

Why Christianity?

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"Every tiny part of us cries out against the idea of dying, and hopes to live forever."
(Ugo Betti in *Struggle to Dawn* (1949))

The Issue of Truth

In our increasingly hectic world, it seems as if most people have substituted convenience for truth. Despite the unhappy exchange there is nothing more important in life than finding truth, nor is there any more valued possession. Throughout history both the famous and men of letters have had some interesting things to say about truth:

Man passes away; generations are but shadows; there is nothing stable but truth (Josiah Quincy);

A sincere attachment to truth, moral and scientific, is a habit which cures a thousand little infirmities of mind (Sydney Smith);

God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose (Emerson);

To love the truth is to refuse to let one's self be saddened by it (Andre Gide);

So little trouble do men take in their search after truth; so readily do they accept whatever comes first to hand (Thucydides);

Without truth there is no goodness (Matthew Henry);

For most of us the truth is no longer part of our minds; it has become a special product for experts (Jacob Bronowski);

Truth matters more than man... (George Steiner).¹

If knowing truth is in one's best interest, then the claim of Christianity to have the truth and the claim of Jesus Christ to be the truth is worth investigation.

For those who do not share our Christian worldview, why might they consider openly evaluating the Christian religion?

First, because it is good to do so. As noted, the honest search for truth is one of the most noble philosophical endeavors of life. Plato declared, "Truth is the beginning of every good thing, both in Heaven and on earth; and he who would be blessed and happy should be from the first a partaker of the truth."

Any religion or philosophy that makes convincing claims to having absolute truth is worth consideration because only a few do. More to the point, any religion that claims and produces solid evidence on behalf of an assertion that it alone is *fully* true is worth serious consideration for that reason alone. Only Christianity does this.

Second, the kind of existence Christianity offers in life is one of deep and abundant satisfaction, regardless of the pain and disappointment we may have to experience. Jesus claimed He would give us what we really want in life—true meaning and purpose now, and everlasting life in a heavenly existence far beyond our current comprehension. The noted Oxford and Cambridge scholar, C. S. Lewis, correctly understood one of the most heartfelt yearnings of mankind when he wrote, "There have been times when I think we do not desire heaven but more often I find myself wondering whether, in our heart of hearts, we have ever desired anything else."² Jesus declared, "I came that they might have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10) and "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes

in me will live, even though he dies" (John 11:25). He also said, "I am the truth" (John 14:6).

Everyone likes a good adventure and, this side of death, life is undoubtedly the greatest adventure of all. The reason is obvious. Most people live their lives not really knowing why they were born—or what happens when they die. Most moderns would consider it too presumptuous to claim any final answers to the mysteries of life and death. But what if, in spite of all the questions, there really were an answer? What if Jesus Christ claims He *is* the answer and that anyone who wishes could determine the truth of His claims to their own satisfaction?

Third, Christianity is not just intellectually credible, whether considered philosophically, historically, scientifically, ethically, or culturally, but from an evidential perspective, it is actually superior to other worldviews, secular or religious. If Christianity were obviously false, as some skeptics charge, how could such esteemed intellectuals as those quoted below logically make their declarations? Mortimer Adler is one of the world's leading philosophers. He is chairman of the board of editors for *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, architect of *The Great Books of the Western World* series and its amazing *Syntopicon*, director of the prestigious Institute for Philosophical Research in Chicago, and author of *Truth in Religion*, *Ten Philosophical Mistakes*, *How to Think About God*, *How to Read a Book*, plus over twenty other challenging books. He simply asserts, "I believe Christianity is the only logical, consistent faith in the world."³ How could Adler make such a statement? Because he knows it can't rationally be made of any other religion.

Philosopher, historian, theologian, and trial attorney John Warwick Montgomery, holding nine graduate degrees in various fields argues, "The evidence for the truth of Christianity overwhelmingly outweighs competing religious claims and secular world views."⁴ How could an individual of such intellectual caliber as Dr. Montgomery use a descriptive phrase as "overwhelmingly outweighs" if it were obviously false? His fifty-plus books and one hundred-plus scholarly articles indicate exposure to a wide variety of non-Christian religious and secular philosophies.

The individual widely considered to be the greatest Protestant philosopher of God in the world, Alvin Plantinga, recalls, "For nearly my entire life I have been convinced of the *truth* of Christianity."⁵ On what basis can one of the world's greatest philosophers make such a declaration if the evidence for Christianity is unconvincing, as critics charge?

Dr. Drew Trotter is executive director of the Center for Christian Studies in Charlottesville, Virginia. He holds a doctorate from Cambridge University. He argues that "logic and the evidence both point to the reality of absolute truth, and that truth is revealed in Christ."⁶

If we are looking for obvious truths, then perhaps we should consider the words of noted economist and sociologist George F. Gilder, author of *Wealth and Poverty*, who asserts, "Christianity is true and its truth will be discovered anywhere you look very far."⁷

Alister McGrath, principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford University, and author of *Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Myths*, declares that the superior nature of the evidence for Christianity is akin to that found in doing good scientific research:

When I was undertaking my doctoral research in molecular biology at Oxford University, I was frequently confronted with a number of theories offering to explain a given observation. In the end, I had to make a judgment concerning which of them possessed the greatest internal consistency, the greatest degree of correspondence to the data of empirical observation, and the greatest degree of

predictive ability. Unless I was to abandon any possibility of advance in understanding, I was obliged to make such a judgment....I would claim the right to speak of the “superiority” of Christianity in this explicative sense.⁸

The noted Christian scholar Dr. Carl F. H. Henry wrote a three-thousand-page, six-volume work on the topic of *God, Revelation and Authority*. After his exhaustive analysis, Henry declared, “Truth is Christianity’s most enduring asset....”⁹

Such accolades could be multiplied repeatedly. While testimonies *per se* mean little, if they are undergirded by the weight of evidence they can hardly be dismissed out of hand. Indeed, as Norman Geisler comments, “In the face of overwhelming apologetic evidence, unbelief becomes perverse....”

Fourth, as we will see, Christianity’s founder, Jesus Christ, is utterly original and totally unique when compared to every other religious leader who has ever lived. In the words of an article in *Time* magazine, His life was simply, “the most influential life that was ever lived,”¹¹ In addition, the Christian Bible itself is clearly the most influential book in human history. As we will see, the evidence in favor of its divine inspiration and the inerrancy of its autographs is formidable, even to many former skeptics. But if Jesus Christ and the Christian Scriptures continue to exert an unparalleled influence in the world, shouldn’t they be considered worthy of an impartial investigation? If objective evidence points to Christianity alone being fully true, then it seems that only personal bias can explain the person’s unwillingness to seriously consider the claims of Jesus Christ on his or her life.

A final reason secularist and those of other religious persuasions should be receptive to Christianity is because we live in an increasingly poisonous age. In our pluralistic and pagan culture, almost anyone is a viable target for conversion to a wide variety of false beliefs which are far more consequential individually than Christianity—from various cults and New Age occultism to solipsism and nihilism. Philosophies of despair and potent occult experiences can convert even those who think they are the least vulnerable: “There is a great deal of research that shows that all people, but especially highly intelligent people, are easily taken in by all kinds of illusions, hallucinations, self-deceptions, and outright bamboozles—all the more so when they have a high investment in the illusion being true.”¹² In other words, even in this life it is the personal welfare of the non-Christian that may be at risk.

Footnotes:

1. Unless otherwise indicated these citations were taken from various books of contemporary or historical quotations, i. e., Rhoda Tripp (compiler), *The International Thesaurus of Quotations*; Ralph L. Woods (compiler and ed.), *The World Treasury of Religious Quotations*; William Neil (ed.), *Concise Dictionary of Religious Quotations*; Jonathan Green (compiler), *Morrow’s International Dictionary of Contemporary Quotations*.
2. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 145.
3. As cited in an interview in *Christianity Today*, Nov. 19, 1990, p. 34.
4. John Warwick Montgomery (ed.), *Evidence for Faith: Deciding the God Question* (Dallas: Word, 1991), p. 9.
5. Alvin Plantinga, “A Christian Life Partly Lived,” in Kelly James-Clark (ed.) *Philosophers Who Believe* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), p. 69, emphasis added.
6. As interviewed in the *Chattanooga Free Press*, July 23, 1995, p. A-11.
7. L. Neff, “Christianity Today Talks to George Gilder,” *Christianity Today*, March 6, 1987, p. 35 cited in David A. Noebel, *Understand the Times: The Religious Worldviews of Our*

Day and the Search for Truth (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1994) p. 13.

8. Alister E. McGrath, "Response to John Hick" in Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips (eds.), *More Than One Way? Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), p. 68.
9. Ajith Fernando, *The Supremacy of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1995), p. 109.
10. Norman L. Geisler, "Joannine Apologetics" in Roy B. Zuck (gen. Ed.), *Vital Apologetic Issues: Examining Reasons and Revelation in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1995), p. 37.
11. Richard N. Ostling, "Who Was Jesus?" *Time*, August 15, 1988, p. 37.
12. Maureen O'Hara, "Science, Pseudo-Science, and Myth Mongering," Robert Basil (ed.), *Not Necessarily the New Age: Critical Essays* (New York: Prometheus, 1988, p. 148.

(Excerpted from the book *Ready With An Answer*, Harvest House, 1997)