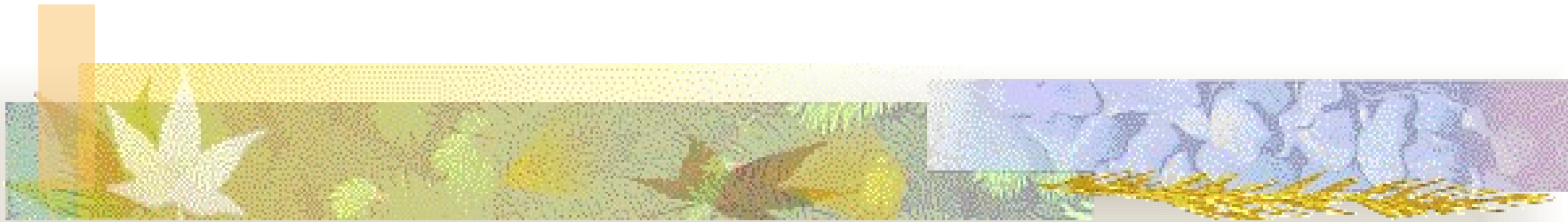


Is The Christian Faith Rational?



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Christianity – A Rational Faith

- The Testimony of Eye Witnesses
- Dispelling Misconceptions
- What is Faith?
- A Rational Body of Truth
- Creation Makes It Plain
- More Arguments For God's Existence
- Addressing Postmodernism
- Addressing Skepticism
- Addressing Agnosticism



Topics/Questions Covered

1. Does Your Truth Match Reality?
2. Jesus' Credibility – Is He God?
3. Prophecies Come True – Messianic + Others
4. Christ Rose From the Grave – What is the Evidence?
5. Is the Bible God's Word?
6. Does Archaeology Verify the Bible?
7. Creation Apologetics
8. Is the Bible Reliable Scientifically?
9. (If God is All-Loving and All-Knowing), Why Is There So Much Pain and Suffering?



Why Christian Apologetics?

- **1 Pet. 3:15**, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;”
- **Matt. 22:37**, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”
- **1 Th. 5:21-22**, “Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.”
- **2 Cor. 10:5**, “casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,”



The Testimony of Eye Witnesses



NT Eyewitnesses

- NT writers were (or recorded) eyewitnesses of the events they described
 - **John 20:30-31**, “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”
 - **2 Pet. 1:16**, “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”



The Gospel According to Luke

- Luke recorded eyewitness accounts:
 - **Luke 1:1-4**, “Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.”



The Acts of The Apostles

- Luke recorded eyewitness accounts:
 - **Acts 1:1-3**, “The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”



The Acts of The Apostles – 2

- Some of the eyewitnesses:
 - **Acts 1:9**, “Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.”
 - **Acts 2:22**, “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know”
 - **Acts 10:39-42**, “And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, ...”

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Dispelling Misconceptions



Misconceptions Dispelled

- Blind faith – committing intellectual suicide
- Just be sincere – as long as you believe it enough
- The Bible is full of myths – eyewitnesses?
- The Jesus of history is unknowable
- Loving Christians should accept other religious views – tolerance vs. truth
- I have an intellectual problem – ignorance, pride, or moral issues



I Have an Intellectual Problem

■ Ignorance:

- **Rom. 1:18-23**, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. ... ”
- **Matt. 22:29**, “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.’”

■ Pride

- **John 5:40-44**, “But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. ... “

■ Moral issues

- **John 3:19-20**, “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ... “



Competing Worldviews

- Atheism – belief that there is no God
- Agnosticism – man cannot attain knowledge of God
- Postmodernism – all meaning and truth is relative
- Skepticism – reliable or absolute knowledge is impossible
- Eastern mysticism – direct knowledge of God or ultimate reality is attainable through immediate intuition



What Is Faith?

What Is Faith?

- **Heb. 11:1-3**, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a *good* testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”





Paul's Faith

- **II Tim. 1:12-13**, “For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”



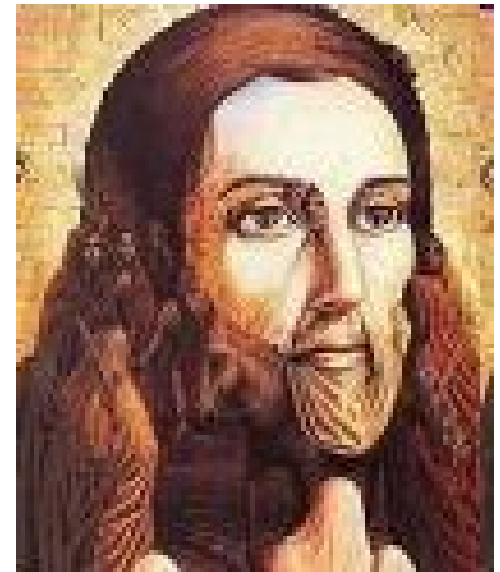
The Believer's Faith

- What do we believe?
- Why do we believe what we believe?
- **Is. 1:18**, “Come now, and let us reason together,’ says the LORD, ... ”
- What are the truths that support our belief?
- What truths do we live by?
- Is Christianity rational and can it withstand scrutiny?

“Faith in Christianity is based on evidence.”
Paul Little

The Christian Faith

- The Christian faith is an intelligent faith
- It never consists of a mindless act which is unrelated to reality
- Is it real? Does my “truth” match reality?
- We are encouraged to use our minds when investigating Christianity
- **Matt. 22:37**, “Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’”
- Don’t leave your brains at the door





We All Live By Faith

- We have faith in the doctor, the grocery store, the person who asks us for a date
- We have faith in the food we eat in a restaurant
- We have faith in the scientific method
- Relationships are built on some degree of faith in the other person

The Object Of Our Faith

- For example, ride in a wheelbarrow across a tight rope over Niagara Falls
- Our faith is only as valid as the object in which it is placed
- Whatever the object of our faith, we should check its reliability, investigate and learn the truth



Test All Things

- **1 Cor. 10:15**, “I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say.”
- **1 Th. 5:21**, “Test all things; hold fast what is good.”
- **1 John 4:1**, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”





A Rational Body of Truth



Rationality of the Christian Faith

- What is our prior thinking about Christianity?
- What do we know about Christianity:
 - Ignorant of the facts?
 - Have a misunderstanding?
- What is our view of Christianity based on examples of “practicing Christians?”
- What is our cultural background?

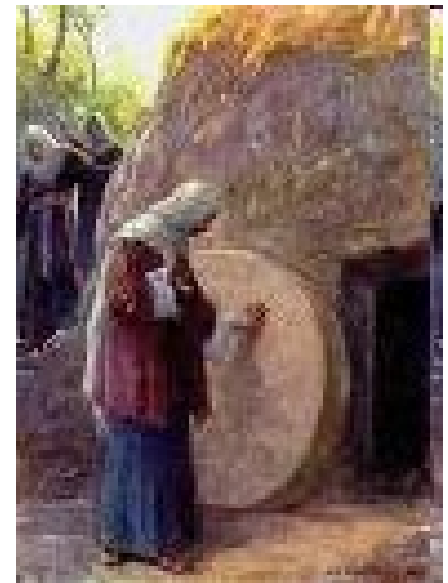
Religious Pluralism

- Religious pluralism and postmodern thinking lead people to think:
 - All religions are equally valid
 - Contradictions between religious systems are fully acceptable
 - Absolute truth does not exist



Can Christianity Be Tested Objectively?

- “Religious assertions incapable of being tested objectively are meaningless”
 - Anthony Flew, British scientist who came to believe in theism at age 84
- Christianity has the empirical evidence of the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - **John 20:14**, “Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus.”



Searching The Scriptures

- **Acts 17:11**, “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”
 - The Bereans
- The Christian faith is open to verification/testing
- The non-Christian is encouraged to use his mind to check out the claims of Christ





Testing The Scriptures

- There are many non-believers who have tried to disprove the Christian faith and have ended up becoming Christians:
 - Josh McDowell wrote the book “Evidence That Demands a Verdict” + others
 - Frank Morrison (a lawyer) wrote the book “Who Rolled Away The Stone?”
 - Lee Strobel (a journalist) wrote the book “The Case for Christ” + others



A Rational Body of Truth

- The Bible stresses the importance of revealed rational processes
- Jesus stressed this to His disciples – **Matt. 22:37**, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”
 - Involves the whole person – mind, emotion, will
- The Apostle Paul described himself as “defending and confirming the gospel” in **Phil. 1:7**, i.e. giving an apologetic for his faith
 - This implies a clearly understandable message that can be rationally understood and supported



A Rational Body of Truth – 2

- Enlightenment brings satisfying comprehension when based on a rational body of truth
- **1 Pet. 3:15**, “ ... always be ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, ... ”
- The Christian faith is always equated with truth
- Truth is the opposite of error. **2 Th. 2:11**, “And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, ... “
- The key question is “does absolute truth exist?”



Christianity Is Rational

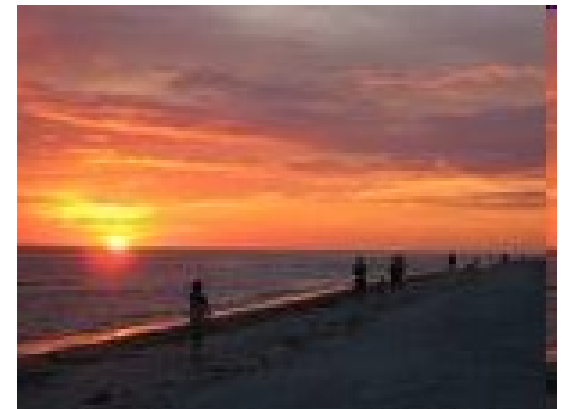
- **Acts 1:3**, “To whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”
- Skeptics ask the same questions again and again
- Genuine seeking will be rewarded
- You can believe it, for Christianity is rational
- **John 10:10**, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.”

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Creation Makes It Plain

Creation Makes It Plain

- Creation gives all people enough knowledge to know there is a God
- **Rom. 1:19-20**, “because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,”



God's Omniscience & Omnipotence

- God has complete knowledge of all of the mysteries of biology, physiology, zoology, chemistry, psychology, geology, physics, etc.
- We see God's eternal power and divine nature in His creation



Seeing The Big Picture

- We “explore” to see how we fit into the “big picture” from God’s perspective
 - Where did we come from?
 - Why are we here?
 - What happens when we die?
- Stephen Hawking in “A Brief History of Time” states “now if we only knew the why, we would have the mind of God.”
- God gives us answers in His Book





Moral Smoke Screens

- In some cases, the true issue is not that people cannot believe – it is that they will not believe
- It is a moral issue, not an intellectual issue
- If morality is “feeling derived,” who makes the rules?
- If Christianity is only “feeling derived,” it leads to absurdity
- The Pharisees were unwilling to believe
 - **John 5:40**, “But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.”



Moral Smoke Screens – 2

- Moral commitment brings understanding to the mind
 - **John 7:17**, "If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or *whether* I speak on My own *authority*."
- Both educated and uneducated people don't want to believe it
- Belief is ultimately a matter of the will
- A student may have received all of the answers to his questions, but will not become a Christian because "it would mess up the way I'm living."

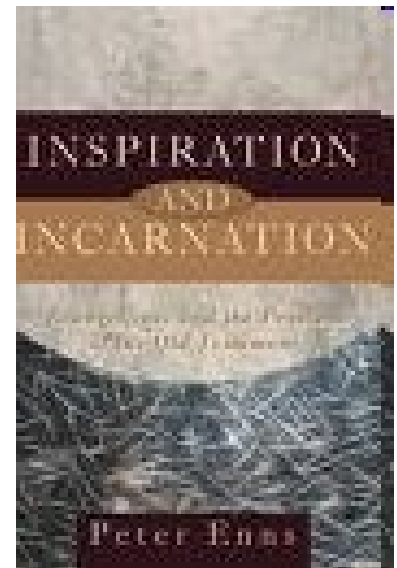


Doubt Strikes Terror

- John Stott – “We cannot pander to a man’s intellectual arrogance, but we must cater to his intellectual integrity.”
- In our early years we accept the facts of Christianity solely on the basis of confidence and trust in parents, friends and pastors
- Later we re-examine how much of this teaching we own ourselves

Doubt Strikes Terror – 2

- I know the Gospel is true because
 - The objective, external, historical facts of the Resurrection
 - The subjective, internal, personal experience of Jesus Christ that I have known in my own life
- Doubt and questioning are normal
- Christianity centers on the One who is Truth
 - Scrutiny is no threat





Don't Hit The Panic Button

- We don't need an immediate answer; research can provide the answer
- The Lord has not fully revealed His mind to us on every conceivable question
- **Deut. 29:29**, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever.”
- God gives us enough information to have a solid foundation under our faith
- Christianity is based on reasonable faith



More Arguments For God's Existence



Arguments For God's Existence

- “Eternity in their hearts”
- The Law of Cause and Effect
- Infinite Time Plus Chance?
- Order and Design in the Universe
- The Universe Had a Beginning
- The Moral Argument
- God Has Penetrated the Finite
- Changed Lives

Is There A God?

- This question challenges every thinking person
- More consequences for thought and action follow the affirmation or denial of God than from answering any other basic question
- Is God a force to be defied or a Lord to be obeyed?





God In A Test Tube?

- We can't prove God by the scientific method
- We can't prove that Napoleon lived by the scientific method
- No one can rerun history
- Just because events can't be proved by repetition does not mean they did not occur



“Eternity In Their Hearts”

- There has been a universal belief in God among the farthest and most remote primitive people of the world
- The original concept was of one God, who is the Creator
- The oldest traditions everywhere acknowledged one supreme God (monotheism)
- **Eccl. 3:11** refers to God as having “ ... put eternity in their hearts, ... ”
 - Pascal – “the God-shaped vacuum” in every person
 - Augustine – “Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.”



The Law of Cause and Effect

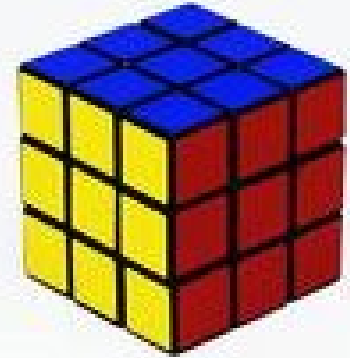
- No effect can be produced without a cause
 - e.g. painting, note on door, human beings, universe
- We come eventually to an uncaused cause, who is God
- Bertrand Russell asked the question – “Well, who created God?”
 - Without an answer “My entire faith collapsed.”
- God (Creator and Beginner) is eternal by definition
 - Uncreated, self-existent
- Being eternal, God is not an effect; He is uncaused

Time + Chance?

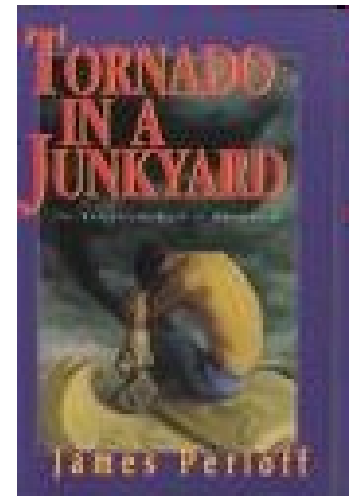
- Computer cannot come into being without an intelligent designer
- A monkey in a print shop cannot set Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address"
- Could the universe in its incredible complexity have happened by chance?
- Einstein recognized God as the designer of the human body, but never came to a belief in a personal God as far as we know
- Universe/human race – by chance or by purpose and design?



Probability



- A blind person solving a Rubik's Cube making one move per second would take 1.35 trillion years – impossible!
- Forming a chain of 200 amino acids in a protein, the building block of life, would be impossible!
- The probability of a tornado blowing through a junkyard forming a 747 is impossible!
- Life cannot have arisen by chance



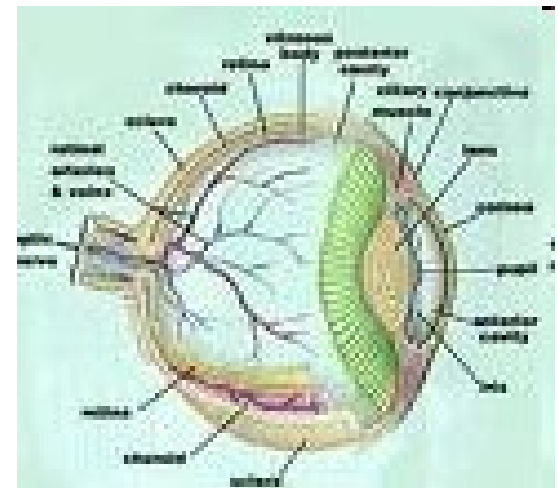


Order and Design in the Universe

- TV – “Natural selection” or self-assembly?
- The universe appears to be intentionally designed
- Living structures are made of subnuclear particles – raises questions:
 - How did these particles arise?
 - Why does an electron have exactly the electrical charge and mass that it does?
 - Why does light travel at precisely the speed that it does?
 - Who or what dialed the value of the gravitational “constant?”

Order and Design?

- Without water, and its specific properties, life would not be possible
- Paley, the English theologian, pointed to the eye as evidence of an all-wise Creator
- Darwin, in *The Origin of Species*, “To suppose that the eye, with so many parts all working together could have formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest degree.”
- Design points to a Designer!



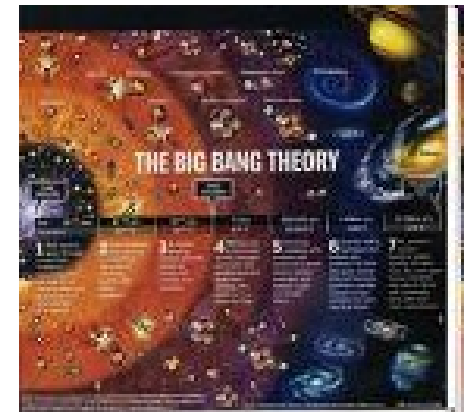
The Universe Had a Beginning

- **Gen. 1:1**, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”
- **Ps. 102:25**, “Of old You [Lord] laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.”
- Secular scientists avoid the idea that the Universe had a beginning – implies a Creator
- Expansion of the Universe supports a beginning



Secular Theories

- Continuous creation/steady-state model proposed by Hoyle et. al. in 1948
 - Abandoned in the 60's based on discovery of cosmic microwave background radiation (CMBR)
- Oscillatory model proposed in 1922 – expanding and contracting universe, repeating indefinitely
 - No longer supported by cosmologists
- Big Bang theory proposed in the early 1900's:
 - Incompatible with the Bible
 - Has serious scientific problems





His Creation Gives Evidence of Him

- **Ps. 19:1**, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands.”
- **Rom. 1:19-20**, “God has made it plain. ... For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”



The Moral Argument

- Right and wrong as a clue to the meaning of the universe
- An appeal to some law or rule of fair play or morality
- Built-in consensus about what is moral decency
- A moral law implies that there is a moral law giver
- There is somebody behind the universe

God – A Celestial Killjoy?



- We cannot know what God is like from nature
- **Job 11:7**, “Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?”
- Einstein thought of God as an impersonal force or mind



What is God Really Like?

- To the Theist, God is the Creator and Ruler, and is personally involved in His creation while revealing Himself
- To the Deist, God created the world and yet never intrudes on it
- To the Agnostic, the finite cannot penetrate the infinite – the bird cannot fly out into space
- God, the infinite, can penetrate the finite (communicating to man what He is really like)



God Has Penetrated the Finite

- **Heb. 1:1-2**, “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;”
- God’s fullest revelation has been His entry into human history in the person of Jesus Christ
- The best and clearest answer to how we know there is a God is that He has visited us

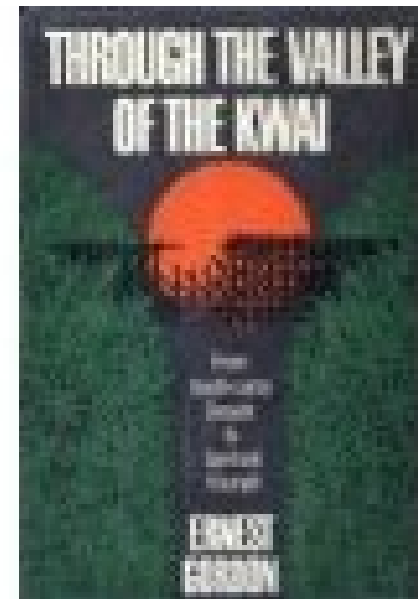
The Incarnation of Christ

- God is confirmed by the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- **John 1:14**, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, ... ”
- **John 1:18**, “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”
- Jesus came to earth to reveal who God is and what He is all about



Through The Valley of the Kwai

- The story in “Through The Valley of the Kwai”, prisoners reduced to almost animals
 - The prisoners started to read the NT
 - Gordon, a skeptic leads the reading
 - Many were unbelievers
 - Prisoners transformed into a community of love
- Demonstrates the reality of God in Jesus Christ





Changed Lives

- Evidence for the reality of God's existence
- His clear presence in the lives of men and women today
- Convincing evidence from Creation, History, contemporary life – there is a God and that this God can be known in one's personal experience



Addressing Postmodernism



Addressing Postmodernism

- Tenets of Postmodernism
 - Truth does not correspond to reality
 - There is no grand story (universal truth) that can account for all reality
 - We never encounter the thing-in-itself
 - There is no ultimate foundation upon which knowledge is based
 - Objectivity is an illusion
 - Truth depends on one's perspective
- Ethical Theism -> Modernism -> Postmodernism

Postmodernism has replaced knowledge with interpretation



Views on “Truth”

- **Ethical Theism** – truth has been revealed to men and women by God
- **Modernism** – truth can be discovered by reason and logical augmentation
- **Postmodernism** – truth does not exist objectively; it is a product of a person’s culture

The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict, *Josh McDowell*



Views on “Human Identity”

- **Ethical Theism** – humans are both spiritual and material beings, created in God’s image but fallen because of sin
- **Modernism** – humans are rational, not spiritual, beings who can define their existence according to what their senses perceive
- **Postmodernism** – humans are primarily social beings, products of their culture and environment



Views on “The World”

- **Ethical Theism** – God is the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of His earth and has instructed humans to subdue it and care for it
- **Modernism** – humans can and should conquer the earth and all its mysteries
- **Postmodernism** – life on earth is fragile, and the “Enlightenment model of the human conquest of nature ... must quickly give way to a new attitude of cooperation with the earth”



Views on “Thought & Language”

- **Ethical Theism** – reason “can disclose truth about reality, but faith and revelation are needed in addition”
- **Modernism** – for answers and understanding about life and the world around us, people should rely only on rational discovery through the scientific method and reject belief in the supernatural
- **Postmodernism** – thinking is a “social construct,” language is arbitrary, and there is no universal truth transcending culture



Views on “Human Progress”

- **Ethical Theism** – human history is not progressing but awaiting deliverance
- **Modernism** – human progress through the use of science and reason is inevitable
- **Postmodernism** – things are not getting better; besides, progress is an oppressive Western concept



Answering Postmodernism

- Postmodernism is self-defeating
- We can know the thing-in-itself
- The Postmodern rejection of representational correspondence fails to demonstrate that truth does not correspond to reality
- Practical experience indicates we are able to extract the author's meaning as it exists formally in the text
- Truth is objective rather than dependent on one's perspective



Addressing Skepticism

Addressing Skepticism

- David Hume's Skepticism
 - Questioned the knowledge claims of all disciplines – mathematics, science, and metaphysics
 - Allowed for beliefs based on probability, which transcended our experience
 - Against any presuppositions about the uniformity of nature
 - Induction is not a valid form of reason, but rather a habit of expecting similar results based on a uniformity of experience



1711 - 1776

Skepticism – the belief that any reliable or absolute knowledge is impossible, and any aspects of the supernatural are unattainable by any individual.



Tenets of Skepticism

- All knowledge is derived through either the senses or reflection on ideas
 - Probable conclusions inducible from sense impressions
 - Knowledge founded in the necessary conclusions deducible from self-evident truths
- Causality cannot be observed but only believed based on custom
 - Cannot know for sure if any particular cause and effect are connected
 - Can't know the truth about a cause from an effect



Answering Skepticism

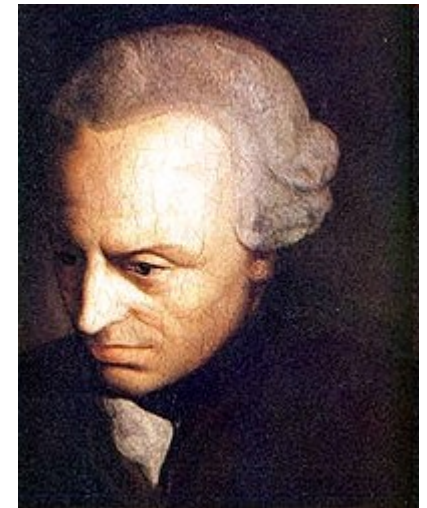
- Skepticism is self-defeating
 - Should we be skeptical of skepticism (doubts)?
- The statement “all knowledge is derived through senses or reflection on ideas” is derived from neither of these
 - Reduces our mind to purely sensitive faculty
- Radical empirical atomism (no events connected) is self-defeating and implies unity and connection
 - A unified self is assumed while denying a unity
- Denial of causality is self-defeating
 - The denial requires causal connections
 - What is known about reality cannot be known?

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Addressing Agnosticism

Addressing Agnosticism

- Immanuel Kant's Agnosticism
 - The content of knowledge is structured by the mind
 - There is an unbridgeable gulf between our knowledge and reality
 - A capsule of Kant's Agnosticism
- Immanuel Kant denies that we can know what reality is in itself
- If we can't know reality, we can't know truth



1724 - 1804

Agnosticism – the belief that man “either does not know or cannot know.
... In theology the theory is that man cannot attain knowledge of God.”



Kant's Epistemology

- Knowledge is composed of content and form
 - The content of knowledge is supplied by sensory experience
 - The form/structure of knowledge is supplied by the mind
- There are two sources of knowledge – sense and understanding
- Kant declares that reason alone is not sufficient to know reality
- The content of knowledge is structured by the mind



An Unbridgeable Gulf Between Our Knowledge and Reality

- Kant's epistemology draws a limit to our knowledge, and reality is outside that limit
- We can't find truth because we can't know reality
- The mind is not satisfied with knowing the limits (beyond which we cannot know truth)
- Kant does not deny reality but brackets it as unknowable
- He believed there was a distinction between the real world and the apparent world of appearance



Answering Agnosticism

- Agnosticism is self-defeating
 - Claims that all knowledge about reality (i.e. truth) is impossible
 - Agnosticism is offered as a truth about reality
 - Kant claims to have knowledge of what he declares to be unknowable
- Categories of the mind correspond with reality
 - Otherwise Agnosticism is unstateable
 - Unless the real world were intelligible no statement about it would apply



Answering Agnosticism – 2

- It is not possible to affirm existence without declaring something of essence
 - i.e. what it is in itself
- Kant's epistemology cannot reach reality because it does not start with reality
 - The knowledge depends on the realities known
- The certainty of Kant's a priori conclusions are refuted by scientific realities
 - The only way we judge whether something corresponds to reality is according to these a priori categories and not based on our experience of reality itself



Christianity – A Rational Faith

- Truth is revealed by God
 - Special Revelation through His Word
 - General Revelation through His Creation
- We can know truth/reality through:
 - God's Revelation – His Word and Creation
 - Our five senses
 - Our power to reason
- We have been given sufficient evidence
- Our Faith is based on Facts (not feeling)



Thank You!

II Tim. 2:2, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”