

The Evidence for the Reliability of the Bible

“To them also He showed Himself alive after His passion (His suffering in the garden and on the cross) by [a series of] many convincing demonstrations [unquestionable evidences and infallible proofs], appearing to them during forty days and talking [to them] about the things of the kingdom of God.”

Acts 1:3 (Amplified Bible)

“Biblical Christianity refuses to separate historical fact from spiritual meaning. Its core claim is the living God has acted in history, especially in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.”

Nancy Pearcey

(Saving Leonardo: A Call to Resist the Secular Assault on Mind, Morals, and Meaning)

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- John Stott
“Remember that God is a rational God, who has made us in His own image. God invites and expects us to explore His double revelation, in nature and Scripture, with the minds He has given us, and to go on in the development of a Christian mind to apply His marvelous revealed truth to every aspect of the modern and post-modern world.”

Common Misunderstandings About God and Spirituality

- Misunderstanding Number One: People are free to believe whatever they want about God.
- The Manhattan Declaration: “No one should be compelled to embrace any religion against his will, nor should persons of faith be forbidden to worship God according to the dictates of conscience or to express freely and publicly their deeply held religious convictions.”

Misunderstandings about God and Spirituality

The Issue of Tolerance

- TRUE TOLERANCE is where we extend to each other the right to be wrong with respect.
- False Tolerance naively asserts that all ideas are created equal.
- False Tolerance is false and unlivable.
- Some people believe that true tolerance means believing in whatever God (or no god) they want.

Misunderstandings about God and Spirituality

- There is a “bottom-line” and profound reality to grasp: just because you believe something doesn’t make it true.
- People are entitled to their own beliefs, but not their own truth.

Misunderstandings about God and Spirituality

- What you and I believe is not what ultimately matters - TRUTH IS!
- Our believing something is true doesn't make it true.
- Truth is what corresponds to reality.
- The Bible isn't true because I have faith.

Misunderstandings about God and Spirituality

- Misunderstanding Number Two: All religions basically teach the same thing.
- “The differences between religions are worth debating. Theology has consequences: It shapes lives, families, nations, cultures, wars; it can change people, save them from themselves, and sometimes warp or even destroy them. If we tiptoe politely around this reality, then we betray every teacher, guru, and philosopher - including Jesus...and the Buddha both-who ever sought to resolve the most human of all problems: How then should we live.”
Ross Douthat (columnist for New York Times)

Misunderstandings about God and Spirituality

- “No one argues that different economic systems or political regimes are one and the same. Capitalism and socialism are so obviously at odds that their differences hardly bear mentioning. The same goes for democracy and monarchy. Yet scholars continue to claim that religious rivals such as Hinduism and Islam, Judaism and Christianity are, by some miracle of the imagination, essentially the same, and this view resounds in the echo chamber of popular culture.” Dr. Stephen Prothero (God Is Not One)

Misunderstandings about God and Spirituality

- All religions of the world make exclusive and mutually contradictory claims which demonstrate that they are not the same. Jesus of Nazareth is an example: either Jesus was not the Messiah (Judaism), was the Messiah (Christianity), or was a great prophet (Islam) - but not all three.

Misunderstandings about God

- ~~Misunderstanding Number Three~~
and Spiritually
God is a psychological crutch humans invent to feel better.
- New York University psychologist Paul Vitz clarifies this misunderstanding: “Since both believers and nonbelievers in God have psychological reasons for their positions, one important conclusion is that in any debate as the truth of the existence of God, psychology should be irrelevant. A genuine search for evidence supporting or opposing the existence of God should be based on the evidence and arguments found in philosophy, theology, science, history, and other relevant

Three Key Issues about Christianity

- Issue Number One: Christianity deals with Truth-Claims which can be tested and verified. Our culture declares that everyone has his own truth and that truth is private and personal.
- We must introduce (or reintroduce) Christianity to our culture with its very public truth claims and let the best ideas win!

Three Key Issues about Christianity

- Issue Number Two:
Biblical Faith is Not Blind Faith!
- Our culture defines faith as wishful thinking or opposed to reason and evidence.
- “Reason defines one kind of reality (what we know); faith defines another (what we don’t know),” states religion editor Lisa Miller with Newsweek.
- Christianity does not encourage blind faith!
- Biblical faith is Evidenced - based.

Three Key Issues

- Biblical Faith is Evidence - Based (Hebrews 11:1).
Note the biblical pattern:
Evidence - Knowledge - Trust
- Note God speaking to Moses (Exodus 4:4,5; 14:31)
- Note Jesus and the paralyzed man (Mark 2).

Three Key Issues

- Issue Number Two:
Biblical Faith is not Blind Faith!
- Jesus did not demand “blind faith” but shares evidence that would be helpful.
Note Matthew 11:2-5 - “...Jesus answered them, ‘God and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.’”

Three Key Issues

- Issue Number Two:
Biblical Faith is not Blind Faith!
- Paul exhibited the historical nature of Christianity in his letters; Note I Corinthians 15:17-19 - “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins...If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.”
- Christianity demonstrates this significant aspect from every other world religion: testable truth-claims.

Three Key Issues

- Issue Number Two:
Biblical Faith is not Blind Faith!
- Faith is active Trust.
Gordon Lewis: “Spirituality without understanding is not faith; it is superstition.”
- Biblical Faith is active trust that God is who He says He is and will do all that He has promised to do (Note Psalm 9:10 - “...those who know Your name will put their trust in You, For You, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You.”)

Three Key Issues

- Issue Number Two:
Biblical Faith is not Blind Faith!
- God's faithfulness in our past and our present forms the foundation for our faith (trust) in Him in our unseen future.
- Faith (trust) acts on knowledge; faith is not a substitute for knowledge (Note Hebrews 11:6).

Three Key Issues

- Issue Number Three:
Christians are commanded to Defend the Faith.
I Peter 3:15- “In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense [apologia] to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.”
- Apologetics involves:
 - i) responding to objections;
 - ii) making a case;
 - iii) giving hope (Christ-centered).

Three Key Truths

- Issue Number Three:
Christians are Commanded to Defend the Faith.
- Three Objections to the use of Apologetics:
One: Apologetics is not practical and is for scholars (Everyone has questions - your kids, your family, your friends, and our culture);
- Dr. Walter Martin:
“When we fail to answer someone’s questions and objections, we become just one more excuse for them to disbelieve.”

Three Key Truths

- Three Objections to the use of Apologetics:
Two: You should just preach the simple gospel and not worry about the intellectual stuff.
- Nancy Pearcey's comment is critical: "The ultimate goal is to preach the gospel. But the gospel is not simple to those whose background prevents them from understanding it. Today's global secular culture has erected a maze of mental barriers against even considering the biblical message."

Three Key Truths

- Objection Number Three:
Too much knowledge leads to arrogance.
The remedy for arrogance is not ignorance but humility.
- John Stott: “I am not pleading for a dry, humorless, academic Christianity, but for a warm devotion set on fire by truth.”
- Dallas Willard: “Bluntly, to serve God well, we must think straight; and crooked thinking, unintentional or not, always favors evil. And when crooked thinking gets elevated into group orthodoxy, whether religious or secular, there is always...hell to pay.”

Three Key Truths

- Issue Number Three:
We are Commanded to Defend the Faith.
- When Christians love God with their whole heart and minds, they are worshipping God.
- What does it say to us that Jesus, the Son of God, practiced Apologetics with Teaching, as His post-resurrection and pre-Pentecostal ministry?
- Apologetics prepares and serves evangelism, discipleship, and the Great Commission.

Reason and Faith

- What is the relationship between Apologetics, Reason, and Faith?

“Reason in the form of rational arguments and evidence plays an essential role in our showing Christianity to be true, whereas reason in this form plays a contingent and secondary role in our personally knowing Christianity to be true. The proper ground of our knowing Christianity to be true is the inner work of the Holy Spirit in our individual selves; and in our showing Christianity to be true, it is His role to open hearts of unbelievers to assent and respond to the reasons we present.”

William Lane Craig

Challenges to the Bible

- Challenge Number One:
The Growing Secularization of American Culture
- Our culture has divorced the spiritual from the rational.
- Our culture has moved from a THINKING culture to a FEELING culture.
- The secular mindset regards belief in God as nonsense and the rational equivalent of fairy tales for grown-ups.

Challenges to the Bible

- The *Attack of the New Atheists on Christianity*:
“When one person suffers from a delusion, it is called insanity. When many people suffer from a delusion, it is called a religion. If this book works as intended, religious readers who open it will be atheists when they put it down.”

Richard Dawkins

“I think that religion should be treated with ridicule, hatred, and contempt, and I claim that right.” Christopher Hitchens

Challenges to the Bible

- Challenge Number Two:
The Strong Anti-Institutional Attitude among Those under Age Thirty-five.
- Three reasons for this attitude:
Thom and Jess Rainer (The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation)
 - i) Never-ending moral failure of pastors and priests;
 - ii) Churches are too inward focused;
 - iii) Churches are perceived as judgmental, exclusive, and negative.

Challenges to the Bible

- Challenge Number Three:
The Sophisticated Attacks on the Bible's Origin,
Credibility, and Reliability
Multiple fronts in three major avenues:
Traditional Media
The New Media
The Classroom
- Study by Harvard University and George Mason University: 52% of college professors regard the Bible as “an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts.”

Challenges to the Bible

- “They will see me as just another liberal professor trying to cajole them out of their convictions and they are dead right about that - that’s what I am, and that’s exactly what I am trying to do.”

Daniel Dennett (Tufts University)

- “We try to arrange things so that students who enter as bigoted, homophobic, fundamentalists will leave college with views more like our own...so we are going to right on trying to discredit you in the eyes of your children, trying to strip your fundamentalist community of dignity, trying to make your views seem silly rather than discussable.”

Richard Rorty

Evidence for the Reliability of the Bible

- BASIC CONSIDERATIONS
- MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE