



A CASE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

INTRODUCTION

With the number of religions and worldviews in existing today and the many people from all walks of life that adhere to them, it is almost ridiculous to claim uniqueness. Well it is kinder to call such a stance ridiculous because logically speaking we will have to call it madness, pride or sheer ignorance.

But in the mist of so much being thrown at us calling for our attention and examination, can there really be anything unique about the Christian gospel or the God of the Christian faith? With all that we have to choose from and the many deities and demy-gods calling out for our allegiance, what reason is there for one to even consider the Christian faith? What does the gospel say that is so different (radically) from other faiths? After all, nearly all the major religions posit the existence of a God of some sort.

A CASE FOR TRUTH

“To give truth to he who does not love it is to give him more reason for argument”.

He that is on the side of truth listens to me. What is truth, Pilate asked. And with that he walked out”.

In our times (I believe every generation feels that pressure/opposition they face has never been greater in any time before theirs) when the subtlety of relativism is its main tool for gaining a lot of ground in our thinking and our approach to life in general, it is becoming increasingly difficult to talk about absolutes or in absolute terms concerning many things.

But we first need to know that there is such a category as truth. Yes, truth does exist. And because there is such a thing as truth, there is such a thing as a lie.

It is very important for us to think along these lines because contrary to popular opinion, it is not only the Christian faith that has claims of exclusivity in its teachings. All religions make exclusivist claims (that is there are points or issues that they are not willing to compromise on and believe all other contradictions to their stand is a lie).

But as has been said in many circles, “all roads don’t lead to Rome”. And no matter how long a lie has been in office, it will never become a truth.

But it was Joseph Stalin who said “tell a lie to the people, tell it over and over again, and the people will believe it to be the truth”.

Truth by definition is exclusive. What that means is that when a statement or a point is made with the assertion that it is true, all other statements or points that stand in direct opposition or contradiction to it must be considered as false or lies.



So in effect I cannot say a shirt is black and white at the same time. Or I cannot say well it is black to me but it may be white for someone else. Because black as a color is exclusive and unique so the game of relativizing comes to a halt when we confront absolutes.

The uniqueness of the Christian message hinges on the fact that it is actually true. And so the test of the truth claims of the Christian gospel is not really with the message but with it lies in the honesty in the heart of the inquirer. Indeed he who is on the side of truth listens to him.

“I do not want God to exist because that frees me because it frees me to indulge in my own sensual desires”.
A proponent of Evolution

Look at the contradiction we have to live with because of trying to live without absolutes.

“At the time of making it I believed that the most powerful weapon in the world was the bomb. But now I believe that the most powerful weapon in the world is truth and the Christians have it.”...**Andre Sakharov**

THE BURDEN OF PROOF LIES WITH ALL WORLDVIEWS

More often than not we assume that the onus is on only the theist/Christian to prove the existence of God and sustain the claims that Christians make concerning what we believe. Atheists often state that since theists are the ones proposing that something exists—God—It is on them to prove his existence. They hold that if God’s existence cannot be proven definitively, then the default position is not to believe in God—period. Thus, atheism is true until proven otherwise. This is certainly a stance taken by the new atheists (such as Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris).

Oxford philosopher and skeptic Peter Millican concisely expresses the sentiment: **“The believer is the one with the onus of proof as the proposer of the proposition that God exists.”**

But is this a correct assessment? Let’s first look at **what “burden of proof” means**. Whenever someone makes a statement about reality, that person is the one who must provide evidence showing that the statement is true. Thus, he has the burden to provide facts that support the thesis.

The term “burden of proof” is often used in the context of a court of law where lawyers seek to prove their case by showing various evidences to the judge or jury. A core presumption of the justice system says that a person is “innocent until proven guilty.” That means the burden of proof falls upon the *prosecutors* to show that a person is indeed guilty. The defense merely has



to show how the prosecutor's case is insufficient to demonstrate guilt. However, in some countries the opposite presumption is followed: A person is "guilty until proven innocent." Thus, the *defense* has the burden of proof. What we find highlighted in both scenarios is the presumption of either guilt or innocence, and whichever one is followed determines who has the burden of proof.

But what happens if there are no presumptions about guilt or innocence? In such a case the burden lies with the party making the positive statement. But both parties *are* making a positive case—one concerning innocence, and one concerning guilt. Therefore, *both parties* have the burden of proof! When neither party successfully proves their case, the default position is to suspend judgment.

When it comes to competing worldview claims, the default position should be to suspend judgment until the evidence is presented. Even so, this hardly produces atheism as the default worldview, for atheism is always *making the case* that God does not exist. In truth, the default worldview should be a pure form of agnosticism—the position that God's existence is truly unknown, with the verdict still out. Nevertheless, Atheism often presents itself as the default position. This is done by making people believe that all data should be filtered through the axiom that "the cosmos is all that there is," and the burden of proof rests on others who say otherwise. However, this axiom is not a fact; it is merely a philosophical presumption about the world, no matter how widely held it may be. Atheism is not the mere suspension of belief; it is the affirmation that God does not exist. Thus, in a neutral context, atheism bears the same burden of proof as theism.

So does Christianity have a burden of proof? Yes. Is atheism the proper default worldview? No. And it is false to think that because Christianity has a burden of proof, atheism does not. Indeed, they both have a case to make. The only worldview that does not initially have a burden of proof is agnosticism, since it professes a complete suspension of judgment. However, agnosticism is not a destination; it is a temporary holding pattern with an inevitable termination.

In his preface to *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis paints a picture of a man who has entered a hallway with a number of doors that he can enter. For Lewis, this represents the man who has entered Christianity but has yet to choose a specific church or denomination. We can apply this analogy to finding a worldview. Agnosticism is the hallway with numerous worldview doors that one can choose to walk through after the evidence is analyzed. Yet, no matter where one ends up, one can know with certainty at the start that each door is on an equal footing in terms of its obligation to attract people to open its door and enter.

But one practical problem with agnosticism is that those who are walking the hallway will eventually be *forced* to open a door, even if it's simply the door of death at the end of the hallway. In that sense, walking the hall until death constitutes a significant door selection by default. Suspending judgment may inescapably be *making* a judgment.



THE QUESTIONS THAT BOTHER US ALL AND THE ANSWERS CHRIST GIVES?

THE QUESTIONS

“Who are we?”, “where are we?”, “what’s life all about?” Questions like these are common to all of us and are expressed in a range of ways in our culture. How we answer these questions about life is governed by something called your worldview.

Your worldview is the set of spectacles, as it were, through which you view the world. It’s not what you see but what you see with the

- Assumptions
- Beliefs
- ideas

you bring to the questions of life,

- the decisions you make
- the opinions you form
- the conclusions that you draw.

And everybody has one. It’s impossible to live without a worldview, for all of us have to address a number of quite deep and profound questions about life and reality.

Questions of **origin, meaning, morality** and **destiny**. Whether you’re a Christian or atheist, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim or New Ager, you have to face these questions.

Origin — where did I come from and what does it mean to be human?

Meaning — is there purpose to life, or is everything simply random?

Morality — how should I live? How do I respond to the difficult ethical choices?

Destiny — where, ultimately am I headed?

ORIGIN

Where *do* we come from? Where does our universe come from? Why are we here? Why is there **something** rather than **nothing**. Different worldviews answer this in different ways. Atheists would say whatever the answer is, God had nothing to do with it. Rather the universe began several billion years ago — we don’t yet know why or how. Perhaps we’re one of a near-infinite series of other universes (the multiverse) or maybe, as Stephen Hawking recently claimed, making headlines around the world, gravity caused the universe to spontaneously emerge from nothing. Hawking wrote: “Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist.”



Eventually, our galaxy formed, and our solarsystem and then, four billion or so years ago, life developed from the primordial chemical soup and slowly evolved into more and more complex forms, until finally human beings emerged.

Humans are just another animal — as atheist Ingrid Newkirk put it: “A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy. They’re all mammals.”

But a question arises. Can we live like this? If we can see each other as just animals, why not treat each other that way? Journalist Tanya Gold expressed the angst this kind of view can generate when she wrote. If everything, as some would claim, has a physical origin, why are all the things that we care about most non-physical?

- beauty and art
- morality and music
- truth and justice
- mind and soul
- personality.

Somehow, the view that we’re just “throw away survival machines” for our selfish genes doesn’t really ring true.

MEANING

And then there is the question of “meaning”. Is there meaning to life? Is there a purpose to our existence? There are some who will say “no”, flat out. Indeed, the very question is bizarre. There is no meaning, no purpose, no reason for our existence. Your life is just a brief spark in the infinite blackness and when you wink out, that’s it, you’re gone. Ultimately human beings will go the way of every species and when we’re gone, life on earth will roll on without us. Until one day the sun expands and swallows the earth and our solar system becomes just a cold, dead ember. One day, too, the universe itself will end, one day dark, cold and empty. There is no escape. There is meaning. There is no hope.

Again, we might ask: does this answer really satisfy? Bertrand Russell famously said that we must bravely live in the face of this meaningless and build our lives “upon the firm foundation of unyielding despair”. But can we?

MORALITY

Let us come to “morality”. Is there such a thing as “right” and “wrong”? Do “good” and “evil” exist as categories, or do we simply make it up as we go along? Our atheist friends would tend towards saying that “no”, there is no such thing.



Richard Dawkins puts it very bluntly:

The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference.

Other atheists, such as Michael Ruse and E. O. Wilson would say that ethics is merely an illusion fobbed off on us by our genes to make us cooperate. Any worldview that cannot properly and intelligently talk about “good” and “evil” is a non-starter

DESTINY

And, finally, our last worldview question — destiny. Where, ultimately, are we headed? My atheist friends would say our final destiny is death and non-existence. There is no afterlife, no heaven, no hell. All of us, saint or sinner, face oblivion. And the same holds true for the universe — in a few billion years time, the universe will cool and die. No survivors, nothing. So what’s the best we can hope for? Perhaps to live on in the memories of our friends when we’re gone.

But as someone once said: “I don’t want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve immortality through not dying. I don’t want to live on in the hearts of my countrymen. I would rather live on in my apartment!”

And this is not just a question of comfort —if ultimately the destiny of all of us is exactly the same, then you might as well live exactly as you choose, now. It makes no difference. Saint or sinner, all end up the same.

“If there is no God, everything is permissible.”

THE ANSWERS AS GIVEN IN CHRIST (THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW)

These are big questions: origin, meaning, morality, destiny. Questions that, if we’re honest with ourselves, we all have to face — or push away and pretend don’t exist. They’re also questions, I put it to you, that lead directly to the “God question” — because without God, there are no satisfactory answers to any of them. We cannot live as if everything is random and we’re just another animal. We cannot live without meaning and purpose. As if good and evil are clever fictions. As if, ultimately, it doesn’t matter because all end up the same.

The Christian looks at these questions and says that if you want to know the answer to some of the most profound questions about humankind, you need to start with God, because any worldview that starts from us is ultimately going to remain circular.



*Our lives are not puzzles to be figured out. Rather, we come to God, who knows us and reveals to us the truth of our lives. The fundamental mistake is to begin with ourselves and not God. God is the center from which all life develops. If we use the ego as the center from which to plot the geometry of our lives, we will live eccentrically....***Eugene Peterson**

The exciting thing about the Christian worldview is that we don't have to search too hard for God, because he came looking for us. Many people think religions work a bit like this: when it comes to God, they say, everything is foggy and clouded in mist. We just cannot know. At best, religions are like signposts, pointing into the mist, saying "look in that direction". Yet that is *not* the Christian claim at all. The Christian claim is that somebody has come to us *out of the mist*, claiming not to point vaguely *towards* God, but to *be* God. That was the claim of Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus is a fascinating figure. One of the things most fascinating is how many people respect him, even people who aren't Christians. Muslims revere Jesus as a prophet. Hindus consider him a wise and holy teacher. Even many atheists, quick as they are to deny God, are very willing to say they admire Jesus.

The well-known atheist and novelist, Philip Pullman, remarked that **he admires Jesus for his strength and his courage.**

Another, Christopher Hitchens, said that **he respects "the virtue of his teachings"**. There is something fascinating, enigmatic, attractive about Jesus that many have found who have read the pages of the New Testament Gospels, searcher or skeptic.

Jesus Christ upon whom and around whom the Christian message is built said some pretty radical stuff. In particular, he made some startling claims. For example, in the Gospel according to John, Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth and the life. Nobody can come to God the Father except through me". Our first reaction may well be: how startlingly arrogant! What about other religious belief systems other than Christianity? But then a moment's reflection reveals something interesting. Whatever you make of him, Jesus was vastly different from any other religious teacher. All other religions and religious teachers have something in common — they claim that they offer a set of rules, a mystical experience, a body of knowledge that, if you master it, can change your life. Christianity is the one exception. Jesus didn't come claiming to give us new information, a new experience, a new list of things to do. Rather Jesus came claiming to be God himself. Not *a* way, not a vague signpost into the mist, but *the* way. The Christian worldview is not faith or belief in some list of propositions — it's trust in a person.

Second, Jesus claimed to be "the truth". That's a fascinating statement. Not, "I *know* the truth" but "I *am* the truth". The Greek word for truth used in John's Gospel is the word "aolh/qeia" and



it literally means to reveal, or to un-hide something. Jesus is the one who *unhides*, who takes that which is hidden and brings it out into the daylight, the one who *reveals*.

Jesus claimed to reveal the truth — the real truth about who we are, to ourselves. Unless we grapple with that, we're never going to find the really deep answers. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, once remarked that **“the line between good and evil runs right through the middle of every human heart.”** Jesus claimed to be truth itself and to be able to identify and deal with that dividing line in each of us. The Gospel isn't to induce a massive guilt trip. It's not about pointing the finger and being holier than thou. It's about a person, Jesus, who claimed to be truth itself, the one who reveals all secrets.

The claim of Christianity is uniquely this: that the whole purpose of Jesus' ministry and mission was not to provide a self-help programme but rather to *transform our very hearts*. That's an entirely different approach.

Finally, Jesus claimed to be “life”, to offer us a whole new way of being, of meaning and purpose and to shed light upon those profound questions we touched on earlier. The question all of us have to answer is this one: what basis are we really going to found our lives upon? Meaninglessness? Materialism? A hope that “it all will work out okay in the end”? Atheism and nihilism? Jesus once told a story about two builders who each set out to build a house. One erected his home on foundations of sand — the other, on rock. Both looked fine, both were wonderful homes — until the waters rose. As with houses, so with worldviews; it's only when the tide comes in — when life gets tough, when you ask your friends more searching questions, that you can see who has built their life on sand.

The English literary critic, novelist and author, C S Lewis, put it beautifully: “I believe in Christianity in the same way that I believe the sun has risen. Not only because I see it, but because by it, I see everything else.” In other words: only by first making sense of God, can we make sense of everything else, including ourselves.

WHAT MAKES CHRISTIANITY UNIQUE

THE NATURE OF THE GOD REVEALED

A careful study of the all the religions/the major religions today and what they teach about the nature of God reveals a very interesting point. None of them apart from the Christian faith have terms or analogies for God as a God of love. Their definitions and descriptions of God do not put him across as a relational being. Yes there is wide spread understanding of God as Judge, terrifying, punisher of the wicked and



even in some circles a vindictive being. But outside the Christian context, you will never come across a description of God as a “Loving Father”. It is considered an insult in some religions to use such terms regarding God.

Based on this simple case of character discrepancy, it becomes obvious then that when we talk about God, we are not talking about the same God across religions, or is it not?

So the concept of God in the Christian message is a relational being. ...

”in the face of Christ Jesus”...I honestly believe that with all that sets us apart as unique individuals, there is nothing more personal than a Face. So in the revelation of God in Christ Jesus, we have to appreciate that God is not just a God far away, he is also a God that is near. In the gospel we do not come to creeds or forms or statues or just rules. We come to a person in loving fellowship and through this life takes on meaning and we walk in purpose and in fulfillment

So the first distinctive of the Christian faith is the God that is posited in Christianity. We have a God of love who is not a monad (a Trinitarian God). God is the only being in existence the reason for whose existence is in himself. So the God who is revealed in the gospel does not create out of a need for worship or love because he is all sufficient in himself. He creates out of desire, creativity and purpose. Indeed “we are his workmanship”

THE ACCURATE DESCRIPTION OF THE HUMAN CONDITION

Oh wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from this body of sin? Thanks be to God there is way. Christ in you the hope of glory.

Use words such as ego, confidence, ambition, flaw, failings, shortcoming, immorality and the like to describe the human condition and most people will not have any problem with you. After all, “to err is human”.

But one of the most empirically verifiable facts is the lostness of man. And the Christian message hits it bulls eye. We are not just people with huge egos or ambitious drives. In the word of God we are told clearly “deceitful and desperately wicked is the heart of man, who may know it?”

The issue here is sin. Yes sin. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. It is only I the Christian message that the human condition is accurately described. In simple terms, we are lost.

I like putting it this way. Our hearts have been reverse polarized. We love we are supposed to hate and hate what are supposed to love. We live with selfishness and greed when we were meant to live in selflessness and fellowship. The first symptom of our lostness is evident when Cain killed his brother



Abel. His angry reply to God's question about the whereabouts of Abel was a question whose answer was indeed simple but clouded in our judgment.... Am I my brother keeper? Yes Cain, you are.

I dare say that over time we have become more sophisticated in doing and inventing new ways of doing evil. Nowhere is this clearer than in observing the behavior of children. How selfish and demanding they can be. They want what they want when they want it, how they want it and where they want it.

“The bent of his heart is towards evil and imagination from birth”.

So when we say that man without Christ is a sinner, it is not an insult. Rather, it is an accurate diagnosis of the human condition. This is only evident in the Christian message.

THE PROVISION MADE FOR THE MALADY

One of the major points which all other religions find themselves in a choke hold or difficulty is understanding the justice and mercy of God. How can God be just and merciful at the same time? Does being merciful mean he set aside his justice to be lenient sometimes? If that is the case then can he really be considered as a just God since that will mean he is not Just all the time?

You will never read in any other faith the concept of grace apart from the Christian faith. As the average Muslim and you will immediately realize that the emphasis is on works. For them in the end your good deeds have to measure up and outweigh your bad deeds and then you “may” stand a chance of being given mercy. So in the end when enough sweat has been poured and sufficient blood has been shed, then God will consider what to do with you

In the Hindu scriptures we are introduced to the concept of karma. Here you come back again and again after death in many different forms to atone for past sins until you attain the state of Brahman. Let me add that you are not guaranteed a fixed number of times to return and also a memory of your past sins so technically speaking it is an endless cycle.

It is only in the Christian faith that we are introduced to the concept of grace. It is only in grace that the Mercy and Justice of God can be reconciled because of the introduction of a new factor, love. So in the gospels, God does not have to set aside his justice before he can be merciful. He can be merciful because of his justice.

For the wages of sin is death....so For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that who so ever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life...but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

It is very important for us to realize that without appreciating the diagnosis of the human condition as sinful and lost, we will never appreciate the necessity of Christ in the events of world history. And this is where we need to just briefly consider the reason why the law was given...”the law was not given to



make anyone righteous"...but to reveal transgression. So all the law and the prophets point to the revelation of God in his son and the reason for his coming.

In the gospel we are introduced to a God who takes the initiative in reconciliation, as is seen in the story of the prodigal son.

CONCLUSION

Many have said that Christians are blinded or conditioned by the faith so that they cannot be objective in their assessment of some of these critical issues of life. Well if that charge is true I will say the same of all other worldviews, theistic and atheistic. Because in the same way, even the unbeliever is conditioned by their unbelief.

You will agree with me that the questions to which we are seeking honest answers to are not trivial. And if we are to spend our lives going the way of any worldview, it should be based on the validity and viability, and livability of what it teaches and espouses. And so allow me to recommend the revelation of God in Jesus Christ to you in your search for truth and meaning. Stop at his door and consider the person of Christ. And I am convinced any honest inquirer will come to the conclusion that he is indeed Lord Christ.