

IS CHRISTIANITY ALONE FULLY TRUE AND IS JESUS CHRIST REALLY THE ONLY WAY TO GOD? (Part I)

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“Everyone shall consider the main End of his life and studies, to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life.” (*John 17:3*)—Harvard University’s First College Laws (1646, p. 41)¹

“Our repugnance to death increases in proportion to our consciousness of having lived in vain.” —WILLIAM HAZLETT, —*THE ROUND TABLE* (1817)

Introduction: Wasted Minds

A poll conducted by the Barna Research Group allegedly revealed that 43 percent of “born again Christians” agreed with the following statement: “It does not matter what religious faith you follow because all faiths teach similar lessons about life.”²

If these poll results are valid, this indicates that millions of those claiming to be “born again” agree with most of the rest of the world on the subject of religion. Christianity is not unique in the lessons it teaches about life, and apparently no religion has an absolute claim to religious truth. But no viewpoint could be more wrong.

What these poll results really indicate is that a lot of people, Christians and non-Christians included, are uninformed on the subject of comparative religion. Yet critical thinking in this area is vital—critical thinking is the reasoning we do in order to determine whether or not a claim is true. These results also betray a remarkable and appalling lack of emphasis on teaching apologetics and logical thinking in the church.

Distinguished Christian philosopher Mortimer J. Adler is unfortunately correct when he said,

I suspect that most of the individuals who have religious faith are content with blind faith. They feel no obligation to understand what they believe. They may even wish not to have their beliefs disturbed by thought. But if the God in whom they believe created them with intellectual and rational powers, that imposes upon them the duty to try to understand the creed of their religion. Not to do so is to verge on superstition.”³

Of course, religious people are hardly alone at this point. Secularists are frequently content with blind faith and just as frequently superstitious. As G.K. Chesterton once observed:

Superstition recurs in all ages, and especially in rationalistic ages. I remember defending the religious tradition against a whole luncheon-table of distinguished agnostics; and before the end of our conversation every one of them had procured from his pocket, or exhibited on his watch-chain, some charm or talisman from which he admitted that he was never separated.⁴

If the Bible is clear on anything, it is that Christians are responsible to love God with *all* their *minds*. This is part of “the greatest commandment” God has given (Matt. 22:37). One aspect of this duty includes, at a minimum, a basic knowledge of theology and Christian evidences. The Bible teaches we are to actively defend the faith. We can not do this unless we know the content of the faith (doctrine) and how to defend it (apologetics): “Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had

to write and *urge you to contend for the faith* that was once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 3; cf., Titus 2:1; 2 Pet. 3:18); “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. *Always be prepared* to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Pet. 3:15; cf., Phil. 1:7,16).

In light of Adler’s comment above, consider the statements of Dr. William Lane Craig, the author of many fine books on Christian evidences. He writes the following important comments about the extended implications of Adler’s remark, first quoting theologian J. Gresham Machen:

False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the reception of the gospel.... Our churches are filled with Christians who are idling in intellectual neutral. As Christians, their minds are going to waste. One result of this is an immature, superficial faith.... Intellectual impoverishment with respect to one’s faith can thus lead to spiritual impoverishment as well. But the results of being in intellectual neutral extend far beyond one’s self. If Christian laymen don’t become intellectually engaged, then we are in serious danger of losing our children. In high school and college Christian teenagers are intellectually assaulted on every hand by a barrage of anti-Christian philosophies and attitudes. As I speak in churches around the country, I continually meet parents whose children have left the faith because there was no one in the church to answer their questions. For the sake of our youth, we desperately need informed parents who are equipped to wrestle with the issues at an intellectual level.

Machen, like Malik, believed that “The chief obstacle to the Christian religion today lies in the sphere of the intellect,” and that it is in that sphere that the issues must be addressed. “The Church is perishing today through the lack of thinking, not through an excess of it.”⁵

Are there Christian parents anywhere who do not care deeply about the spiritual welfare of their own children? Then why does the current situation exist? In part it is because in its pluralism, subjectivism and relativism, our culture finds it easy to replace truth with certainty. And this attitude has influenced the church. But truth is not the same thing as certainty. The people in the above poll may have been certain of their beliefs, but this does not make them *true*.

Truth is something that is in accordance with fact. Certainty refers to a person having no doubt or being fully convinced about something. However, if we examine the overall religious and philosophical landscape, we find that most people are certain about things that are not true and can rationally be proven false. Philosophers may be certain of their existentialism, relativism, secular humanism or atheism. Members of religious cults like Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the “Hare Krishnas,” and followers of Eastern gurus are certain they are on the right spiritual path. Practitioners of New Age medicine are certain that iridology, homeopathy and reflexology really work. Astrologers are certain that astrology can reveal personality traits and accurately predict the future. Most scientists are certain of the logically impossible theory of evolution,⁶ and mainstream theologians are certain of the so-called “findings” of higher criticism and that the Bible is not inerrant. And on it goes.

Certainty does not make the above beliefs true: only evidence does, and in each case it is sorely lacking. It’s the same for traditional world religions. Roman Catholicism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Sufism, the Baha’i faith, etc.—committed followers are all certain about their beliefs. But this alone cannot prove their

basic beliefs true because all these religions conflict with one another and no real evidence supports any of these religions. We have demonstrated this in our *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs* and *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*.⁷

So, even if 100 percent of all “born again” Christians were certain that “it does not matter what religious faith you follow,” that wouldn’t make it true. The issue is whether or not *real* evidence supports the claims of any particular religion. And is it really possible to find absolute truth in one religion—is one religion fully true? Or are all religions false? Or does it really matter? One could assume that if there is only one true God, there would be only one true religion.

Since the dawn of time, man has been incurably religious. Yet there are only a few basic questions that men have asked since the beginning. They revolve around the personal inquires: Who am I? Why am I here? Where did I come from? What happens when I die? How can I know the truth? These are unavoidably *religious* questions and underscore the fact that the history of man is the history of religion—an attempt to find satisfying answers to these questions.

Although the vast majority of people through history have believed in some concept of God, the advent of materialistic theories such as Darwin’s theory of evolution and Marx’s theory of communism have caused skeptics to add another basic question—“Is there a God?” If so, how do we know? And who or what is he?⁸ The classical and recent proofs of God’s existence are beyond the scope of this discussion; however, in light of them we can know with certainty that the psalmist was correct when he said, “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Ps. 14:1).

As Sir Isaac Newton observed, “He must be blind who from the most wise and excellent contrivances of things cannot see the Infinite Wisdom and Goodness of their Almighty Creator, and he must be mad and senseless who refuses to acknowledge them.”⁹

Notes:

1. In *Religious and Theological Studies Fellowship Bulletin*, Nov./Dec., 1994, 22.
2. Douglas Groothuis, “When the Salt Loses Its Savor,” *CRI Journal*, Winter, 1995, 50.
3. Mortimer J. Adler, “A Philosopher’s Religious Faith,” in Kelly James Clark (ed.), *Philosophers Who Believe: The Spiritual Journeys of Eleven Leading Thinkers* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 207.
4. G. K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man*, (Garden City, NY: Image, 1985), 19.
5. William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), xiii-xv.
6. See our *The Facts On Creation Evolution* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1994).
7. The statement does not hold true where Roman Catholic beliefs are biblical. Nevertheless, the evidence upon which official, traditional Roman Catholic dogma and practice rests is unconvincing.
8. For a critique of naturalism see Phillip E. Johnson, *Reason in the Balance: The Case Against NATURALISM in Science, Law & Education* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995).
9. Isaac Newton, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, trans. Andrew Motte (1714; rev. and ed., Florian Cajori, Berkley CA: University of California 1934), 32