

Reaching Our Brave New Secular World

Part Two

(How to Make a Case for Christianity)

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21st Century A Post-Christian Jury (World)

- * Modernism and Post-Modern assumptions
- * Moral relativity
- * Skepticism
- * Hatred of God
- * Secular assumptions and values dominate

Who is your “jury?”

Ways to Make a Case for Christianity

- * **Formal**

- * Courtroom

- * Debate

- * Lecture

- * **Informal**

- * Casual conversation

- * Appropriate opportunities

How Christians should engage the secular culture

- * Be informed
- * Be Prepared
- * Have a Winsome Attitude
- * Love People

Three Broad Issues to address in making a Case for Christianity

- * Does God exist?
- * Is the Bible reliable?
- * Did Jesus rise from the dead?

Part 3, Making a Case

- * Opening Statement
- * Presentation of Evidence
 - * Direct and Circumstantial
 - * Expert testimony
- * Cross-examine opposing positions
- * Closing Argument (Summation)
- * Request a Verdict

Opening Statement

Condition the Hearers

Sample Opening Statement (what the evidence will show)

- * God exists
- * The Bible is a reliable source that reveals God's plan
 - * Dead Sea Scrolls
 - * Wealth of manuscript evidence
 - * History and archaeology support reliability
- * Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead
 - * Multiple, independent sources
 - * Eyewitness testimony, close in time to the events
 - * Changed lives of followers

Presentation of Evidence

“Evidence” Defined

- * The data on which a conclusion or judgment can be established
- * The statements and material objects admissible as testimony in a court of law

Types of Evidence

- * **Direct**
- * **Circumstantial**
- * **Expert Testimony (Opinion)**

Expert Witnesses

"A witness qualified as an expert by knowledge, skill, experience, training, or education" may testify and offer opinions if (a) the expert's scientific, technical, or other specialized knowledge will assist the trier of fact to understand the evidence or to determine a fact in issue..."

Rule 702(a) of the Federal Rules of Evidence

First Issue: Does God Exist?

Bible: The Fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” Psalm 14:1

Atheist: “The most reasonable belief is that we came from nothing, by nothing and for nothing.”
Quentin Smith, Philosopher

Science is the 900 pound gorilla

“I stand in awe of God because of what he has done through his creation. Only a rookie who knows nothing about science would say science takes away from faith. If you really study science, it will bring you closer to God.”

James Tour, Nanoscientist

Evidence for God's Existence

“CALM”

- * Cosmos had a beginning
- * Anthropic Principle
- * Life
- * Morality

“C”--Cosmos had a beginning First Cause (Cosmological Argument)

- * Whatever begins to exist has a cause
- * The universe began to exist
- * Therefore the universe has a cause

Five lines of Evidence for the Cosmos having a beginning

*GEARS

- * Gas tank not empty yet
- * Expanding universe
- * Albert Einstein's Theory of General Relativity
- * Radiation from Creation Event
- * Seed of Galaxies

The Atheist Delusion: “Multiverses”

A delusion is something that people believe in despite a total lack of evidence.

Richard Dawkins, Atheist

Only thing the “Multiverse” theory
lacks is evidence

Its equivalent to “My Dog Ate My Homework”
 (“Trillions of Dogs Ate My Homework”)



“A”--Anthropic Principle

- * Watchmaker Argument (William Paley)
- * Fine-Tuning of the Universe and Earth necessary for them to be life-permitting

“L”--Life

“The complexity of the simplest known type of cell is so great that it is impossible to accept that such an object could have been thrown together suddenly by some kind of freakish, vastly improbable event. Such an occurrence would be indistinguishable from a miracle.”

Michael Denton, Microbiologist, Agnostic

The Information Problem for Atheists

- ❖ DNA in *E. coli* bacterium is 4 million letters long (information would fill 1,000 pages in a book)
- ❖ Human genome is over 3.5 billion letters long (information would fill an entire library)

Where did the information come from?

“M”--Morality

Can a person be good without God? Yes.
But the atheist has no objective basis for morality

- Every law has a lawgiver
- There is a moral law
- Therefore there is a moral lawgiver

No God=No Accountability

"If a person doesn't think there is a God to be accountable to, then—then what's the point of trying to modify your behavior to keep it within acceptable ranges? That's how I thought anyway."

Jeffrey Dahmer, mass murderer

Right and Wrong Without God

- * Some people love their neighbors, others eat them--what is your preference?

Ravi Zacharias, Christian Apologist

- * The atheist is cheating whenever he makes a moral judgment, acting as though it has an objective reference, when his philosophy in fact precludes it.

William A. Dembski, Philosopher

Summary of the Case for God (CALM)

- (1) Cosmos had a beginning (supernaturally)
- (2) Anthropic Principle is strong evidence that the universe and earth were designed
- (3) Life's very existence is best explained by an Intelligent Designer than chance
- (4) Morality's existence requires a transcendent Moral Lawgiver

Atheism

The belief that there was nothing and nothing happened to nothing and then nothing magically exploded for no reason, creating everything and then a bunch of everything magically rearranged itself for no reason what so ever into self-replicating bits which then turned into dinosaurs.

Makes perfect sense.


Summation of the Case for God

God Exists

Second Issue: Is the Bible Reliable?



The "sea" in Scripture imagery stands for the populace, the more unorganized and unskilled (Mt. 13, 41; Rev. 13, 1, 17, 2).

- 
- * It makes sense that God, the Intelligent Designer who created our life-permitting universe would reveal His purpose and plan.
 - * The Bible claims to be a written record of God's plan and purpose for humanity
 - * What is the evidence that the Bible is a reliable source of truth about God and His plan?

In Short, Is the Bible the Word of God?



Determining Reliability

- * Does the Bible say the same thing today as when first written (or has it changed over time)?
- * Is the content of the Bible consistent with what we know from history and archaeology?

Evidence that the Bible has not changed over time

Old Testament

- * Masoretic Text
- * Dead Sea Scrolls

New Testament

- * Embarrassing Wealth of Evidence
- * Copies made relatively close to time of writing

Has the Old Testament been changed over time?

- * The verdict: No!
- * The Dead Sea Scrolls prove the Old Testament has been accurately copied

Has the New Testament been changed over time?

Without originals to examine, how do we know the Bible is the same now as when first written?

- * The vast number of handwritten copies that exist
- * Their closeness to the time of writing

If we stack all the existing copies of all classical Greco-Roman authors together

The pile would be four feet high



If we stack the existing copies of the N.T. together, how high would it be?



Taller than a house



Taller than the tallest tree



Taller than the Eiffel Tower



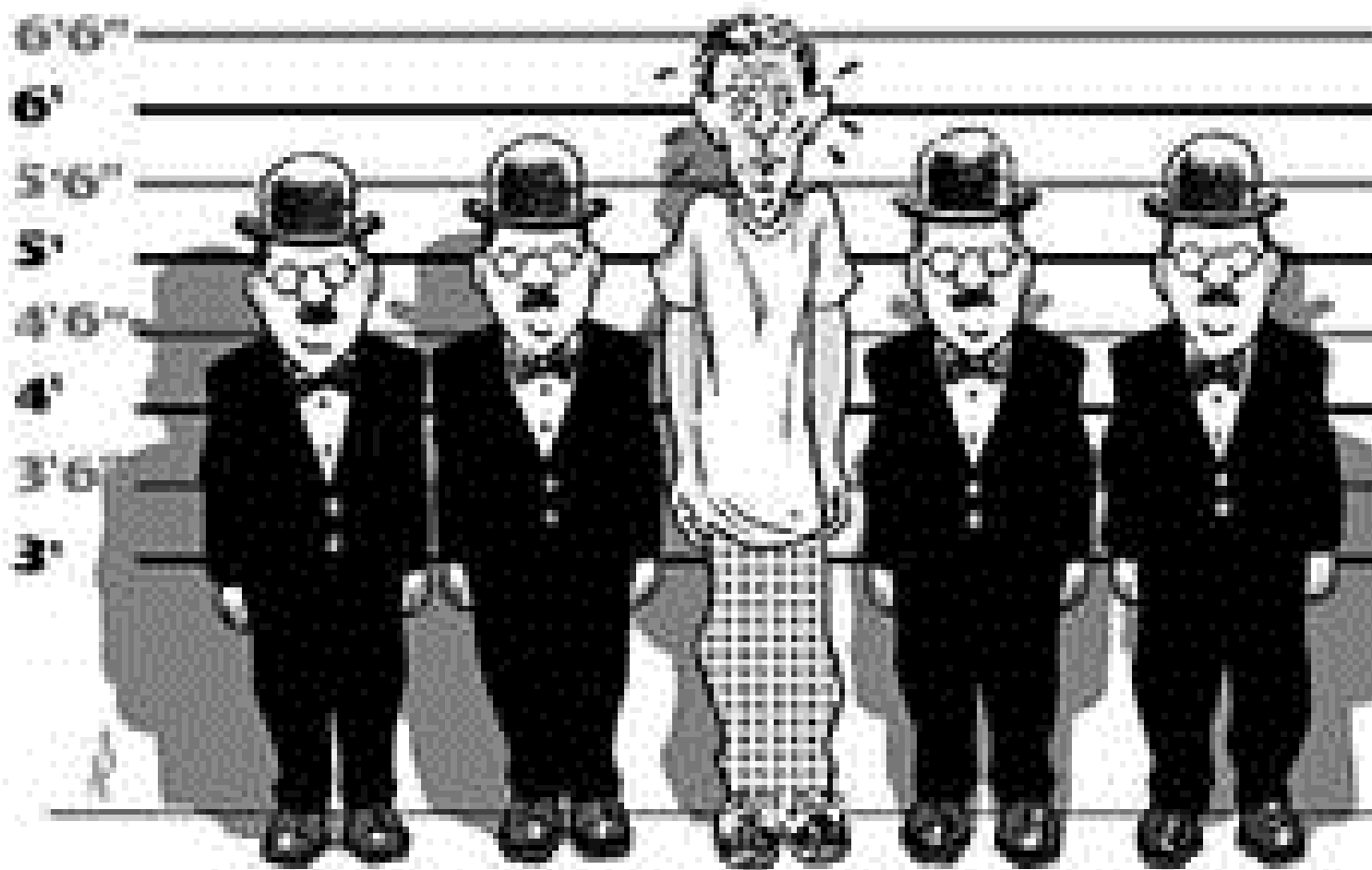
Taller than the Burj Khalifa (tallest building in the world)



The stack would be a mile high-- twice as high as the Burj Khalifa



Was the Bible Written By Eyewitnesses or Those Close to Source?



Eyewitness and primary source accounts

- * Luke 1:3-4—Luke interviewed eyewitnesses
- * Galatians 1:18—Paul investigated Peter and James (A.D. 35)
- * 2 Peter 1:16—Claims to be an eyewitness
- * 1 John 1:1-3—Claims to be an eyewitness

Embarrassingly Honest Accounts

- * The disciples were told by Jesus on several occasions that they had “little faith”
- * The disciples fell asleep after Jesus said, “Watch and pray.”
- * The disciples often misunderstood Jesus
- * The disciples (except John) were not at Jesus’ crucifixion (but women were)

Do Archaeology and History Support Biblical Accounts?



Confirmation by HISTORY

“Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy...this author should be placed along with the very greatest historians.”

Sir William Ramsay

Confirmation by ARCHAEOLOGY

I know of no finding in archaeology that's properly confirmed which is in opposition to the Scriptures. The Bible is the most accurate history textbook the world has ever seen."

Dr. Clifford Wilson, Former director of the Australian Institute of Archaeology

Summation of the Case for the Bible

- * The New Testament is the same today as when originally written.
- * The New Testament written by eyewitnesses or those knew the eyewitnesses.
- * History & archaeology confirm biblical accounts.

Therefore, the New Testament is reliable

Third Issue: Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?

Who is Jesus?

- * Historical Person, Son of God, Savior
- * Myth
- * Liar or
- * Lunatic?

What Jesus Said About Himself

“I and the Father are one”

“He that has seen me has seen the Father.”

“Before Abraham was, I am.”

“I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except by me.”

“Unless you believe that I am, you shall die in your sins.”

“I am the resurrection and the life.”

What Others Said About Jesus

“Never did a man speak the way this man speaks.”
John 7:46

“Truly this man was the Son of God.” Mark 15:39

The Historical Jesus

Secular writers that mention Jesus

- * Josephus (end of 1st c.)
- * Mara Bar Serapion (end of 1st c.)
- * Tacitus (beginning of 2nd c.)
- * Suetonius (wrote at beginning of 2nd c.)
- * Pliny the younger (beginning of 2nd c.)
- * Lucian of Samosata (middle of 2nd c.)
- * Thallus (middle of 1st c.)

Even Liberal Scholars Reject the “Jesus Myth” Theory

"That (Jesus) was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be."

John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus:*

A Revolutionary Biography (1995) p. 145

Facts Accepted by 99% of Scholars

- (1) Jesus died by crucifixion
- (2) the disciples believed that He rose from the dead and appeared to them
- (3) Paul, a persecutor of the early church was converted when he believed he had seen the risen Christ
- (4) James, the skeptical brother of Jesus was converted when he believed he had seen the risen Christ

The Fact Jesus Died by Crucifixion

- * Stated in all four gospels
- * Mentioned by several secular sources--
Josephus, Tacitus, Lucian, Mara Bar-Serapion
and the Talmud
- * Even skeptic John Dominic Crossan writes,
"That he was crucified is as sure as anything
historical can ever be."

The Fact Jesus' disciples believed He rose and appeared to them

- * I Corinthians chapter 15 is solid evidence supporting the disciples' belief that Jesus rose from the dead.
- * Apostolic preaching focused on Jesus' resurrection as proof He was the Messiah

The fact Paul was converted after seeing what he believed was the resurrected Jesus

- * Acts chapters 9 and 22 give Paul's account
- * He was a devout Jew and persecutor of the church, not someone easily converted
- * His testimony and secular sources support that he was persecuted (and eventually martyred) for his belief in the risen Jesus

The fact that James was converted after seeing what he believed was the resurrected Jesus

- * James, the half brother of Jesus, was a devout Jew who was skeptical about Jesus' Messiahship, not someone easily converted
- * His testimony and secular sources support that he was persecuted (and eventually martyred) for his belief in the risen Jesus

Another Fact Accepted by 75% of Scholars

- * Jesus' tomb was found empty.

Conclusion of Scholars

“... that is why I, as an historian, I cannot explain the rise of early Christianity unless Jesus rose again leaving an empty tomb behind him.”

British Scholar N.T. Wright

“It may be taken as historically certain that Peter and the disciples had experiences after Jesus’ death in which Jesus appeared to them as the risen Christ.”

Gerd Ludemann, agnostic

Summation of the Case for Jesus

- * He lived, died on a Roman cross, and rose from the dead as proof He was the Messiah, the Son of God.

The Plaintiff Rests



Closing Argument



Closing Argument— What the Evidence Has Shown

- * God exists
 - * Cosmos had a beginning
 - * Anthropic Principle
 - * Life itself
 - * Morality
- * The Bible is reliable for telling us about God's plan and the life and teachings of Jesus
 - * Dead Sea Scrolls
 - * Manuscript evidence, history, archaeology

Closing Argument— What the Evidence Has Shown

Regarding Jesus:

The historical record, both secular and biblical, is replete with evidence confirming that Jesus lived, performed miracles to demonstrate His authority in the spiritual realm, died on a Roman cross, left behind an empty tomb, and appeared alive to His disciples and many others. Therefore, He is the Messiah, the only way to God, and only through Him can our sins be forgiven.

What is the Verdict?

* “Verdict” = “to say the truth”

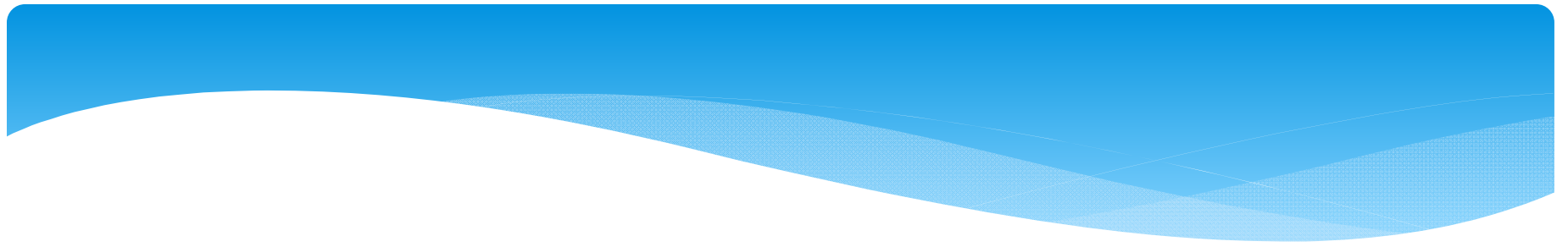


Verdict

In light of the testimony, I ask for the only plausible verdict supported by the evidence:



Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God.”



A Final Word to Christians:

- * Study the Scriptures
- * Know what you believe, and why you believe it
- * Develop your critical thinking skills
- * Learn to use evidence, reason and persuasion in presenting the gospel
- * Do your homework, and you won't have to worry about engaging skeptics

Resources

- * www.RatioChristi.org
- * www.RollingStoneMinistries.org
- * www.RZIM.org
- * www.STR.org
- * www.Reasons.org
- * www.ReasonableFaith.org
- * www.Apologetics315.com
- * www.CrossExamined.org
- * www.ColdCaseChristianity.com

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Additional Reading

- * Any books by C.S. Lewis, F.F. Bruce, or John Warwick Montgomery

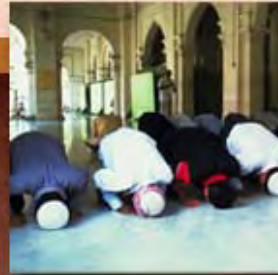
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