

A stained glass window depicting a bearded man with a halo, likely a saint or apostle. The image is overlaid with a yellow triangle in the top right and a cyan triangle in the bottom left. The text is centered over the image.

WHAT IF
CHRISTIANITY
IS TRUE?



RATIO
CHRISTI

Faith and reason are at odds in our culture. For many, faith has come to mean little more than wishful thinking and blind belief. Such a concept is completely foreign to the pages of Scripture and historical Christianity. As Edward Feser notes, “In short, reason tells us that there is a God and that he has revealed such-and-such a truth; faith is then a matter of believing what reason has shown God to have revealed. In that sense faith is not only not at odds with reason but is grounded in reason.”¹

WHAT IS RATIO CHRISTI?

Ratio Christi, Latin for *the reason of Christ*, wants to help reverse this trend of anti-intellectual Christianity. We organize apologetics clubs at colleges, universities, and even for high school groups in order to strengthen the faith of Christian students and faculty and challenge the rampant atheism and secularism on most campuses. Our mission is to fill the intellectual gap, to make Christianity something worth thinking about, both personally and in the public square.

WHAT IS APOLOGETICS?

Apologetics comes from the Greek word *apologia* meaning “to give a defense.” Imagine Christian students and faculty who are completely confident in their faith in Christ and can stand up to intellectual attacks and inquiry. Imagine trained apologists and Christian professors working together to help students and faculty see the intellectual weaknesses of secularism, atheism, and

“College can really take a toll on a student’s faith, and Ratio Christi provides fact-based support for the Christian worldview that can be hard to find elsewhere. Ratio Christi helped me conquer my doubts and fall even more in love with the Word.”

MONICA | UC IRVINE STUDENT

religious pluralism. Imagine every Ratio Christi chapter hosting campus-wide lectures and debates. Imagine Christian students entering college confident in their ability to defend their faith. Imagine every church member knowing why they are confident Christianity is actually true. That is what Ratio Christi is all about. It is not just an organization, it is a movement!

ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

As C.S. Lewis notes, “Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and if true, is of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important.”² In the pages of this booklet you will get a taste of a complete apologetic for Christianity and what we do on campuses all over the world. This resource, inspired by *I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Crossway, 2004) by Norman Geisler and Frank Turek, as well as the classical apologetics taught at Southern Evangelical Seminary (SES.edu), includes summaries of each premise in a 12-step argument for the truthfulness of Christianity. It is our desire that you will study the arguments, investigate the end-notes and recommended resources, and begin your journey of knowing why Christianity is true so that you can either put your trust in Jesus Christ for the first time or be equipped to communicate to others your convictions in a winsome and respectful way (1 Pet. 3:15; Jude 3). There is no room for blind faith in the war of ideas for your mind (2 Cor. 10:5).

LEARN MORE ABOUT US:
ratiochristi.org | info@ratiochristi.org

NOTE: Some of the content in this booklet does not necessarily represent the views of every person involved with, or the official position of, Ratio Christi. Ratio Christi’s official statement of faith can be seen at ratiochristi.org/about/beliefs

TRUTH ABOUT
REALITY
IS KNOWABLE

What is truth? In contrast to what many in our culture think, truth is not simply that which works. Lies work from time to time, though they are not true. Nor is truth simply that which is internally consistent. We may read many fictional books which are internally consistent, yet they remain fictional. Furthermore, truth is not simply that which feels good. While it may feel good to think I am not sick, if in fact I am sick that feeling remains false.

Hence, truth is telling it like it is. More specifically, truth is that which corresponds to its object, or the conforming of intellect to reality. By its very nature truth is absolute. That is, if something is true it is true for all people, in all places, at all times. Some truths are subjective, that is, the truth is found within the subject. For instance, it may be true that *you* like vanilla ice cream. It is absolutely true for everyone that vanilla is *your* favorite ice cream flavor. Other truths are objective when the truth or falsity of a claim has nothing to do with your particular feelings. “The freezing point of water is 32° F” would be an example of an objective truth.

Truth cannot be relative. In other words, truth cannot be true for you but not for me. If so, that would be true for everyone, thus making the very claim false! It follows then that truth is not affected by someone’s belief; it is discovered rather than invented; and it is exclusive, always excluding its opposite. Moreover, truth is undeniably know-

“The nights we had Ratio Christi were always my favorite of the week. Being a part of this group helped me understand how Christianity is not simply a blind faith, but a belief grounded in evidence...Ratio Christi is an oasis for the student seeking reasonable answers and evidences to his search for truth.”

able since to claim one cannot know truth would itself be making a claim to know *that* is true (more on this later).

How is truth about reality known? Contrary to 17th century thinker René Descartes, we do not proceed from our *thinking* about things to the *existence* (i.e. being) of the things themselves. Rather, because man is a rational animal, all our knowledge begins in our sense experiences of physical being (i.e. the external world). It is self-evident that our senses provide generally reliable information about the external world. As such, this is not a truth in need of proof, nor is it merely an assumption. While we may at times be mistaken, it is only by using more sense data that we come to realize our incorrect judgment! As Frederick Wilhelmsen says, “everything [man] knows is being...Outside of being he knows nothing, because beyond being...there is nothing to know.”¹

From these sense experiences of particular existing things our intellect abstracts a universal essence such that we can know, for example, what a tree actually is, and that these things are all trees while those things are not. This is known as moderate realism. That is not to say that we can *only* know sensible reality. Rather, as Peter Kreeft explains, “...we must distinguish the claim that all our knowledge *begins* with sense experience from the claim that it is *limited* to it...knowledge can rise to immaterial things [emphasis in original].”²

TRUTH ABOUT REALITY IS KNOWABLE

KEY POINT

All our knowledge begins in our sense experiences of some portion of physical reality. From this, our intellect abstracts a universal essence such that we can know the thing in itself. Knowledge is then able to rise to immaterial things (like the existence of God) based on what we know from physical reality.

THE OPPOSITE OF
TRUE
IS FALSE

From our knowledge of reality we discover the existence of the first principles of thought, or the self-evident laws of logic. You cannot think without using these first principles. Norman Geisler says, "... by way of sensation and abstraction the intellect apprehends that things are and something of what they are. Then, by way of judgment the mind knows that being is and non-being is not. From these judgments arises the first principle of knowledge that 'being is not nonbeing,' which is the [law] of noncontradiction."¹

The law of noncontradiction says that opposite ideas cannot both be true at the *same time* and in the *same way*. Hence, either God really exists or He does not, but it cannot be both. This law of thought is one of the most important tools to put in your toolbox. It will help you quickly spot false claims because contradictions cannot possibly be true.

In order to spot contradictory claims simply apply the claim to itself. For example, if someone says, "There is no truth," apply the claim to itself and ask, "Is *that* true?" If it *is* true (i.e. it corresponds to reality) that there is no truth then the claim "there is no truth" is actually false since there is at least *one* truth! Again, contradictions are always and *necessarily* false.

Perhaps someone has bought into the ideas of 18th century philosopher Immanuel Kant and claims that "We cannot know the real world, only our ideas about reality as it appears to us." Apply the claim to itself. Is *that* idea about the world

"As a deconverted Christian (atheist), I first came to Ratio Christi to continue challenging my thinking. It was the right place to come. Although I am still an atheist, they are respectful, coherent, and offer challenging arguments. Regardless of the fact we disagree, they value truth and critical thinking as I do."

true for everyone, or is it simply their own thoughts about reality? Given their view, how could they possibly objectively know that all minds work this way and that reality is actually unknowable? Such a notion results in contradiction and is thus necessarily false.

The same holds true for what is perhaps the default, and often unexamined, metaphysical view of our society, namely *nominalism*. Contrary to the metaphysical realism previously laid forth (where things have universal essences by which we come to know them), nominalism “claims that universals are only names that we use as a kind of shorthand. Instead of giving each individual tree a separate proper name, we group together, for our own convenience, under the one vague name ‘tree,’ all those things that resemble each other in certain ways...But in reality all trees are different, not the same; not one-in-many, but only many.”²

Yet, as Peter Kreeft explains, “The very sentence that says all trees are not really the same presupposes that they are!”³ The known universal essence of trees is inescapable in such a statement. Moreover, the very concept of nominalism being discussed is itself a type of universal which is shared by all the differing philosophers who debate this issue. Thus, nominalism also results in contradiction.

THE OPPOSITE OF TRUE IS FALSE

KEY POINT

Since truth, by its nature, excludes its opposite, the law of noncontradiction states that opposite ideas cannot both be true at the same time and in the same way. Any claim or view, such as relativism or nominalism for example, that results in contradiction is always and necessarily false.

IT IS TRUE THAT THE
THEISTIC
GOD EXISTS

By observing physical reality we can reason from effect to cause and see that even the most mundane object we encounter can lead us to the existence of God. “There is nowhere the unbeliever can hide in all reality where he is not standing on some ground that can be shown to point to its Creator.”¹

From the cosmological argument, to the design argument, to the argument from objective morality, there are many popular lines of thinking, both scientific and philosophical, showing that theism is true; that is, that there exists a God who is separate from, yet active in, His creation. We will look at one argument, by 13th century thinker Thomas Aquinas, built upon the metaphysical realism we have established.

The argument begins, some *thing*, a tree for example, undeniably exists. Essence is *what* a thing is, and whatever is true of a tree is either because of its essence or some other reason. For instance, to be a tree is to grow roots, sprout leaves, etc., not to be in a particular location such as a backyard. We must ask, is *existence* part of what it means to be a tree?

The answer is no. Even if all trees ceased to exist we would still know what a tree is because its essence and existence are distinct. For example, you can know what a unicorn is, the essence of a unicorn as it were, even though it does not actually exist. From where, then, does existence come? The

“The amount of spiritual equipping that I have gone through [at Ratio Christi] has not only kept me from doubting my faith but has started a passion to tell others of the many reasons for God’s existence and love.”

HANS | UAH STUDENT

tree either exists through itself (by virtue of its essence), exists through another (receives its existence), or causes itself to exist. Self-causation is a contradiction and thus false. Additionally, trees go from potentially existing to actually existing, or they can be turned into piles of ash and thus cease to exist as trees. Hence, they do not exist by virtue of their essence as trees. Therefore, the tree must be receiving existence from another.

Whatever is causing the tree to exist is either receiving its existence from another or it necessarily exists by virtue of its essence. Like an infinite chain of moving train cars with no engine, a chain of existence-receiving causes cannot account for its own existence. Hence, there must exist an uncaused cause, who's essence simply *is* existence, causing all other things. As Being itself, its essence and existence are identical such that it *is* unlimited Being while everything else only *receives* being.

Edward Feser notes, "If essence and existence were not distinct, they would be identical; and they could be identical only in [something who's essence is its very act of existing]. That is to say, something whose essence is its existence would depend on nothing else (e.g. matter) for its existence, since it would just be existence or being. But there could only possibly be one such thing, for there would be no way in principle to distinguish more than one."² And as Aquinas says, this everyone knows to be God.³

IT IS TRUE THAT THE THEISTIC GOD EXISTS

KEY POINT

Everything that exists either exists through itself, exists through another, or causes itself to exist. Self-causation is a contradiction. Physical reality can either exist or not exist and therefore does not exist through itself. Hence, there must be something who is Existence itself creating and sustaining the existence of all other things. Whatever else we may conclude, at minimum, this is what we mean by God.

IF GOD EXISTS THEN
MIRACLES
ARE POSSIBLE

Once it is shown that the theistic God exists, using the law of noncontradiction, we can see that, of necessity, any non-theistic view of reality, or worldview, must be false. This means an incredible amount of work has already been done in showing that Christianity is true. Atheism, agnosticism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Wicca, and any other non-theistic worldview must be false regarding their views of God.

That leaves us with Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and any other unnamed theistic worldview as possible contenders for the one true view of reality. How can we adjudicate between these views? If one of the above belief systems were confirmed by miracles then we would have reason to believe its truth claims.

Miracles? No doubt many in our society would say, “Surely you cannot seriously believe miracles are possible.” Why not? As Norman Geisler says, if there’s a God who can act, then there can be acts of God. Therefore, if God exists then miracles are possible. C.S. Lewis wrote, “If we admit God, must we admit miracles? Indeed, indeed, you have no security against it.”¹

Others will protest, “But extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. So I have no reason to believe miracles have actually occurred.” What exactly is meant by *extraordinary* here? That term is ambiguous and one could, in principle, never meet the demand. For instance, if one means by “extraordinary” some particular *quality* of

“Ratio Christi has provided an open atmosphere in which I can bring my questions about Christianity. It has given me logical answers to those questions and has equipped me with arguments about issues I face as a Christian student on a secular campus.”

JENNIFER | UNC CHARLOTTE STUDENT

evidence is needed, then in order to accept the extraordinary evidence for the extraordinary claim one would need more extraordinary evidence to support the initial extraordinary evidence for the extraordinary claim *ad infinitum* which is absurd.

If, on the other hand, one means by “extraordinary” a particular *quantity* of evidence, who decides how much? That is rather arbitrary. Moreover, we have a vast amount of evidence showing the existence of God, the reliability of the Bible (as we will see), and so forth.

Still others, following 18th century thinker David Hume, will say, “The evidence for the regular is always greater than that for the rare. Since miracles are rare a wise man should never believe in miracles.” Yet nonbelievers accept many rare events as true. For example, the Big Bang cannot be repeated, yet we have solid scientific evidence that the greatest miracle of all actually happened, that is, that the universe exploded into being out of nothing a finite time ago. Many believe that life spontaneously arose from non-life, something that has never been observed nor repeated.

Arguments against the possibility, or believability, of miracles simply prove too much. We have solid reasons to conclude that God exists. Hence, if we have good reason and evidence to believe a miracle actually occurred, then the wise thing to do is believe it.

IF GOD EXISTS THEN MIRACLES ARE POSSIBLE

KEY POINT

If God exists then miracles are possible. If there is a God who can act, then there can be acts of God. The arguments used against the believability of miracles prove too much. Given that God exists, if we have good evidence that a miracle occurred there is no reason we should not believe it.

NO. 5

MIRACLES ARE ACTS
OF GOD
TO CONFIRM A
MESSAGE FROM
GOD

It was a bitterly cold Thursday afternoon on Jan. 15, 2009 when a flight bound for Charlotte, NC hit a flock of birds shortly after takeoff from New York City. Captain “Sully” Sullenberger III safely landed the disabled plane in the Hudson River. Then-New York Governor David Patterson said, “We had a miracle on 34th Street. I believe now we have had a miracle on the Hudson.”¹

Like many words in the English language, we use the term *miracle* quite loosely to describe everything from sporting events, to the birth of babies, to Jesus walking on water. Since the theistic God exists, we know miracles are possible, but what precisely counts as a miracle?

Norman Geisler and Frank Turek, in their book *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Crossway, 2004), distinguish between six categories of unusual events. *Anomalies* are purely physical events that may be considered “freaks of nature.” Scientists used to consider the ability of a bumblebee to fly a “freak of nature.” Second, *magic* refers to slight-of-hand, human-controlled physical events like those of a trained stage performer. Next, *psychosomatic events* are “mind over matter” episodes where we trick ourselves into believing something actually happened. This occurs frequently with television “faith healers.” Then there are *satanic counterfeit signs* that derive from limited preternatural power meant to lead people away from God. *Providential events*, often mistaken for miracles, are

“...many Christians are riddled with doubt, and they can't love the Lord with all their minds if they secretly suspect that Christianity can't answer the hard questions....Every campus needs Christians who can articulate the truths of historic Christianity and answer the falsehoods spread by skeptics....”

CLAY JONES | ASSOC. PROF. CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS AT BIOLA UNIVERSITY

naturally explained but have supernatural timing for God's purposes. The fog at Normandy providing cover for the allies could be considered providential. Finally, there are actual *miracles*, stemming from divine power, that are immediate, lasting, and point to the glory of God.

A miracle, therefore, is a very specific kind of unusual event which would not apply to sporting events, televangelists, or even landing airplanes on rivers. Rather, a miracle provides a divine fingerprint most often used to confirm God's message.

Biblical miracles generally occurred during the times surrounding Moses, Elijah and Elisha, and Jesus and the Apostles; that is, the times God was providing new revelation and confirming as authentic His message. As John 20:30-31 says, "Now Jesus performed many other miraculous signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (NET).²

Miracles are not for show or entertainment. They are relatively rare and, biblically speaking, their primary purpose is to confirm God's message. Why do we not see more miracles? If miracles occurred on a regular basis they would no longer be miracles!

MIRACLES ARE ACTS OF GOD TO CONFIRM A MESSAGE FROM GOD

KEY POINT

Miracles are a specific type of unusual event. They stem from divine power, are immediate, lasting, and point people to God. Their primary purpose is to provide a divine fingerprint confirming God's message.

THE NEW TESTAMENT
IS HISTORICALLY
RELIABLE

The miracles recorded in the Bible, specifically the resurrection of Jesus, will distinguish between our remaining worldviews of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, or any other theistic belief system. But can we trust what the Bible says? For our purposes we will focus on the New Testament (NT). Why? Because Jesus, whom the NT shows is God, says the Old Testament (OT) is the Word of God. Thus, while there is independent evidence for the reliability of the OT, by confirming the NT we get the OT as well.

Two questions must be asked regarding the NT's reliability. One, do we have an accurate copy of the original writings, and two, did the NT writers tell the truth? Accurate copies of fairy tales would do little to help in our search for truth.

Ranging from fragments with a few verses, to pages, to whole books and collections of books, the manuscript evidence for the text of the NT far outweighs any other ancient literary work. There are currently about 6,800 NT manuscripts in the original Greek, some dating as far back as the early 2nd century. This does not even include the 15,000-20,000 versions in Latin and other languages.¹

Our earliest copy of any portion of the NT is around 25-40 years removed from the original.² In second place is Homer's *Iliad* with 1,757 manuscripts, our earliest copy of which is 400 years removed from the original.³ Support for other

“Ratio Christi has helped me learn about the reasons why the Christian worldview stands head and shoulders above the rest. This has helped me feel strengthened in my faith and more confident in sharing my faith with others.”

MATT | UC IRVINE STUDENT

ancient documents drops significantly from there. When you add in the tens of thousands of early translations of the NT and over a million quotations from the church fathers (ranging from the first century AD to the middle ages), the text of the NT is incredibly well attested.⁴ While there are over 200,000 places where these NT manuscripts differ amongst themselves, only about 1% of those differences (which affect about 0.1% of the NT text) have any significant bearing on the meaning of the verse in question. Most importantly, not one of those differences affects any essential Christian doctrine.⁵

Do these well-attested NT documents tell the truth? We have good reason to believe they do. First, we have *early* testimony. It is likely that most of the NT was completed prior to 70 AD. Second, we have *eyewitness* testimony. The NT authors claimed either to be eyewitnesses or to have interviewed eyewitnesses of the reported events. Third, we have *embarrassing* testimony such that the chief characters are portrayed in a negative light (something fabricators would unlikely do). Fourth, we have *excruciating* testimony. Jesus' disciples were willing to die for what they knew for a *fact* to be true or false. Finally, we have *extra-biblical* testimony. There are 10 known non-Christian sources, within 150 years of Jesus' life, which corroborate key portions of the NT.⁶

THE NEW TESTAMENT IS HISTORICALLY RELIABLE

KEY POINT

There are over 5,800 manuscripts in original Greek, thousands of ancient translations, and over a million quotations from the early church fathers that allow us to reconstruct the original NT text with some 99% certainty. Any remaining uncertainty does not affect essential Christian doctrines. We also have several lines of evidence to suggest the NT writers told the truth and were not simply inventing a new religion or religious leader.

JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD

LORD, as found in most modern English Bibles, is the equivalent of the Hebrew letters YHWH, also known as the tetragrammaton (pictured at left and right), and is usually transliterated into English as *Yahweh* or *Jehovah*.¹ This is the special name God gave for Himself in the Old Testament (Ex. 3:14). Other titles for God such as *Adonai* and *Elohim* can also be used to refer to human rulers or false gods. *Yahweh*, however, is only used to refer to the one true God of the Bible.² While perhaps less than explicit to the *modern* reader, Jesus clearly claimed to be *Yahweh* come in human flesh. Here is but a sampling of the ways Jesus claimed to be God.

Perhaps most explicitly, Jesus said, “...before Abraham came into existence, I am!” (John 8:58 NET), equating Himself with *Yahweh* in Ex. 3:14.³ According to Ron Rhodes, both “I AM” and “*Yahweh*” have the same root meaning from the verb “to be” and can be used interchangeably.⁴ Jesus’ listeners knew exactly what He was saying, and they picked up stones to stone Him—the prescribed punishment for blasphemy. In addition, Jesus claimed to share glory with the Father (John 17:5) even though *Yahweh* clearly says He does not share His glory with anyone (Is. 42:8).

Jesus also claimed titles for Himself that were reserved for *Yahweh* alone. He referred to Himself as “the Son of man” (Mark 14:61-64), a title given to the “Ancient of Days,” referring to *Yahweh*, in Dan. 7:22. He calls Himself the “first

“It was so reassuring to realize that there were logical reasons and historical evidence for God. Ones that no one had bothered to explain to me before. God has revealed so much to me about his nature and character through [Ratio Christi].”

and the last” in Rev. 1:17, a title for Yahweh in Is. 42:8. Jesus called Himself the “good shepherd” (John 10:11) even though the Psalmist calls Yahweh the shepherd (Ps. 23:1). Moreover, Jesus claimed prerogatives that belong to God alone. He forgave sin (Mark 2:5-11), declared power over life and death (John 5:21), accepted worship (Matt. 14:33; John 20:28), and commanded the same honor as the Father (John 5:23). In many ways Jesus clearly claimed to be God!

Again, His followers understood His claims to divinity and also called Him Yahweh in many places. For example, John writes in John 1:1 that Jesus (the Word) was “fully God” (NET). He says that Jesus created everything that has been made (John 1:3), yet Yahweh says He alone created everything (Is. 44:24).⁵ Paul called Jesus God in Phil. 2:5-11 and Col. 2:9. Referring to Jesus, Paul says, quoting Joel 2:32, in Rom. 10:13 “...everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (NET), a verse that clearly says to call on the name of Yahweh.

The earliest Christians also understood Jesus’ divine identity. Pliny, the governor of Bithynia (in modern-day Turkey) during the early second century, condemned Christians for offering worship to Jesus “as if to a god.”⁶ Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch who was martyred c. 107-110 AD, said Jesus is “the mind of the Father” and properly called “our God.”⁷ From this sampling it is clear Jesus was understood to be God.

THE NEW TESTAMENT SAYS JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD

KEY POINT

Jesus clearly identified Himself as Yahweh, the God of the Bible, in both word and deed such that His first century audience wanted to stone Him. The original Apostles also identified Jesus as God, and the earliest Christians understood Jesus’ divine identity and worshiped Him as such.

JESUS PROVED TO
BE GOD
 VIA THE RESURRECTION

We have seen that Jesus claimed to be God, and that His earliest followers believed He was God, but do we have reason to believe His claims were true? Recall that a miracle is God's fingerprint to confirm His message. The New Testament attributes many miracles to Jesus, but one stands above the rest, namely His resurrection. As Paul says in 1 Cor. 15, Christianity hinges on the resurrection, and we have good reason to believe it actually occurred.

Investigating the resurrection involves doing good history by explaining the key pieces of evidence, the historical puzzle pieces if you will, in the best way possible with the fewest un-evidenced assumptions. Most critical scholars will grant five key pieces which, when taken together along with our background knowledge that God exists, show the resurrection is a historical fact.¹ Using FACTS as an acronym, here are the five key puzzle pieces.

F - FATAL CROSS: Jesus actually died on the cross. This contrasts the swoon theory that Jesus somehow survived the crucifixion and was resuscitated. The biblical text, historical investigation, and modern medical science demonstrate that Jesus died.

A - ABANDONED TOMB: Most scholars will grant that Jesus was buried in a borrowed tomb that was later found empty. It was first explained by inventing the story of the disciples stealing Jesus' body (Matt. 28:13).

“Ratio Christi has given me something that I did not know existed – a rational and logical defense for my faith. When I dialogue with atheists, they are shocked I have a defense.”

JP | NC STATE STUDENT

C - CONVERSION OF THE DISCIPLES: Jesus' disciples went from cowering away in a locked room (John 20:19) to turning the world upside down (Acts 17:6). History shows that all but one of the disciples died for proclaiming the risen Christ. People may die every day for what they believe is true, but no one willingly dies for something they know to be false.

T - TRANSFORMATION OF JAMES: According to Paul, Jesus' brother James was an eyewitness of the risen Jesus, as were the apostles and more than 500 others (1 Cor. 15:3-8). After the resurrection he transformed from skeptic (Mark 3:21; John 7:5) to leader of the early church and martyr (Gal. 2:9; Eusebius).

S - SAUL BECAME PAUL: Saul, the zealous persecutor of Christians, became Paul the Apostle after encountering the risen Christ (though his encounter was not a pre-ascension encounter like the others). He, too, died for his proclamation. Like James, something major had to happen in his life in order to cause such a drastic change that ultimately resulted in much physical suffering and death.

An actual resurrection of Jesus best accounts for all the puzzle pieces without forcing them to fit. Other theories simply leave some pieces out, are completely ad hoc, or unnecessarily rule out the possibility of miracles. Thus, Jesus' claim to divinity was miraculously confirmed, providing reason to trust His claims.²

JESUS PROVED TO BE GOD VIA THE RESURRECTION

KEY POINT

Since we know that God exists, we also know miracles are possible. Examining the five lines of evidence that even most critical scholars will grant, when a good historical method is used, we can see that the resurrection best accounts for all the pieces of the puzzle without forcing them to fit. Hence, Jesus' claims of divinity were miraculously validated.

THEREFORE, JESUS
IS GOD

Jesus claimed to be Yahweh, the one true God, and He proved to be God via the resurrection. But saying Jesus is God raises a host of questions and objections. Let us examine a few such issues.

First, Jesus being God implies something like the doctrine of the Trinity. While not explicitly mentioned in the Bible, the Trinity accounts for the information we have been given about God. It does not mean that God is one God and three gods or one Person and three persons, which would be necessarily false contradictions. Rather, the Trinity is the notion that there exists within the one God three co-eternal and co-equal persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is three in a different way than He is one. Thus, no contradiction results.

The Trinity is not against reason even though it is beyond our ability to *comprehend*. Yet, we can *apprehend* what has been revealed to us. The most common illustration is that of an equilateral triangle. There is only one triangle, yet within that one triangle exists three equal angles. Each angle is distinct yet equal, and without them the triangle would not exist. Similarly, there is only one God. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. Yet, the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Father, etc. While no analogy is perfect, you can think of God as one *Essence* (what) and three *Persons* (whos).

Regarding Jesus, in addition to His divine nature, as Phil.

“We have a supremely rational God, and our faith is supremely reasonable....Why should we expect anyone to become a Christian if we cannot give good reasons for what we believe and good responses to objections to our faith?”

MELISSA PELLEW | RC CHAPTER DIRECTOR AT WINTHROP UNIVERSITY

2 notes, He added a human nature to Himself when He became man at the incarnation. While Jesus is totally God, He is also totally man. Theologically this is known as the hypostatic union, two distinct natures in one person. Therefore, when asking a question about Jesus we must consider this dual nature.

For instance, when Jesus says He doesn't know something (Mark 13:32), we must realize that in His human nature He does not know, yet in His divine nature He knows all. When He gets tired or hungry it is His human nature that suffers the limits of humanity not His divine nature. When He says the Father is greater than He (John 14:28) it is because His *human* nature is submissive to the Father, yet their divine natures are equal.¹ In other words, Jesus is not less than God.

Virtually no credible scholar denies Jesus' actual existence, and many people claim He was a great man and a great moral teacher. Yet, as C.S. Lewis notes, "You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."² Jesus is Yahweh, the great I AM, Being itself, the source of all creation (Col. 1:17). As such, this has tremendous implications for what He teaches.

THEREFORE, JESUS IS GOD

KEY POINT

The doctrine of the Trinity states that there exists within the one God three co-eternal and co-equal persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is not a contradiction since God is said to be three in a different way than He is one. Jesus added humanity to Himself thus having both a divine and human nature.

EVERYTHING JESUS,
WHO IS GOD,
 TEACHES IS TRUE

Recall that in our argument for God's existence we distinguished between essence (*what* something is) and existence (*that* something is). Essence limits existence to be *this* particular thing, like the tree in our example from step three, rather than something else.

As Richard Howe observes, "Like a balloon that limits and shapes the air that infuses it, the essence of the creature bounds the otherwise limitless fullness of the perfections of existence."¹ We

have seen that a theistic God simply *is* unlimited Being itself since His essence and existence are identical (see *step three*). The importance of this conclusion cannot be overstated, for from this follows all the classical attributes of God.

As Being itself, it follows that God is Pure Actuality, meaning He has no potential for change in any way. He has no need for anything and cannot be other than He is. He is the Uncaused Cause, the Unmoved Mover, the great I AM (Ex. 3:14). He not only created us but is sustaining us in existence every moment we exist (Col. 1:15-17).

As the source of all other existing things, all the perfections of those things preexist in God in an unlimited way. As Edward Feser says, "To show that an Unmoved Mover exists, then, is just to show that there is a single being who is the cause of all change, Himself unchangeable, immaterial, eternal, personal, all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good. It is, in short, to show that there is a God."²

"I just talked to one of my RAs all night about apologetics, and it was so cool to share knowledge that I have learned over the past 2 years about why Christianity is true....He is super interested in learning about why Christians believe what we do and how to know for sure, so this will be a continuing discussion. This is why RC exists!!!"

JENNIFER | UNC GREENSBORO STUDENT

While for us, truth is the conforming of our minds to reality (see *step one*), in an ultimate sense, truth is the conformity of being to an intellect, specifically the divine and creative intellect (e.g. “true” love, a “true” gentleman, a “true” circle). Necessarily it follows that, as Being itself, God cannot be anything other than Truth itself since what He *is* and what He *knows* are one and the same thing considered under different lights.³ A lie or falsity is a privation of truth. Hence, God cannot lie because He has no potential to be other than He is. This also lines up with what the Bible says about God (1 Sam. 15:29; John 14:6; Heb. 6:18; Titus 1:2).

We have seen that Jesus is God, the second Person of the Trinity (see *step nine*). From a simple deductive procedure then, it is easy to see that whatever Jesus teaches is true (it corresponds to reality; see *step one*) because He is God and God cannot lie. But Jesus is also fully man. Could His human nature limit His trustworthiness? Not at all. Even from the standpoint of His willfully limited human knowledge, Jesus taught from what He did know, namely, whatever the Father taught Him (John 8:26).

Hence, we would be wise to consider carefully what Jesus taught. In the words of the Apostle Peter from John 6:68-69, “Lord [Jesus], to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God” (NET).

EVERYTHING JESUS, WHO IS GOD, TEACHES IS TRUE

KEY POINT

As Being itself, God is necessarily Truth itself. Hence, God cannot lie. Jesus is God. Therefore, whatever Jesus teaches is necessarily true.

JESUS TAUGHT THAT
THE BIBLE
 IS THE WORD OF
GOD

When we began our investigation of the reliability of the Bible, if you recall, we focused only on the New Testament (see *step six*). The reason for this is because that is where we learn about Jesus though He was prophesied in the Old Testament (OT). We concluded that Jesus is God and that whatever He teaches is necessarily true (see *step ten*). Therefore, we can trust whatever Jesus teaches about the Bible as a whole.

As we examine the words of Jesus we see that He affirmed the OT. According to Norman Geisler, Jesus referred 92 times to the OT with the phrase “It is written...” In Matt. 5:17-18, Jesus explicitly says, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets [the Old Testament]. I have not come to abolish these things but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth pass away not the smallest letter or stroke of a letter will pass from the law until everything takes place” (NET). He also affirmed the OT in other places like Matt. 23:35 and Luke 24:27 where He says it was written to point to Him. When speaking to the unbelieving Jews, Jesus explicitly said in John 5:39-40, “You study the scriptures thoroughly because you think in them you possess eternal life, and it is these same scriptures that testify about me, but you are not willing to come to me so that you may have life” (NET). There can be little doubt that Jesus considered the OT the Word of God which He fulfilled. But He did not stop there.

Not only did Jesus affirm the OT, but He promised the NT. In

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John 14:26 Jesus tells His disciples, “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and will cause you to remember everything I said to you” (NET).

Geisler points out several things Jesus taught about the Bible as a whole. Jesus taught the Bible is divinely authoritative (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). In John 10:35 He said “the Scripture cannot be broken” (NET). Thus, it is infallible. It is historically reliable (Matt. 12:40; 24:37-38), and it has ultimate supremacy (Matt. 15:3, 6).

Jesus also taught that the Bible is inerrant, that is, that the original writings are without error (Matt. 22:29). While our understanding of either nature or Scripture may be in error, we know the two will never conflict because the Bible is the Word of God, and God cannot be in error or untruthful; therefore, the Bible cannot err. Although the Bible *records* lies and evil it does not *condone*, Jesus taught that the Word of God is to be obeyed in all it *affirms*.¹

The divinely inspired authors of the promised NT agreed. For instance, Peter called the writings of Paul “scripture” in 2 Pet. 3:16. Paul concludes in 2 Tim. 3:16, “Every scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness....” (NET). May we take care to understand what the Word of God says.

JESUS TAUGHT THAT THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD

KEY POINT

In many places Jesus affirmed the OT, acknowledged it as God’s Word, and considered Himself to be a fulfillment of it. He promised the NT and claimed divine authority and supremacy for the Bible as a whole. The divinely inspired NT authors concluded that all Scripture is inspired by God and directed toward training us in righteousness.

THEREFORE
THE BIBLE
IS THE WORD OF
GOD

If you recall, we said the Bible would distinguish between our remaining theistic worldviews. Since God cannot lie, we can conclude that the Bible is in fact His Word revealed to us. This means that Christianity is objectively true, regardless of what anyone believes about it. Using our indispensable tool of the law of noncontradiction, which says opposite ideas cannot both be true at the same time and in the same way (*see step two*), we can immediately know that any worldview that contradicts Christianity is necessarily false. That is not to say that other worldviews are incapable of containing *any* truth whatsoever. Any worldview that says, for example, you should love your neighbor as yourself says something true. It is simply that, where it contradicts or opposes Christianity, it must necessarily be false at those points. This is not a matter of preference or probabilities, rather, it is a necessary truth given that our reasoning about Christianity is sound.

This is a far cry from any type of blind, wish-in-the-dark faith. As we have seen, this is a reasoned faith where every step in the argument builds on the other, and each step is supported by solid evidence. True faith is a response of trust in light of what we know.

Reason can only carry us so far. Biblical faith is not just knowing *that* God exists; it is an active trust *in* God and the authority of what He says. He says we are sinners deserving of separation from Him (spiritual death/hell; Rom. 3:23). We cannot reason our way to a right relationship with God. He must reveal the

“I am thankful for the ministry of Ratio Christi who seeks to partner with other ministries and train students in apologetics. Apologetics gives students more self-confidence as evangelists, but more importantly it gives them more confidence in Christ, our Redeemer.”

MATT | UNC GREENSBORO STUDENT

way to that restored relationship, and we must take Him at His word. Jesus, the God-man, came to pay our sin penalty for us (Rom. 5:6-11; 6:23) as the only means of reconciliation (John 14:6), and by trusting in Him we will be saved (Eph. 2:8).

That is the Gospel, the “good news.” *It is true*, and it is the greatest news of all (1 Cor. 15:3-8). The God of all creation is sustaining you in existence at this moment to give you a choice. We know He is Love and Goodness itself, and He offers to restore your broken relationship with Him so that you will one day know Him as He is and enjoy Him forever (1 John 3:2; Ps. 23:6). *That is life’s true purpose*. We come to Him by trusting in Jesus’ death and resurrection as payment for our sins (John 3:16). He takes us just as we are, but He loves us too much to leave us that way. From there, we can give God our lives to use for His glory (Matt. 16:25).

As Étienne Gilson says, “God creates, not that there may be witnesses to render Him His due glory, but beings who shall rejoice in it as He rejoices in it Himself and who, participating in His being, participate at the same time in His beatitude [true happiness]. It is not therefore for Himself, but for us, that God seeks His glory; it is not to gain it, for He possesses it already, nor to increase it, for already it is perfect, but to communicate it to us.”¹ *The choice is yours*.

If you have more questions, or have decided to place your trust in Jesus, please let us know via our website, email, or phone.

THEREFORE, THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD

KEY POINT

Given the soundness of our argument, it must be concluded that the Bible, and by implication Christianity, is true. According to the Bible, our wrong choices and attitudes have separated us from a relationship with God. Jesus’ death and resurrection paid the penalty our sin deserves. By trusting in Him as our Savior we can have a restored relationship with God, and He will work in us to make us more like who He intended for us to be.

ENDNOTES

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STEP 2

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STEP 6

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STEP 7

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2. Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999) 129.
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4. Ron Rhodes, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Jehovah's Witnesses* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1993) 115.
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STEP 8

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STEP 11

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STEP 12

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RECOMMENDED BOOKS

- *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* - Geisler/Turek
- *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* - Habermas/Licona
- *The Last Superstition* - Feser
- *Cold-Case Christianity* - Wallace
- *Reinventing Jesus* - Komoszewski/Sawyer/Wallace
- *When God Goes to Starbucks* - Copan
- *The Case for... Series* - Strobel
- *Jesus Among Other Gods* - Zacharias
- *How to Stay Christian in College* - Budziszewski
- *True Reason* - Gilson/Weitnauer
- *Relational Apologetics* - Sherrard
- *Tactics* - Koukl

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

- thepoachedegg.net (Blog collection)
- crossexamined.org (Frank Turek)
- str.org (Stand to Reason)
- coldcasechristianity.com (J. Warner Wallace)
- reasonablefaith.org (William Lane Craig)
- equip.org (Christian Research Institute)
- edwardfeser.blogspot.com (Ed Feser)
- normgeisler.com (Norman Geisler)
- richardghowe.com (Richard Howe)
- michaelkruger.com (Michael Kruger)
- christiananswersforthenewage.org (Marcia Montenegro)
- reasons.org (Reasons to Believe)

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