

Why Christianity



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INTRODUCTION

The existence of God and the immortality of the soul has challenged thinkers of all ages and all cultures. Nearly all human beings ask themselves:

Does God exist?

Can God's existence be proven?

Is there something better than blind faith as a foundation for my knowledge of God?

Is there some truth about God that can be known with certainty?

Can I prove the existence of God without the Bible or some holy book?

If I just start making reasonable observations of life and the world in which I live, can I conclude God exists?

Can I, by normal every day reason, demonstrate that the personal sovereign God described by Christianity actually exists?

Is there some logical way to demonstrate that the other mystical and atheistic views are not true and the Christian view of God is true without first assuming Christianity is right?

I believe the answer to all these questions is, "Yes!" And the purpose of this study book is to give you that answer.

What Is Apologetics?

Apologetics comes from the Greek word *apologia*, which means "to make a defense." We may get the word "apologize" from it, but the Greek word is quite the opposite. It means to make a logical, reasonable case for something. In the New Testament, the word is used in the context of making a personal defense for oneself. (See Romans 2:15; Acts 19:33; 22:1; 25:16; 26:1, 24; 1 Corinthians 9:3; 2 Corinthians 12:19; and 2 Timothy 4:16). But it also is used in making a defense for the message of Jesus Christ.

Paul told the Philippians, ... *in the defense (apologia) and confirmation of the gospel, you are all partakers of grace with me* (Philippians 1:7).

Peter wrote, *but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense (apologia) to every one who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence* (1 Peter 3:15).

When Christianity was spreading among the Jews, the main word was *evangelidzo*. It means simply "go and tell" or "tell the Good News about" what happened. The word occurs fifteen times in the book of Acts, but its last occurrence is in Acts 17:18. After that, things got more complex. Christianity spread to the Greeks and Romans, who were polytheists with no Bible and lots of philosophies. Here Paul made a **case** for Christianity. He made a **defense**, he **reasons** and **persuades** (Acts 17:2-4 and 28:23-24). He discussed and dialogued with reason, facts, and evidence (Acts 18:4, 19; 19:8, 9).

We might be tempted to say, "It sure would be nice if we didn't have to answer the question **why** and just tell people **what** the Gospel is." But it's just not that kind of world. It wasn't even that kind of world for the apostles.

I would like to dedicate this book to my wife Ellen, who has faithfully supported me for over 35 years of marriage and has worked diligently typing every word of this book and all other Relational Concepts' material, and my daughters Becky, Debbie, and Sarah, who have brought tremendous delight to my life.

I am indebted to many men who have contributed to my life and inspired this and the other Relational Concepts' material. A few of these include my father (David DeWitt), Rev. E. Eugene Williams, Dr. Howard Hendricks, Dr. Charles Ryrie, and Walter Henrichsen. For this particular book, I would like to thank Dr. Norman L. Geisler for his contribution to my work in this area.

David A. DeWitt

This studybook will probably be more interesting to an unbeliever and an older believer than it will be to a new believer. New believers generally want to know **what** the Bible has to say—and rightly so. No one will grow significantly without regular input from the Bible.

Apologetics, however, is necessary for two reasons:

First, many people won't bother to open a Bible unless they realize there is a good reason to do so. And the fact that Christianity can be shown to be true is a good reason.

Second, the God of Christianity does not just exist because the Bible says so. It is true, and the Bible does say so. But truth is truth. And if something is true, then a reasonable case should be able to be made for it. That doesn't mean everybody who hears the logic will believe. Only the Holy Spirit can generate saving faith, and the Spirit of God may or may not use our efforts. But that does not give us permission to be sloppy.

When the world sees Christianity as the half-witted belief of naive religious fanatics with no credibility in the real world, we must tell them the truth

We cannot communicate to a skeptical world with “God said it, I believe it, and that settles it.” Christianity has the distinction of being the reasonable religion. It's the only one that can be investigated, checked out, examined, and found to be reasonably and logically valid. The point is, the message given in the Bible, taken in a plain, ordinary, normal way, can be logically verified as true.

How to Proceed

In order to make a complete case for Christianity, we must determine four things:

- What truth is
- How truth should be tested
- The view about truth which passes the test and, therefore, proves the existence of God
- That biblical Christianity is the truth revealed by God

The goal of this booklet will be to show that a belief in the God described in the Bible (theism) is the only reasonable view. Then I shall prove Christianity is the correct theistic view.

For further study, I recommend *Christian Apologetics* by Norman Geisler, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell, and my book, *Answering the Tough Ones*.

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THE NATURE OF TRUTH

There are two very different ways to look at truth. They are usually called **relative** truth and **absolute** truth. The point we shall make here is that all truth is absolute truth. The words “relative” and “truth” are contradictory terms and therefore impossible. Here are some brief definitions:

TRUTH is the way things actually are
RELATIVE TRUTH says true things are sometimes true
ABSOLUTE TRUTH says true things are always true

The Case for RELATIVE TRUTH

Relative truth says that which is true sometimes and in some places and with some people is not necessarily true at all times and in all places and with all people. So truth is relative with respect to time, space, and people.

- Concerning **time**, relativists believe that what was true then is not necessarily true now. For example, the statement “Ronald Reagan is President of the United States” was true in 1985 but not now. Or a statement like, “Ancient men believed the sun moved around the earth” was true then but not now.
- Concerning **space**, relativists believe that what is true here is not necessarily true there. For example, if I’m facing you and say, “The pencil is to the right of the pad,” that may be true from here but not from there. Perspective, they claim, changes truth. So truth about God can change from an eastern to a western perspective.
- Concerning **persons**, relativists say that what is true for me is not necessarily true for you. For example, if I say, “I feel warm” or “I am sick,” that may not be true of you. So truth varies with the individual person.

Problems with Relativism

- If truth was relative, there could be actual contradictory conditions, and that is impossible. It would be like saying, “All pens write with blue ink” and “Some pens write with red ink.” That’s a contradiction, and therefore, at least one of the statements must be false. If you and I make contradictory statements, then there are only three possibilities: (1) I am wrong, (2) you are wrong, or (3) we are both wrong. But we cannot both be right.
- If relativism were true, we could never learn because everything could be true—even if it’s wrong. Also, one can never know something is wrong unless there is an absolute truth to measure it with.

The Case for ABSOLUTE TRUTH

Absolute truth says that which is true sometimes and in some places and with some people is true at all times and in all places and for all people. So truth is absolute with respect to time, space, and people. And as we shall see, the case for absolute truth disproves the existence of relative truth.

- Concerning **time**, what is true then is true now. For example, the statement “Ronald Reagan is President of the United States” said in 1985 is still true now. It is absolutely true for all time that Reagan was President in 1985. Also, if ancient men believed the sun moved around the earth, then it’s true now and for all times that ancient men believed that.
- Concerning **space**, what is true here is true everywhere. For example, if the pencil is to the right of the pad from here, then it is also true from there (or anywhere) that the pencil is to the right of the pad from here. Perspective does not change truth. What is true is true regardless of one’s perspective of it. Perspective is like several boys looking at a ballgame through different knot holes in a fence. Their perspectives may differ, but the truth remains absolute.
- Concerning **persons**, what is true for me is true for everybody. For example, if I feel warm, then it is true for you (and everybody) that I feel warm, even if you feel cold. The same goes for “I am sick,” etc.

Misunderstandings about Absolutism

- To say truth is absolute is not to claim absolute knowledge of any truth. It is only to say that if something is true, it is true absolutely. The knowledge of truth is something very different than truth itself.
- Time and space are inseparable with respect to truth. For example, to say Reagan is (or was) President is not a truth claim unless some time is stated or implied. If no time or place is meant, then it is neither true nor false, since no claim is being made about any time or place.
- Just because truth is changeless does not mean there cannot be any new truth. Old truths cannot change but new truths can come to be. There is new truth when a new condition is accurately described. For example, if January 1, 3000, arrives, it will be true for the first time to get up in the morning and say, “This is January 1, 3000.” It was never true before but will always be true from then on. It is new truth. Everything that happens is new truth, and it is absolutely true that it has happened. That truth is now added to all other absolute truth.

Q and A

The Nature of Truth

Please fold this page along the dotted line. Then, after answering each question, check the answer and the explanation across the folded page. Ask yourself not only why the true answer is true but also why the false answer is false.

1. If a tree falls in the woods and no one is there to hear it, does it make a noise?
 - A. Yes, because trees make noise when they fall.
 - B. No, because no one is there to hear the sound.
 - C. It depends on your perspective. If you were not there, it made no noise for you.
 2. A relativist would claim *No one should say Christianity is true for everyone* because
 - A. The truth of Christianity cannot be known absolutely.
 - B. Christianity is only absolutely true for those who believe it.
 - C. Christianity is only sometimes true for some people.
 3. An absolutist would claim *adultery is always wrong*
 - A. *If the Bible says so.*
 - B. *If it is wrong at all.*
 - C. *Because it has always been wrong.*
1. In this classic question, the correct answer is A because it is absolutely true that trees make noise when they fall. B is incorrect because it deals with knowledge, not truth. C is incorrect because truth is independent of human perspective.
 2. Of these possible relativist claims, C is correct. Relative truth is defined as claiming true things are sometimes true. A is incorrect because it is the position of agnosticism not relativism. B is incorrect because it is the position of faithism not relativism.
 3. In these choices B is correct. Absolutism says true things are always true. So if adultery is wrong, then it is always true that adultery is wrong. A is incorrect because it is not necessary to believe the Bible is true to believe in absolute truth. C is incorrect because an absolutist would not necessarily assume adultery has always been wrong.

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4. The relativist would tend to tolerate most world religions because
 - A. It is necessary for a global community to function.
 - B. Those religions work well for them in their culture.
 - C. There are many religions which are sometimes true.

 5. Suppose I believe Tennessee winters are cold, but someone from Alaska believes Tennessee winters are warm. My belief is absolutely true
 - A. If it is true that I believe it.
 - B. If I am in Tennessee.
 - C. Because the fact is, winters are cold in Tennessee.

 6. Which statement is absolutely true?
 - A. Christianity can be just as true for you as it is for me.
 - B. Christianity is true for you if it is true for me.
 - C. Christianity is true for you because it is true for me.
4. In this example, C is correct. Relativism says true things need only be sometimes true. A is incorrect because the function of the global community is not part of relativism. B is incorrect because it is the view of pragmatism not relativism.

 5. In this example, A is correct. If I believe something is true, then it is absolutely true that I believe it. Even if I'm wrong, it's absolutely true I believe it. B is incorrect because it doesn't matter where I am when I believe it. C is incorrect because the question is not about the facts but about what I believe. I could be wrong, but the fact that I believe it is absolutely true.

 6. In these statements, B is absolutely true. If Christianity is true, then it is true for everyone. For example, when Jesus presented Himself as the Messiah to the Jews, it did not pertain to the Chinese. But it was just as true for the Chinese that Jesus presented Himself as the Messiah to the Jews. A is incorrect because what Christianity can be for me or you is not relevant to it being absolutely true. C is incorrect because absolute truth does not presuppose Christianity is true for me.

TESTS FOR TRUTH

Having determined truth to be absolute, we can now ask the question, How would we test somebody's idea to see whether or not it is true? If somebody were to suggest something as being true, how would we check it out? Here are seven common tests for truth. Remember, these are not world views. They are ways to check out world views.

AGNOSTICISM

Truth cannot be known. Agnosticism is often seen as a modified atheism. We sometimes hear, "I'm not an atheist, but I'm an agnostic." Actually, that's an improper use of the word, since they are two very different **kinds** of things. Atheism is a world view. Agnosticism is not a viewpoint but a way to evaluate a viewpoint. The two should not be in the same category.

The word *agnosticism* means "no" (*a*) "knowledge" (from the Greek word *gnosis* "to know"). The position says we cannot know anything for sure. We can know appearances—phenomena—but not reality—*nomena*. So truth is connected to knowledge. Agnostics point out that knowledge is a synthesis, a changing body of what we observe to be true. Therefore, we can never know the truth about anything.

Problems with Agnosticism

It's self-defeating. Here is the most basic problem with agnosticism. Make note of it because many views make this same mistake.

If truth cannot be known, then the statement, "Truth cannot be known" cannot be known

So some truth may be knowable. If the statement can be known, then something can be known, namely, that statement. Either way, agnosticism defeats itself. Agnosticism is negative dogmatism (the belief that everything can be known), and one must be omniscient in order to be dogmatic. [There is a soft form of agnosticism which says **some** things cannot be known, and that, of course, is true (Deuteronomy 29:29). But what is being evaluated here is the hard or pure form.]

Something must be known about everything in order to know that nothing can be known about anything. One cannot say something is "not that" unless he knows something about the "that." If I didn't know anything about it, it would not have come to mind in the first place. For example, if I say, "I know nothing about Uglats," then either (1) the word Uglat has no meaning, in which case I have made no statement at all, or (2) it has meaning (even if I just made it up), in which case I know something about them. For instance, it's illogical to say, "I don't know anything about computers." If I really didn't know anything about them, I could not meaningfully use that word in a sentence.

It is true that knowledge is a synthesis of what we observe, but truth is not. Just because our knowledge of truth changes does not mean truth changes. Agnostics make the classic mistake of confusing truth with knowledge. Because they are generally humanists, they see truth as originating with man, so truth and knowledge get blended together.

SKEPTICISM

Truth must always be doubted. Skepticism is a close cousin to agnosticism. Skepticism believes judgment must always be suspended. The reason is because knowledge comes through the sensations and ideas of the mind, but the mind learns based on customs, which must always be doubted.

Problems with Skepticism

It is self-defeating. If truth must be doubted, then the statement "Truth must be doubted" must be doubted. In that case, some truth may be known undoubtedly. If the statement is not to be doubted, then some truth is not to be doubted, and that violates the whole position of skepticism. Either way, skepticism defeats itself. In other words,

A skeptic who is truly skeptical must be skeptical about his skepticism

To always suspend judgment is to suspend judgment on suspending judgment, which is back to making a judgment. So skepticism is impossible.

It's true that we acquire knowledge through social customs. But what the mind does not learn from customs and traditions is the ability to think with reason. All people everywhere assume $A \neq \neg A$, that is, a thing and its opposite cannot both be true. In other words, logic is everybody's basis for thinking. If someone does not think reasonably, we call him unreasonable and disregard his thoughts. For example, different cultures may define differently what a "wife" is. But no one believes the same woman is both his wife and not his wife at the same time.

FAITHISM

Truth must be believed. There are two kinds of faithism. The liberal kind says that truth is tested in one's life, not by human reason. It's personal, not propositional. The law of noncontradiction ($A \neq \neg A$) is a rational hang-over which does not apply to spiritual/religious truth. Religious truth requires a leap of faith. (Kierkegaard and Barth)

The more popular conservative form of faithism says everybody must ultimately base their ideas on faith. Ultimately there is no evidence for anything. For example, Muslims accept the Koran by faith, Christians accept the Bible by faith, evolutionists accept evolution by faith, creationists accept creation by faith, etc. To admit one's own presuppositions and to point out the presuppositions of others is, therefore, to maintain that all reasoning is, in the nature of the case, circular reasoning. Faithists claim that truth comes from the top down. If man could know God by natural reason, then grace would be negated and human works would be established as a means of knowing God. Faith alone is the way to God. Examples of faithism include sayings like, "God said it, I believe it, and that settles it," "Only believe, only believe, all things are possible, only believe," and "Some may doubt that God's Word is true, I've chosen to believe it, how about you?"

Problems with Faithism

A faithist must be asked if there is a justification for his faith. If no reason is given, then there is no reason to believe it. It's not in the arena, since it's not offering a test for truth at all. If someone makes a justification and offers a reason to believe it (which they often do), then they are not faithists. For example, to say "the reason to believe in faithism is because presuppositions are unavoidable" is a rational, not a faithist, argument. Whenever I give reasons for my faith, my faith is based on reason, not on faith. There is no such thing as a "faith" argument. The two words contradict each other. It's like talking about a black-white or an up-down. The faithist must deny his faithism to make a case for it. So either it is not a test for truth at all or it's a self-defeating one.

If we can simply believe without justification, then so can any idiotic or insane person believe in nonsense. Also, one is faced with contradictions being true. If the Bible is true because it is believed, then so are the Koran and the Gita. If truth is determined by faith, then there is no difference between sense and nonsense, sanity and insanity, or reality and mythology.

***Faithism fails to distinguish between a belief "in" and a belief "that."
It is impossible to have an intelligent belief in God unless one first
has some way to know that there is a God in whom to believe.***

In the Bible, faith is not a blind leap. Faith is a rational decision which extends beyond what is observed but not in contradiction of it (John 1:12). It's going out on a limb but not going in some direction other than that of the limb. I have faith the roof of my office won't fall in on me because I have been under it before, plus there are many other similar offices whose roofs don't fall in. I believe the Bible is true because everything I can check out in it is demonstrably true. Therefore, I have faith in the rest of it, even though I cannot check all of it out. If it were filled with contradictions and myths, then it would not be worthy of my faith.

Q and A

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7. An agnostic would not accept the deity of Christ because
 - A. He or she believes one cannot know it is true.
 - B. He or she believes one cannot prove it is true.
 - C. He or she believes one cannot observe that it is true.
 8. The basic problem with both agnosticism and skepticism is
 - A. They are not logical.
 - B. They are self-defeating.
 - C. They are humanistic.
 9. What is wrong with the following agnostic argument? *We cannot say marriage is only for heterosexuals because we are constantly learning more about homosexuality (for example, that it is genetically determined), so the truth about sexuality can never be known.*
 - A. If something is true, it can be known.
 - B. Just because everything cannot be known does not mean some things cannot be known.
 - C. We know homosexual marriage is wrong because it is not found in the natural world. If something is contrary to what we observe, it is not true.
 10. What's wrong with this argument from skepticism? *What we have learned about the roles of men and women came through social customs which must always be doubted. Therefore we must doubt the traditional roles of men and women.*
 - A. Not everything known is learned from social customs. We did not learn to think logically from society.
 - B. What we know about the roles of men and women should come from faith in the Bible.
 - C. Social customs have always defined roles for men and women with male headship. This is simply a fact which will not change.
7. In this example, A is correct. Agnostics are people who believe nothing can be known. Therefore, they believe the deity of Christ cannot be known. B is incorrect because it is the argument of rationalism not agnosticism. C is incorrect because that is the argument of evidentialism not agnosticism.
 8. The biggest problem with both views is B. If "truth cannot be known," then their truth claim cannot be known. A and C are incorrect because, although they could be said of both agnosticism and skepticism, they are not their basic problem.
 9. The problem with this argument is B. Just because we will never know everything about our sexuality does not mean we cannot know anything about it with certainty. A is incorrect because many true things cannot be known (Job 38 and 39). C is incorrect because it does not answer the point. The agnostic would simply say, "We continue to learn and observe from the natural world, so the knowledge obtained from our observations cannot be known to be true.
 10. The correct answer to this argument is A. The mind did not learn logical thinking from society. We were born with brains that think logically. Also, if truth must be doubted, then the idea that *the roles of men and women cannot be known* must be doubted. Therefore, some roles for men and women can be known undoubtedly. B is incorrect because it is an argument from faithism. C is incorrect because it is the argument of evidentialism.

Q and A

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Please fold this page along the dotted line. Then, after answering each question, check the answer and the explanation across the folded page. Ask yourself not only why the true answer is true but also why the false answer is false.

11. Evaluate this statement. *We must start somewhere, so Christians can start with a belief that the Bible is true.*
- A. It's true because some presuppositions must be assumed.
 - B. It's false because Christianity starts with a belief in Jesus not in the Bible.
 - C. It is false because then Muslims can start with a belief that the Koran is true.
12. Evaluate this statement. *Without faith, it's impossible to please Him ... (Hebrews 11:6).*
- A. Pleasing God begins with faith.
 - B. Pleasing God begins with knowledge.
 - C. Pleasing God begins with commitment.
13. Kierkegaard and Barth said that spiritual truth (like, say, belief in God or the things written in the Bible) must be entered into by a *leap of faith from the real world to the spiritual world*. Evaluate their idea.
- A. The problem is, it assumes the spiritual realm described in the Bible is not real except in what our faith can imagine.
 - B. It's true that faith is a leap because we don't see the things we believe in.
 - C. It's false because we can start with faith in the Bible without a leap into some spiritual realm.
14. Evaluate this statement. *Only believe. Only believe. All things are possible. Only believe.*
- A. This is a good statement of the power available to the Christian who places his or her faith in Christ.
 - B. The problem is, this statement could be believed by Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, etc.
 - C. It would be a good statement if "all" were changed to "many," thus showing the power of faith.
11. The correct evaluation here is C. If the Bible is true by faith, then so is any religious book, like the Gita, the Koran, and the Book of Mormon. But these books contradict one another, so we would have contradicting truth, and that is impossible. A is incorrect because presuppositions must be undeniably established, not presupposed. B is incorrect because a belief in Jesus should be connected to a belief in the Bible.
12. In this example, B is correct. One must have an object for faith before faith is relevant. One's faith cannot create God. God must be first known, then believed. A and C are incorrect because simply having faith or commitment does not please God. One could have sincere faith in or be committed to false prophets, false ideas, false religions, etc. Faith only pleases God when it is faith in God Himself. (*This is eternal life, that they may know Thee... John 17:3.*)
13. This idea is best evaluated by A. This upper story of religious or spiritual reality is, for them, not connected to reality as we know it. That assumes there is no rational case which can be made for Christian beliefs. But a case can be made for biblical Christianity from the real world. B is incorrect. Indeed, faith is in what is unseen, but it is not activated by a leap. To believe my office ceiling will not fall on me is a belief in the unseen but not a leap into some spiritual unreal realm. C is incorrect because it is still faithism. C is conservative faithism evaluating liberal faithism.
14. The best evaluation of this song is B. Many contradicting religions could make this claim. One must ask "only believe" what? Even in the context of Christianity, Christian truth is not determined by the fact that it is believed in. A is incorrect because even in a Christian context only things within the sovereignty of God are possible. C is incorrect because "only believe" is not the "only" requirement.

EXPERIENTIALISM

Truth must be experienced. Experientialists would state their view something like this. Experience is the consciousness or awareness that individuals have. So there is nothing bigger than experience. Everything we know, we know by experience. Even reasoning is an intellectual experience. Since everything involves a consciousness or awareness by someone about someone or something, experience is the only all-inclusive test for truth. One's consciousness of something is more basic than one's concept about it. For example, if we had no consciousness of God, we could have no valid concepts about God. Experience is the stuff out of which all truth must be built. There are no meaningful expressions except those rooted in experience. For example, in Christianity we sing of Jesus Christ, "You ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart."

God is actually indescribable. Words cannot capture religious consciousness. God can be felt, i.e., experienced, but not expressed. Limited words cannot express ultimate truth. Ultimate truth can only be experienced, not expressed.

Problems with Experientialism

Experience is neither true nor false. Experiences as such are not self-interpreting. They do not come with meaning labels on them. They are neutral and may be interpreted in a variety of ways. They are stuff, not structure. Meaning must be brought to the experiences, and experiences are capable of different interpretations. For example, consider the conversion experience. A Christian sees it as the work of the Holy Spirit of God on the heart of the person to bring him or her to a realization of sin and need for salvation. However, a naturalistic psychologist recently described the conversion experience as that which comes when the human mind is dedicated to something. He said that as we make a conscious case for our belief, our subconscious stores up the opposite case. When the conscious faith fails, the opposite one leaps from our subconscious, and we are "converted." So, you see, the truth of Christianity cannot be based on the experience of conversion to it but whether or not it is a true thing to be converted to.

It is a categorical mistake to speak of a "true" "experience." It's like talking about the taste of blue. Truth and experience are in different categories.

In other words,

Truth is:	Experience is:
True or false	Neither true or false
What we express	What we have
A proposition by someone	A condition of someone
An affirmation	An awareness

An experience cannot be used to prove the truth of that experience. That's circular reasoning and begs the question. You cannot use the thing you wish to prove as the basis of your proof.

As to the argument that everything (including reasoning) is an experience, this is unhelpful in testing truth. If one simply calls everything an experience, then the word "experience" has no meaning at all. It's like adding "x" to everything. To say, "**My experience** of reason leads to **my experience** of God," is the same as saying, "Reason leads to God." But that's rationalism, not experientialism.

It is self-defeating for experientialists to speak of an experience (such as experiencing God) as being indescribable. If we speak beyond our ability to express, we are only stuttering. If an experientialist expresses an inexpressible experience, he has made no expression at all. For example, any statement that says, "No logical statement can be made about God," is self-defeating since the statement itself claims to be a logical statement about God.

Therefore:

Experientialism is either meaningless, circular, or self-defeating

EVIDENTIALISM

Truth must be factual. Definition—A **fact** is a distinguishable piece of reality.

This view claims the following four things:

- (1) Truth must be based empirically in facts or events, not in ideas or theories, or else it is not grounded at all. For example, “I’m from Missouri. Show me!” is a typical statement of an evidentialist.
- (2) Facts stand by themselves apart from the framework of different points of view.
- (3) Not all facts can be interpreted in entirely different ways. “Some things just speak for themselves.” For example, design always requires a designer.
- (4) Truth must be observable, objective, and general. Private subjective observations are not evidential.

Problems with Evidentialism

No fact gives off meaning. Meaning always demands a context. So when the context changes, the meaning changes. For example, “Heisnowhere.” This could be read, “He is now here” or “He is no where.”

For example, is this, in fact, a picture of an old lady or a young lady? Can you see both ladies?



Facts and events have meaning only when interpreted in light of some world view.

For example, consider the subject of miracles.

Theism says they are “evidence of God.”

Atheism says they are “odd, not God.”

Pantheism says they are “an unusual eruption of The Force.”

As an illustration, suppose we ask each of these three world views to assume the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is true. How would they explain it?

Theism might say, “It proves Jesus was God.”

Atheism might say, “It’s an unusual event of nature, not yet explained.”

Pantheism might say, “It shows Jesus was closely tuned to The Force.”

I remember a TV commercial for a certain beer which showed a guy in a hot desert. Then the scene changed to someone pouring a cold beer into a frosted glass. The only words in the commercial were, “Some things just speak for themselves.” My thought was about a minister I know who would not bring the same meaning to that glass of beer as the guy in the desert.

***Facts don't speak
for themselves***

It's true that design always implies a designer, but what basis is there for labeling something as designed unless we already assume a theistic world view? In order to call ordered intricacies as a “design” assumes a designer to start with.

Q and A

Experientialism

Please fold this page along the dotted line. Then, after answering each question, check the answer and the explanation across the folded page. Ask yourself not only why the true answer is true but also why the false answer is false.

15. An experientialist would say
- A. I can feel the presence of Jesus.
 - B. I have a personal relationship with Jesus.
 - C. I know Jesus personally.
16. Which would be the argument of the experientialist. *I know God led me to get divorced and remarried because ...*
- A. *I have such a great life now with my new spouse.*
 - B. *I now understand a loophole in the Bible which allows it.*
 - C. *I believe God would not want me to live like I was living.*
17. What's wrong with this statement? *I know I have experienced healing because I am experiencing being well.*
- A. You don't know for sure if you are well.
 - B. You can remove the two uses of the word "experience" and not change the meaning of the statement.
 - C. Wellness is not the same as sickness.
18. What's wrong with this statement? *I know I'm worshipping God because of the feelings I have while worshipping.*
- A. Worshipping God is more than feelings.
 - B. Worship must be in spirit and in truth.
 - C. It's circular reasoning.
19. Evaluate this statement. *A relationship with God must be experienced.*
- A. There is no way to know for sure you are experiencing a relationship with God.
 - B. There is no way to know from experience alone that you are experiencing God.
 - C. A relationship with God must be believed.
15. In this example, A is correct. An experientialist bases truth on his or her experience. B is incorrect because a personal relationship with Jesus could be based on reason, knowledge, evidence, etc. C is incorrect because knowing Jesus is not necessarily a claim that the knowledge came from experience.
16. All these statements are wrong, but the argument of the experientialist would be A. Their experience is the foundation of their belief. B is incorrect. It's a false use of evidence and a perversion of reason but not experientialism. C is incorrect because it is an argument from faithism.
17. The reason this statement is not an argument for experientialism is B. To call everything an experience says nothing. Simply labeling everything an experience says nothing about how the truth of the experience is determined. A and C are incorrect because they have nothing to do with experientialism.
18. The problem with this statement is C. It's circular reasoning and a false test for truth to use what you are trying to prove as the basis for proving it. The experience of worship is not proof of the truth of the experience of worship. A and B are incorrect because they do not identify what is wrong with the statement.
19. In this case, B is the best answer. Experience cannot interpret experience. C is incorrect because it is an argument from faithism. A is incorrect because it is an argument from agnosticism.

Q and A

Evidentialism

Please fold this page along the dotted line. Then, after answering each question, check the answer and the explanation across the folded page. Ask yourself not only why the true answer is true but also why the false answer is false.

20. Which statement describes evidentialism?
- A. Seeing is believing.
 - B. Believing is seeing.
 - C. We cannot know what we see or believe.
21. Which statement describes evidentialism?
- A. Truth is what I can see, touch, or measure.
 - B. Truth is what everybody sees, touches, or measures.
 - C. Truth is what anybody could see, touch, or measure.
22. What's the problem with saying, *I'm from Missouri, show me!*
- A. Nobody should admit they are from Missouri.
 - B. You will interpret what I show you from a certain predetermined perspective.
 - C. Some things cannot be seen, they must be believed.
23. Evaluate this statement. *The design of a living cell proves there must be a designer.*
- A. True. Design requires a designer.
 - B. Design can come about in ways other than a designer.
 - C. There is no way to prove the wonders of a living cell are a design by simply observing them.

20. The statement which describes evidentialism is A. They believe truth is to be found in the facts. Seeing is one way an evidentialist would determine those facts. B and C are incorrect because they express the views of faithism and agnosticism respectively.
21. In this example, C is correct. Evidentialists see true facts as ones which are generally observable by anyone who seeks to observe them. A is incorrect because evidentialists object to private observations as a test for truth. B is incorrect because evidentialists only believe truth is available for everyone not necessarily observed by everyone.
22. The problem with this saying is B. I can show you facts, but facts don't give off meaning. You and I bring meaning to facts. A is incorrect. Just a bit of humor! C is incorrect because it is faithism, which we have already determined to be wrong.
23. Concerning this statement, answer C is correct. The statement is true in itself because it has called a living cell a "design." But there is no way to know that by simply looking at the intricacies of the cell. First, one must establish the existence of a designer and that cannot be observed from the cell alone. A is incorrect here. The statement itself is true, but it does not account for why the wonders of the cell are a design. B is incorrect because once something is established as a design, then it cannot come from anything but a designer.

PRAGMATISM

Truth must be practical. Pragmatists make the following points:

- (1) “Religion is not to be judged by its roots [i.e., its sources] but by its fruits [its results].” William James
- (2) The testing ground for truth is, “Does it work in the lives of people. Is it livable?”
- (3) It is not the present individual experience but the general future experience seen over the long haul which determines truth.
- (4) We must be able to live consistently with our theory. The proof of the theory of a religion or philosophy is, Does it work for people?

Problems with Pragmatism

Success is not truth. Results do not establish what is true but simply what happens to work. Results may have been accidental or evil. For example, being honest on one’s tax reports may be economically painful yet right. Economic gain by oppressing the poor might work, but it’s not right.

Truth is more than the expedient. We could never determine truth in court by swearing people to just tell “the expedient, the whole expedient, and nothing but the expedient, so help your future experience.”

It is impossible to know the long-run consequences of anything. Something may look like it works for a long time and yet be false (like providing servicemen in World War II with free cigarettes).

On only pragmatic grounds, opposing world views can work equally well. Polytheism worked well for societies all through history, pantheism works for Hindus in India, and theism works for Christians in America. But Hinduism and Christianity contradict each other, so both cannot possibly be right.

RATIONALISM

Truth must be logical. Rationalism says:

- (1) That which is logical can be known with certainty because it can be tested with the law of noncontradiction. This is the basic law of logic. It says a thing and its opposite cannot both be true. $A \neq \neg A$. If you have brown eyes, then it is not true that you do not have brown eyes, etc.
- (2) There are some truths innate in the mind and known independent of experience. (The mind is not a *tabula rasa*, i.e., a blank sheet). One of those truths is that the mind always evaluates logically. Whenever we say someone is wrong, we are saying he or she is being illogical.
- (3) The rationally inescapable is real. One example of rationalism is the ontological argument for the existence of God. It goes like this—
 - (a) The idea of a most perfect being exists.
 - (b) A being which did not exist would be less perfect than one who did exist.
 - (c) Therefore, that being exists.

Problems with Rationalism

NOTE: This view is almost true. Points (1) and (2) above are correct. Reason does provide us with a valid way to test observations. But there are some problems with point (3).

The rationally inescapable is not necessarily real. For example, “If mermaids exist, they must live in the sea” is a rational statement, but it does not establish that mermaids are real. Pure logic provides us with no way to eliminate the “if.” The ontological argument of point (3) only proves that the *idea* of God exists, not that God exists.

The problem with pure rationalism is that it has no purely rational way to establish itself. One cannot legitimately argue that “the law of noncontradiction is valid because it is a contradiction to deny it” because that’s circular reasoning. In that case one would be using the law of noncontradiction as the basis of proving the law of noncontradiction.

REMEMBER: This test for truth is almost correct. It is valid to test truth with reason because, as we shall see in the last category, it is undeniable. The only shortcoming it has is it cannot by itself establish itself.

Some have suggested that the best test is a combination of several of the above methods, but several leaky buckets hold no more water than one leaky bucket.

UNDENIABILITY

Truth must be undeniable. NOTE: In my opinion, this is the best test for truth.

- (1) Truth is that which is unable to be avoided and, therefore, unable to be denied. For example, “I exist” is undeniable since I would have to exist to make the denial.
- (2) Logic (the law of noncontradiction) applied to reality is true for the same reason—because it is inescapable. To say “the law of noncontradiction is false” is a claim based on the law of noncontradiction. For example, to say “God cannot be understood logically” is to make a logical statement about the understanding of God.
- (3) Even though there are mysteries (as to how or why certain things can be true), there are no actual contradictions. For example, we do not know how speed changes time, why light can be either waves or particles, how God can predestine everything and we have free will, or how there can be a Trinity and one God. But none of these are logical contradictions. They are all verifiable logically. It’s just that we lack the information as to know how they fit together.
- (4) There must be at least some inclinations of the mind toward truth, otherwise nothing could ever be known. There would be no possibility for truth. But that’s already been shown to be false (agnosticism is self-defeating). The one thing in the mind that does not come through the senses is the mind itself, which is universally observed as pursuing reality logically.
- (5) The real is rational, even though the rational is not always real. This is true because it’s undeniable. If I say, “Rational thought does not apply to reality,” I have already, by making the statement, applied rational thought to reality.

CONCLUSION

As I look, taste, touch, smell, and hear the universe around me, I can make certain observations which are undeniable. The reality of matter and energy, my own existence and that of other people, animals, and things are undeniably there. Ideas are also undeniably there, one of which is the law of non-contradiction (also known as “logic” or “reason,” $A \neq -A$). This seems to be the only idea for testing truth which is undeniable, that is, we cannot get away from it. If someone disagrees with someone about something, they either say (1) your observations are deniable or (2) your thinking is illogical. In other words, they are saying your information and/or your way of thinking can be denied. Disagreement does not usually say, “Your problem is you are looking at things logically.” If they do, one can simply point out their objection is a logical one.

Would it be a problem to claim undeniability is circular reasoning because it is saying undeniability is true because it’s undeniable? This would indeed be circular reasoning, but that is not what the view says. It claims

Undeniability is true because it is inescapable

It’s not true simply because we state it as a possible theory and then use it to prove things as the other views do. Rather, we are saying it is true because it cannot be avoided. We are simply stuck with it. We can’t get away from it. Therefore, it is true. (*See Acts 4:16.*)

Q and A

Pragmatism

Rationalism

Undeniability

Please fold this page along the dotted line. Then, after answering each question, check the answer and the explanation across the folded page. Ask yourself not only why the true answer is true but also why the false answer is false.

24. Which statement is an example of pragmatism?

- A. The Dead Sea Scrolls prove the reliability of the Bible.
- B. Evidence for the reliability of the Bible is that it has been used to help people live better lives for over 2000 years.
- C. It's doubtful if anything will prove the reliability of the Bible.

25. What is the most basic problem with pragmatism as a test for truth?

- A. Contradicting ideas may work equally well.
- B. Some things work for only a little while.
- C. Some things may work for me but not for you.

26. One problem with rationalism is that it implies

- A. Logical statements are true statements.
- B. Truth can be tested with the Law of Non-contradiction.
- C. The mind evaluates truth with reason.

27. The other problem with rationalism is

- A. It cannot, by itself, be used to test truth claims.
- B. It cannot, by itself, establish itself.
- C. It cannot, by itself, be applied to natural observation.

24. Among these examples, B is an argument from pragmatism. A pragmatist (wrongly) believes that the truth of something is determined by its usefulness. A is incorrect because it is the view of evidentialism. C is incorrect because it is the view of skepticism.

25. The most basic problem with pragmatism as a test for truth is A. Contradictory ideas, like, say, Christianity and Islam, may work equally well in different cultures which define "working well" very differently. But Christianity and Islam contradict each other, so both cannot be true. B is incorrect because pragmatism says true things work over the long haul not just for a little while. C is incorrect because pragmatism says true things work generally not just personally.

26. The problem with rationalism is A. It says logical statements are true. But if the premise of the statement is deniable, the statement is false, even though logical. For example, "If there is a Santa Claus, he will come to your house if you're nice." This is a logical statement but does not prove the existence of Santa Claus. That's the problem with the ontological argument for the existence of God. It only proves God is thinkable not actual. B and C are incorrect here because they are true statements and therefore not a problem with rationalism.

27. The other problem with pure rationalism is B. It cannot establish itself because that's circular reasoning. One should not say the Law of Non-contradiction is true because of the Law of Non-contradiction. A and C are incorrect here because they are true statements and therefore not a problem with rationalism.

Q and A

Pragmatism

Rationalism

Undeniability

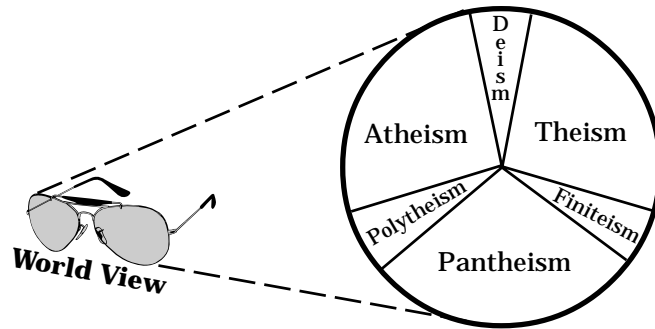
Please fold this page along the dotted line. Then, after answering each question, check the answer and the explanation across the folded page. Ask yourself not only why the true answer is true but also why the false answer is false.

28. The best test for truth is undeniability because it says
- A. Truth must have value in the real world.
 - B. Truth must come from the thing we observe.
 - C. Truth is what we are stuck with because we can't get away from it.
29. Reason (the Law of Noncontradiction, $A \neq \neg A$, the foundational principle of logic) applied to reality is a good way to test truth because
- A. It's undeniable.
 - B. It's logical.
 - C. It's factual.
30. How can rationalism not be a valid test for truth and yet reason be used to test truth?
- A. Rationalism is a valid way to test truth, it's just that it cannot validate itself.
 - B. Rationalism is not a valid test for truth because there is no way to get the "if" out of a rational statement.
 - C. Rationalism is not a valid test for truth because it can prove mermaids are real when they are not.
31. How do we know Christianity is better than Islam?
- A. Christianity is truthful.
 - B. Christianity is undeniable.
 - C. Christianity is factual.
28. Undeniability is the best test for truth because of C. It is whatever we cannot get away from. If something is undeniable, then its truth cannot be denied. So, like it or not, we are stuck with it. For example, my own existence, pain, pleasure, birth, death, and the reality of the universe are inescapable, so they are true undeniably. A and B are incorrect here because they are the views of pragmatism (A) and evidentialism (B).
29. Rationalism can be applied to truth because of A, it's undeniable. In order to deny reason, we have to make reasonable statements. So reason (i.e., logic, the Law of Noncontradiction, $A \neq \neg A$, however you wish to say it) is unavoidable. B is incorrect because that would be circular reasoning, and C is incorrect because it represents evidentialism.
30. The explanation for this is A. Rationalism must be used to test truth because it is what we all have. We are all rational creatures. Reason is undeniable, so we are forced to use it. B and C are incorrect because rationalism is a valid way to test truth. The problem with an "if" statement like "if mermaids live in the sea" is that it doesn't make the reality of mermaids undeniable. Reason is only an undeniable method for testing truth. It cannot create truth. So if you apply it to deniable things like mermaids, it will not give you an undeniable conclusion.
31. Christianity is better than Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Mormonism or any religion or cult because of B. Christianity is the only world religion which applies reason (which is undeniable) to observations, which are undeniable, to establish itself. Most world religions and cults are an example of faithism. A is incorrect because Islam would also claim to be truthful. The reason Islam is not truthful is because it is deniable. C is incorrect because it's evidentialism.

WORLD VIEWS

A world view is simply a mental view we have of the world. It's a position from which we interpret all the things we encounter. Like a pair of glasses, it colors and focuses pieces of reality so they make sense in a particular way. Since we have determined that undeniability is the best way to test truth, each world view suggested must be tested to see if it is undeniable.

There are three major world views in existence today. Besides these three major ones, we shall consider three minor ones, but nonetheless, ones we should be familiar with.



The major world view of the **ANCIENT WORLD** was polytheism. The religions of the Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans were all polytheistic. The Far East became more pantheistic in its Hinduism and Buddhism with only the ancient Hebrews being clearly theistic.

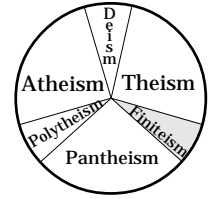


In the **MODERN WORLD**, polytheism only exists in certain isolated places, like, for example, in Central America and Australia. The big newcomer was atheism, getting its strength in the mid-1800s and early 1900s from Communism and evolution. But atheism seems to be losing ground to both pantheism and theism. Today it is only a dominant view in western Europe. Deism and finiteism are strongest in North America, but since the holocaust of WWII, many Jews are finiteists and have carried the view to various parts of the world.



THREE MINOR WORLD VIEWS

The minor world views we shall consider are: ***Finiteism***
Polytheism
Deism



FINITEISM

God is not infinite. Finiteism says:

- (1) God is personal. Like the character George Burns played in the movie “Oh God,” God is a personal Being involved with some of the universe some of the time.
- (2) God is the Creator. God created the world (or the stuff that evolved into the world), i.e., He was a first cause of the universe.
- (3) God is limited. He is temporal, changing, and involved to the extent that He is capable of being, but there is much He would like to do and cannot. He is not omnipotent.
- (4) Good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to good people because that is the way the universe evolved. (At least most finiteists since Darwin believe God used the evolutionary process to produce man.) God believes in justice, but He is incapable of making sure it always works out that way.
- (5) God is all-loving, even though He is not all-powerful. They believe it is obvious that God is limited in His power, since even God cannot both create and destroy at the same time, make square circles, sticks with one end, or rocks so big He cannot move them. Nor can He sin. Also, a world of free creatures places a limitation on God. Therefore, it is obvious that God must be limited.
- (6) Most finiteists do not believe in miracles. Some say they are possible, but they usually deny they actually happened.
- (7) Evil is real. In fact, it is so real it limits God. Our moral duty involves cooperating with God (or even going beyond God) in overcoming evil. There is no guarantee that evil will be destroyed. The optimistic finiteists hope it will, but all of them admit it is possible that there will be no final victory. The struggle could go on endlessly or evil could win.
- (8) God is mutable, that is, He changes. Therefore, there are no moral or ethical absolutes. As God develops, so do they.

The Case for Finiteism

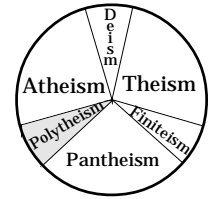
- 1) If God were all-powerful, He *could* destroy evil.
- 2) If God were all-loving (or good), He *would* destroy evil.
- 3) Evil is not destroyed.
- 4) So either there is no God or He is limited.
- 5) But there is evidence that God exists.
- 6) Therefore, God must be limited.

Problems with Finiteism

- (1) A finite God needs a creator and hence is not an ultimate cause. The finiteists have the same problem as the atheists here. This results in an infinite regress or a self-caused cause, both of which are impossible. [We will discuss this problem under atheism.]
- (2) Anything or anyone finite is not worthy of worship. Worship means to attribute worth. To worship a creature is idolatry. An ultimate commitment should not be given to anything less than an ultimate.
- (3) Evil does not eliminate an infinite God. Take the case for Finiteism and add the word “yet” to #3 so it reads “Evil is not destroyed yet.” Then we must conclude that an infinite God could very well exist. As a matter of fact, when we demonstrate that an all-good, all-powerful God does exist (which we shall do when we discuss theism), we shall conclude that evil must be defeated in the future. [The question “Why does God allow evil?” will be discussed in the last section under “Why do the innocent suffer?”]
- (4) If God is not infinite, then by what standard do we measure God? We cannot measure Him by His own standard because He keeps that perfectly by definition. But if we measure Him by a standard beyond Him, then the legislator of that standard is God (since laws and moral prescriptions always come from lawgivers and moral prescribers). If He is not an ultimate, then the standard must come from elsewhere and the other source would be God.

- (5) There is a difference between restrictions and limitations. God is restricted to righteousness, holiness, and consistency. Therefore, He cannot sin or do absurd things like make square circles or sticks with one end. But restrictions like holiness, righteousness, and consistency are not limitations.
- (6) It is arbitrary and of wishful thinking to limit God in the area of power but not love. By what justification could one possibly make the choice of which attributes of God to limit? And, for that matter, how can God be an infinitely loving Being when He is not an infinite Being?
- (7) If God is finite, then there is no guarantee that evil will be overcome. And if that is so, then what is there to inspire the individual to an ultimate commitment? One is more apt to say, "I don't mind losing a battle in a war we will ultimately win," than one is to say, "I would rather win in battle in a war we might ultimately lose." A finite God offers no hope.

Therefore, **FINITEISM IS DENIABLE.**



POLYTHEISM

There are many gods. Polytheism says:

- (1) There are many personal gods. These gods vary in their power and attributes. Some can create and some cannot, and some are greater creators than others.
- (2) Except for Mormonism and a few places in Africa, Latin America, and Central Australia, polytheism is pretty much extinct today. Many people in the Far East do have individual idols of deities that they worship. But the ultimate for these people is generally the universe itself or a god-force which these idols depict in some lesser form. This, then, is pantheism not polytheism. In ancient polytheism, such as the Greek gods on Mt. Olympus or the gods of Babylon, Egypt, and Rome, there was no spiritual power beyond the individual god. They believed that there were more powerful and less powerful gods, but not some one universal or unifying force that is ultimate.
- (3) All the gods are limited, and they vary in their attributes (although some would say they are ultimate beings).
- (4) Most polytheists do believe in miracles as being both possible and actual in human experience.
- (5) Evil is seen as real, and the gods struggle with it in a real way. Man may struggle alongside the gods in this effort, but there is no guarantee that good will triumph over evil.
- (6) Most ancient polytheisms believed man was different from the gods—mortal instead of immortal.

There is no apologetic case made for polytheism

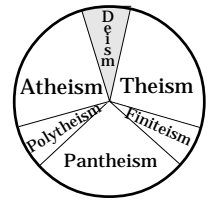
Problems with Polytheism

- (1) Many finite gods are no improvement over one finite God or no God at all when it comes to the need for an ultimate cause. Finite gods, whether they are creators or not, need a creator (or many creators).
- (2) It is impossible to have many ultimates. An ultimate is by nature only one. If you had two or more ultimate beings, they would be identical in nature, otherwise one of them would be less than ultimate. There could be more than one ultimate role or person within that one ultimate (as with the Trinity), but that is theism not polytheism.
- (3) The many non-ultimate beings of polytheism face all the same impossibilities that the one non-ultimate being of finiteism faces. Namely:
 - (a) Anything less than an ultimate is not worthy of worship. Worship of a non-ultimate is idolatry.
 - (b) A number of finite gods leaves us with no standard by which to evaluate the goodness of those gods or any other goodness or badness, for that matter.
 - (c) The characteristics must be assigned these gods arbitrarily. There is no justification for any particular set of characteristics for any particular god.
 - (d) Many finite gods offer no guarantee of the elimination of evil and hence offer no motivation to struggle against it for anything but selfish reasons.

Therefore, **POLYTHEISM IS DENIABLE.**

DEISM

There is one uninvolved God. Deists believe:



- (1) There is an eternal, personal, ultimate God who created the universe from nothing. The universe is like a top which God started spinning. He will not touch it again until it stops spinning. God alone is eternal.
- (2) Man is to learn about God through natural revelation, that is, through people and the natural universe. This natural revelation is to be understood naturally by the laws of logic (i.e., reason).
- (3) There are no miracles. Deists claim miracles do not occur nor have they ever occurred. So there was: no virgin birth, no God/man (hence no deity of Jesus Christ), no Messiah, and no infallible Bible. None of the miracles reported in the Bible or anywhere else were real.
- (4) Deism holds to an unitarian concept of God. "God is one" means God cannot be three, thus the Trinity is impossible. There could be no God the Son or God the Holy Spirit if there was a God the Father. This, they say, would be polytheism.
- (5) Deists believe there are moral laws set up by the Creator (God) which are to be discovered in the universe. There is also (most believe) an afterlife of rewards or punishment based on one's adherence to those moral laws discoverable (by natural and logical means) in this universe.

The Case for Deism

- 1) Miracles are rare.
- 2) The evidence for regular things is greater than the evidence for rare things.
- 3) It is always wise to base one's belief on regular things not rare things.
- 4) Therefore, it is never wise to believe in miracles.

Problems with Deism

- (1) Their understanding of God is incompatible with their understanding of miracles. To create the universe from nothing is to perform a contrary-to-nature miracle. One cannot say God does not do miracles and at the same time claim God did a miracle. If a major miracle (creation) happened, why is it not likely that lesser miracles happened?
- (2) It is true that miracles are rare (by definition). But it is not true that rarity is a basis for disbelief or that regularity is the best basis for belief. As established in the section Tests or Truth, the way to test truth is with undeniability, not with regularity (that's evidentialism). Some regular things (like a belief in a flat earth) could be wrong, and some regular things may only be regular for a short time (like the use of phonograph records). And some rare things could be true (like the death of Abraham Lincoln, the French Revolution, or any unique event in history). Deists themselves believe in at least one rare event—creation. Many deists are also evolutionists, and they believe in another rare event—the spontaneous generation of life from nonlife.
- (3) The deistic concept of God is one of a master machine-maker, not a God who is involved in people's lives (at least by way of emphasis). So it is no wonder they do not hold to His personal intervention. But one would expect a personal God to be personally concerned, thus personally involved in His creation. If God is concerned enough to create humans, then it would be reasonable to expect He would also be concerned enough to intervene on their behalf when they fell into difficulties.
- (4) A belief in the Trinity is not polytheism, nor does it violate the belief in one God. The concept of the Trinity says God is one ultimate, one essence. Polytheism says there are many ultimates and many essences. The Trinitarian specialization of this one ultimate God into three persons, the same in substance but distinct in subsistence, is not polytheism, nor does it violate the belief in one God. Polytheism is characterized by gods who disagree. Everything from bad weather to war was blamed on disagreements among the polytheistic gods.
- (5) The attempt of the deists to eliminate the basis for believing in supernatural revelation (as in the Bible) all apply equally well for eliminating a belief in a deistic creation. If the Bible is not to be believed because it describes miracles of the intervention of God, then neither should deistic creation be believed because it also describes a miracle of the intervention of God.

Therefore, **DEISM IS DENIABLE.**

Q and A

Three Minor World Views Finiteism, Polytheism, and Deism

Please fold this page along the dotted line. Then, after answering each question, check the answer and the explanation across the folded page. Ask yourself not only why the true answer is true but also why the false answer is false.

32. Which world view would not encourage people to pray for supernatural healing?

- A. Finiteism
- B. Polytheism
- C. Deism

33. Which world view would not accept Genesis 1:1, *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth?*

- A. Finiteism
- B. Polytheism
- C. Deism

34. If someone is sick and does not get better, the finiteists would say that's because

- A. God can't help.
- B. God chooses not to help.
- C. God expects us to help.

35. What's wrong with the finiteist argument, *If God were all-powerful, He would have eliminated evil?*

- A. Evil is here to help us learn what is good and wise by contrast.
- B. Evil represents a divine struggle, not a limit to divine power.
- C. God may be in the process of eliminating evil now.

36. Polytheists would be likely to describe paranoid schizophrenia as

- A. A problem the gods cannot solve.
- B. A problem the gods caused.
- C. A problem the gods expect us to solve.

37. Which of these things do deists not believe?

- A. There is a sovereign God in control of the universe.
- B. We will be judged by God for our sins after death.
- C. God inspired prophets to reveal who He is.

32. The world view which would discourage prayer for healing would be C. Deism believes in an uninvolved God. A and B are incorrect because both finiteism and polytheism believe God (or the gods) might heal.

33. In this case, the answer is B. Polytheism would not accept the implication of one God creating the whole world. A and C are incorrect because both finiteism and deists believe God is a creator.

34. A finiteist would say A. God would like to help, but He doesn't always have the power to do so. B is incorrect because finiteism believes God wants to help. C is not correct because, although finiteists might say that, it is not the most basic statement of finiteism.

35. What's wrong with the basic finiteist argument is C. God has not eliminated evil **yet**. But what we observe could be God allowing evil so that He may reveal Himself to us through it. In this case, He could be in the process of eliminating evil now. A is incorrect because it is the view of deism. B is incorrect because it is the view of polytheism.

36. The polytheists would likely describe mental illness as B, a problem caused by the gods—probably a zapping of someone because of an argument among two or more gods. A is incorrect because this mixes polytheism with finiteism. C is incorrect because it mixes polytheism with deism. A and C are possible for polytheism but B is the best answer because it is unique to polytheism.

37. What the deists do not believe is C, that God sent prophets or intervened in the world in any way after He created it. A and B are incorrect because deism holds to a sovereign God who judges people in the afterlife.

Q and A

Three Minor World Views Finiteism, Polytheism, and Deism

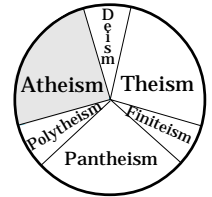
38. According to the deists, we should not believe in miracles because
- A. Miracles are not observable by the scientific method.
 - B. Miracles are true only by faith.
 - C. Miracles are not reasonable.
39. What's wrong with the deistic argument that God is universal today because we only see evidence of His involvement in creation?
- A. God's involvement can be rare and hence unobservable today.
 - B. God's involvement can be regular and yet unobservable to those who do not believe.
 - C. God's involvement may be restricted to those whom He has chosen.
40. What is wrong with the deistic argument that belief in the Trinity is polytheistic?
- A. Polytheism believes in gods which are not ultimate.
 - B. Polytheism believes in gods who disagree.
 - C. Polytheism believes in gods with different roles.
41. What's wrong with the deistic concept that the Bible should not be believed because it describes miracles and the intervention of God.
- A. They presuppose that God could not intervene.
 - B. They presuppose that God would not intervene.
 - C. They presuppose that God did intervene.
42. Which view believes moral standards—like, say, concerning marriage and sexuality—are absolute?
- A. Finiteism
 - B. Polytheism
 - C. Deism

Please fold this page along the dotted line. Then, after answering each question, check the answer and the explanation across the folded page. Ask yourself not only why the true answer is true but also why the false answer is false.

38. The deists reject miracles because of reason A. They argue that miracles are rare, so rare that they cannot be generally observed and, they say, such things are not a good foundation for belief. B is incorrect because it's the view of faithism. C is incorrect because deists would believe miracles are reasonable for God, He just doesn't do them in our natural world.
39. The answer to the basic deistic argument is A. For example, God could have been involved in revealing the Old and New Testament and that process would not be observable today. B is incorrect because it is the position of faithism. C is incorrect because most of God's miracles were observable to everyone, not just those chosen—parting the Red Sea, healing the blind man, etc.
40. Polytheism differs from Trinitarianism because of B. The polytheistic basic concept is one of different gods distinguished by their differences. A is incorrect because some polytheistic gods are ultimates (although that's illogical). C is incorrect because different roles define Trinitarianism not polytheism.
41. The problem with the deistic argument is C. They believe God intervened with the miracle of creation. So if the Bible is to be rejected because it teaches miraculous intervention, then so is deism. A and B are incorrect because deism does not presuppose that God could or would not intervene, only that they don't observe it.
42. The view which holds to absolute moral standards is C deism. A is incorrect because finiteists believe God is learning about morals along with the rest of us. B is incorrect because polytheists believe different morals are connected to different gods.

THREE MAJOR WORLD VIEWS

The minor world views we shall consider are: *Atheism*
Pantheism
Theism



ATHEISM

There is no God. There is only natural matter and energy.

- (1) Atheists believe that there is nothing but matter. There is energy, of course, but only natural energy that can be transformed into matter. The word “atheism” means *a* (no) and *theism* (God). But it’s not a position to simply deny something. To have a position, one must be saying something. What atheists are saying is there is nothing in the universe but natural matter and energy. So really, atheists are materialists.
- (2) They teach that all powers thought of as mystical or supernatural will one day be (if they have not already been) explained physically. That is, there is nothing but physical power.
- (3) The universe is eternal. It may expand and contract (via the big bang theory), evolve and change, but it did not come from something (or someone) else.
- (4) Human nature, they say, is that of a higher (evolved) animal. Since people are still evolving:
 - (a) Their values are temporal (so moral truth is relative).
 - (b) Their goal is human utopia.
 - (c) Their salvation or means for accomplishing utopia is education.

The Case for Atheism

1. Cause and effect do not lead to a God since there is no cause for God. Either
 - a. He would be self-caused, and that’s impossible (because a being would have to precede itself to create itself) or
 - b. There would be a never-ending infinite line of causes (an infinite regress), and no ultimate cause could ever be identified.
2. Evil exists.
 - a. If God was all-powerful, He could defeat evil.
 - b. If God was all-loving, He would defeat evil.
 - c. Evil is not defeated.Therefore,
 - d. No all-powerful, all-loving God exists.
3. A belief in God is anti-humanitarian. When people experience a plague of disease or disasters, they are experiencing an act of God (since a God would be in control). So
 - a. If one helps the people, he is opposing God, or
 - b. If one allows the actions of God, he cannot help the people.Therefore, to believe in God is anti-humanitarian.
4. It is logically impossible to have an omnipotent (all-powerful) God. Some things just cannot be done. For example, God could not go into nonexistence. He could not make a stick with only one end or a rock so big He could not move it.

Problems with Atheism

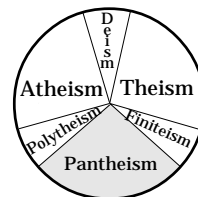
- (1) Atheism and pantheism are nothingbutisms. Pantheism says there is nothing but spirit. Atheism says there is nothing but matter. However, nothingbutisms are always illogical. One cannot logically say there is nothing but something because then there would be nothing to compare it to for identification. For example, if I say there is nothing but the table in the room, then the table is the room and any table as we know it would be unidentifiable. Something (like air) which is non-table must also be in the room in order to identify a table. So for an atheist to claim there is nothing but matter is meaningless. If that were so, he would be unable to identify it. The same is true concerning their argument that there is nothing but physical power.

- (2) It is unreasonable to conclude that the universe is eternal because that says matter produced mind, life spontaneously generated from nonlife, and potentials actualized themselves. But all these things are contrary to all observations. The Second Law of Thermodynamics says the amount of useless energy is increasing, and the First Law of Thermodynamics says the total amount of energy is constant. So the universe cannot be eternal in the future because at some future time it will die. It cannot be eternal in the past because at some time (back) the amount of useful energy would be greater than the total amount of energy, and that's impossible. You can't have more than all there is (see the diagram on page 28, number 15). A "big bang" followed by an oscillating universe theory won't help either since the Second Law requires the oscillations to get smaller and smaller until they also stop.
- (3) If there is no God, life is absurd. Man's values would be changing, hence moral truth would be relative, but that is impossible (since we have already shown that truth cannot be relative). Human utopia and education are also meaningless. Because man faces death and with it extinction, the universe also faces death, so life holds no ultimate significance. The contributions of scientists to human knowledge, the advances in medicine, the efforts of diplomats to secure peace in the world, the sacrifices of good people everywhere all come to nothing. In atheism, humanity is nothing essentially more than a swarm of flies or a herd of pigs. Because man ends in nothing, he is nothing.
- (4) The existence of God cannot be deemed impossible because:
- The cause and effect argument cannot be invalidated. Of course God cannot be self-caused, but there is another alternative to an unending line of causes (see page 28, number 10)—namely an eternal God. An eternal God could be a cause yet need no cause.
 - The existence of evil does not rule out the existence of God because God may be in the process of destroying evil (their argument requires omniscience). This will be more fully discussed in the last section under *Why Do the Innocent Suffer?*
 - A belief in God does not require one to be anti-humanitarian. Fighting the plague of disease or disasters would be working for and with God if indeed suffering is caused by the fall of man and God is against evil and suffering.
 - An inability to do the impossible does not disprove an omnipotent God because omnipotence does not mean an ability to do the absurd. To not be able to do evil, to not be able to not exist, and to not be able to be contradictory are restrictions, not "limitations." To be restricted by righteousness, existence, sovereignty, and consistency is to not be limited. These are indeed things God cannot do, but they are not limitations. [See also this discussion with respect to finiteism on page 21, number 5.]

Therefore, **ATHEISM IS DENIABLE.**

PANTHEISM

God is everything, and everything is God. Pantheists believe:



- There is nothing but spirit, i.e. the nature of the universe is ultimately spiritual. The world is a temporary emanation, mode, or manifestation of God. For example, all the sun's rays emanate from the sun and are indeed part of the sun in the same way the universe is from God yet is part of God.
- For pantheism, creation is *ex Deo*, out of God, but not *ex nihilo*, out of nothing (as the theists and deists believe). God is the source of everything. So both good and evil flow necessarily from God. Evil is there because it must be there as a balancing coequal with good (as in the yin and the yang ☯).
- God is neither personal nor conscious, not HE but IT—like a force, an energy field, or an aura.
- Pantheists say God cannot be understood or expressed logically or in any expressible terms. God must be understood with mystical intuition that goes beyond the Law of Noncontradiction.
- Humans emanated from God and hence are God (not gods or godly) in their nature. So man as an entity does not exist apart from God. We will reincarnate in endless cycles through history or be reunified with God (the force or energy field) as a drop of water entering the ocean.
- Many eastern forms believe you go around and around trying to burn up **karma** (by various means such as good works, meditations, etc.) until you have no more passion. Then when you die, you are sucked back into

the universe (God/the energy field). So happiness (and hence the goal of man on earth) is to get rid of **all** desires. The western forms sometimes hold to reincarnation and sometimes not. They are best pictured by the *Star Wars* movies and the New Age Movement.

- (7) Truth and values are relative for our emanation on earth. Good is not right and evil is not wrong, they are simply part of the way things are. Like birth and death, morning and evening, spring and fall, good and bad are part of the cycle of things and hence both are part of God.
- (8) The power of God and work of God are mystical (unable to be known or reasoned) not supernatural (the reasonable acts of a superior Being).
- (9) All religions are OK as long as they don't interfere with other religions. The different world religions are like different paths up a mountain. They all lead to the top unless they waste time getting people to cross over to their path—then they are not climbing.

The Case for Pantheism

Since they believe that logic does not apply to ultimate reality, no logical "case" can be made for pantheism—by definition.

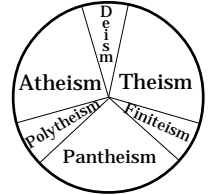
Problems with Pantheism

- (1) Pantheism is a nothingbutism. It believes there is nothing but spirit. And, as explained under atheism, nothingbutisms are always impossible. If there is nothing but the spiritual, then there is nothing to contrast it with for identification. It's like saying everything is everything—it says nothing.
- (2) Where atheism insisted *I exist but God does not*, pantheism concludes that *God exists but I do not*. This is self-defeating since one must exist in order to affirm that he or she does not exist.
- (3) Pantheism is based on the idea that reason does not apply to ultimate reality. We might then ask if the statement *Reason does not apply to ultimate reality* is a reasonable statement about ultimate reality. If it is, then there is a reasonable statement about ultimate reality (namely, that one), and pantheism is defeated. If that statement is not reasonable, then there is no reason to believe it. So pantheism is self-defeating. By the way, they certainly do write large books full of reasonings about ultimate reality—for a people who don't believe you can make any such reasonings.
- (4) Pantheism does not adequately explain evil. If evil is only an illusion which is part of the emanation of God, then what is the origin of the illusion and why does it seem so real? To make evil a part of God does not explain evil, it only does away with good. If the only ultimate there is has a makeup which is both good and evil, then there is no hope anywhere. Also, if there is no good or evil, in what sense is it **good** to rid oneself of desires (through meditation, good works, etc.)? And, how can one be reincarnated (or absorbed) into a better state (such as a better incarnation or oneness with God) if there is no such thing as **better** (which there could not be since both good and evil are part of God)? Actually, in pantheism there is no real basis for any distinction between good and evil. They are just part of the cycle of things, like spring and fall, birth and death, etc.
- (5) If God is all and one with the universe, then for personal beings like humans, pantheism is indistinguishable from atheism because man personally ceases to exist at death (since he is that drop which falls into the ocean of energy). So for the individual, pantheism leads to the same thing as atheism. This may be why so many atheists are becoming pantheists.
- (6) If God is infinite and yet is one with the finite creation, then either the infinite is finite or the finite is infinite, and both are impossible.
- (7) The pantheistic generosity to all religions—seeing them all as paths up the same mountain—is illogical, unreasonable, and self-defeating. All pantheistic religions (like Buddhism, Hinduism, or the New Age) may be going up the same mountain, but atheism and theism make claims totally opposite to those of pantheism. For example, atheism claims there is nothing spiritual, and pantheism claims there's nothing else. Christianity claims there is only one way to God. Pantheism claims all are ways to God. But if all are ways to God, then Christianity is also a way to God. But Christianity claims to be the only way to God (John 14:6), so if it is a way, pantheism is not a way.

Therefore, **PANTHEISM IS DENIABLE.**

THEISM

One eternal personal involved God exists.



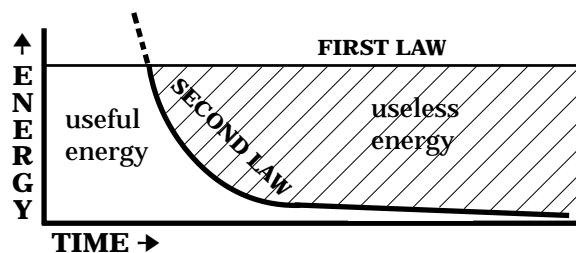
A Summary of the Case for Theism

- 1) Every effect has a cause.
- 2) The universe is an effect.
Therefore,
- 3) The universe has a cause.

The theistic argument expanded to 20 steps:

- (1) Every effect has a cause (by observation).
- (2) Every effect has a cause which is equal to or greater (that is, more complex) than itself. For example, a bird nest is made by a bird more complex than the nest, a computer is made by humans more complex than the computer, etc. The only observation of when the cause and the effect are equal is procreation. All other causes are more complex than their effects.
- (3) Therefore, if the universe exists, it must have a cause which is greater (more complex) than itself.
- (4) The universe exists. (We have proven pantheism is wrong.)
- (5) Therefore, a cause greater than the universe **exists**.
- (6) The universe contains personality and morality. (Animals are personal, and humans are personal and moral.)
- (7) Therefore, a (at least) **personal moral** cause for the universe exists. The Creator can then be designated "He" or "She" not "It." "He" is preferable because it traditionally designates headship.
- (8) The universe has never been observed creating something from nothing.
- (9) Since the universe exists (as an effect), a personal moral existing cause for the universe can **create**.
- (10) If the creator-cause were finite, then He would have another creator-cause who would in turn have a creator-cause and so forth. This leads to an infinite regress of causes.

$$\dots C_n \rightarrow \dots C_3 \rightarrow C_2 \rightarrow C_1 \rightarrow U$$
 But that would mean that at least one finite creator-cause would be either self-caused or uncaused. But that's impossible because a being cannot precede itself to cause itself and nothing finite is uncaused (by observation).
- (11) Therefore, all the causes cannot be finite (non-ultimate) causes.
- (12) Therefore, the personal moral existing creator-cause is **infinite** (or ultimate). That is, there must be at least one infinite cause.
- (13) No meaningful statement can be made about space without reference to time. Time and space are always connected by observation of the law of logic. "Reagan was President" assumes a time and a place.
- (14) The infinite cause must be **eternal** (because eternity is simply infinity applied to time).
- (15) The universe cannot be its own cause because it is not eternal due to the Laws of Thermodynamics. [See the explanation on page 26, number (2).] And matter does not produce mind. The impersonal does not produce the personal, and potentials do not actualize themselves (by observation).



- (16) An infinite eternal cause would be immutable, that is, He could not change (since anything He would change into, He would already be).
- (17) Therefore, the creator-cause must be all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-perfect (otherwise He could change).
- (18) Therefore, a personal, moral, infinite, eternal, immutable (unchanging), all-knowing, all-powerful, all-perfect creator-cause exists.
- (19) Such a being is worthy of worship and therefore can be called God.
- (20) Therefore, **GOD EXISTS**.

THEISM IS UNDENIABLE

Q and A

Three Major World Views Atheism, Pantheism, and Theism

Please fold this page along the dotted line. Then, after answering each question, check the answer and the explanation across the folded page. Ask yourself not only why the true answer is true but also why the false answer is false.

43. The most basic foundational belief of atheism is

- A. There are no absolute morals.
- B. There is no God.
- C. There is only natural matter and energy.

44. Which of the major world views would not accept Einstein's Theory of Relativity ($E = MC^2$) as a way to describe the universe?

- A. Atheism
- B. Pantheism
- C. Theism

45. Which of these religious groups are theistic?

- A. The Baptists and the Nation of Islam.
- B. The Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons.
- C. The Presbyterians and the Unitarians.

46. What's wrong with the atheistic claim that humans are highly evolved animals?

- A. Humans form societies.
- B. Humans form religions.
- C. Humans form hierarchial structures.

47. What do theism and pantheism have in common concerning their views about spirituality?

- A. The spiritual is not material.
- B. The material is not spiritual.
- C. The spiritual is logical.

43. The most basic foundation of atheism is C, their belief that the universe consists of nothing but natural matter and energy. In other words, there is nothing spiritual or supernatural. A and B are incorrect because both are products of their belief but not foundational principles.

44. The view that would reject $E = MC^2$ as a way to describe the universe would be B. Pantheism describes the universe with spiritual energy and would object to describing it with natural matter and energy. A is incorrect because this is how the atheists describe the universe. C is incorrect because theists believe in both a physical and a spiritual reality. So for theists, $E = MC^2$ is relevant to the physical part of the universe.

45. The answer is A. Christian and Islamic groups are theistic. B is incorrect because Mormonism is ultimately polytheistic (they believe in one god for our planet but other gods for other planets). C is incorrect because Unitarianism is deistic not theistic.

46. What separates humans from animals is B. One problem with claiming humans evolved from animals is that no animal anywhere, no matter how intelligent, thinks in terms of purpose, destiny, or morality. No animal group ever forms a religion. By contrast, all human groups form religions, no matter how sophisticated or "primitive" they appear to be. A and C are incorrect because some animal groups form elaborate societies and hierarchies.

47. The only thing in common here is A. Both believe the spiritual is something other than the material. The pantheists believe everything is spiritual, and the theists believe in both the material and the spiritual, but both believe in a spiritual which is not material. B is incorrect because only theists believe this. Pantheists believe the material is spiritual. C is incorrect because only theists believe this. Pantheists believe logic cannot be applied to ultimate reality.

Q and A

Three Major World Views Atheism, Pantheism, and Theism

Please fold this page along the dotted line. Then, after answering each question, check the answer and the explanation across the folded page. Ask yourself not only why the true answer is true but also why the false answer is false.

48. Which view says bad things are caused by moral evil?
- A. Atheism
 - B. Pantheism
 - C. Theism
49. The cosmological (cause-effect) argument for the existence of God says the universe is an effect which, therefore, requires a cause. How do we know the universe is an effect instead of being eternal, as the atheists claim?
- A. Because the existence of the universe is a fact.
 - B. Because the universe does not create.
 - C. Because the Bible says God created the universe.
50. What do atheism and pantheism have in common?
- A. Neither view believes in God.
 - B. Both views believe the universe consists of only one substance.
 - C. Both views believe man does not exist as a separate distinct being.
51. How do we know there is a personal moral God?
- A. Because we are personal moral beings.
 - B. Because a personal God would have to also be a moral God.
 - C. Because the Bible says so.
48. The only major world view that believes in moral evil is C, theism. A is incorrect because atheism says bad things happen because that's just the way the universe evolved, and the strong survive those things and then get stronger. B is incorrect because pantheism says evil is just part of the cycle of reality, like birth and death, spring and fall.
49. The reason we know the universe is an effect is B. The universe must be either a cause or an effect (by observation). If it is a cause, it must be either eternal or be able to create itself. But in order to create itself, it would have to exist before it existed, and that's impossible. In order to be eternal, the universe would have to create because (by observation) matter does not become mind, the impersonal does not become personal, life does not come from nonlife, etc. But the universe has never ever been observed creating anything. Since the universe does not create, it must be an effect. A is incorrect because it is evidentialism. C is incorrect because it would not be a good answer to an atheist.
50. What atheism and pantheism have in common is B. They are both nothingbutisms. Atheism believes the universe is nothing but matter. Pantheism believes the universe is nothing but spirit. Only theism believes in both. A is incorrect because pantheism believes in God, just not a personal God but a god-force. C is incorrect because atheism believes man exists as a separate being, an animal-like physical being.
51. Cause and effect requires A to be correct. Since we humans are personal moral beings, we require a (at least) personal moral cause. Everything has a cause equal to or greater than itself, so our cause must be at least personal and moral. B is incorrect because personality does not require morality. For example, animals are personal beings which are not moral. C is true but incorrect in this context since no reason is given for knowing why the Bible is true.

THE CASE FOR CHRISTIANITY

Thus far we have established that (1) truth is absolute, (2) it must be tested with undeniability, and (3) the only world view that passes that test is theism. But the existence of a personal involved eternal Creator does not necessitate the truth of Christianity. So we shall next make a case for Christianity by answering the most common questions asked about it. Generally, that is done by demonstrating the reliability of the Bible. We shall do that. But there is more to be done. We must also show that Jesus' claim to be the only way to God is reasonable, that the miracles claimed in the Bible are possible, and so forth. In other words, we must demonstrate that Christianity is not only true because the Bible says so, it is true because it is the only undeniable theism—and the Bible says so.

In this last section we shall consider seven basic questions which define the case for Christianity. Our approach will be to break these down into smaller issues, which taken together make a Christian apologetic. [These questions are an adaptation of those given in my book *Answering the Tough Ones*, available through Relational Concepts, Inc. and on line at www.pccorner.com/ato/ato_Contents.htm]

(1) IS JESUS CHRIST THE ONLY WAY TO GOD?

Isn't it enough to be sincere?

The assumption here is that sincerity makes exclusivity unreasonable. Although sincerity is an admirable quality, to sincerely follow something that is wrong is to be sincerely wrong. Sincerity does not change reality.

During my undergraduate days at Michigan State University, we had an unusual snowstorm. Normally, Michigan snow is rather damp and forms solid snowdrifts that will pretty well hold you up when you jump into them. One particular storm, however, lasted for three days and left very dry, powdery snow almost up to the second-story windows of some dorms. Lots of kids thought it would be great fun to jump into that snowdrift from the third- and fourth-floor windows—having all the confidence in the world that it would hold them up.

It didn't.

We had students in nearly every class with broken legs from jumping out windows. One guy on our floor who hurt his leg playing basketball even wore a sign around his neck—I did not jump into the snow!

Those kids were sincere. They had so much conviction that the show would hold them up that they jumped out the window. Now that is sincere faith! They not only believed it, they also acted on their faith. The only problem is—they were wrong! The same thing is true in religion. No matter how many people believe it and regardless of how sincere they are, if they are wrong, the results can be disastrous.

What is the difference between Christianity and the other religions?

In a sense, nearly all founders of the major world religions claimed to be ways or have ways to get to God (though they all defined God differently). But Jesus claimed to *be* God. Many non-Christians find it difficult to believe that a man (Jesus) could become God, but that is not what happened. The Bible teaches that *God became man* in the form of Jesus of Nazareth—not the other way around.

The reason He took on humanity was so He could die—in place of Mohammed, Buddha, you, and me. Jesus said that He came *to give His life a ransom for* [the Greek word literally means *as a substitute for*] *many* (Matthew 20:28).

Aren't Christians too narrow-minded?

People are often quick to recognize that Christianity is intolerant of other beliefs. That is true. But the reason is that Christianity emphasizes absolute truth. That is, it is based on real history—real people, places, and events. Christianity is basically news, not views. Truth is narrow by definition. Tolerance in personal opinions is a virtue, but tolerance when dealing with facts is ridiculous.

Is it unreasonable to say, "That's okay for you but not for me"?

Anything that is true objectively and universally cannot be applied only privately. If it is true, then it is true for everybody, and if it is not true, then it is not true for anybody.

I shall always remember a large, loud, elderly lady math teacher I once had. I can still hear her bellowing: “Remember, DeWitt, if you don’t come up with the same answer that I have, either you’re wrong or I’m wrong, but we can’t both be right!” If Jesus said that He is the only way to God, and Mohammed or anybody else said that there is some other way to God, then either Jesus is wrong or Mohammed is wrong. They cannot both be right.

Jesus said, *I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me* (John 14:6). Before this He said, *I and the Father are one* (John 10:30). He went on to say, *He who has seen Me has seen the Father* (John 14:9). Either He is the only way to God the Father or He is not. If He is, then that is true for you and me as well as everybody else, no matter where they live or what they believe. If He is not, then it is no more true for me than for anybody else, no matter how much I believe it.

Could Jesus be one of many ways to God?

To claim Jesus is just one of many ways to God is to say the opposite of what *He* said. If that were true, He would be wrong. If His basic message is wrong, then He is not a reliable way to anything. His claim to be the only way was not just a sidelight, it was the heart of His whole message. He was the only way because He was God, the Creator of the universe (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16-17). So if there is any other way, then His basic message is wrong and He is not a way at all.

These five are merely examples. But they do demonstrate Christianity’s claim that Jesus is the only way to God is not unreasonable.

- 1) It’s undeniable that Jesus claimed to be the only way to God.
- 2) It’s undeniable that Jesus’ claim is reasonable.

Therefore, we can conclude that Jesus Christ could very well be the only way to God.

(2) ARE THE MIRACLES OF THE BIBLE POSSIBLE?

Do miracles produce faith?

Atheists, agnostics, and skeptics usually want to know—If God actually performed miracles, why does He not do that today? They assume that, if He did, there would be more believers. But the purpose of miracles was not to produce faith. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the Bible says some believed. But it also says, *the chief priests took counsel that they might put Lazarus to death also; because on account of him many of the Jews were going away, and were believing in Jesus* (John 12:10-11). Acts 4:16-17 records that the same thing happened when Peter and John healed the lame beggar. Jesus Himself said, *If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets [that is, the Bible], neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead* (Luke 16:31).

If someone is willing to decide to believe, then a miracle could help him or her decide more quickly or easily. Lighter fluid may help your charcoal burn more readily. But lighter fluid will not start the fire. And if someone is predisposed not to believe, then no amount of miracles will create faith (see Revelation 16:9, 11).

The reason God provided miracles was to authenticate that a particular message or messenger was indeed from Himself

After the author of Hebrews wrote, *How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?* he went on to say, *After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will* (Hebrews 2:3-4). The miracles verified that the great message of salvation was indeed from God.

Why do we not find miracles in science and history?

Science and history deal with that which is “natural” to our universe. Miracles are not natural, so by definition they are not part of the study of natural science or natural history. The occurrence of miracles does not depend on our observing them in nature, any more than the existence of dinosaurs depends on our observing them at the zoo. The question is, If we had scientifically recorded facts and history as we observed the life of Jesus of

Nazareth, would we have observed what the eyewitnesses of that day claimed to have seen? The question is not, Do you see dinosaurs today? but rather, Would you have seen them then?

Should we expect to see miracles today?

The Bible does not claim that all people, whether they lived in Bible times or are alive today, should expect to observe contrary-to-nature events. The fact that something happened does not mean it ought to happen to everyone. God does not expect all of us to cross the Red Sea on dry land like the Israelites or walk on water like Peter did. For that matter, most of the people living in Bible times and places did not see any miracles either. Remember, the miracles of the Bible were to authenticate God's revelation. The Bible is specifically the record of that revelation. It's not claiming miraculous experiences for most people now or then. It only claims to be a record of what God did at certain times in history.

Is life full of miracles?

People commonly refer to wonders of nature as "miracles." But that only confuses the issue by using two different meanings for the word "miracles." Saying everything is a miracle destroys the concept of miracles as effectively as saying there are no such things. Certainly there are wonders of nature that cause us to marvel at God's handiwork. But those are natural not *supernatural*. The Bible also describes some events that are beyond the nature we observe every day. Those *are* supernatural. When we say we believe in miracles (supernatural things) and then refer to the birth of a baby or the beauty of a flower (natural things), we are illustrating the supernatural with the natural—thus denying the existence of anything beyond the natural.

How did supernatural miracles happen?

The answer is that they were the normal act of a supernatural being. What is unreasonable for a human being in a three-dimensional universe might be commonplace to a Creator controlling more than three dimensions.

An example comes to mind from my old days as a math teacher. Much of mathematics is designed around two dimensions instead of three. Let's call it flatland. Imagine a place like a flat tabletop, except spread out all over the room and beyond. If I, a three-dimensional being, took a bowling ball and passed it through the plane, the event would appear as several miracles to the flatlanders. First, a dot would appear. Then it would become a circle. It would get bigger, and then smaller, as I passed the ball through the plane. Finally, it would make a dot again and then disappear. Now, flatlanders know dots cannot appear from nowhere. They do not become circles and then dots again by themselves. What is their explanation? It was a miracle. But if they understand that I exist in a dimension beyond theirs, what happened is not unreasonable. If there is an all-sovereign, creating God controlling all the dimensions beyond the three we live in, it would be reasonable for Him to penetrate our world with the miraculous events described in the Bible.

A word of caution is in order here. In answering the question about miracles, it is crucial to maintain a truly biblical viewpoint. Many try to get the Bible off the hook by explaining away the miracles in some way other than supernatural occurrences. Some try to say the stories of Adam and Eve or Jonah and the whale are myths rather than actual historical events. That kind of thinking is clearly in conflict with the plain, normal interpretation of the Scriptures. More understanding of our three-dimensional universe may unravel some of the reasoning behind the wonders of nature, but it will never give natural explanations for the supernatural events recorded in the Bible.

These explanations demonstrate that the miracles of the Bible are unable to be denied.

- 1) It's undeniable that the Bible records supernatural events.
- 2) It's undeniable that these real events could have happened historically.

Therefore, it's undeniable that the miracles of the Bible are possible.

(3) IS THE BIBLE RELIABLE?

Uniqueness

The Bible is a unique library of 66 books written over a 1,500 year period by 40 authors in three languages (Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic) on three different continents (Europe, Asia, and North Africa). Its books include history, poetry, romance, prose, and prophecy, with a cast of 2,930 characters depicted in 1,551 places, and written on hundreds of controversial subjects with perfect harmony and continuity. This harmony is unlikely without it being a work of God. People just do not agree that easily, even in more objective subjects like physics, chemistry or medicine. For example, it is likely you would not get the same diagnosis from two doctors in the same specialty. The Bible has also been translated into nearly 1,700 languages and has stood the test of time as the most valuable book in the world.

Character

The Bible tells us it was God's choice to disclose Himself and His view of the world. That disclosure is called **revelation**. He did this through His creation (Romans 1:18-20) and through His written Word, the Bible. This came about as God guided the human authors to write down His Word. This writing is called **inspiration** (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:15-16). As a result, the Bible is **infallible**, which means it is without error as it was originally written. In other words, the original words are an exact record of the mind and will of God (Luke 24:27, 44). Therefore, nothing should be added or taken away from it (Revelation 22:18-19). So the Bible is the infallible, inerrant, verbally inspired revelation of God.

Canonicity

Historically, the church had to decide which books God Himself inspired. The collecting of these books into the Bible is called **canonicity**. For example, a New Testament book was recognized as God's Word when it (1) claimed internally to be from God, (2) taught things consistent with the rest of the Bible, (3) was written or sanctioned by an apostle, or (4) was already being used by the church.

Development

The Old Testament was copied by scribes who carefully counted every line, word, syllable, and letter to ensure accuracy. The earliest complete copy of the Old Testament dated from around A.D. 900—UNTIL the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1948. These were Old Testament manuscripts which dated 1,000 years earlier (150 B.C.). When the two sets of manuscripts were compared, they were essentially, and amazingly, the same.

The New Testament has more than 24,000 partial or complete manuscript copies, the oldest fragment dating from A.D. 130, which makes the New Testament the most credible document in existence. For example, Caesar's Gallic War (58 B.C.) has 10 existing manuscripts, the oldest being some 900 years later than Caesar's day. There are also enough quotations, from the early church fathers who lived 150-200 years after the time of Christ, to reproduce the Bible. Even if we did not have a single copy of the Bible, we would have all but 11 verses of the entire New Testament from material written within 200 years of Christ's death and resurrection.

Archaeology

Archaeology has proven and verified over and over again the accuracy and reliability of the Bible. Here are four examples: (1) The Dabon Stone, dated around 800 B.C., records King Omri of Israel (1 Kings 16:15-28), a number of biblical places, and the name of the God of Israel. (2) The Ebla Tablets (2400-2250 B.C.), recently discovered in Syria, not only show that writing existed nearly 1,000 years before Moses, but that laws, customs, and events similar to those recorded in the Bible were recorded in writing at that time. (3) Luke and Acts, written by Luke, are filled with literal dates, times, people, places, and events, yet not one has ever been found to be even the slightest bit inaccurate. (4) A burial box has been discovered in Jerusalem having the inscription, *James, the son of Joseph, the brother of Jesus*. This verifies in stone the exact time of the death of James and the historical existence of Jesus, James, and Joseph exactly as the Bible describes them.

Prophecy

Fulfilled prophecy also verifies the accuracy of the Bible. Here are some examples: (1) The Old Testament *predicted* that Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome would rise and fall (Daniel 2:31-45). (2) The city of Tyre was destroyed just as Ezekiel 26 predicted. (3) Abraham's descendants still exist, just as predicted in Genesis 12—15. (4) There is no trace of the Canaanites or the Edomites who were cursed by God (Genesis 9:25, Obadiah 1-21).

(5) Prophecies of the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, including the place of His birth (Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:1), His virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23), His betrayal for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12, Matthew 26:15), the piercing of His hands and feet (Psalm 22:16, Matthew 27:35), the casting of lots for His clothing at the crucifixion (Psalm 22:18, Matthew 27:35), His burial (Isaiah 53:9, John 20:28), and that He was to be called God (Isaiah 9:6; John 4:25-26).

Credibility

The credibility of the Bible is demonstrated by its self-testimony. For example, (1) The Old Testament writers claimed over 2,600 times to be writing the Word of God. (2) There are at least 320 quotations of the Old Testament in the New Testament. (3) Peter equated Paul's writings with "the rest of the scriptures" in 2 Peter 3:16. (4) Jesus claimed the Old Testament was God's Word (Matthew 5:18) when He equated what Moses wrote with what God said (Matthew 15:4).

These seven areas demonstrate that the Bible cannot be denied.

- 1) The authenticity of the Bible cannot be denied.
- 2) The Bible made certain truth claims, including the basic claims of Christianity, which cannot be denied.

Therefore, the truth claims of Christianity are undeniable.

[Notice: This validates Christ's truth claims, made from the Bible, not denominational claims, those from any sacred traditions, or from any other source.]

(4) WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER HEARD?

How can we say God is fair if He sends people to hell who have never heard of Him?

Whatever God does, it is going to be just. But many feel if *that* were true, then He would let everybody into heaven—or at least all the "good" people. Well, if that *is* the just thing to do, then that is what He will do. The Bible rhetorically asks, *Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?* (Genesis 18:25). In other words, the God who judges the whole earth will be just to each individual. Romans 2:11 reads, *For there is no partiality with God.* Whatever God does about those who have never heard of Jesus Christ will be the most just thing to do.

What about people who have been completely isolated from Christianity?

How can they respond to Christ?

Every person, no matter what his or her geographical location, has at least two sources of information about God to which he or she can respond.

Nature is one source. As we observe the universe around us, we see design and beauty far beyond anything we or even nature itself could produce. Everyone has the same natural wonders around him or her, and they point to a superior Being beyond man who anyone may choose to seek.

If I were to live in your house a while, I would know you existed, even if I never met you. The pictures, artifacts, and designs I would find around the house would tell me of your existence as a distinct person with a definite personality. I would have enough information to decide to try to find you if I wanted to. The Apostle Paul put it this way. *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 that they are without excuse* (Romans 1:20).

But nature is not our only source of information about God. Another one is within ourselves—conscience. We have the idea of a standard of goodness beyond what we are able to keep. Conscience tells us about sin—the difference between the way we live and the way we know we ought to live.

I once had a man in my office who had been an atheist most of his life. He told me how as a teenager he had rejected the beliefs of the church he grew up in and replaced them with a moral code that he thought he should live by. Then he tried to live by it.

“To my surprise,” he told me, “I couldn’t keep my own moral standards. What’s worse, I found myself *pretending* I was the kind of person I had decided I should be, even though I couldn’t pull it off.”

“That’s fascinating,” I said. “You made up your own religion, converted yourself to it, then backslid from it, so you became a hypocrite about it!”

He agreed.

We both had a good laugh. But there is a point here not to be overlooked. Even though he outwardly rejected God, he could not escape his inner knowledge of a goodness beyond what he was able to keep. Speaking of those who have never heard, the Bible says, *They show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them* (Romans 2:15). What finally brought him to a belief in God was his realization that man has a sense of goodness far greater than he needs for his basic survival. Actually, man’s sense of goodness seems to work against the survival of the fittest and shows compassion for the weak.

How could someone in an isolated area know about Jesus Christ, even if he wanted to?

God has obligated Himself to respond to people who respond to Him. When someone looking at nature and his own conscience wants to find the source of the goodness and righteousness within it all, God promises He will reveal Himself to that person. Ezekiel wrote, *For thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out”* (34:11). Jesus said, *For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost* (Luke 19:10). But God also wants people to seek Him. Jesus said, *Seek, and you shall find* (Matthew 7:7). Hebrews 11:6 reads, *He is a rewarder of those who seek Him*. Missionary records are filled with stories of people from isolated areas who had no exposure to the Bible or to anyone who knew the message of Christianity, yet were seeking a good, loving God of some kind.

Some object, saying that a person sincerely seeking God would probably just become a loyal follower of his or her own tribal religion. Experience does not bear that out. I have not observed true seekers of God turning back to become loyal followers of their childhood religion. Most reject it! The more sincere they are, the more they question. Jesus said we should have the faith of a little child—but every child I talk to about God has gobs of questions! Seeking people generally reject any ideas that are inconsistent with what nature and conscience tell them is right.

Couldn’t people be worshipping Jesus but calling Him by a different name?

For one thing, I know of no other religion following the teachings of any other leader, with anywhere near the message Jesus had. On the surface they might *appear* the same. Non-Christian religions have commandments and morals and rules to live by and accept some sort of supernatural being and promote the betterment of man. But while other leaders claimed to be prophets of God or one of many gods, Jesus claimed to *be* God, the only God, the Creator of the universe (John 14:7-9). All non-Christian religions I have studied teach a “works” system of reaching God or becoming better. Jesus taught that no works will get one to God. Faith alone accomplishes that (John 5:24; 6:28-29). Most religions point primarily to the betterment of man. Jesus pointed primarily to the glory of God (John 12:44-45). The religions of man may claim to be *a way* or a *better way*. Jesus asserted that He was the *only way* and that there was absolutely no other way (John 8:24).

Besides that, the name of Jesus *is* significant. Christ Himself said that the reason some people would end up being condemned was because they did not believe *in the name* of the *only begotten Son of God* (John 3:18). The Bible says that *at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth* (Philippians 2:10). [See also Acts 5:41; 1 John 3:23; 5:13; and 3 John 7.]

Couldn’t those who have never heard of Jesus be let into heaven some other way?

Of course. God *could* do anything He likes. But we might also ask, “Since God is powerful enough to reveal Himself some way other than how He said He would, then is He not also powerful enough to do it the way He said He would?” God told us very clearly that people come to Him through hearing about Jesus Christ (Romans 10:14). The Bible does not tell us that people can come to God any other way. Therefore, to say there is some other way is to say we know more than the Bible reveals. If God wants to lead people to Himself some other way, that is up to Him. But for *us* to say He might do that goes beyond what the Bible reveals—and God has not given us that assignment.

What about babies and insane people who can't believe in Jesus?

We admit that it is unusually difficult to find clear biblical teaching about the salvation of infants and the mentally disordered. But we *can* say this. Biblical evidence indicates that people unable consciously to choose are not asked to choose.

In 2 Samuel 12:23 David spoke of his infant son, who had just died. He reasoned, *But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.* Deuteronomy 1:39 reads, *Moreover, your little ones who you said would become a prey, and your sons, who this day have no knowledge of good or evil, shall enter there, and I will give it to them, and they shall possess it.* The *it* of that verse is not eternal life. *It* is the promised land of Israel, not heaven. But the principle is the same. Those who were not able to be accountable were not held accountable.

A mentally disordered person never has the ability to reject righteousness. Neither does a baby. But as a normal infant grows up, there comes a point (and the age varies with each individual) when he or she *does* have within himself or herself the knowledge of good and evil (see Nehemiah 8:2; Isaiah 7:15-16). At that time, the intentional sinning is a rejection of righteousness, which is a rejection of Christ.

So we can make the following conclusions about those who have never heard:

- 1) It is undeniable that a just God will do what is right in terms of justice for everyone.
- 2) Isolation limits what a person is likely to hear but does not limit God's ability to bring a person to someone who is seeking Him.

Therefore, having never heard the message of Christianity does not deny the truth of the Christian message.

(5) ISN'T CHRISTIANITY ONLY A PSYCHOLOGICAL CRUTCH?

What if I don't need religion?

Every human being seeks meaning for life. We want to know things like: Who am I? Why am I here? What am I for? Am I significant? Where am I going? Many people in our society seem to think they are being sophisticated if they say they do not need religion. In reality, they are not being sophisticated, they are just being immature. We can stick our heads in the sand if we wish and say we are not interested in those things. But before long, we will find ourselves seeking answers, just as certainly as we will seek food, water, and shelter. Every human society (no matter how educated or primitive) has religion, and it is taught by the most stable, intelligent members as well as the most emotional and unthinking ones. If we are to remain mentally healthy, it is not a matter *if* we will seek those things, it is only a question of *how*.

Isn't religion just a crutch for people who want to believe something?

Jesus Christ said, *I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father, but through Me* (John 14:6). That does not become *true* because I feel like believing it, nor does it become *false* because I feel like not believing it. It is either true or it is not. My believing *can* make me feel better, but that is like morphine. I might *feel* better if I believed the same way about Buddha or Mohammed or my new sports car. That is still morphine. I can deaden my nerves so I worry less and have more peace for awhile. But unless it is real, I could actually be getting worse while I think I'm getting better. If Jesus Christ was God and did pay for my sins, and if by receiving Him I can have a relationship with the real Creator of the universe—that's a *cure*, not a crutch! It is penicillin, not morphine! It is the answer and the direction that I need to go, whether I feel like I need it or not.

So we can make the following conclusions about our need for religion:

- 1) It is undeniable that all humans everywhere have thoughts of morality, significance, purpose and destiny.
- 2) Biblical Christianity is undeniable.

Therefore, it is reasonable to meet our unavoidable need for morality, purpose, and destiny in biblical Christianity.

(6) WHY DO THE INNOCENT SUFFER?

Why is the world full of suffering?

There are lots of reasons for suffering, but man himself is a major cause. People cause most of the agony we observe. The 1900s were the most bloody century in world history. War, divorce, suicide, and homicides all cause suffering, and it is all man-made.

Why doesn't God wipe out all suffering right now?

In order for God to wipe out all suffering, He would also have to wipe out the cause of all suffering. Since all people cause some suffering, that solution would require that all people be wiped out.

Why doesn't God make people unable to cause suffering?

To do that, God would have to make people unable to choose. But love requires choice. That solution would make a love relationship with God—or one another—impossible. A husband, wife, or friend can love you only if he or she has a completely free option to *not* love you. If the other person cannot choose *not* to love you, then real love is impossible.

Why does God make us suffer things like disease and natural disasters?

Nature was originally created without suffering—a Garden of Eden. It was lowered to its present perverted state (Romans 8:20-22) to match the spiritually perverted state man placed himself in through sin. It is not that God makes us suffer. God provided us with the option of rejecting Him, and the consequences with that choice included the perversion of nature.

Why did God make the results of Adam's choice so bad?

Without results, choice is insignificant. Suppose I offer you one of two milk chocolate bars—a Hershey bar or a Nestles bar. If the result of eating one is the same as the result of eating the other, then the result of choosing one is the same as the result of choosing the other. In that case, the choice would be insignificant. Now let us imagine a situation in which the result of your eating would be very different. Suppose one item offered was a milk chocolate bar and the other a chocolate-flavored laxative. Then the choice would be significant because the results of eating the two would be very different. If God is going to give man the real choice of following Him or not, then the results of the choice must also be real.

Why are we suffering because of Adam's sin?

In order for us *not* to suffer because of Adam's sin, God would have to remove the results of that sin. If God removed the result of Adam's sin, then He would have to keep doing that for everybody's sin, including yours and mine, to keep suffering from starting. But if God kept removing the result of our choosing to sin, then of course there would be no result at all—and, as reasoned above, no choice or love would be possible.

Why not create man like angels— creatures with free will who do not choose evil?

Ultimately, we cannot say why God created us. But let me offer this idea. The existence of God makes possible the existence of evil, just as light makes possible the existence of darkness. If that potential evil becomes actual and God overcomes it, then we can learn a lot more about God. For example, suppose you were offered a trip around the world in one of two airplanes. Both are brand new, but one has been flown by the test pilots. It has been through icing, turbulence, and every conceivable emergency, and it checks out fine. The second airplane just rolled off the assembly line. It should be as good as the other one, but it has never been tested. Which airplane would you like to fly around the world in? God is the same, whether tested or not. But what can be said about Him is not the same. We know about God's compassion, mercy, grace, and plan of redemption because of the actuality of our sin (Romans 11:32). Sin is never in God's will, but it is clearly in His plan.

So we can now conclude some things about suffering:

- 1) The reality of suffering is undeniable.
- 2) The reality of suffering does not deny the existence of a sovereign God.
- 3) Suffering is logically explained by the Bible.

Therefore, biblical Christianity has a undeniable explanation for suffering.

(7) WHAT ABOUT HYPOCRITES?

Why are there so many hypocrites in Christianity?

If Christianity is to be doubted because there are hypocrites who call themselves Christians, we must first be sure those hypocrites are really Christians. The legitimacy of anything original cannot be judged by qualities of a phony.

My grandmother used to send away for the best recipes. But when they came, she would substitute ingredients she already had on hand for those listed in the recipe. Lard was substituted for butter, regular salt for seasoned salt, and so on. When the dish came out tasting sort of funny and nobody ate much, she would write to the company and tell them what she thought of their recipe.

Unregenerate people who go through Christian-sounding religious formalities without having received Jesus Christ as their God and Savior are not real Christians. The presence of such hypocrites is just a fact of life about anything worthwhile. There are false diamonds in jewelry because real diamonds are valuable. We make copies of Rembrandt's paintings because the real ones are priceless. Quacks spring up in the medical profession because good doctors are an asset to the community. Actually, the fact that Christianity attracts phonies is a good indication that it is real. Light tends to attract bugs.

If Jesus had the true religion, why doesn't He keep His followers from turning into hypocrites?

This question assumes Jesus should remove the free will of believers and deny them involvement in the growth process. There is no claim in the Bible that true believers in Jesus Christ become perfect in this life. A true believer is one who recognizes his sinfulness and need for Jesus Christ as his Savior (see 1 John 1:8-10). Although Christians do change for the better, the change is from the inside out. It does not begin with outward appearances, as it does with hypocrites.

Jesus was harder on the hypocrites than on any other group. His words in Matthew 23 have been called the harshest language ever used by anyone against anyone. Jesus was talking to and about hypocrites. It is interesting to contrast our Lord's description of a hypocrite in Matthew 23 with the Bible's description of a real believer.

Hypocrites, Jesus said, *do all their deeds to be noticed by men* (Matthew 23:5), whereas biblical believers seek only to be approved by God (Romans 6:5-6; Colossians 3:23; Ephesians 5:10).

Hypocrites train others to be what they are. Speaking about their converts, Jesus told them, *You make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves* (Matthew 23:15). But real Christians train others to be like Christ, not like themselves (Matthew 28:18-20).

Hypocrites deal with external formalism, neglecting internal qualities (Matthew 23:25-27). Biblical believers, on the other hand, emphasize inner attitudes, knowing that God changes people from within (Galatians 5:22-24).

If Jesus really changes people, why aren't all Christians morally better than all non-Christians?

Though God does deal with true believers, He does not make them perfect all at once. It is a great compliment to Christianity that people expect Christians to be better people. When someone complains to me that a certain person who claims to have received Christ is living inconsistently, I generally respond with something like this. "Maybe so. But if you really want to know whether there's anything to his faith or not, look at him closely. Get to know him really well. See if there *has* been any change in his life. But be careful," I warn. "You might find Christ that way, and when you receive Him but are not yet perfect, others may think *you're* a hypocrite."

If some Christians are hypocrites, doesn't that suggest that Christianity has some mistakes in it?

We must encourage people to consider Jesus Christ and the Bible, rather than what people do with them. Any product must be evaluated on its own grounds. We do not stop going to hospitals because some doctors are in medicine just for the wealth they can accumulate. Either hospitals are a good idea or they are not. If they are, then insincere doctors do not make them a bad idea.

So hypocrisy does not deny Christianity because:

- 1) It's undeniable that there are hypocrites within the ranks of those called Christians.
- 2) To forcibly eliminate hypocrisy would eliminate free will and growth.
- 3) Jesus' condemnation of hypocrisy is undeniable.
- 4) Biblical Christianity does not claim perfection for believers in this life.

Therefore, Christianity cannot be denied because of hypocrisy.

A PERSONAL CONCLUSION

As I see it (and I used to be a part-time atheist), there are only a few ways to go.

Decide to not decide

The problem I have with that is that we are all going to die and face some sort of eternity. So it's like being in an out-of-control car headed for a very high cliff and deciding to do nothing about it. That seems to me to be unwise.

Decide to rely on ourselves

The problem I have with that is that I know I am wrong a lot. I'm right sometimes and I'm wrong sometimes, but I'm wrong too often to bet my eternal future on my own conclusions. [By the way, this was big for me as a part-time atheist. I couldn't find any place where Jesus was wrong, and He believed in an afterlife when I (who am often wrong) didn't.]

Decide to follow one of the other world religions

For example, like Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism or some cult. The problem with that is they are all part of one of the world views we have shown to be deniable or they reject the Bible which is undeniable. [I didn't give up atheism to be religious. That's essentially switching from one faithism to another.]

Decide biblical Christianity is correct and receive Christ as God

Does that mean it can be completely proven that Jesus and the Bible are true? That depends on what you consider proof. But we can demonstrate they are undeniable, and that's the only sound way to test truth. There is nothing magic here. We exist. We are real. We are alive. But we are also headed for this cliff (death is 100%.) So what are we going to do about it? Nothing? Trust ourselves? Get religious? All those things are deniable. Therefore, they are bad decisions. Only biblical Christianity provides us with undeniability. [I received Jesus Christ as my personal God and Savior for the same reason the Apostle Peter did. He said, *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life* (John 6:68).]

Q and A

The Case for Christianity

Please fold this page along the dotted line. Then, after answering each question, check the answer and the explanation across the folded page. Ask yourself not only why the true answer is true but also why the false answer is false.

52. Evaluate this statement. *Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims are not going to heaven.*

- A. It's not true.
- B. It's judgmental.
- C. It's narrow-minded.

53. Evaluate this statement. *Don't criticize my faith. It works for me.*

- A. It's probably not true.
- B. It's pragmatic.
- C. It's faithism.

54. Why do we not see miracles today?

- A. We do.
- B. Because miracles are rare.
- C. Because we aren't looking in the right places.

55. Miracles are, by definition,

- A. Mystical
- B. Supernatural
- C. Improbable

52. The correct answer is C. This statement is narrow-minded. If your religion believes in relative truth (true things are only sometimes true), then religion is only a matter of belief or presupposition. But we have already shown that true things are always true, and absolute truth is always narrow. A is incorrect because the statement is true, if Christianity is true. B is incorrect because the statement is not a judgment, it merely informs us of God's judgment (John 5:22; 14:6; Acts 4:12; Revelation 20:11-15). No punishment is carried out by this announcement.

53. The correct answer is B. The statement is pragmatic, and as we have proven, pragmatism is a bad test for truth. A is incorrect because it probably does work for the speaker. C is incorrect because the proof given for the faith is that *it works* not *because I believe it*.

54. We should not necessarily expect to see miracles today because of B. Miracles, by definition, are rare. They were rare in Bible times, too. The Bible is a specific record of God's revelation, which sometimes included miracles to authenticate that revelation. God is not constantly giving new revelation today, so there should be no expectation for miracles today. A is incorrect because supernatural acts, done by God, are not available for general observation today. C is incorrect because when miracles occurred they were not hidden. For example, everybody knew the Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry land, whether they were there or not (Joshua 2:10).

55. Miracles can be defined by B, supernatural acts or natural acts of a Superior Being. A is incorrect because mysticism is without explanation. C is incorrect because miracles are contrary to nature, not just contrary to probability.

Q and A

The Case for Christianity

Please fold this page along the dotted line. Then, after answering each question, check the answer and the explanation across the folded page. Ask yourself not only why the true answer is true but also why the false answer is false.

56. The translation of the New Testament Bible which we read comes from
- A. Hebrew manuscripts
 - B. Greek manuscripts
 - C. Older Latin, German, or English manuscripts
57. Most ancient works have less than 10 manuscripts representing the original. How many manuscripts do we have of the New Testament?
- A. 240
 - B. 2,400
 - C. 24,000
58. What is the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls?
- A. They confirm the existence of Jesus.
 - B. They confirm much of the Old Testament.
 - C. They confirm much of the New Testament.
59. Why is the prophecy of the Bible important?
- A. It helps us predict the future.
 - B. It helps us prepare for the Second Coming of Christ.
 - C. It confirms the accuracy of the Bible.
56. The New Testament translations we read came from B, Greek manuscripts. Paraphrases may come from others in the translating language, but translations (like the King James Version, the New American Standard Version, and the New International Version) come from Greek manuscripts. A is incorrect because only the Old Testament comes from Hebrew manuscripts. C is incorrect because New Testament translations come from the original Greek language in which it was written.
57. We have over 24,000 manuscripts of the New Testament, so C is correct. Therefore, A and B are incorrect.
58. The significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls is B. The caves at Qumran, on the northwest edge of the Dead Sea, contained many Old Testament manuscripts dating nearly 1000 years earlier than those we had prior to their discovery. A and C are incorrect because there is no New Testament significance to the Dead Sea Scrolls.
59. Prophecy has many values, but the most significant is C. It confirms the literal fulfillment of the Bible. Prophecy is *given* in many ways, including metaphors, parables, figures of speech, etc. But it is always *fulfilled* literally. Thus it affirms the every-word accuracy of the Bible. A is incorrect because the value of prophecy is to confirm the past, not predict the future. B is incorrect because it is a subpoint of A. There is some truth to B, of course, but C is the most basic value of prophecy.

Q and A

The Case for Christianity

Please fold this page along the dotted line. Then, after answering each question, check the answer and the explanation across the folded page. Ask yourself not only why the true answer is true but also why the false answer is false.

60. Thinking about those who have never heard about Jesus,
- A. God will treat all people the same.
 - B. God will treat all people from the same standard.
 - C. God will treat all people from the sincerity of their response to what they know.
61. Do people in isolated tribes have to receive Jesus to go to heaven?
- A. Probably, yes.
 - B. Possibly, yes.
 - C. As far as we know, yes.
62. How did Old Testament people become believers in Jesus?
- A. Jehovah (*Yehweh*) was Jesus.
 - B. They didn't. They only believed in God the Father.
 - C. They didn't have to because they had animal sacrifices to pay for their sins.
63. Do all babies and mentally insane people go to heaven?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Maybe
64. What's wrong with "I don't need religion"?
- A. Everyone needs religion.
 - B. Everyone is religious.
 - C. Everyone becomes religious.
60. When it comes to God's treatment of people, B is correct. God treats everyone from His own standard of holiness. A is incorrect because God's justice treats everyone from Himself as a standard. He does not treat them all the same because they are not the same. C is incorrect because a sincere response can be sincerely wrong. Truth is not tested by sincerity.
61. In this case, we must say C is correct. As far as we know, there is no other way to God except through Jesus (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). We can assume that those whom God has chosen from eternity to be His saints will live in a place where they will hear about Jesus (Ephesians 1:3-11; Romans 8:28-30). Or God will lead someone to them to tell them (Romans 10:13-15). A and B are incorrect because speculation about probability or possibilities are unwarranted when there is a clear biblical statement on the subject.
62. The correct answer is A. All three persons of the Trinity were present in the Old Testament, even though that is not clear until the New Testament was given. Salvation has always been by grace, through faith, in the second Person of the Godhead, whom we call Jesus (John 1:18). B is incorrect because God the Son was also an object of faith (Genesis 18:1, 25; Joshua 5:13-15). C is incorrect because animal sacrifices did not pay for sin (Hebrews 10:1-14).
63. Here we must answer C, maybe. We have some indications that those who cannot decide are not held accountable for deciding (Deuteronomy 1:39). It also seems that babies, especially babies of believers, go to heaven (2 Samuel 12:23; 1 Corinthians 7:14). But to say all babies and all mentally insane people everywhere go to heaven or do not go to heaven is to go beyond what the Bible says. Therefore, A and B are incorrect.
64. The problem with this statement is B. Everyone is, by human nature, religious in the sense that they cannot escape thoughts about their own morality, purpose, destiny, and significance. A is incorrect because "religion" usually means a formal organized belief which is unnecessary. C is incorrect because people are always religious.

Q and A

The Case for Christianity

Please fold this page along the dotted line. Then, after answering each question, check the answer and the explanation across the folded page. Ask yourself not only why the true answer is true but also why the false answer is false.

65. Evaluate the atheist argument, *There is no God because, if there was, He would eliminate evil and suffering.*

- A. The elimination of evil may be a process.
- B. Evil is caused by people, not God.
- C. Suffering is a result of free will choices.

66. Evaluate this opinion. *I don't like a God who allows people to suffer and evil to exist.*

- A. Real evil does not really exist.
- B. God is not responsible for the suffering people cause one another.
- C. Then you don't like God.

67. Why did God allow my spouse to get sick and die?

- A. You didn't have enough faith.
- B. You were being disciplined.
- C. You cannot know.

68. Why do we experience disease and natural disasters?

- A. They are part of the curse.
- B. They are part of the cycle of life and death.
- C. They are part of the natural way of things.

69. Is hypocrisy a reason for disbelief?

- A. Yes. We should not believe in anyone practicing it or not condemning it.
- B. Yes. Goodness should eliminate it.
- C. No. Hypocrisy is to be expected.

65. The answer to the argument is A. God has not eliminated evil and suffering yet. What we observe could very well be such a process. The Bible describes that process as evil increasing until God suddenly brings it to judgment in various cataclysmic events. That picture fits what we observe. B and C are incorrect because they deal with the possible cause of suffering and why it isn't eliminated.

66. The correct answer here is C. People suffer and evil is real, therefore, God has allowed it or He is not a sovereign God. So if you don't like such a God, then you don't like God. God is doing what He is doing for His glory, not for yours. A is incorrect because evil is real. B is incorrect because it assumes God is not sovereign.

67. The specific reason for personal suffering is C. It cannot be known this side of eternity. Many reasons are given in the Bible for suffering—discipline, judgment, living for God in an ungodly world, the spiritual warfare, etc. We should not figure out why we are suffering because we do not know what God is doing (Ecclesiastes 3:11; John 3:8). A is incorrect because it's faithism. B is incorrect because you can't know you are being disciplined. If you are sinning, assume you will be disciplined. But your suffering may be for something completely unrelated.

68. Since we have already proven theism to be the correct world view, A is correct here. The suffering of the natural world is because of God's curse on the natural world when Adam and Eve sinned. The way we see the world now is not the way God created it but the way He cursed it (Romans 8:20-22). B is incorrect because it's the view of pantheism. C is incorrect because it is the view of atheism.

69. In this example, A is correct. Jesus severely condemned the hypocrites and used their hypocrisy as proof of their disbelief. People who practice hypocrisy, or groups that allow it, should not be considered true believers (1 John 2:4). B is incorrect because goodness should deal with it, but only God will eliminate it. C is incorrect. Just because Christians sin does not mean hypocrisy is to be expected.