed here with a purpose and that there is meaning to my existence. Although I still had some questions, sins that I struggled with, and difficult trials, I had an ever-abiding peace and joy I had never had before.

The more I studied the Bible, the more the world around me began to make sense. I gained a new understanding in all my academic studies. The complexity of life on earth, biological organisms, and planets reflected the character and intelligence of a loving Creator who wants us to enjoy His creation.

My struggles in relationships were the results of selfishness, and a sinful attitude in my heart. Once I began to follow the principles of Christ's love, my friendships became much more meaningful and joyous, not competitive. I experienced freedom from living up to others' expectations because the God of the universe

loved me just for who I was.

I experienced the reality of the Bible promises as I applied them to my life. My faith continues to grow each time I see that God's truth works in every day life. The more time I spend with God in prayer, in study, and in worship, the stronger my faith becomes.

How do I know Christianity is true? The facts behind it along with my experience of God's promises confirm it.

### **Notes**

1. Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*. (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing, 1960), 45.
2. For more extensive discussion read the Probe article, "[Evidence for God's Existence](#)" by Sue Bohlin.
3. Albright, William. *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*. (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins, 1953), 176.
4. For more extensive discussion read the Probe article, "[The Authority of the Bible](#)."
5. For more extensive discussion read the Probe article, "[The Uniqueness of Jesus](#)."
6. Strobel, Lee. *The Case for Christ*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1998), 265.
7. For more extensive discussion on the resurrection read the Probe article, "[Resurrection, Fact or Fiction](#)."

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Note: Material on the subjects below can also be found under the “Apologetics General” heading above.

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