

# THE CHRISTIAN FAITH—WHY IT'S TRUE

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The Christian faith was not the fabrication of man, for whatever reason. It was not the invention of the disciples, the Apostle Paul or the Council of Nicea in the fourth century. Nor is the Christian faith simply a result of the cultural evolution of the Jewish people, or an ersatz reviving of the ancient mystery religions. By whatever means the cults suggest, Christianity is not the deception they claim it is. Jesus' original teachings were never perverted, only to have them revived by this cult or that cult, whether Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, Unity School of Christianity, Armstrongism, or others.

Historical facts and the canons of logic document that Christianity alone is fully true and the only religion in the world truly based upon divine revelation. To the extent that any Christian body or denomination holds to that divine revelation, it may be considered genuinely Christian, as opposed to being considered aberrational Christianity, heterodoxy, heresy or Christian in name only.

Besides being divine revelation, biblical faith is rational, not blind or based in subjectivism. Christianity is the one religion simultaneously most likely to be true and, given its claims, the easiest to disprove if false. Therefore, an individual searching for truth should begin that search with biblical Christianity. If knowing the 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. Further, because Christianity is a religion based on *divine* revelation (the content of the Bible), it is Christianity which submits to biblical authority. In other words the church does not sit in judgment upon the content or legitimacy of the Bible; the Bible sits in judgment upon the content or legitimacy of religious bodies claiming to be Christian, whether inside the fold of traditional Christianity or outside.

For those who are already searching but who do not share our Christian worldview, especially members of cults and new religions, why might they consider openly evaluating the Christian religion? First, because it is good to do so. All religions can't be true because they all conflict with one another. All might be false, but only one can be true. The honest search for truth is one of the most noble philosophical endeavors of life. As noted earlier, 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." Jesus Christ claims that He is the truth and that people can determine the legitimacy of His claims to their own satisfaction. 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 biblical Christianity does this.

The kind of existence that Christianity offers a seeker is one of deep and abundant satisfaction, regardless of the pain and disappointment one may experience in life. Jesus claimed that He would give us what we really need in life: true meaning and purpose flow, and when we die everlasting life in a glorious heavenly existence far beyond our current comprehension. 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." <sup>1</sup> Jesus declared, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). He said, "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 on the side of truth listens to me" (John 18:37).

Christianity is unique in both the evidence upon which it rests and the doctrines it teaches. Just as Jesus Christ is unique, so is the religion based upon Him. There is sufficient evidence from virtually every department of human experience and study to objectively demonstrate that Christianity is true. Regardless of the many truth claims in other religions, it is the faith of the non-Christian that is internally and externally lacking. While it may be "politically incorrect" in some minds to say such a thing, the only issue is: "Is it true"? Again, Christian faith is an objective, rational faith. Whatever their merits, non-Christian faiths are typically irrational, subjective and without sufficient grounding as to historical claims, and they lack credible claims to be divine revelation. Despite the widespread misperception that Christianity involves a blind "leap of faith," that description does fit non-Christian religions generally.

### **Scholars Are Convinced**

Christianity is not just intellectually credible, whether considered philosophically, historically, scientifically, ethically or culturally, but from an evidential perspective it is superior to other worldviews, secular or religious. If Christianity were obviously false, as cults and most skeptics charge, how could esteemed scholars and intellectuals logically make their declarations of faith? While testimonies *per se* mean little, if they are undergirded by the weight of scholarly evidence they can hardly be dismissed out of hand. Mortimer Adler is one of the world's leading philosophers. He is chairman of the board of editors for *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*. He is also the architect of *The Great Books of the Western World* series and its amazing *Syntopicon*, and he is 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 20 other challenging books. He simply asserts, "I believe Christianity is the only logical, consistent faith in the world." <sup>2</sup> How could a philosopher of Adler's caliber 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." <sup>3</sup> His 50-plus books and 100-plus scholarly articles indicate exposure to a wide variety of non-Christian religious and secular philosophies. How could an individual of such intellectual stature use a descriptive phrase as "overwhelmingly outweighs" if it were obviously false?

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." <sup>4</sup> On what basis can one of the world's greatest philosophers make such a declaration if the evidence for Christianity is unconvincing, as cultists and critics charge?

Dr. Drew Trotter is executive director of the Center for Christian Studies at 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" <sup>5</sup>

If we are looking for evident truths, then perhaps we should consider the words of noted economist and sociologist, George R. Gilder, author of *Wealth and Poverty*, who asserts, "Christianity is true and its truth will be discovered anywhere you look very far." <sup>6</sup>

Dr. Alister McGrath is Principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford University. He studied at Oxford

and Cambridge universities and is research lecturer in theology at Oxford. He is considered one of the most influential Christian writers in the world, and his numerous books include an acclaimed text on apologetics, *Bridge Building*, as well as *Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Myths*. He 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.<sup>7</sup>

The noted Christian scholar, Dr. Carl F. H. Henry, wrote a 3000-page, 6-volume work titled *God, Revelation and Authority*. After his exhaustive analysis, Henry declared, "Truth is Christianity's most enduring asset...."<sup>8</sup> In his definitive *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 1999, p.785, leading Christian scholar Dr. Norman L. Geisler, author of *When Cultists Ask, When Critics Ask* and *When Skeptics Ask*, writes, "The only system of truth is the Christian system." Such accolades could be multiplied repeatedly. Indeed, as Dr. Geisler comments, "In the face of overwhelming apologetic evidence, unbelief becomes perverse...."<sup>9</sup>

There is also Christianity's founder, Jesus Christ, who 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."<sup>10</sup> In addition, the Christian Bible itself is clearly the most influential book in human history. If Jesus Christ and the Christian Scriptures continue to exert unparalleled influence in the world, shouldn't they be considered worthy of truly impartial investigation? If objective evidence points to Christianity alone being fully true, then it seems that only personal bias can explain people's unwillingness to consider seriously the claims of Jesus Christ on their life.

(to be continued)

## Notes:

1. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 145.
2. As cited in an interview in *Christianity Today*, November 19, 1990, p. 54.
5. John W. Montgomery (ed.), *Evidence for Faith: Deciding the God Question* (Dallas: Word, 1991), p. 9.
4. 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.
5. As interviewed in the *Chattanooga Free Press*, July 25, 1995, p. A-11.
6. L. Neff, "Christianity Today Talks to George Gilder," *Christianity Today*, March 6, 1987, p. 55, cited in David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times: The Religious Worldviews of Our Day and the Search for Truth* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1994), p. 15.
7. 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.
8. Ajith Fernando, *The Supremacy of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1995), p. 109.
9. 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. 57.
10. Richard N. Ostling, "Who Was Jesus?" *Time*, August 15, 1988, p. 57.