

Dear Reader,

I recently read a “Letter from an atheist.” It was a scathing letter indicting Christians who don’t seem to care about the eternal future of non-Christians. The writer equated these Christians as the person who sits on the street corner watching person after person walk out into the street, get mowed down by vehicles they don’t see, and yet gives no warning and doesn’t try to stop them. He is just happy and content that he has received his “walk” signal who will be in heaven one day and has little concern or love for those who are being wiped out in front of him. Understand that this is my perspective and position – based on what I believe, it would be the worst form of cruelty and selfishness if I should not at least attempt to warn those who are stepping out to cross the street who do not see the Mack truck of eternal judgment barreling down upon them!

Lest I be guilty of such silence and apathy, permit me to give a brief defense of Christianity and a sincere plea for you to consider your eternal destiny. First, I believe to be true that to which Scripture and creation attest:

- That God created this world and man for a purpose – to glorify and enjoy Him. He is a loving Creator who established man to rule the world under Him (Revelation 4:11).
- Man has rejected God and rebelled against His rule. He has tried to live life his own way and has failed miserably to rule his own life, society, or the world (Romans 3:23).
- Every man has sinned against God and is therefore deserving of judgment from a holy God who, by His nature, cannot tolerate sin. His judgment is just, but terrible as it is eternal (Hebrews 9:27).
- But, because of his great love He sent His Son, Jesus Christ who lived a perfect and sinless life and died on the cross for mankind. He bore the punishment for those that would believe in Him (Romans 5:8).
- Christ was crucified, buried, and rose again and now sits at the right hand of the Father as the rightful Ruler over all (John 11:25).
- Man is faced with 2 choices in life (John 3:36):
 1. Reject the Ruler, Christ, by living life his own way resulting in death and eternal condemnation.
 2. Submit to Christ as Lord and Savior in faith resulting in forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

There are key questions that man has tried to answer from the beginning of time:

1. What defines reality and from where is its origination?
2. What is the meaning of man? Specifically, what is my meaning and purpose in life?
3. How is right and wrong determined?

Every man tries to answer these questions for themselves to one degree or another. Consequently, all men have a belief system that serves as the basis for their worldview. Christianity represents the only worldview that gives answers that agree with and explain the very reality that creates these questions and demands rational answers.

The Alternatives

In opposition to the Christian worldview rooted in the Bible are many alternatives. But every alternative world-view presents logical problems. The following are various alternatives:

1. **Atheism.** Atheism is a simpleton's religion. Those who claim there is no God must cling to the silly notion that all reality came from nothing and the personality observed in humanity came from impersonal nothingness. Such a person claims absolute knowledge in saying there is no God when in fact there is much outside his knowledge, and if he were to be intellectually honest, he would have to at least admit the possibility of God. But such a person has no basis for morality, no hope in this lifetime and the natural conclusion is utter despair. The great philosopher Frederick Nietzsche boldly penned the famous words: "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him." Ironically, he lived his last years in isolation, went insane, and died in utter despair. His philosophy provided no joy, no hope and no basis for morality. In the end, his own "religion" killed him. Atheism fails to provide any reasonable answers to the above 3 questions and is therefore useless as a system of life-governing thought and the extreme logical conclusion to such belief is literal suicide for everything which came from nothing is entirely meaningless ... even your own life.
2. **Existentialism.** The summation of existentialism is captured by the phrase, "existence precedes essence." Existentialism is concerned with the here and now – meaning for man is found in his life as he lives it. The essence of ultimate truth is either irrelevant, indiscernible, or only discernible through his experiences. As the experience of man is preeminent over any notion of ultimate truth, this philosophy also fails to provide any good answers to the 3 main questions. If there is not a personal God and not a universal truth that can be known by man, than man must find answers through his experiences which equates to finding answers in himself. Man then becomes the arbiter of truth and this introduces all sorts of relativistic problems. This is the essence of **humanism**, a doctrine and way of life centered on human interests or values. Man's reason and experience become the ultimate standard of purpose, right and wrong. Few would call themselves existentialists, but many think existentially as evidenced by the habitual practice of doing what "I feel." And what I feel like doing is that which works in practice for me or boosts my self-esteem. Pragmatism becomes god as man becomes the object of his own worship.
3. **Pluralism and Relativism.** Pluralism jettisons the traditional philosophical pursuit that desired to bring all knowledge under a unifying and universal truth that transcends man and his reality. Instead, pluralism says you can believe what you want, I will believe what I want, and even though your belief system says one thing and mine says another, they can both be true. This type of relativism is extremely common in today's world, and has influenced secular and religious spheres. In the arena of religion, this pluralistic thinking can be illustrated by the late Pope John Paul II who declared in a spirit of tolerance, "there are many ways to God and heaven." If, however, you are going to say that a sincere Muslim who believes in Allah will experience eternity just like the good catholic and the Buddhist seeking spiritual enlightenment and nirvana, you have declared religious truth to be relative, since

they all teach distinctly different things. $2+2$ can either equal 4 or 5 or whatever works for you. Pluralistic relativism has created today's cultural feel-good spirit of tolerance that eschews dogma and ultimate truth. Inclusive of every system of thought that is not exclusive (say Christianity), it has declared all thoughts and beliefs to be equal. One dare not say an idea/belief is superior or even right or wrong. Practical morality ceases to exist since right and wrong, as determined ultimately by man, is relative to what he thinks it should be. Since relativism ultimately uses man as the standard for truth, man's reason becomes his god. The essence of life is found ultimately in himself. Such systems fail to answer adequately our 3 questions. And man, mired in all sorts of vices and problems, is hardly a reliable source for any useful and untainted truth. Take again the Pope's declaration. In regards to our questions, he would certainly attribute reality and the existence of man to God with man's purpose rooted in God. However, his pluralistic declaration now nullifies ultimate truth and even the "mouthpiece of God" (the Pope) cannot live within his own system since there is now no longer any singular basis for truth and right and wrong. How can extremist Muslim teaching which rewards the killing of the "infidels" with 70-odd virgins in heaven be as true and good as the catholic teaching which says you must attend mass (among other things) to secure salvation and eternal life? Pluralism allows for it. Consequently our pluralistic and relative world, while applauding its own progressive tolerance, drowns in her inability to decipher ultimate truth and the only answer to $2+2$.

4. **Deism.** Deism is a system of thought advocating natural religion based on human reason and morality rather than divine revelation or transcendent truth. Although a deity may exist, he is aloof and impersonal at best. He cannot be known personally. As a pseudo-religious system, deism presents the same problems as pluralism, relativism, humanism, etc. since any truth or meaning in life ultimately begins and ends with man.
5. **World Religions.** The ultimate question addressed by all major religions deals with the acquisition of eternal life, or in the case of most Eastern religions, spiritual enlightenment. Some provide better answers than others but simple logic requires man to either jettison them all as false or embrace one as the truth since they all say something different. There is no room for pluralism for a rational thinking man. Without going into great detail here, the fundamental difference between Christianity and all other religions is that Christianity does not in any way rely on the works or deeds of man to obtain eternal life. In every other religion, from Catholicism to Hinduism, man must work and earn salvation to one degree or another. Since man is constantly working for eternal life, trying to be a good person, or finding spiritual enlightenment through subjective personal experience, there are never any assurances that can be obtained. How can man know if he has been good enough, or earned enough favor with God, or actually achieved a state of spiritual enlightenment and not just mental delusion? He can't! And because he can't, he ultimately has no assured hope in this lifetime. Scripture clearly nails man for who he is – corrupt, sinful and absolutely incapable of saving himself or scoring enough "good points" to make him acceptable to a holy God (Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:10-12, 23). To confirm this truth, man need look no further than his own heart to see his own bent to do the things he instinctively knows to be bad. The world of horrific evil confirms it. Christianity alone says man can only be saved from something *exclusively* outside himself or anything he does (Romans 3:20).

Reality around us begs the key questions listed above be answered. Man, in and of himself, has failed to create or find lasting meaning and answers. The end result is utter despair. If man cannot answer those questions, what's the point? He is left to the natural conclusion that there is no point. The extreme form of this despair manifests itself such as in the actions of the literary giant, Ernest Hemmingway, who put a shotgun to his head to end his insanity, suffering and hopelessness. Or perhaps one will engage in hedonism, the pursuit of pleasure to the exclusion of suffering. This too, ends in despair, as many pleasure-seekers will attest to, as either boredom of pleasure or failure to experience pursued pleasure only heaps more pain on the hedonist.

Christianity answers the 3 questions by the following:

1. Reality – everything that constitutes our universe – was created by God.
2. The purpose for humanity is to glorify God by submitting to his rule, serving Him and others, and enjoying Him in this lifetime and all eternity.
3. Ultimate Truth, established and rooted in a perfect and infinite God, universally dictates right and wrong. Additionally, objective and ultimate Truth, dictates how man is rightly related to God (here's where Christianity differs from all other religious and philosophical systems).

The Evidence of Christianity

There are many evidences that attest to the veracity and truth of Christianity as defined by God's Word. Here's a few:

- Creation. God has revealed Himself in creation. All creation, in its beauty and precise design, declares that there is a God (Romans 1:20).
- Man's conscience. God has revealed Himself to all men in that He has put a knowledge of Himself in the heart of man (Romans 1:19). An active component of this knowledge is the conscience of man. Although man may sear his conscience and become dull to this built-in mechanism, his conscience bears witness to this knowledge. Guilt and his propensity to excuse his own behavior attest to the knowledge, however vague, that he has violated a higher standard. This is universal amongst all men. From culture to culture, although norms vary, there are common standards of morality that point to a universal morality. For example, from the perspective of the husband, it is wrong to kill his wife in every pocket of humanity that can be found, even in the most remote and primitive tribe. Moral relativity, although it may be praised by the "enlightened" intellectual, finds no substance in daily living as the relativist will be the first to cry "foul play" when personally wronged.
- Man's sin. Christianity declares man a sinner and that because of his sin he is an enemy of God (Romans 5:10). Human nature attests to this fact. Young children, sweet and innocent, are bent towards evil and rebellion. No child has to be taught to lie, steal or be selfish. These are his natural talents. Any child, left to his own devices with no guidance or discipline, will become the worst hellion. This same bent towards evil is evident to every man who gives his own heart even a casual perusal.

- The man Jesus Christ. History declares the life of one called Jesus who claimed to be God and perfect and who was ultimately crucified by the Jews for this “blasphemy.” Because of His claim to deity and that He serves as the only door to eternal life, there are only 3 options to His true identity.
 1. Liar. His claim to be the Messiah, the Savior of Mankind, the Son of God was all a lie. If this is the case, then He was a cruel deceiver. All Scripture, which declares these truths, should be immediately discarded as rubbish and Jesus should be branded a pathological liar.
 2. Lunatic. If His claims were false and he did not knowingly deceive, then at best, He was a raging lunatic who experienced delusions of deity and kingship.
 3. Lord. The only other viable option is that He is who He said He was – the “I AM,” Jehovah God, Lord and Savior.

These are the *only* three options to the person of Christ. To say He was a good moral teacher or prophet, yet not the Son of God and the only way to salvation as He claimed, is to irrationally elevate a liar or lunatic to that of a great moral leader. Such is true lunacy and deception.

Objections to Christianity

There are many objections given to the truth as represented by Christianity as defined by Scripture. Here are some common ones:

- “I have a problem with suffering and evil in this world. How could a good and loving God allow this?”

If you say you have a problem with all that’s horrible in this world, we are in agreement. Saying this reveals that you think the world should be one way that it’s not. There is a standard of goodness that you feel has been severely violated. Again, we agree. Scripture confirms this. God created a perfect world without sin, yet God gave man a will, able to freely obey or disobey, love or hate. Because Adam sinned, sin entered the world and all was corrupted. The evil in the world does not prove that God is in anyway evil or complacent. It does prove that man is inherently evil. The problem is with man, not with God. The standard of goodness that causes man to see evil and say “that’s not right!” is the standard of goodness rooted in the perfect goodness of God. If there is no God and God is not perfectly good, then there is no ultimate standard of goodness that transcends man, and good and evil are relegated to a relative perspective or preference. The person that says “evil must be dealt with” should first deal with the evil in his own heart.

- “I believe God is good and that he will not condemn anybody to hell. How could a loving God be so harsh?”

Let us suppose that there is a God and there is good and evil. If man commits evil, what then is the proper response from a loving God? To say, as some, that evil man should not be judged according to his evilness in the name of love is to distort true love. Take for instance the love of a parent. If a parent never punishes a child for wrong doing, he is not “loving” his child as this child will soon become a “loved” rebel of the worst sort. This is not “love” – this is hate. And what is justice? Should justice be trumped in the name of love just because man thinks this would be fair?

Man really doesn't think so. For he will be the first to cry "Outrageous!" to the judge who lets a convicted murderer go, even if the murderer has been "good" for a majority of his life. Few will dare to suggest that this cruel murderer should not receive the harshest of punishment. God is love, but He is also just and his wrath is real towards evil and perfectly legitimate. The problem is not that man doesn't think evil should be judged, he just doesn't think *he* is evil and deserving of judgment.

- "I am a pretty good person. I always try to do the right thing. I think God will let me into heaven in the end."

This ties right in with the previous idea. "I'm not all that bad, particularly compared to many." By what standard of goodness do you use to make such a risky assessment? Too many people reduce "goodness" to doing more good than bad, playing the percentages: if my good deeds outweigh my bad ones by at least 51% or more, than I can be considered a good person and God will overlook my sins. Again, such thinking is logically foolishness since this same person in practice will think it no small matter should a long time friend betray him, even if the long-time friend has been a good friend 99% of the time. And what assurance is there in a fuzzy hope that you can ever do enough good deeds to gain God's favor or escape His judgment. Such a belief presumes upon a person's own goodness according to a nebulous standard of goodness and ultimately presumes upon the mercy of God. To say you deserve mercy is to fail to understand that mercy is not getting what you actually *deserve*. All men deserve justice. Justice is God's punishment for man's rebellion towards Him. Mercy is provided through grace, favor given to man through the work of Christ which man does *not* deserve, but which a loving God gives anyway.

- "Christianity is fine for you if it works for you. I think all religions say the same thing and as long as you are sincere, God will let you into heaven."

Christianity, or any other religion, is not "fine" just because it "works" for somebody. Christianity is true or it is false. Buddhism is true or false. Atheism is true or false. Objective, universal truth either exists or it doesn't. If it exists, then one system of thought and belief represents it and the rest distort it. If this truth can not be rationally considered and known, as the Eastern mystic would say, than it is subjective to man's experience which is the antithesis of objective truth. This "truth" is then worthless no matter how "sincerely" you believe it. Early astronomers who believed the earth was the center of the solar system were *sincerely* wrong. If, however, objective and universal truth does exist and can be known, than it is incumbent upon man to search for it. This man must jettison today's pluralistic and relativistic thinking if he is ever come to grips with a singular Truth that will give meaning to his life and a basis to live. Ultimately, Christianity is the only religion that makes sense of the crazy reality we observe around us.

In conclusion, the stakes could not be higher for man. The pursuit of truth cannot be a hobby or intellectual exercise. Realize God says via His Word that man is not good. If you think you are good then ask yourself if you have ever told a lie. Of course. Have you ever stolen anything, however small or seemingly insignificant? Of course! If you're a guy, have you ever lusted in your heart after another woman? Yes, and according to the Bible, you have committed adultery in your heart. So if you are honest, you must admit that you are a lying, thieving, adulterer. And you say you're good? What makes you think your "goodness" will get you into heaven, into the very

presence of a holy God? So man must conclude he is not good, and such is the indictment of all declared throughout Scripture. Realize God says that all men are sinners. All men have rejected God and gone their own way, pursuing his own lusts (Romans 1:21). Know that God says there will be eternal torment in hell for such a one (John 3:6; Matthew 25:41). According to God, such condemned men will endure His terrible and fierce wrath for all eternity and there will be no relief and no end to it and it will all be just and deserving. Realize that God is infinitely loving and sent His own Son to pay this just penalty for the sins for all those who would by faith belief in Christ as Savior and Lord (Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:8,9). Know that man stands in direct opposition to God and that he can only be made right with God if his sins are covered. Scripture gives the beautiful and clear remedy to man's problem and it is rooted in the person of Christ. If one will count the cost (Luke 14:28), deny himself, pick up his cross (Matthew 10:37-39; Luke 9:23-24), repent of his sins (II Corinthians 7:10) and turn towards Christ in faith and submission to His authority, not resting on anything in himself to save him, there is forgiveness of sins and eternal life. For such a one who recognizes his depravity and entrusts Christ with his life resting on His righteousness, there is supreme joy in this lifetime and the guarantee of eternity in heaven (Romans 5:1, 8:38-39; John 15:11, 10:29). Should the world rise up against him, he rejoices in Christ who is his sufficiency and fulfillment. He echoes the apostle Paul in saying "to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Death has no victory. Death has no sting. For this life is only a stepping stone to a perfect eternity where there is no suffering, no tears, no pain. Suffering and hardship are but temporal and the Christian is able to rejoice in all circumstances knowing God is perfectly in control of all things and actively working all things together for His good (Rom 8:28). For the Christian, God is our Protector, Provider, Redeemer, and Friend. He is loving Father. He is a wonderful Savior.

It is possible that Christianity is a hoax. It is possible that there is no God and Christ was as liar or just plain crazy. If this is the case, it doesn't matter what you believe. You can be an atheist. You can indulge in every conceivable pleasure. You can seek nirvana or some other religious high. It doesn't matter because we will all die in the end and be annihilated or end up in the same after-life. You have nothing to lose, so eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you die! However, if Christianity is true, then every man will bow the knee to Christ. You can do it in this lifetime while you still have breath, or you can wait when it's too late. If Christianity is true, then what is at stake is eternity. *Make ready to meet God while there is still time!*

In love for man made in the image of God,

One beggar to another

P.S. I recognize that no argument, no matter how bullet-proof or persuasive, can convince a skeptic's heart and mind. If you are skeptical of the above, but desire to know if it is, in fact, true then I implore you to do the following:

Pick up a Bible, pray that God would reveal Himself to you, and read the gospel of John.