

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY

by William Paley (1794)

Rewritten in Simple English

This version uses simple words and short sentences for readers who are learning English or prefer plain language.

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DEDICATION

To the Honourable and Right Reverend

James York, D.D., Lord Bishop of Ely

My Lord,

Five years ago, you gave me an important job at Cambridge University. I want to thank you publicly for this.

I had never met you before. I had no friends who could speak for me. You knew me only from my work as a teacher and from some books I had written. You thought these books were useful.

This was a very kind and unselfish thing to do. You chose me only because you thought I could help.

I do not know how people will receive this book. My first hope is that it will help someone. My second hope is that it will support religious education at universities.

You showed kindness to me for the public good. I hope this book is a good way to thank you.

I am very grateful for your notice. It is one of the greatest honors of my life.

I am, My Lord,

With thanks and respect,

Your servant,

WILLIAM PALEY

[End of Dedication]

PREPARATORY CONSIDERATIONS

Can We Believe in Miracles?

The Starting Point

I do not need to prove that people needed God to speak to them. Everyone agrees that we do not have too much knowledge about God. We need all the help we can get.

Also, when we judge Christianity, remember this: the choice is between Christianity and no religion at all. If Christianity is not true, no other religion has better proof.

A Chain of Thinking

Let us think step by step.

Suppose God made the world. Suppose we can see from how the world works that God wants his creatures to be happy. Suppose God still cares about us.

Suppose God gave some creatures the ability to choose right and wrong. Suppose they can choose to obey God or not.

Suppose God plans a life after death for these thinking beings. In that next life, how they behaved in this life will matter. This would explain why good and bad people are not always treated differently in this life.

Suppose it is very important for people to know about this next life. Suppose this knowledge would help them be happy.

But suppose most people cannot figure this out on their own. Their minds are limited. Their situations are hard. Maybe they lost some earlier message from God. They need help from God to know these things.

If all this is true, is it strange that God would speak to us? Is it hard to believe that God would tell us about the next life?

Miracles Are Needed

How can God speak to us? Only through miracles. We cannot think of any other way. So if God probably would speak to us, then miracles are probably real too.

When people say miracles happened to bring us an important message, we should not be surprised. The miracles are not more unlikely than the message itself.

What This Argument Claims

Let me be clear about what I am saying. I am not using God to prove miracles. Miracles must be proved by evidence.

I am only saying this: miracles that support a message from God are not impossible to believe. The miracles are not harder to believe than two simple ideas:

1. God planned a next life for people.
2. God would tell people about it.

These two ideas do not have to be proved right now. They just need to be possible. They should not seem so crazy that we refuse to look at any proof for them.

Answering a Famous Objection

Some people say we should never believe miracles, no matter what proof we have. I think my argument answers this objection. If God might want to speak to us, then miracles might happen.

But since this objection blocks all other arguments, let me look at it more closely. The objection says: "We have never seen miracles happen. But we have seen people lie. So lies are more likely than

miracles."

What "Against Our Experience" Really Means

The word "experience" can mean different things. Let me explain.

True meaning: Something is "against our experience" only when we were there and saw that it did not happen. For example: Someone says a dead man came alive in a certain room at a certain time. But I was in that room at that time. I saw no dead man come alive. This is truly against my experience. No proof could change my mind.

But this is not what the objection means. The objection means something else: We have not seen anything like this happen. Other people have not seen it either.

But "we have not seen it" is not the same as "it cannot happen." The question is: If miracles did happen long ago, would we expect to see them now? Would we expect everyone to see them?

Suppose miracles really happened when Christianity started. They were needed then to prove the message was from God. Would we expect the same miracles to keep happening? Would they happen everywhere? No. That is not how miracles work.

Miracles Are Not Like Science

When scientists tell us about a law of nature, we expect to see it work the same way every time. If we do not see it, we doubt the law.

But miracles are different. A miracle is a one-time act. If it happened every time we asked, it would not be a miracle anymore. It would just be another natural law.

God Makes Choices

Think of nature as the work of a thinking God. Would it be strange for God to break his normal rules sometimes? Would he not do this on special occasions? And would these special times not be rare?

If so, only a few people would see miracles. Most people would not see them. This should not surprise us.

What Causes Miracles?

Some say: "You claim a touch healed a sick person. You claim words raised a dead person. But touches and words do not have that power."

We agree. Touches and words have no special power. They were just signs. The real power came from God's will. We already know God exists and has power. We already know he is present and active. The touch or word just connected the miracle to its purpose.

When a powerful person has a good reason to act, we can explain the action. Simply put: If you believe in God, miracles are not impossible.

An Unfair Argument

Some say miracles are a contest: Which is more likely— that the miracle is true or that the witnesses are lying?

This is a fair question. But some people ask it unfairly. When they talk about miracles, they ignore important facts:

d- God exists and has power

d- God cares about his creation

d- The miracle had a good purpose

d- That purpose was important

d- It fits with how God usually works

They make miracles sound equally impossible for believers and non-believers. They make miracles sound equally unlikely whether done for a good reason or no reason at all. This is not fair.

On the other side, when they talk about witnesses, they say: "We do not have to explain how the story started." But we do need to explain this. If we reject the true explanation (that it really happened), we need another explanation. And that other explanation must make sense based on how people really act.

A Simple Test

Here is the best way to test the argument against miracles. When mathematicians see a new theory, they test it on a simple case. If it gives a wrong answer, the theory is wrong.

Let us test this theory:

Suppose twelve men I trust tell me about a miracle. They are honest. They are sensible. They saw it with their own eyes. They could not have been tricked.

Suppose the governor hears about this. He calls these men before him. He says: "Admit you lied, or I will hang you."

Suppose they all refuse. They say it is true.

Suppose he asks each one alone. They all say the same thing.

Suppose he carries out his threat.

Suppose I watch them die, one by one. They choose torture and death rather than say they lied.

According to the theory, I still should not believe them.

But no one in the world would actually refuse to believe them. No one would defend such refusal.

Conclusion

Some people point to fake miracles that seemed to have good proof. They use these to support their argument. I hope to show later that none of these cases are as strong as the Christian evidence.

These examples are the real strength of their argument. The basic principle itself has no strength.

[End of Preparatory Considerations]

PART I

PROOF THAT CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE AND WHY IT IS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER RELIGIONS

CHAPTER I

What We Can Learn from the Facts

The Main Point

We have good proof of this fact: Many people saw the miracles of Jesus with their own eyes. These people spent their whole lives working hard for Christianity. They faced danger. They suffered pain. No one forced them to do this. They did it because they believed what they saw was true. They also changed how they lived because of what they believed.

To prove this, we need to show two things. First, Jesus and his followers really did live the way we say they did. Second, they lived this way to tell others about the miracles. They did this only because they believed the miracles really happened.

What We Would Expect

Before we look at the proof, let us think about what makes sense.

Christianity exists today. So someone had to start it. Either Jesus and his followers worked hard to spread it, or we must believe something silly. We would have to believe that strangers spread the message while the people who saw Jesus did nothing. This does not make sense. If Jesus and his followers had done nothing, the movement would have died.

What kind of life did these early teachers live? They probably lived like anyone who starts a new religion. They preached often. They talked about God with many people. They gave up fun activities. They focused on one serious goal.

This kind of life can bring joy. But that joy comes only if you truly believe. A person who knows it is all a lie would hate this life. Few liars would choose such hard work. Even fewer would keep doing it for long. Only true belief can make someone give up comfort and pleasure.

Why Preaching to Jews Was Dangerous

Spreading this new religion was hard and dangerous.

The Jews had strong beliefs about what God would do. They believed God would send someone special. This person would make their nation great and powerful. The religious leaders taught this idea. The common people believed it deeply. They held on to this hope even when bad things happened to their nation.

Now imagine what the Jews heard from Christians. Their hopes would not come true the way they expected. There would be no great army. There would be no national glory. Instead, there would be a gentle, peaceful religion. Worse, non-Jews (called Gentiles) would be equal to Jews in God's eyes. The Jews did not like Gentiles. This message made Jews very angry.

The message was hard to accept. No Jew had ever thought God's kingdom would include people who did not follow Jewish law.

There was another problem. Jewish religion had many ceremonies and rituals. Jews thought these rituals were very important. Christianity said rituals were not the main thing. Faith, good thoughts, and good character mattered more. This was hard for Jews to accept. It went against what their leaders taught.

There was also a dangerous fact. The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem had just killed Jesus on a cross. Anyone who preached about Jesus had to say these leaders did something very wrong. This made powerful enemies.

The Roman government ruled Judea at that time. Romans did not usually care about Jewish religious arguments. But Christianity looked dangerous to them. Christians said they followed a new master. Jews had expected this master to be a "King." The Romans worried about anyone called a king. They could not see that Jesus meant a different kind of kingdom— a spiritual one, not a political one. This gave Jesus' enemies a way to make trouble with the Romans.

The Christian preachers faced many enemies. The common people were against them. The priests were against them. The Roman rulers could be turned against them. They had no army. They had no power. They had no protection. This was very dangerous.

Why Preaching to Non-Jews Was Dangerous

Next, think about what happened when Christians preached to non-Jews (pagans).

Christianity said all other religions were false. It said all other gods did not exist. It allowed no mixing with other religions. If Christianity won, every statue, altar, and temple in the world would have to go. This was a bold claim. It made many enemies.

This was not about adding one more god to a list of gods. That would have been easy. This was about saying all other gods were fake. Ancient people might accept a new god. But they would not accept someone who said their old gods were lies.

Some philosophers did not believe in the gods. But they did not travel around trying to change ordinary people's beliefs. They did not start new religious groups. Christians did all these things. This made their movement active and dangerous.

The danger came from many places. Sometimes the government attacked them. Sometimes mobs attacked them. Sometimes local officials caused trouble. Sometimes enemies stirred people up against them. Christian teachers were alone and unprotected. They told people that their ancestors' religion was foolish. This made people very angry.

Some educated Romans did not believe in the gods. But these people were not kind to Christians. People who do not believe often do not want change. They want things to stay the same. They were often the first to demand that Christians stop.

Here is an example. Pliny was a Roman official. He was educated and refined. But he said this about Christians: "Those who kept saying they were Christians, I ordered to be killed. I was sure that such stubborn people should be punished." His emperor Trajan was known as a good ruler. But he only said: "Do not look for Christians. But if someone brings them to you and proves they are Christians, punish them." He said this even after Pliny told him that Christians did nothing wrong except have strange beliefs and promise to live moral lives.

The truth is, ancient people saw religion as part of the government. Many government leaders also held religious titles. They saw attacks on religion as attacks on the government.

The old religions had existed for hundreds of years. People trusted them because they were old. The old religions also had beautiful buildings and exciting festivals. Many people loved the shows and celebrations. Priests and others made money from religion. They wanted to keep things as they were. People also believed that their country would fail if they stopped worshipping the old gods.

A historian named Gibbon wrote this about Roman religion: "The people thought all religions were equally true. The philosophers thought all religions were equally false. The government thought all religions were equally useful."

Could Christians expect help from any of these groups? The people believed in the old gods. The philosophers thought all religions were false, including Christianity. The government found the old religion useful and did not want change. None of these groups would help Christians.

How Christians Changed Their Lives

The first Christians changed how they lived. They practiced what they preached. Every teacher of a new religion does this. People will not listen otherwise.

The change was big. We may not understand how big. We have grown up with Christianity all around us. We do not see the change ourselves.

After people became Christians, they spent much time in prayer. They met together often. They shared the Lord's Supper (communion). They taught each other. They preached. They loved other Christians. They wrote letters to Christians in other cities. This was a completely new way of life.

Think about what this meant. Imagine living in Corinth or Ephesus or Antioch. You become a Christian. You are now very different from everyone around you. Everything you believed has changed.

Christianity asks for a pure and giving life. It asks people to be good even in their thoughts. The preachers were probably not perfect. But they must have lived mostly the way they taught. Their lives showed a new pattern.

Changing how you live is very hard. People do not like to change their habits. This is especially true when the change is difficult. It is hard to give up pleasure. It is hard to do things you do not want to do. Changing people's habits is one of the hardest things in the world.

What We Can Conclude

From all this, I would conclude several things. Remember: no army or government started Christianity.

First: Jesus and his followers worked hard to spread this religion.

Second: They faced hardship and trouble, like all people who start new religions.

Third: Their work was very dangerous.

Fourth: Their message went against what people already believed. This caused strong opposition.

Fifth: They suffered cruel treatment from governments and angry mobs.

Sixth: At the very least, they lived in constant danger and worry.

Seventh: Their way of life matched what they taught. This required them to give up many things they wanted.

[End of Chapter I]

PART I

PROOF THAT CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE

CHAPTER II

What Non-Christian Writers Tell Us

The Main Point

We have good proof of this fact: Many people saw the miracles of Jesus with their own eyes. These people spent their whole lives working hard for Christianity. They faced danger. They suffered pain. No one forced them to do this. They did it because they believed what they saw was true. They also changed how they lived because of what they believed.

Introduction

In Chapter 1, we thought about what we would expect to happen. Now we look at what writers actually said. First, let us look at non-Christian writers. This is important because these writers were not friends of Christianity. They had no reason to help Christians look good.

What Tacitus Wrote

Tacitus was a Roman historian. He wrote about 70 years after Jesus died. He was writing about a great fire in Rome during Emperor Nero's rule. Many people thought Nero himself started the fire. Here is what Tacitus wrote:

d"To stop this rumor, Nero blamed a group of people called 'Christians.' The common people hated these Christians for their crimes. The name 'Christian' comes from Christ. This man was killed during the rule of Tiberius. Pontius Pilate ordered his death. This dangerous belief was stopped for a short time. But then it started again. It spread through Judea, where it began. It even spread to Rome. Many people in Rome became Christians. First, those who admitted being Christians were arrested. Then, based on what they said, many more were arrested. They were convicted of hating other people. Their deaths were made into a show. Some were covered in animal skins and killed by dogs. Some were nailed to crosses. Some were covered with oil and set on fire at night to give light. Nero let people watch this in his gardens. Although these people deserved punishment, people felt sorry for them. They seemed to be dying to please one cruel man, not for the public good."

What does this tell us?

First: The founder of Christianity was put to death.

Second: Even after this, the religion spread in the same country.

Third: Within 34 years, there were many Christians in Rome.

From these facts we can conclude two things. First, the early teachers must have worked very hard. Otherwise, the religion could not have spread so far so fast. Second, if the founder was killed for his teaching, his followers must have faced danger too.

What Suetonius Wrote

Suetonius was another Roman writer. He lived at the same time as Tacitus. He wrote: "The Christians were punished. They follow a new and dangerous belief."

Suetonius does not mention the fire in Rome. He does not say only Roman Christians were punished. He probably means Christians in many places were punished.

What Juvenal Wrote

Juvenal was a Roman poet. He wrote about Nero's cruel acts:

d"If you criticize Nero's friend, you will end up like those who stand burning in their own fire. Their heads are held up by poles under their chins. They leave a trail of blood and melted tar on the ground."

This matches what Tacitus and Suetonius wrote. Juvenal is probably talking about the same events.

Why This Matters

These events happened about 31 years after Jesus died. Some of Jesus' apostles were probably still alive. People who knew the apostles were certainly still alive.

Think about this: The founder was killed for his work. Many early converts were killed for their faith. Would the people in between have been safe? The companions of Jesus during his life? The teachers after his death? Of course not. Their work must have been dangerous too.

What Pliny Wrote

Pliny the Younger was a Roman governor. He wrote a famous letter to Emperor Trajan about 70 years after Jesus died. Two things in his letter are important.

First: There were many Christians in his area. He wrote: "There are many of every age. Men and women. This belief has spread through the cities and villages and countryside." The Christian teachers must have worked very hard to produce this result.

Second: Christians suffered even without official orders to hurt them. Pliny was not sure what to do with Christians. He asked the emperor for advice. Trajan gave him a new rule. This shows there was no old rule. But even without a rule, Christians were being arrested and killed.

From Pliny's letter we also learn this: People sent lists of suspected Christians to the government. Many were arrested. Some boldly said they were Christians and died for it. Others denied being Christians. Others said they used to be Christians but stopped.

This shows that being a Christian was dangerous. People were afraid. But there was no official law against Christians yet.

Emperor Hadrian later wrote to another governor. He said mobs were attacking Christians. He ordered that Christians should get a fair trial instead of mob violence. This confirms that Christians faced danger from angry crowds.

What Martial Wrote

Martial was a Roman poet. He made fun of Christians who died for their faith:

d" We saw a man put his hand in fire this morning. You think he is brave? You are foolish. When a man wearing a burning shirt is told, 'Burn incense to the gods or die,' it takes more courage to say 'No.'"

Martial was mocking Christians. But his joke proves something important. Christian deaths were well known. Also, these deaths were truly voluntary. At the last moment, Christians could save themselves by worshipping the Roman gods. They chose death instead.

What the Philosophers Wrote

Epictetus was a Stoic philosopher. He asked: "How can some people face death without fear? Is it madness? Or is it just habit, like the Galileans?"

Marcus Aurelius was a Roman emperor and philosopher. He wrote: "Let your readiness to die come from your own thinking, not from stubbornness like the Christians."

These writers did not understand why Christians were so brave. But they could not deny that Christians faced death without fear. They refused to save their lives by giving up their faith.

Conclusion

These writers were not Christians. Some did not care about Christianity. Some were against it. But they all confirm the same facts:

- d- The founder of Christianity was killed.
- d- The religion spread quickly anyway.
- d- Christians suffered terrible deaths.
- d- They faced death by choice. They could have saved themselves.
- d- Their courage was so great that even enemies noticed it.

This supports our main point: The early Christians suffered for their faith. They did this by choice. They truly believed what they taught.

[End of Chapter II]

PART I

PROOF THAT CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE

CHAPTER III

Indirect Proof from the Bible

The Main Point

We have good proof of this fact: Many people saw the miracles of Jesus with their own eyes. These people spent their whole lives working hard for Christianity. They faced danger. They suffered pain. No one forced them to do this. They did it because they believed what they saw was true. They also changed how they lived because of what they believed.

Why We Need Christian Sources

Non-Christian writers give us only a distant view of early Christianity. For details, we must look at Christian writings. This makes sense. Who would write the history of Christianity except Christians? Who would record what the apostles did except their own followers?

Our Christian books support what we are saying. We have four accounts of Jesus' life. We have a history of what happened after his death. We have letters written by key leaders while they were doing their work.

All these writings support our point. They show that the first Christians suffered. They show this in many ways: by direct statements, by stories, by things mentioned in passing. When proof comes in many forms, it is hard to fake.

Information that appears by accident is very important. It is the hardest to fake. A liar plans what to say. But he does not plan every small detail. So let me show some proof that appears indirectly.

1. Jesus Was Killed, But Christianity Spread

Our books say Jesus was killed in Jerusalem because of his teaching. Tacitus, the Roman historian, confirms this. Our books say the religion then spread through Judea and beyond. Tacitus confirms this too. He says it spread all the way to Rome within 30 years.

This supports our point. What did Jesus' followers expect after watching him die? Could they think they would be safe? Of course not. "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also." This was simple common sense. They knew their work would be dangerous.

2. Jesus Said His Followers Would Suffer

All four Gospels say Jesus warned his followers about persecution:

d"\"They will hand you over to be hurt. They will kill you. All nations will hate you because of me.\" (Matthew 24:9)

d"\"They will arrest you and persecute you. They will bring you before kings and rulers because of my name... Some of you they will put to death.\" (Luke 21:12-16)

d"\"The time is coming when whoever kills you will think he is serving God.\" (John 16:2)

I am not saying this proves Jesus could see the future. But one of two things must be true:

Either Jesus really said these things and they came true.

Or the writers put these words in Jesus' mouth because persecution had already happened.

Either way, persecution happened. The other possibilities make no sense:

d- Did Jesus make up scary warnings that never came true? No one would follow such a teacher.

d- Did later writers invent these warnings when everyone knew they were false? Why would they do that?

So the early Christians must have suffered persecution.

3. Many Passages Tell Christians to Be Patient in Suffering

The Christian books are full of passages about patience and suffering:

d"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble, or hardship, or persecution, or hunger, or poverty, or danger, or death? No, in all these things we win through him who loved us." (Romans 8:35-37)

d"We are pressed on every side, but not crushed. We are confused, but not in despair. We are persecuted, but not abandoned. We are struck down, but not destroyed." (2 Corinthians 4:8-9)

d"Remember the early days after you believed. You faced a hard struggle with suffering. Sometimes people publicly shamed you. Sometimes you stood with others who were treated this way. You felt for those in prison. When your property was taken, you accepted it with joy." (Hebrews 10:32-34)

d"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are going through. Do not think something strange is happening to you." (1 Peter 4:12)

Why These Passages Matter

What could these words mean if Christians were not actually suffering? Why write so much about patience if no one needed patience?

Could these passages be fake? Could writers have added them to fool later generations? This makes no sense. These letters were written to real people who were alive at the time. The readers knew if they were suffering or not.

Imagine getting a letter that said, "Be brave in your suffering." You would think, "What suffering? Everything is fine." The letter would seem silly. If the readers were not suffering, these words would have failed completely.

The fact that these passages exist proves that suffering was real. The writers wrote to people who knew the truth.

[End of Chapter III]

PART I

PROOF THAT CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE

CHAPTER IV

Direct Proof from the Bible

The Main Point

We have good proof of this fact: Many people saw the miracles of Jesus with their own eyes. These people spent their whole lives working hard for Christianity. They faced danger. They suffered pain. No one forced them to do this. They did it because they believed what they saw was true. They also changed how they lived because of what they believed.

How the Story Is Told

Our Bible does not give us a neat "History of Persecution." Instead, details about suffering appear here and there in a larger story. This is actually good evidence. A liar would write a clear persecution story. The scattered details suggest the writers were just telling what happened.

How the Church Started

Jesus traveled through Judea and Galilee teaching people. He chose twelve men to help him. These twelve stayed with him almost all the time. They were there when he was arrested and killed. He told them to spread his message to all nations after he was gone.

A few days after Jesus left, these men met in Jerusalem. One of the twelve had betrayed Jesus and killed himself. So they chose a replacement. They picked someone who had been with Jesus from the start. This person could be a witness to what they had seen.

They began preaching in Jerusalem. They said Jesus—whom the rulers had just crucified—was sent by God. He would judge all people. Everyone who wanted to be happy after death should believe in him and be baptized.

The First Troubles

Many people believed. They formed a close community. Soon the Jewish leaders noticed. Two apostles were arrested while speaking in the temple. They spent the night in prison. The next day, they were brought before the Jewish council. The council could only threaten them and let them go.

The apostles said they had to speak about what they had seen and heard. They went back to their friends and reported what happened. They prayed for courage to continue.

Soon all twelve apostles were arrested. They were brought before the council again. They were scolded for disobeying. They were beaten. Then they were released with more threats. But they did not stop. They kept preaching every day in the temple and in homes.

[Note: The Apostles and Money]

No one says the apostles did this for money. But notice how little they cared about money. Some believers sold their property and gave the money to the apostles. The apostles quickly gave this job to others. They did not even pick who would handle the money. The whole community voted.

Also, giving money was never required. Peter told one man: "Your property was yours. After you sold it, the money was still yours." Giving was always a free choice.

Stephen Dies and Persecution Grows

At first, the common people liked the Christians. That is why the rulers did not do more. But enemies convinced the people that Christians wanted to destroy Jewish law and dishonor Moses. This worked. The people joined their leaders in killing Stephen, an active Christian.

After this, persecution became fierce. One man named Saul went from house to house. He dragged out men and women and threw them in prison. Most Christians fled Jerusalem— except the twelve apostles. Those who fled preached wherever they went.

Paul Becomes a Christian

Something important happened next. Saul, who was hurting Christians, suddenly became a Christian himself. He had been going to Damascus to arrest Christians there. Instead, he joined them.

Now he faced double danger. His old friends hated him for leaving them. The Jews in Damascus watched the city gates day and night to catch him. He escaped by being lowered in a basket through a hole in the wall. He was not safe in Jerusalem either. People there also wanted to kill him. He had to leave quickly.

A Short Break

For a while, persecution stopped. This was only seven or eight years after Jesus died. But in that short time—even with persecution— churches had started throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria.

The preachers did not rest. They traveled through the region. They kept Jerusalem as their home base. This is where they reported their work and made important decisions.

James Is Killed, Peter Is Arrested

The peace did not last. King Herod Agrippa began hurting Christians. He cut off the head of James, one of Jesus' closest friends. The people liked this. So Herod arrested Peter and planned to kill him too. But Peter escaped from prison and left Jerusalem.

The Story Is Honest

Notice how the writer tells this story. He does not make the Christians sound braver than they were. He does not make their suffering sound worse than it was.

When Christians ran away, he says so. When the churches had peace, he says so. When the people supported them, he says so. When the council was gentle, he says so.

This honest reporting is important. When he does describe harsh persecution and death, we can trust him. He is not exaggerating.

Paul's Travels

The story now follows Paul. He traveled through Asia Minor and Greece to spread Christianity. Almost everywhere he went, people attacked him.

At Antioch in Pisidia, he was thrown out of the city. At Iconium, a mob tried to stone him. At Lystra, they actually did stone him. They dragged him outside the city and left him for dead.

This did not stop him. He planned another trip. On this trip he crossed the sea to Greece. In Philippi, he was beaten badly and thrown in prison. His feet were locked in stocks while he was still bleeding.

Did this stop him? No. He went to Thessalonica. A mob attacked the house where he was staying. He went to Berea. His enemies followed and caused trouble there too. He went to Corinth. The Jews dragged him before the Roman governor. Only the governor's lack of interest saved him.

After all this, Paul went back to Jerusalem. But he could not stay still. He set out again, traveling through the same dangerous regions.

He spent two years in Ephesus. His success made the idol-makers angry— he was hurting their business. They started a riot. He almost died. Still, he continued to Greece and back.

On his way home, he learned of a plot to kill him. He had to change his route. When he finally reached Jerusalem, a mob grabbed him in the temple. They would have killed him if Roman soldiers had not arrived.

Paul's Arrest and Journey to Rome

From this point on, Paul was a prisoner. He almost died when a plot to kill him was discovered. He spent two years in prison. Then he was sent to Rome. The voyage included a terrible shipwreck.

Even as a prisoner in Rome, Paul kept preaching. The story ends with him teaching everyone who came to see him.

Paul's Letters Confirm the Story

We have letters Paul wrote during this time. These letters were not copied from the history, and the history was not copied from them. But they match perfectly.

The history says Paul was beaten in Philippi. Paul's letter to the Thessalonians says: "We had already suffered and been badly treated at Philippi."

The history says Paul faced trouble in Thessalonica. Paul's letter to them says: "You received the gospel in much affliction."

The history says Paul almost died in Ephesus. Paul's letter written from that area talks about despairing of life and being thankful for rescue.

The history says Paul was attacked in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. Paul's letter to Timothy mentions "the persecutions that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra."

These matches prove both sources are true. They support each other.

What Early Church Leaders Wrote

Christians who knew the apostles also wrote about these things.

Clement (Paul mentioned him in a letter) wrote:

d"The greatest and most faithful leaders of the church have been persecuted to death. Peter suffered many things and was finally killed. Paul was in prison seven times. He was beaten. He was stoned. He preached in the East and the West. At last he was killed under the rulers and went to his holy place. Many others also suffered terrible pains. Not only men but women were persecuted. They finished their race with great courage."

Polycarp (who knew the apostle John) wrote:

d"Be patient, as you saw with your own eyes in Ignatius and others, and in Paul and the rest of the apostles. They have not run in vain. They have gone to their reward from the Lord. They suffered with him. They did not love this present world. They loved him who died and rose for us."

Ignatius (who knew Polycarp) wrote:

d"Because they touched Christ's body after his resurrection and were convinced, Peter and the others despised death."

What Persecution Really Meant

What did Christians really suffer? Here is part of a letter written after Polycarp died:

d"The martyrs showed great courage and patience. They were whipped so hard that their inner body was visible. They still endured. Those sent to wild animals spent a long time in prison first. They were forced to lie on sharp points. They were tortured in many ways. The tyrant hoped that long suffering would make them deny Christ."

This is what early Christians faced. They suffered terribly but did not give up their faith.

[End of Chapter IV]

PART I

PROOF THAT CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE

CHAPTER V

Thoughts on the Previous Proof

The Main Point

We have good proof of this fact: Many people saw the miracles of Jesus with their own eyes. These people spent their whole lives working hard for Christianity. They faced danger. They suffered pain. No one forced them to do this. They did it because they believed what they saw was true. They also changed how they lived because of what they believed.

Introduction

The last chapter told the story from the Bible. Now let me make some important observations about that story.

I. What Paul Went Through Shows What All Apostles Went Through

The Bible story follows mainly Paul. But what happened to Paul shows what the work was like for everyone. If one apostle suffered for this work, the others probably did too. The same work would bring the same dangers.

Paul himself wrote about the other apostles having similar experiences:

d"I think God has put us apostles on display at the end of the line. We are like men sentenced to death. We have become a show for the whole world. Right now we are hungry and thirsty. We do not have enough clothes. We are beaten. We have no home. We work hard with our own hands. When people curse us, we bless them. When they persecute us, we put up with it. We have become like garbage to the world." (1 Corinthians 4:9-13)

Also, the early part of Acts tells us what happened to the other apostles:

d- Two were arrested and threatened.

d- All twelve were put in prison and beaten.

d- One follower was stoned to death.

d- Most Christians had to flee Jerusalem.

d- One apostle was beheaded. Another was sentenced to death.

All this happened in Jerusalem alone, within ten years of Jesus' death.

II. The Basic Story Must Be True

We are not asking you to believe every miracle right now. We are not saying every detail is perfect. But unless the whole story is made up— unless Peter, James, Paul, and the others never existed— unless all their letters are fake— then we have enough proof for one simple fact:

The early followers of Jesus worked very hard to spread his message. They faced great danger and suffering because of this work.

III. The Story Explains Things We Know Happened

We know Christianity exists. It must have started somehow. This story explains how it started. It shows the work that made it spread.

We know the message went against what people believed at the time. We know it overthrew established religions wherever it spread. The story shows the natural result: people who spread such a message would face opposition. Sometimes that opposition would turn violent.

The story fits what we would expect. It explains effects that clearly happened. This makes it believable.

IV. Early Christians Changed How They Lived

Our records also show that early Christians adopted a new way of life. This was almost certain to happen. If you truly believe something new, you live differently.

Right after Jesus left, his followers "continued together in prayer." They "met daily in the temple." "Many gathered together praying."

The apostles told converts to "repent"— to stop doing wrong things. They had to give up behaviors that were common and accepted at the time. They had to live by new standards of honesty and kindness.

Even if they did not follow these standards perfectly, trying to follow them would change how they lived. Their behavior would look very different from everyone around them.

Paul wrote about this change:

d"You were dead in your sins. You used to follow the ways of this world... We all lived that way once. We followed our selfish desires." (Ephesians 2:1-3)

d"You have spent enough time living like non-believers. You used to live in immorality, lust, drunkenness, and wild parties. They are surprised that you do not join them anymore. They speak badly of you." (1 Peter 4:3-4)

Paul reminded the Corinthians of what they used to be like, then said: "But you were washed. You were made holy."

Paul uses strong words for this change: "newness of life," "freed from sin," "dead to sin," "children of light" instead of "children of darkness." These words show a complete change in how people lived.

Pliny Confirms This

Pliny was a Roman governor about 50 years after Paul. He investigated Christians carefully. Here is what he found:

Christians met before sunrise on a set day. They sang songs to Christ as God. They made a promise together: never to steal, never to lie, never to cheat, never to break their word, never to refuse to return something trusted to them.

This shows that Christians lived by stricter moral rules than other people. If Christians in Pliny's time lived this way, the earlier Christians probably did too. It makes sense that the first Christians would be at least as strict as those who came later.

PART I

PROOF THAT CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE

CHAPTER VI

Their Story Was About Miracles

The Main Point

We have good proof of this fact: Many people saw the miracles of Jesus with their own eyes. These people spent their whole lives working hard for Christianity. They faced danger. They suffered pain. No one forced them to do this. They did it because they believed what they saw was true. They also changed how they lived because of what they believed.

Summary of What We Have Shown

Let us remember what we have proven:

First: Christianity exists today and is widespread.

Second: The only good explanation is that the founder and his followers worked hard to spread it.

Third: This work would naturally cause opposition.

Fourth: The founder was killed. Both Christian and non-Christian writers confirm this.

Fifth: Non-Christian writers tell us that early Christians suffered greatly.

Sixth: Jesus predicted his followers would suffer. Either he really said this, or writers added it later because it came true.

Seventh: Letters from the apostles talk about their labors, dangers, and sufferings.

Eighth: A history written by a companion of one apostle describes travels, persecution, and deaths. This history matches the letters perfectly.

All this together proves one thing clearly. A group of people appeared in the world. They told an amazing story. For this story, they traveled far. They worked hard. They faced danger. They suffered greatly. They did this by choice.

They also changed how they lived because of their beliefs.

The Story Had to Be About Miracles

What kind of story did these people tell? It had to be a story about miracles.

Why? Because they had nothing else to stand on.

They said Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah (God's chosen one). But how could they prove this? Jesus had no army. He won no battles. He gained no political power. He was not a famous thinker or inventor.

Jesus was a simple man from Galilee. He lived a quiet life. He did not free the Jewish nation from Rome. Without miracles, there was no reason to believe he was special.

A carpenter's son calling himself the Son of God? Without proof, this would be absurd. No one would listen. No one would follow. The only proof possible was miracles.

Miracles Were the Foundation

Whatever other arguments Christians used, miracles were always the foundation. Every debate started by assuming the miracles. Without miracles, there would be no debate at all.

For example: Jews and Christians debated whether prophecies about the Messiah fit Jesus. But this debate only made sense if Jesus had done something remarkable. Without signs and wonders, why would anyone even ask if he was the Messiah?

A young man giving moral lectures could not have raised this question. The Jews expected something much greater from the Messiah. Without miracles, Jesus would not deserve any attention at all.

Later, Christians discussed many questions about Jesus: his nature, his authority, his work, his message. These discussions rarely mention miracles directly. But miracles lay beneath everything. Miracles were what made the other questions worth asking.

Later Miracles Prove Earlier Ones

Christians in later centuries also claimed to do miracles. This too supports our point.

If the later miracle claims are true, they continue what started earlier. If the later claims are false, they copy what was claimed earlier.

Either way, the tradition of claiming miracles must have started somewhere. The most natural explanation: it started with the first Christians, who actually claimed to have seen miracles.

It would be very strange if followers claimed miracles but the original apostles never did. The tradition came from somewhere. It came from the beginning.

[End of Chapter VI]

PART I

PROOF THAT CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE

CHAPTER VII

Our Story Is the Original Story

The Main Point

We have good proof of this fact: Many people saw the miracles of Jesus with their own eyes. These people spent their whole lives working hard for Christianity. They faced danger. They suffered pain. No one forced them to do this. They did it because they believed what they saw was true. They also changed how they lived because of what they believed.

The Question

We have shown that the first Christians worked hard and suffered for a miraculous story. Now we ask: Is our story the same as their story? Is the account in our Bible what they actually told?

In other words: Is the Christian story we have today the same story Christians had then?

First Proof: No Other Story Exists

There is no trace of any other story. We have no document, no fragment, no hint of a different account. Not from that time. Not from centuries later.

The few non-Christian writers from that era agree with our account. They confirm:

- d- Jesus started the movement
- d- He was killed in Jerusalem under Pontius Pilate
- d- The religion spread anyway, first in Judea, then far beyond
- d- Many people converted
- d- Christians suffered greatly
- d- This all happened when our books say it did

These writers also describe Christian practices that match our records: meeting on a fixed day, singing hymns to Christ as God, promising to live honestly, looking forward to eternal life, despising death.

No contradiction. No alternative. Our story is the only story.

Jewish Sources Agree

Jewish writers of that time also give no different account. The historian Josephus mentions John the Baptist, describes how he was killed, and even mentions Jesus and his brother James. Whatever Josephus left out, he

never told a different story.

All Christian Writers Tell the Same Story

Every Christian writer from the beginning until now tells the same basic story. The main facts and people are always the same. We can trace this chain of writers back to people who knew the apostles.

The Apostles' Letters Confirm the Gospels

The apostles' letters were not written as history books. But they mention many facts from Jesus' life:

- d- His family and descent
- d- His gentle character
- d- His transfiguration
- d- His suffering and patience
- d- The Last Supper
- d- His crucifixion and burial
- d- His resurrection and appearances
- d- His ascension to heaven

The letters also mention miracles done by the apostles themselves. Paul refers to miracles he performed among the very people he is writing to.

Early Church Leaders Confirm the Same

Barnabas, who traveled with Paul, wrote about Jesus' sufferings, his choosing of apostles, his death, and his resurrection.

Clement, who heard Paul preach, wrote about Jesus' resurrection and the apostles going out to preach.

Polycarp, who knew the apostle John, wrote about Jesus' humility, patience, and resurrection. We are told he used to describe miracles he had heard about from eyewitnesses.

Ignatius, a friend of Polycarp, mentions many details: Jesus' descent from David, his mother Mary, his miraculous birth, his baptism, the Lord's Supper, and especially his resurrection. Ignatius says the apostles touched Jesus after he rose and were convinced.

Justin Martyr, writing about 30 years later, describes Jesus' miracles clearly: "He healed those who had been blind, deaf, and lame from birth. He raised the dead."

The story is always the same.

Even Doubtful Books Preserve the Main Facts

Some ancient Christian writings are considered less trustworthy. They may add legends. But they still preserve the main story. This proves that the basic facts were fixed from the beginning. No one could change them.

For the original story to disappear completely, with a new story taking its place, would be very strange. We have no example of such a thing in history. Christianity passed through dark and troubled times, but the story remained the same.

Christian Practices Match Our Story

Early Christians practiced certain rituals. These rituals match what our books describe:

d- Our books say Jesus told his followers to be baptized. Early Christians were baptized.

d- Our books say they held meetings. They did hold meetings.

d- Our books describe the Lord's Supper. Early Christians everywhere celebrated it.

These practices were shared by Christian communities in many countries, speaking different languages, separated by great distances. They all had the same story.

The Gospels Assume the Story Was Already Known

The Gospels were not the first announcement of the story. They were written for people who already knew it.

Luke says this clearly: he is writing so that his reader "may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught." The reader already knew the basics.

John mentions major events without describing them, such as Jesus' ascension to heaven. He assumes his readers already know about it.

The Gospels were not the cause of people believing. They were written because people already believed.

Conclusion

Four things prove our story is the original story:

1. Later writers all recognize our account.
2. No different account exists.
3. Early Christian rituals match our account.
4. Our books show the story was already known when they were written.

The story we have now is the story Christians had from the start. The resurrection was always part of it. I know nothing in all of history like this.

PART I

PROOF THAT CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE

CHAPTER VIII

Can We Trust Our Scriptures?

The Main Point

We have good proof of this fact: Many people saw the miracles of Jesus with their own eyes. These people spent their whole lives working hard for Christianity. They faced danger. They suffered pain. No one forced them to do this. They did it because they believed what they saw was true. They also changed how they lived because of what they believed.

The Question

We have shown that our story is probably the original story. But can we trust the details? Do the four Gospels give us reliable information? Were they really written by the people whose names they carry?

If Any One Gospel Is Real, That Is Enough

Here is the key point: If any one of the four Gospels is real, it is enough to prove our case.

Matthew was one of Jesus' twelve apostles. He was there.

Mark lived in Jerusalem at the time. The apostles met in his family's house. He traveled with an important apostle.

Luke traveled with Paul constantly. He often met with the original apostles.

John was one of Jesus' twelve apostles. He was there too.

If any of these men wrote their Gospel, we have eyewitness testimony or something very close to it. Very few histories are so close to their facts.

Read the Gospels and you will find detailed accounts of miracles. Specific times. Specific places. Specific people. Many and varied.

If Matthew and John wrote their Gospels, they are either telling the truth or they are lying. But would liars sacrifice their comfort and safety to teach virtue? Would men go through danger and death for what they knew was false?

Mark and Luke Are Close to the Source

Mark and Luke were not eyewitnesses. But they were close. They knew the eyewitnesses. They talked with them constantly.

Luke honestly admits he is not an eyewitness. He says he traced every account back to its source. He wanted to give certainty about things his reader had already heard.

Very few historians are so close to their subjects.

The Gospels Tell Us What the Apostles Preached

I am using these books to prove one thing: they tell us what the apostles actually preached. These are the miracle stories for which the apostles worked and suffered.

We want to know what the apostles said. We have accounts from two of them. We have accounts from people close to them. What better evidence could we ask for?

What If We Lacked This Evidence?

Imagine we knew that men long ago suffered for a miraculous story, but we had no records from their time. We would say: "We would believe them, but we do not know exactly what they claimed. If only we had accounts from them directly, or from their companions, or from anyone who knew them!"

But we do have this. We have exactly what we would wish for.

Any One Genuine Gospel Is Enough

If Matthew's Gospel is real, we have an apostle's own account.

Even if Matthew's is not real, if John's is, we still have an apostle's account.

Even if both are not real, if Luke's or Mark's is, we still have accounts from people who knew the apostles personally.

The New Testament contains many different writings. The genuineness of any one is almost enough to prove Christianity true. It contains four histories. The genuineness of any one is fully enough.

What If the Gospels Used Each Other?

Some think that Mark used Matthew and Luke when writing his Gospel. Even if this is true, it helps our case. If Mark—who knew the apostles—thought Matthew and Luke were good enough to copy, this shows they were trusted from the beginning.

John's Gospel is clearly independent. He wrote on his own.

So even if some Gospels borrowed from others, we still have strong evidence.

Multiple Witnesses Make the Case Stronger

We usually read the New Testament as one book. We see it as one testimony. But this is wrong. It contains many separate writings.

Imagine you knew only Matthew's Gospel. Then you discovered Luke's Gospel. You would find many of the same facts, plus new ones. The same general story. The same central person. You would be strongly impressed by this new evidence.

Then you discover John's Gospel. More confirmation. Then a history (Acts) that continues the story. Then letters from the main characters, written during the events.

Each new discovery would strengthen your confidence. The fact that four people independently recorded the same story proves it has a real foundation.

We miss this because we are used to seeing these books together from childhood. But they are separate witnesses. Their small differences prove they were written independently. Their agreement proves they describe the same real events.

How Christian Records Naturally Developed

Think about how things would have happened. The apostles were busy preaching, traveling, starting churches, facing persecution. They would not immediately write history books.

But they might write letters about their work. They might send instructions to churches they founded.

Meanwhile, others would write accounts of the events. Some accurate, some not. Eventually, respected leaders would write reliable histories. These would replace the less reliable ones.

This is exactly what happened. Our four Gospels gained a reputation that no other accounts achieved. What can be proven about them cannot be proven about any others.

Even Without Knowing the Authors

Knowing who wrote the Gospels is important. But it is not absolutely necessary.

Even if we only knew that these books were written by early disciples, read by early churches, and accepted as true accounts— this would be enough. If the books disagreed with what the apostles taught, churches the apostles founded would not have accepted them.

Two of the Gospels tell us something about their authors even without giving names. John says he was an eyewitness. Luke says he was a companion of the apostles. This is evidence even if we do not know their names.

[End of Chapter VIII]

PART I

PROOF THAT CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE

CHAPTER IX

Proof That Our Scriptures Are Genuine

The Main Point

We have good proof of this fact: Many people saw the miracles of Jesus with their own eyes. These people spent their whole lives working hard for Christianity. They faced danger. They suffered pain. No one forced them to do this. They did it because they believed what they saw was true. They also changed how they lived because of what they believed.

Introduction

Now we will show specific proofs that our Gospels really were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. First, some important background observations.

The Manuscript Evidence

We have many ancient copies of the New Testament. They come from many different countries. Some are over a thousand years old. All of them are from before printing was invented.

We also have ancient translations into languages that are no longer spoken anywhere.

This proves the Scriptures are not a modern fake. We can produce the old copies. The number of copies is far greater than for any other ancient book. This shows the Scriptures were widely read and carefully preserved.

The Language Evidence

The Greek language in the New Testament is special. It is not normal Greek. It is Greek written by people whose first language was Hebrew. It is full of Hebrew ways of speaking.

This fits perfectly. The writers were Jews. They learned Greek as a second language. They naturally used Hebrew expressions.

Who could have faked this? Later church writers did not know Hebrew well. They could not have created these Hebrew patterns. This proves the books are from the apostolic age.

The Only Objection Is the Miracles

Why do some people doubt these books? Only because they contain miracles. If the Gospels told ordinary history, no one would doubt who wrote them.

But miracles do not prove a book is fake. Many ancient books contain miracles that their authors clearly believed. We do not deny those authors wrote their books.

No Successful Forgeries in Christ's Name

If it was easy to forge Christian writings, someone would have written in Christ's own name. People would have accepted such writings eagerly. But we know of only one tiny attempt, and it was rejected by everyone.

The Authors Are Not Famous

If the Gospels were randomly assigned to authors, they would be given to more famous people. But Matthew is barely mentioned in the New Testament. Mark is mentioned only briefly. Luke appears only in Paul's letters.

The fact that these unknown men are named as authors shows the choice was based on real knowledge, not guessing.

Agreement Without Official Decree

Christians everywhere agreed on these books quite early. No official authority imposed this agreement. Given how much Christians disagree about other things, this agreement is remarkable.

Eleven Facts About the New Testament

Here are eleven things we can prove about our historical books:

- 1. The Gospels and Acts are quoted by Christian writers in an unbroken chain from the apostles' time to now.**
- 2. When quoted, they are treated with special respect as having unique authority.**
- 3. They were collected together very early.**
- 4. They were given titles of respect.**
- 5. They were read aloud in Christian meetings.**
- 6. People wrote commentaries on them, compared different copies, and translated them.**
- 7. Different Christian groups all accepted them— even groups that disagreed about other things.**
- 8. Even people with doubts about some books accepted these four Gospels and Acts without question.**
- 9. Christianity's enemies attacked these books because they knew these were the foundation of the faith.**
- 10. Official lists of accepted Scripture always included these books.**
- 11. None of this is true of the fake "gospels" that appeared later.**

The Chain of Witnesses

Writers who knew the apostles:

Barnabas (Paul's companion) quoted Matthew as Scripture.

Clement of Rome (who knew Paul) quoted Jesus' words from Matthew and Luke.

Polycarp (John's disciple) referred to the New Testament nearly forty times in one short letter.

Papias (who heard John and knew Polycarp) named Matthew and Mark as authors of their Gospels.

Later writers:

Justin Martyr (about 150 AD) called the Gospels "Memoirs of the Apostles" and said they were read in church meetings.

Irenaeus (about 180 AD) named all four Gospels and their authors.

Tertullian (about 200 AD) said these authors were known from the very beginning.

Even enemies confirm this:

The pagan critic Celsus attacked Christianity by attacking the Gospels—proving everyone knew these were the foundational books.

The Fake "Gospels" Fail Every Test

Later, fake gospels appeared. They fail every test:

- d- No apostolic father (anyone who knew the apostles) ever quoted them.
- d- They were not read in churches.
- d- They were not collected with the true Scriptures.
- d- They are not in any official lists.
- d- Christianity's enemies ignored them.
- d- Both sides in debates ignored them.
- d- No one wrote commentaries on them.

But even these fake books preserve the main story. They assume the same facts about Jesus. This proves those facts were too well established to change.

Conclusion

Some people say the evidence for the Gospels is as good as the evidence for any ancient book. This is true, but it says too little.

In number, variety, and early date of witnesses, we far exceed any other ancient book. For every testimony that the most famous Greek or Roman author can produce, we can produce many more.

Our chain of witnesses reaches back to people who personally knew the apostles. This is evidence that no other ancient book can match.

[End of Chapter IX]

PART I

PROOF THAT CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE

CHAPTER X

Summary

The Two Main Points

Remember what we have been proving:

First: The founder of Christianity and his followers lived lives of hard work, danger, and suffering.

Second: They did this to confirm the miracle stories in our Scriptures. They did it only because they believed those stories were true.

How We Proved It

The first point is very certain. The nature of the task, the people involved, their message that went against popular belief, their complete lack of power or protection— all this makes it highly likely they suffered.

This is confirmed by the death of the founder, who was killed for his work. It is also confirmed by non-Christian writers who describe how Christians suffered within thirty years of the beginning.

If the founder was killed and his converts were persecuted, how could the people in between have been safe? The companions of Jesus during his life, the teachers after his death— they could not have escaped.

This is confirmed by our own books: by the history written by a companion of the apostles, by the apostles' own letters, by predictions of persecution that must have come true (or no one would have included them), and by constant appeals for courage and patience in suffering.

We have also shown that Christians adopted a new way of life because of their faith.

What They Did This For

The next question: What did they do this for?

The story had to include miracles. Without miracles, why would anyone think Jesus of Nazareth was special?

The story was the one we now have. We proved this several ways:

- d- Two apostles wrote accounts themselves.
- d- Two others close to the apostles wrote accounts.
- d- The detailed nature of the stories proves the writers claimed specific knowledge.
- d- Given their positions, they certainly knew what was being taught.

The genuineness of these books is shown by many proofs:

- d- Early writers quoted them.
- d- Early Christians showed special respect for them.
- d- They were collected together, given titles of honor, and read in church meetings.
- d- People wrote commentaries and translations.
- d- Different groups all accepted them.
- d- Even enemies of Christianity attacked these specific books.
- d- Official lists always included them.
- d- No other books have this kind of evidence.

Why Authorship Matters Less Than You Think

Even if we did not know who wrote the Gospels, it would still be significant that they were accepted by people who knew the apostles and by churches the apostles founded.

These books match each other. They match a history (Acts) that continues the story. They match letters from the apostles. No different story has ever been found.

For the original story to disappear and a new one to take its place would be impossible. Nothing like that has ever happened.

The Conclusion

If all this is true, the religion must be true. These men could not have been liars.

By simply staying silent, they could have avoided all suffering and lived in peace. Would they claim to see what they never saw? Would they tell lies to teach virtue? Would they go around spreading falsehood to promote honesty?

If they knew Jesus was a fake, why would they keep promoting his cause? Why face hatred, danger, and death for a known lie?

This makes no sense. They believed. They suffered because they believed. And what they believed was true.

[End of Chapter X]

[End of Part I, Proposition I]

PART I

PROOF THAT CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE

PROPOSITION II

No Other Miracles Have Such Good Evidence

CHAPTER I

How to Judge Miracle Claims

The Two Propositions

Our first proposition was: There is good evidence that the original witnesses of Christian miracles suffered for their testimony. They did this by choice, solely because they believed their accounts were true.

Our second proposition is: There is NOT good evidence that witnesses of any other miracles did the same thing.

What I Would Believe

Let me say what kind of miracle I would believe.

If the great reformers— Luther, Calvin, Wesley— had claimed to do miracles; if they had based their ministry on these miracles; if they had suffered for these claims: I would believe them.

If the prison reformer John Howard had suffered for a miraculous story: I would believe him.

If Socrates had claimed miracles in Athens; if his followers had risked their lives to spread his teaching based on these miracles; if this information came to us through reliable writings: I would believe this too.

My belief would be stronger if the message was important for human life, if miracles were needed to prove it, and if the effects were still visible today.

But none of these examples are as strong as the apostolic history. If someone says this is being too easy to convince, let them show me cases where such evidence turned out to be false.

DISTINCTIONS ABOUT THE EVIDENCE

I. Stories Written Long After Events

We can ignore miracle stories written centuries after the events. Christianity's evidence is from the same time as the events.

This removes from consideration: the life of Pythagoras (written 800 years after he lived), myths of Greek and Roman gods, and most stories of Catholic saints (usually written a century or more after their deaths).

II. Stories from Far Away

We can ignore miracle stories published far from where they supposedly happened, with no proof they were believed locally.

Christianity was published where it happened. The church started in Jerusalem, the scene of the events. All the churches received the same accounts.

III. Temporary Rumors

We can ignore stories that appeared briefly and then vanished. True stories are confirmed over time. False stories die out.

Christianity's story did not drop. It was followed by action and consequences. Many writers recorded it. The accounts connected with letters, debates, and defenses over centuries.

IV. Stories Without Supporting Evidence

We can ignore miracle stories that stand alone with no supporting evidence.

Christianity's books are combined with an institution, with a religion that exists today, with historical records, with the fact that these books were received by believers from the beginning, with other books that follow them, with letters from the main characters. This is not a single isolated record.

V. Detailed Stories Are More Trustworthy

Specific details— names, dates, places, order of events— are marks of truth. Read the account of Paul's shipwreck in Acts 27. Read the healing of the blind man in John 9. These have the marks of personal knowledge.

Fiction can have details too, but only when someone is deliberately trying to deceive. Specific details reduce the question to whether we can trust the narrator's honesty.

VI. Stories That Require Nothing

We can ignore miracle stories that require nothing from the hearer. Stories that do not matter are believed carelessly. People pass them along without checking.

Christianity was not like this. If a Jew accepted it, he had to give up his national hopes. If a Gentile accepted it, he had to give up his gods. Everyone who accepted it had to change how they lived. People do not make such changes carelessly.

The apostles had no reason to suffer for an idle tale. They convinced others to suffer too. This was not casual belief.

VII. Miracles That Only Confirm Existing Beliefs

We can view differently miracles that only confirm what people already believe. Catholic miracles happen in Catholic countries. They do not make converts. People accept stories that fit their existing opinions.

Christian miracles were different. They were performed among enemies, under hostile government and priesthood. They did not confirm existing beliefs— they overturned them. They made converts. People gave up their deepest opinions based on these miracles.

Jesus had no followers when he started. The miracles created the movement.

Has any founder of a new religion ever claimed miracles and succeeded by that claim? Never. The French prophets tried in the 1700s and immediately ruined their cause. Christianity is unique.

DISTINCTIONS ABOUT THE MIRACLES THEMSELVES

I. False Perceptions vs. Real Effects

We can explain some "miracles" as mental errors— visions, dreams, hallucinations. Madness can produce images that seem real.

But these are always brief events, usually involving only one person. They leave no lasting evidence.

Most of Jesus' miracles are different. When a blind man is healed, the effect is permanent. The man is still there. People can examine him. When Lazarus was raised from the dead, he went home and stayed there. Crowds came to see him. The Jewish leaders plotted to kill him because he was living proof.

When the cripple at the temple gate was healed, he appeared with the apostles the next day. People could see he was really healed. This cannot be explained by mental error.

II. Selective Miracles

We can be suspicious of miracles where many attempts failed and only a few succeeded. Oracles and faith healing work this way: out of thousands, a few get better, and only the successes are reported.

Jesus' miracles were not like this. He did not try many times and occasionally succeed. He spoke the word and the healing happened. Every time. A paralyzed man was lowered through a roof; Jesus told him to walk; he did. A man with a withered hand was in the synagogue; Jesus told him to stretch it out; it was healed.

Some miracles cannot possibly be explained as lucky tries: walking on water, feeding thousands with a few loaves, raising the dead.

III. Events That Might Be Natural

We can dismiss events where it is unclear if anything supernatural happened. Some reported "miracles" might have natural explanations: coincidences, psychological effects, misunderstandings of natural events.

The Gospel miracles cannot be explained this way. No exaggeration could turn a normal event into feeding 5,000 people with five loaves. No misunderstanding could produce the story of raising Lazarus after four days.

The Variety of Jesus' Miracles

Jesus' miracles happened in many different situations: in cities and villages, in synagogues and homes, in streets and on highways, with preparation and by surprise, with crowds and alone, among friends and enemies. This variety makes it impossible to explain them all away with one excuse.

The Final Test

After removing all the cases covered by these distinctions, we apply one final test:

Did the original witnesses suffer for their testimony? Did they do this by choice, simply because they believed it was true?

If this cannot be shown, the miracle claim has less weight than Christianity's miracles.

[End of Proposition II, Chapter I]

PART I

PROOF THAT CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE

PROPOSITION II

No Other Miracles Have Such Good Evidence

CHAPTER II

Looking at the Best Counter-Examples

Introduction

Critics can choose any examples they want. The philosopher David Hume was a strong opponent of miracles. He chose three examples as the best he could find:

1. Emperor Vespasian's healing miracles at Alexandria
2. A man's leg being restored at a Spanish church
3. Cures at the tomb of Abbé Paris in the 1700s

Let us examine each one.

I. Vespasian's Miracles

The Roman historian Tacitus wrote this story about 27 years after it supposedly happened. Two sick men came to the emperor. One had bad eyes. The other had a weak hand. They asked Vespasian to heal them. At first he refused. Then doctors told him these conditions might be curable. So Vespasian touched the men, and they supposedly got better.

What can we say about this?

Tacitus wrote this from a different country, years later, based on rumors. He did not believe it. He called the local religion "superstition."

Still, something probably happened. Two men probably did come to Vespasian. He probably did touch them. People probably said they were healed.

But this looks like a planned trick. Everything helped the scheme succeed:

- d- The miracle was designed to honor the emperor.

- d- It happened among his supporters.

- d- The city was loyal to him.

- d- No one would dare question it.

The doctors' report is suspicious too. They said the first man's eyes were not really damaged, just blocked. They said the second man's hand was just weak. These are exactly the conditions that could be faked.

Compare this to Jesus' miracles: A person of low status, surrounded by enemies, with all the power against him, performing cures that convinced people to give up their deepest beliefs and follow him through danger and death. That is completely different.

II. The Spanish Miracle

Cardinal de Retz visited a church in Spain. The church officials showed him a man who lit the lamps. They said he used to have only one leg but now had two.

The Cardinal did not believe it. He did not examine the leg. He did not ask any questions.

An artificial leg would explain everything. If prosthetic legs were new to that area, people might not recognize one. The church would promote the story because it made their church famous. No one else would bother to investigate.

This is very weak evidence.

III. The Miracles of Abbé Paris

These are the most interesting cases. People visited this holy man's tomb and some reported being healed.

Here is a likely explanation: Visitors to the tomb were so excited by their devotion, the solemn place, and the emotional crowd that many had strong physical reactions— convulsions. These convulsions, in some cases, shook their bodies in ways that helped certain medical conditions.

This explanation fits the facts:

1. The "miracles" were rare. Out of thousands of sick visitors, only nine cures were officially recorded.
2. Convulsions at the tomb are admitted by everyone.
3. The diseases that improved were the type that might respond to strong physical shaking.
4. The cures were gradual. Some people visited for days, weeks, or months.
5. Many cures were incomplete.
6. Some cures were temporary.

So out of huge numbers of sick visitors, many of whom had convulsions, a tiny percentage got somewhat better. This is not very impressive.

Some cases do not even need this explanation. One man had inflammation in one eye but was already using medicine. The inflammation got better but later returned. Another man had slowly recovering vision that continued to improve during his visits. These might be natural recovery.

One Difference

The Paris miracles were different from the first two examples in one way: they were not backed by all the power in the country. One religious group (the Jansenists) claimed them. Another group (the Jesuits) examined and attacked them.

What happened? The examination found much fraud mixed in. The explanations available at the time did not fully account for everything, but modern understanding of how emotions affect the body helps us understand.

Most importantly, the Jansenist cause did not grow because of the miracles. It actually declined— even though the miracles had all the Jansenist supporters to start with.

Conclusion

Remember: these are the best examples history can provide against Christianity.

In none of them was the miracle clear and certain.

None of them overturned existing beliefs.

None of them succeeded against opposition from power and authority.

None of them convinced many people to give up their previous opinions and commit to a life of self-denial and danger.

None of them were confirmed by witnesses who sacrificed their safety.

Christianity's miracles pass every test that these examples fail.

[End of Proposition II, Chapter II]

[End of Part I]

PART II

ADDITIONAL PROOF OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER I

Prophecy

The Prophecy of Isaiah 52-53

Isaiah wrote about 700 years before Christ. He described a special person who would:

- d- Be raised up very high
- d- Look beaten and damaged
- d- Be rejected by people, full of sorrow
- d- Carry our griefs and sorrows
- d- Be wounded for our sins
- d- Be quiet like a lamb being killed
- d- Be put to death unfairly
- d- Have his grave with criminals, but his tomb with the rich
- d- Give his life as a sacrifice for sin
- d- Pray for those who hurt him

This Prophecy Is Real

How do we know this prophecy was really written before Jesus? The Jews themselves kept this book! They are our witnesses. They have the same passage in their copies. They have tried to explain it differently, but no one has ever said it is fake.

This passage is clearly meant to be prophecy. It comes from a prophetic book. It was always understood by Jews to describe someone who would come later.

How It Fits Jesus

The description fits the Gospel story clearly. The meaning is plain. Anyone can see it.

Look at the details:

- d- "wounded for our transgressions" — Jesus was beaten and killed for our sins
- d- "silent like a lamb" — Jesus did not defend himself at his trial
- d- "his grave with the wicked, but his tomb with the rich" — Jesus was executed like a criminal but buried in a rich man's tomb
- d- "made intercession for transgressors" — Jesus prayed for those who killed him

What the Jews Say

Modern Jewish teachers say this passage describes the Jewish people as a nation, not one person. But this explanation has problems:

- d- If the sufferer is the Jewish nation, who is speaking in the passage? Who says "he bore our griefs"?
- d- "Silent like a lamb" does not describe any period of Jewish history we know.
- d- The mention of "grave" and "tomb" makes no sense for a whole nation.
- d- The passage says the suffering was voluntary and the sufferer prayed for those who hurt him. This fits Jesus, not a nation.

If you doubt this, try to find a prophecy about Muhammad or any other person in Jewish Scripture. You will not find anything like this.

Jesus Predicted Jerusalem's Destruction

Jesus also made prophecies. He predicted that Jerusalem would be destroyed. He said:

- d- Not one stone of the temple would be left on another
- d- False messiahs would come
- d- Wars and disasters would happen

- d- His followers would be persecuted
- d- Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies
- d- People would be killed or taken captive
- d- Jerusalem would be trampled by foreign nations

Jesus even wept over Jerusalem, saying enemies would build walls around it and destroy everything.

This Prophecy Came True

Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70, about 36 years after Jesus died. The historian Josephus was there and wrote about it in detail. Everything Jesus predicted happened.

The only question is: Was the prophecy written before or after the event?

Proof the Prophecy Came First

1. **Ancient testimony:** Everyone in ancient times agreed the Gospels were written before Jerusalem fell.
2. **The authors' ages:** The Gospel writers were probably about Jesus' age. By AD 70 they would have been quite old. Why would they wait so long to write?
3. **No mention of fulfillment:** If the writers knew Jerusalem had been destroyed, they would have mentioned it. Luke mentions when other prophecies came true. But no Gospel says "this prophecy was fulfilled when Jerusalem fell." This silence proves they wrote before it happened.
4. **The warnings to flee:** Jesus told his followers to escape Jerusalem when they saw armies coming. If this warning was made up after the event, either Christians did escape (which means they knew the prophecy) or they did not escape (which would make the warning seem useless and false).
5. **Not specific enough:** If someone made up the prophecy after the event, they would include more details: the enemy's name, the general's name, the exact year. The prophecy is general, which suggests it came before the event.

[End of Part II, Chapter I]

PART II

ADDITIONAL PROOF OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER II

The Moral Teaching of the Gospel

Some Important Points First

Teaching morality was not Jesus' main purpose. His main purpose was to prove there is life after death. People needed motivation to do right, not just rules. The promise of heaven and the warning of hell provide that motivation.

Also, morality is not a new discovery like science. People have always known right from wrong. What matters is wisdom in applying moral principles.

Still, Gospel morality is remarkable. It proves the religion did not come from foolish or dishonest people.

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT

I. The Patient Character Over the Heroic Character

There are two types of people:

The first type is bold, active, proud, quick to anger, and eager to fight back when insulted.

The second type is gentle, patient, forgiving, willing to suffer, and seeking peace.

The world admires the first type. These are "great men." But Jesus praised the second type:

d"If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other cheek also. Love your enemies. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you."

This is not common teaching. It is very different.

Why is it right? Think about it: If everyone were patient and forgiving, the world would be peaceful. If everyone were proud and ready to fight, there would be endless conflict. The patient character prevents and ends quarrels.

II. Control Your Thoughts

Jesus said it is not enough to avoid bad actions. We must control our thoughts:

d"Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries... These things defile a person."

d"Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery in his heart."

Where should we stop temptation— at the thought or only at the action? Jesus said: stop it at the thought. This is the only way that really works. If you fill your mind with bad images, you will eventually act on them.

III. The Two Great Commandments

When asked for a summary of all moral law, Jesus answered:

d"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind. This is the greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two

commandments."

The first gives us the right motivation. The second corrects selfishness.

IV. Do Not Seek Praise

Jesus taught that virtue must not be done for reputation:

d"Be careful not to do your good deeds in front of others to be seen by them. When you pray, go into your room and close the door."

This is different from common teaching that constantly talks about reputation and what people will think. True virtue ignores these things and focuses only on pleasing God.

HOW JESUS TAUGHT

Jesus did not write long essays or formal sermons. He gave short, memorable rules. He spoke in pointed sayings that stuck in people's minds.

This fit his situation. He had limited time. He moved from place to place. He faced crowds one day and persecution the next. Short, powerful statements were the most effective way to teach.

Commands like "turn the other cheek" describe a character to aim for, not specific actions to follow literally. The point is to become a certain kind of person.

WHAT JESUS DID NOT TEACH

- 1. No detailed descriptions of heaven or hell. Jesus confirmed these realities but did not describe them in detail. Enthusiasts (people who get carried away with religious excitement) love to describe the afterlife in wild detail. Jesus did not do this.**
- 2. No extreme self-denial. Jesus did not require living alone, wearing rough clothes, or refusing pleasure. Compare this to later Christianity with its monks, hair shirts, and silent orders.**
- 3. No emotional religious frenzy. The Lord's Prayer is calm and simple. Jesus never worked himself into religious excitement like some enthusiasts do.**
- 4. No substituting zeal for morality. Religious leaders often let followers substitute enthusiasm for good behavior. Jesus condemned this: "Not everyone who says 'Lord, Lord' will enter heaven, but only those who do my Father's will."**
- 5. No excessive ritual. Jesus grew up in a religion full of ceremonies. But he created a religion with very few rituals. He criticized those who kept small rules while ignoring justice and mercy.**
- 6. No clever word-tricks. Jewish teachers of that time loved tricky arguments. Jesus never used them.**
- 7. No nationalism. Jews were proud and exclusive. Jesus taught love for all people, even enemies. The Good Samaritan story makes the hero a national enemy.**

8. No political schemes. Jesus said "My kingdom is not of this world." Christianity works under any form of government.

JESUS' CHARACTER

No one— friend or enemy— ever charged Jesus with any personal fault. For five hundred years after his birth, no one accused him of any vice. This is remarkable.

Almost every other teacher has some moral stain. Socrates was suspected of vice. Plato recommended things we find wrong. Muhammad broke his own rules for personal pleasure.

In the Gospels we see Jesus praying often, humble, kind, patient, and wise. He was gentle with children. He wept for Jerusalem and for his friend Lazarus. He prayed for his murderers.

CONCLUSION

When we consider Jesus as a moral teacher; when we see what he taught and what he avoided; when we find him free from the faults of his time and place; when we compare Christianity as it came from Jesus with other religions— we must admit the integrity and good sense of those who started it.

And who was Jesus? A carpenter's son from a remote village. He had no famous teachers. He read only the Bible. His helpers were uneducated fishermen.

If his mission was real, this all makes sense. God worked through simple people. But without that reality, it is very hard to explain how such wisdom came from such a source.

[End of Part II, Chapter II]

PART II

ADDITIONAL PROOF OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER III

The Honesty of the New Testament Writers

The Principle

Honest writers include things that a liar would leave out. They write facts that make their story harder to believe. They do not try to make everything look perfect.

The New Testament writers did this. They included passages that no faker would invent.

The Resurrection Appearances

After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared only to his followers— not to his enemies. All the Gospel writers say this.

Think about it: The story would be more impressive if Jesus had appeared to the Jewish leaders who killed him. A liar would have said that. A clever writer would have arranged it that way.

But the Gospel writers did not. They honestly reported that Jesus appeared only to his disciples. This proves they were telling the truth as they knew it, not trying to make the best impression.

Other Honest Admissions

John the Baptist's Doubt: John, who announced Jesus as the Messiah, later sent messengers to ask, "Are you really the one, or should we expect someone else?" A liar would hide this doubt. The Gospel writers included it.

Disciples Leaving: John wrote, "From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him." Would a promoter include this?

Limited Miracles: Matthew wrote that Jesus "did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith." A faker would not write that.

Officials Dismissing Christianity: Roman officials are quoted saying Christianity is just a dispute "about a dead man named Jesus." A dishonest writer would not put such dismissive words in an official's mouth.

Partial Success: Acts ends by saying that when Paul preached in Rome, "Some were convinced... but others would not believe." No exaggeration here.

Passages No Faker Would Invent

Some passages seem unlikely to be made up:

d"Faith Moving Mountains": Jesus said if you have faith, you can tell a mountain to throw itself into the sea. This creates a difficulty. No writer would invent such a statement unless Jesus really said it.

d"Let the Dead Bury Their Dead": When someone asked to bury his father first, Jesus said, "Let the dead bury their own dead." This sounds harsh. No one would make this up.

d"Touch Me Not": Jesus told Mary Magdalene after his resurrection, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended." This is mysterious. No faker would create such a puzzling answer.

The Bread of Life Discourse: Jesus said, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life." Many disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" The writer admits this was confusing. A faker would not create confusion.

The Lord's Supper: The account of communion is very brief. If it were invented, it would be more detailed. The short phrase "This is my body" creates difficulties. A faker would have been more careful.

What This Proves

These examples support both that the books are genuine and that the stories are true. Liars would not include such passages. Even honest people would not include them unless they believed them to be true.

As scholars have noted: These writers show no cunning, no scheming, no effort to anticipate objections. They simply tell the facts and let the reader decide.

Natural Details

Some details feel very natural and real:

The Father's Struggle: When a man asked Jesus to heal his son, Jesus said, "If you can believe, all things are possible." The father cried, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" This struggle between hope and doubt feels completely real.

The Crowd's Fickleness: People welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem one week and demanded his death the next. This is exactly how crowds behave.

Who Accepted, Who Rejected: Religious leaders rejected Jesus while common people accepted him. The leaders said, "Have any of the rulers believed in him?" This is exactly how powerful people think.

The Woman's Exaggeration: Jesus told the Samaritan woman one fact about her life. She ran to tell her neighbors, "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did!" People exaggerate like this when they are excited.

Paul's Consistent Character: Paul was passionate against Christianity, then passionate for it. The same personality showed in both directions. This is how real people behave.

Details That Fit Each Author

Matthew, who joined Jesus later, says little about Jesus' early life. John, who joined earlier and wrote to add to the other Gospels, includes events the others missed.

Matthew wrote for Jews and did not explain Jewish customs. Mark wrote for non-Jews and added explanations like "The Pharisees wash their hands before eating." Each author fit his audience.

These details show real people writing for real readers, not fakers creating fiction.

[End of Part II, Chapter III]

PART II

ADDITIONAL PROOF OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER IV

Jesus Acts the Same Way in All the Gospels

The Argument

John's Gospel mostly tells different stories than Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This was probably on purpose—John wanted to add what the others left out.

But here is what is interesting: Even though John tells different stories, Jesus acts the same way. The same personality shows through. This suggests all the writers were describing the same real person.

The Gospel writers were not skilled storytellers. They did not try to make Jesus' character consistent. If they had invented their stories, they probably would have made Jesus seem different in each Gospel. But they did not. The same person appears everywhere.

This suggests they were writing about a real person, not making up stories.

I. Teaching from the Moment

Jesus had a special way of teaching. He used whatever was happening at the moment to teach a lesson.

Examples from Matthew, Mark, and Luke:

When someone said, "Your mother and brothers are outside," Jesus pointed to his disciples and said, "Here are my mother and brothers. Whoever does God's will is my family."

When the disciples forgot to bring bread, Jesus warned them about the "yeast of the Pharisees." They thought he meant real bread. He explained he meant false teaching.

When children were brought to him, Jesus said, "Anyone who will not receive God's kingdom like a little child will never enter it."

When he saw fishermen, he said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Examples from John:

When people followed him because he fed them bread, Jesus said, "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that lasts forever."

At a well, when a woman mentioned water, Jesus said, "Whoever drinks the water I give will never thirst again."

When disciples offered him food, Jesus said, "My food is to do God's will."

When he saw a man born blind, Jesus said, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

This is the same teaching style in all the Gospels. No one copied from anyone else. They were describing the same real person.

II. Teaching by Action

Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell how Jesus placed a child among his arguing disciples. John tells how Jesus washed his disciples' feet. These are different stories, but they have the same point: Jesus used actions, not just words, to teach humility.

Different writers tell different stories, but Jesus teaches the same way.

III. "The Son of Man"

Jesus called himself "the Son of Man." This title appears many times in all four Gospels. But here is something remarkable: only Jesus uses this title for himself. No one else ever calls him this.

This consistency across four writers who did not copy each other suggests they all heard the same person speak.

IV. Avoiding Crowds

Matthew, Mark, and Luke record that Jesus often withdrew from crowds. John records the same thing in different situations. John even explains why: "Jesus, knowing they intended to make him king by force, withdrew."

Different writers, different events, same behavior.

V. Not Declaring Who He Was

Jesus was careful not to announce openly that he was the Messiah. Matthew, Mark, and Luke record him telling disciples not to tell anyone. John records the Jews complaining, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."

Same behavior, different events, different writers.

VI. The Disciples' Confusion

The disciples often did not understand Jesus, especially when he spoke about his death and resurrection. Mark and Luke record their confusion and fear to ask questions. John records the same thing in a completely different situation.

This pattern of confused disciples appears across all the Gospels.

VII. Gentle During Suffering

Jesus was calm and gentle during his arrest and trial. This appears in all four Gospels through different examples. His quiet answers, his refusal to defend himself, his prayer for his enemies— the same character shows through in every account.

Two Special Connections

The Cup: Matthew, Mark, and Luke record Jesus praying that "this cup" might pass from him. John does not record this prayer. But John records Jesus saying at his arrest, "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" The image of the cup connects these accounts even though John did not describe

the prayer.

The Temple Charge: Matthew and Mark record that Jesus was accused of threatening to destroy the temple. But they do not explain where this accusation came from. John, early in his Gospel, records Jesus saying, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." John explains what Matthew and Mark left unexplained.

These connections could only happen if all the writers were describing real events.

The Twelve Apostles

Matthew, Mark, and Luke list the twelve apostles by name. John never gives the list. But throughout his Gospel, John assumes Jesus had twelve special followers. Whenever John identifies someone as an apostle, that person is on the others' list.

This agreement runs through every chapter of every Gospel. It indicates reality.

[End of Part II, Chapter IV]

PART II

ADDITIONAL PROOF OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER V

Jesus Was Different from What People Expected

What Jews Expected

Jews believed their prophecies promised a Messiah who would make their nation great and powerful. This was what everyone hoped for.

What an Enthusiast Would Have Done

If Jesus had been carried away by religious excitement, he probably would have followed this popular expectation. He would have claimed to be the kind of Messiah everyone wanted.

What a Faker Would Have Done

If Jesus had been a con man, he would have told people what they wanted to hear. That is how con men succeed.

What Other Messiah Claimants Did

History tells us there were many false Messiahs. The historian Josephus records them. Some were probably fakers. Others were probably carried away by excitement.

But all of them did the same thing: they claimed to be the kind of Messiah the Jews expected. They promised to free the nation and make it powerful.

Why Jesus Was Different

Jesus did not do this. He claimed to be a completely different kind of Messiah. His kingdom was not of this world. His benefits would come in the next life, not this one.

No one had ever imagined such a thing before. It went against everything Jews expected.

This is hard to explain if Jesus was just an enthusiast or a faker. Both types follow popular opinion. Both give people what they expect.

But Jesus was completely original. He created a new idea of what the Messiah would be. No other claimant ever thought of anything like it.

An Objection Answered

Some might say Jesus tried the popular approach first and then changed to this one. But there is no evidence for this. And the other claimants could have done the same thing. None of them ever did.

Jesus' originality suggests he was not a faker or an enthusiast. He was something different.

[End of Part II, Chapter V]

PART II

ADDITIONAL PROOF OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER VI

The Bible Matches Outside Sources

The Argument

When facts in the Bible match facts from other ancient writers, it proves the Bible writers knew that time and place. They had local knowledge that only someone living there could have.

This argument is strong because the New Testament mentions many different places: Jerusalem, Rome, Athens, and other cities. It mentions Jewish, Greek, and Roman customs. A faker from a later time or different place would make mistakes about such varied details.

Our main outside source is Josephus, a Jewish historian who was born four years after Jesus died. He wrote about Jewish history and the destruction of Jerusalem.

EXAMPLES

Here are some examples where the Bible matches outside sources:

Archelaus in Judea

Matthew says Joseph was afraid to go to Judea because "Archelaus was reigning there in place of his father Herod." Josephus confirms that Herod divided his kingdom among his sons, with Archelaus getting Judea. Josephus also confirms that Archelaus was cruel— so cruel that the Jews complained to the emperor about him.

King Herod Agrippa

Acts calls someone "Herod the king" and describes his death at Caesarea after accepting worship as a god. This is very specific. For thirty years before and forever after, there was no "king" in Jerusalem— except for the last three years of this Herod's life. Josephus confirms everything: Herod became king, he went to Caesarea, he wore splendid robes, people called him a god, he immediately became sick and died.

The Proconsul of Cyprus

Acts calls the governor of Cyprus a "proconsul." This technical term matters because Roman provinces had different types of governors. History records that Cyprus had been transferred from the emperor to the Senate, making "proconsul" the correct title. A faker would probably get this wrong.

Roman Soldiers at the Temple

Acts describes Roman soldiers stationed in a castle with stairs leading down to the temple. Their job was to stop riots during festivals. Josephus describes exactly such a fortress called Antonia, with "stairs reaching to each portico" where soldiers "kept watch on the people on feast-days."

Praying by the River

Acts says Paul went "outside the city by a riverside, where prayer was usually made." This custom of Jews praying near water is confirmed by Philo, Josephus, and Tertullian. A faker would not know such a specific detail.

Forty Stripes Minus One

Paul says he received "forty stripes save one" from the Jews. The Old Testament allowed forty stripes. But Josephus records that Jews actually gave "forty stripes, wanting one." Paul knew the actual practice, not just the written law.

The Egyptian Rebel

A Roman commander asked Paul, "Are you the Egyptian who led four thousand terrorists into the wilderness?" Josephus describes exactly such a person: "the Egyptian false prophet" who gathered followers and "brought

them out of the wilderness" to attack Jerusalem. The timing, the description "Egyptian" without a name, and the wilderness location all match.

The Unknown God

Paul in Athens found "an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." Several ancient writers confirm that Athens had altars to "unknown gods."

This seems to have been special to Athens. How could a faker from another place know about it?

WHY THIS MATTERS

These agreements are important because:

- 1. They involve small, obscure details— exactly where a faker would make mistakes.**
- 2. After Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, everything changed. A later writer would not know what things were like before.**
- 3. Later Christian writers made mistakes about this period. If they could not get it right, neither could later fakers.**

A FEW DIFFICULTIES

Among so many agreements, there are a few problems. The main ones have reasonable explanations:

The Census under Quirinius: Luke mentions a census when Jesus was born, but the governor he names took office later. However, Luke's Greek can be translated differently: "This census was made before Quirinius was governor." Or the governor's title was added later to identify which Quirinius was meant.

Theudas: Gamaliel mentions a rebel named Theudas before a rebel Josephus places later. But there could be two rebels with the same name. Josephus records several rebels named Simon and several named Judas.

These difficulties are few and have possible solutions. Compare them with the large number of perfect agreements.

[End of Part II, Chapter VI]

PART II

ADDITIONAL PROOF OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER VII

Unplanned Agreements

The Argument

Paul's letters and the book of Acts agree with each other in many small ways. These agreements were not planned. They are hidden, small, and indirect. You must search carefully to find them.

The letters were not copied from Acts. Acts was not copied from the letters. Yet they match in many details.

These matches rule out two explanations. First, they were not planned by a faker. A faker would make the agreements obvious, not hidden. Second, they are too many to be accidents. Two made-up stories would not match so often by chance.

What remains? The agreements come from truth. Both writers described real events.

Paley's Earlier Book

Paley wrote a whole book about this argument. It is called "Horae Paulinae." He examined all thirteen letters that have Paul's name. He found many unplanned agreements between these letters and Acts.

This argument is strong because it assumes very little. It only assumes the books exist. It does not assume they are true or genuine. The argument proves they are genuine and true.

What This Proves About Christianity

This argument matters for Christianity in three ways:

First: Paul claims in his letters that he did miracles. He says miracles were "the signs of an apostle." If the letters really come from Paul, this claim is very important.

Second: The letters show that Paul's life was real. He traveled, suffered, worked, and faced danger. This supports our main argument. The first Christians gave up easy lives because they believed the Christian story was true.

Third: It proves that Luke (the author of Acts) knew Paul's history well. Luke was probably Paul's travel companion, as he claims to be. This makes Luke's Gospel more believable too. A writer who knew Paul so well probably had good information about Jesus also.

John's Gospel and Letter

There is a similar agreement between John's Gospel and John's letter. The writing style is the same in both. John's style is very different from Paul's style. It is also different from James's and Peter's styles.

But John's Gospel and John's letter sound alike. This proves they came from the same person. Neither was faked.

This matters because John's letter makes a strong claim:

d"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled—that which we have seen and heard, we declare to you."

John says he saw and touched Jesus himself. He was an eyewitness. His Gospel has the value of eyewitness testimony.

[End of Part II, Chapter VII]

PART II

ADDITIONAL PROOF OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER VIII

The History of the Resurrection

Why the Resurrection Is Special

The resurrection is part of the proof for Christianity. But its special value is often misunderstood.

The resurrection is not special because it is a bigger miracle than others. It is not special because it has better evidence than other miracles in the Gospels.

The resurrection is special for this reason: We know for certain that the apostles claimed it happened.

This would be certain even if the four Gospels were lost. Every part of the New Testament mentions the resurrection. Every Christian writer from that time mentions it. Even enemies of Christianity mention it. Everyone agrees that the first Christians claimed Jesus rose from the dead.

For other parts of the Gospel story, we might ask: Did the apostles really say this? For the resurrection, there is no such question. The apostles certainly claimed it.

Only Two Questions Remain

If the apostles claimed the resurrection, only two questions remain:

1. Did the apostles know it was false and lie about it?
2. Were the apostles deceived themselves?

The Fraud Theory

Most people today reject the fraud theory. The apostles do not look like liars. They were simple men who gave up everything for their message. They suffered greatly for it. They showed warm, sincere belief. Liars do not act this way.

The Hallucination Theory

Some say the apostles imagined they saw Jesus. They had hallucinations (false experiences that seem real). This view compares the resurrection to ghost stories.

But the Gospel accounts destroy this comparison:

- d• Many people saw Jesus, not just one person
- d• They saw him together, not separately
- d• They saw him in daylight, not at night
- d• They saw him close up, not far away
- d• They saw him many times, not just once
- d• They touched him, talked with him, and ate with him

These details rule out hallucination. But they depend on trusting the Gospel records.

The Missing Body

There is a stronger answer to the hallucination theory. It does not depend on trusting the Gospel details. It comes from the nature of the case itself.

Everyone agrees that Jesus was buried. Everyone agrees that the tomb was later empty. Everyone agrees that the resurrection was preached in Jerusalem just days after the burial.

The question is: What happened to the body?

The hallucination theory cannot explain the missing body.

If the body was still there: The disciples could not believe Jesus had risen. No one imagines a ghost while looking at the dead body. A spirit might be an illusion. A body is a real thing you can see and touch.

If the body was gone: How did it disappear? Hallucinating people do not steal bodies. If the disciples had hallucinations, they did not move the body. If the body was moved, it was fraud, not hallucination.

The hallucination theory fails both ways. It cannot explain how the disciples believed while the body was there. It cannot explain how the body disappeared without fraud.

Why the Jews Could Not Produce the Body

Christianity started in Jerusalem. The apostles preached there just days after Jesus died. They said his tomb was empty.

The Jewish leaders wanted to stop this message. If Jesus' body was available, they would have shown it. This would have ended the movement instantly. "Here is the body. The apostles are wrong."

But they could not produce the body. Instead, they claimed the disciples stole it. This explanation has problems. The disciples were afraid at that time. They were unlikely to try such a risky plan. They had no hope of success. Getting caught would mean death.

But notice: this explanation assumes fraud, not hallucination. The Jewish leaders did not say the disciples imagined things. They said the disciples stole the body.

The hallucination theory fails. Hallucinations cannot explain a missing body.

[End of Part II, Chapter VIII]

PART II

ADDITIONAL PROOF OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER IX

The Spread of Christianity

SECTION I: THE HISTORICAL FACTS

The Beginning

When Jesus left earth, about 120 believers gathered in Jerusalem. Within days, the number grew to thousands. Within a few years, Christianity spread throughout Judea, Samaria, and Galilee.

This happened where Jesus had lived and worked. These converts knew the places where miracles were said to happen. They could check the facts. They could talk to eyewitnesses.

Three Periods of Growth

First Period (First 30 Years): Christian groups formed throughout Judea and in major cities across the Roman Empire. These included Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Thessalonica, Philippi, and Rome. During this time, James was killed in Jerusalem. Paul was put in prison in Rome. Peter and Paul both died for their faith.

Second Period (AD 64 to AD 100): Christianity grew significantly despite persecution.

Third Period (AD 100 to AD 313): Christianity continued to spread until the emperor Constantine made it legal.

Evidence from Roman Writers

The Roman writer Tacitus described the fire in Rome in AD 64. Emperor Nero blamed Christians for the fire. Tacitus writes that Christianity had spread throughout Judea and Rome. He says "a great multitude" of

Christians were found.

Christians were cruelly punished. Some were covered with animal skins and torn apart by dogs. Others were set on fire to light the night.

This persecution shows how many Christians existed. Nero would not blame a tiny group. The Christians must have been numerous and well known.

Pliny's Letter

Around AD 107, Pliny wrote a letter to Emperor Trajan. Pliny governed a region in modern Turkey. He reported:

- d• Christians were numerous in his region
- d• They included all ages, all social classes, and both men and women
- d• They lived in cities, villages, and countryside
- d• They had buildings for worship
- d• The pagan temples had become nearly empty

Some Christians had given up the faith more than twenty years before. This shows Christianity reached that area within thirty years of Jesus' death.

Later Christian Writers

Forty years after Pliny, Justin Martyr wrote: "There is no nation where prayers are not offered in the name of the crucified Jesus."

Fifty years after Justin, Tertullian wrote: "We have filled your cities, islands, towns, councils, and even military camps. We have left you only your temples."

These statements may exaggerate. But no one could say such things unless Christians were very numerous.

SECTION II: WHAT THIS GROWTH MEANS

This growth is unique in history. We are not tracing the spread of a philosophy based on arguments. We are tracing a religion based on claimed facts— miracles that either happened or did not happen.

Starting a new religion is very difficult. Persuading many nations to abandon their old religions is even harder.

Comparison with Modern Missions

Compare Christianity's early spread with modern missionary work. In India, after two hundred years of effort, there were fewer than twelve thousand converts. Most were social outcasts.

Modern missionaries have many advantages:

- d• They are educated and devoted
- d• Their lives are blameless
- d• They come from a powerful nation that others respect
- d• The religion they teach has the same excellent qualities

The apostles had none of these advantages. They were uneducated Jews— a people the Romans despised. They faced powerful religions with ancient traditions.

Yet the apostles succeeded where modern missionaries struggle. This difference suggests the apostles had something the missionaries lack: proof that convinced people— evidence modern teachers cannot offer.

SECTION III: THE RELIGION OF MOHAMMED

Some compare Christianity's spread to Islam's spread. Both grew quickly. Both were founded by one person. But there are important differences.

I. Mohammed Did Not Claim Miracles

When people asked Mohammed for miracles, he refused. The Quran records this:

d"The unbelievers say, 'We will not believe unless a sign is sent.' Answer: Signs are in God's power alone. I am only a preacher."

This is very different from Christianity. Jesus and the apostles claimed to do miracles. They invited people to check the facts. Mohammed offered no such proof.

II. Islam Spread Through Different Causes

For twelve years, Mohammed only preached. During this time, he gained very few followers— perhaps one hundred in twelve years. If he had continued this way, we would never have heard of him.

But Mohammed had advantages:

- d• He came from a powerful family
- d• He had wealth from marriage
- d• He worked like a politician building a party
- d• His early followers became rich and powerful

His teaching also attracted followers:

- d• He described terrible punishment for unbelievers
- d• He promised paradise with physical pleasures

- d• He allowed men to have four wives
- d• He promised the highest heaven to those who fought for him

III. Islam Spread Through Military Force

After twelve years of slow progress, everything changed. Mohammed claimed God told him to spread the faith by the sword.

His early military victories drew more followers. In his last nine years, he commanded eight large battles and fifty military campaigns. His followers received shares of the plunder and captives.

The conquered peoples had limited choices:

- d• For idol worshippers: convert or die
- d• For Jews and Christians: pay heavy taxes or convert

Under these conditions, Islam spread quickly. This is not surprising. An army that wins battles and offers rewards will attract followers. A religion that conquers will spread with its conquests.

The Conclusion

Islam's spread proves nothing against Christianity. The two cases are completely different.

Compare: A Galilean peasant with a few fishermen versus a conqueror leading an army.

Jesus had no force, no power, no wealth. Yet Christianity overcame the Jewish religion and the Roman Empire— all without violence.

Mohammed spread his religion through battles and threats during the darkest period of history, when people believed military success proved divine approval.

These are not similar at all. Christianity's spread remains unique in history. A Jewish peasant overthrew the religion of the world.

[End of Part II, Chapter IX]

PART III

ANSWERING COMMON OBJECTIONS

CHAPTER I

Differences Between the Gospels

How Human Testimony Works

Some people reject the Gospel story because the four Gospels differ in some details. This is unwise. It misunderstands how human testimony normally works.

The normal pattern of human testimony is this: the main facts agree, but small details vary. Courts of law see this every day.

When witnesses describe the same event, there are almost always small differences. A clever lawyer can find these differences and display them. But judges are not fooled. They expect such differences.

In fact, if witnesses agree perfectly in every detail, judges become suspicious. Perfect agreement suggests the witnesses planned their stories together. Some variation is normal and expected.

Examples from Other Histories

Written histories often disagree on details. Consider these examples:

Philo says a certain embassy happened at harvest time. Josephus says it happened at planting time. Both were writing at the same time about the same event. No one doubts the embassy happened.

English historians disagree about the Marquis of Argyle's death. One says he was hanged on the same day he was condemned. Others say he was beheaded, condemned on Saturday, and executed on Monday.

Does anyone doubt that the Marquis was executed? Of course not. Yet by the same strict standard some apply to the Gospels, we would have to doubt it.

Omission Is Not Denial

Many Gospel differences come from omission. One writer includes something another leaves out. But omission proves nothing.

Josephus wrote two histories of the Jews. His second book leaves out many important things from his first book. This does not make either book false.

Three ancient historians wrote about Emperor Tiberius. Each includes things the others omit. No one questions their histories because of this.

In our own time, three different writers wrote about the same famous person's life. They include different events. Sometimes they seem to contradict each other. Yet no one doubts the basic truth of what they wrote.

The Gospels as Memoirs

The differences make more sense when we understand what the Gospels are. They are not complete histories. They are memoirs (personal accounts of selected events).

The Gospel writers did not try to record everything Jesus did or said. Each writer selected events that seemed important to him. Each wrote for a different audience. Each had a different purpose.

An Example: Matthew's Resurrection Account

Matthew focuses on one resurrection appearance: Jesus meeting the disciples in Galilee. Why? Because before he died, Jesus promised to meet them there. Matthew wanted to show that Jesus kept this promise.

Matthew's account does not say this was the only appearance. It does not say this was the first appearance. Matthew simply focuses on the one that fulfilled Jesus' specific promise.

Mark uses similar language about Galilee. Yet Mark also records other appearances that happened first. The Galilee meeting was not the only one— just the most important for Matthew's purpose.

When we understand each writer's purpose, many apparent contradictions disappear.

[End of Part III, Chapter I]

PART III

ANSWERING COMMON OBJECTIONS

CHAPTER II

Did the Apostles Make Mistakes?

Separating Testimony from Opinion

We treat other books fairly in one way we sometimes do not treat the Bible. We separate a writer's opinions from his testimony about facts.

If a historian gives a wrong opinion about something, we do not reject everything he says. We still trust his reports about what he saw and heard.

The same fairness should apply to the Bible writers.

Old Testament Quotations

The New Testament quotes the Old Testament many times. Some of these quotations seem to apply Old Testament passages in new ways.

This was probably intentional. Writers in every culture quote famous books to fit new situations. They do not always claim the original author had this exact meaning. They use the words because they fit.

Jewish writers did this often because the Old Testament was their main literature.

But even if some quotations seem wrong to us, does this affect the writers' honesty? Does it change what they witnessed? Does it prove they lied about what they saw Jesus do?

No. Interpreting a book wrongly is very different from lying about facts.

Did Apostles Expect Jesus to Return Soon?

Some say the early Christians wrongly expected Jesus to return in their lifetime. If true, this would be a mistake.

Consider a similar case. Jesus said something about the apostle John. People misunderstood his words. They spread a report that John would never die. John's Gospel corrects this mistake.

What if John had not corrected it? What if we only knew about this wrong belief but not where it came from? Some people would use this mistake to reject all of Christianity.

This would be unfair. A misunderstanding about when Jesus would return does not change whether he rose from the dead.

Also, people who expected Jesus to return soon would not fake miracles. Why work to deceive people if the world was about to end?

The Question of Limits

Some ask: If the apostles could be wrong about anything, how can we trust them about anything?

The answer is simple: Give me their testimony, and I do not need their opinions. Give me the facts, and I have what I need.

But we can be more precise. Two rules help us know what to trust.

First Rule: Separate Their Mission from Other Matters

The apostles were sent to teach certain things: Jesus rose from the dead, he is the Messiah, salvation comes through him. These things we must believe.

But other matters appear in their writings that were not part of their mission. The apostles shared common beliefs of their time on these subjects. We are not bound to every opinion they expressed on every topic.

For example, the New Testament mentions demon possession. People of that time believed many diseases came from demons. Even if this belief was wrong, it does not affect the apostles' testimony about Jesus.

If a mute person was healed by Jesus' word, it matters little what caused the muteness. The healing was real. The testimony about the healing is trustworthy. The explanation of the cause is a separate question.

Second Rule: Separate Doctrines from Arguments

The apostles received their main doctrines from God. But when they explained these doctrines, they used their own reasoning and illustrations.

For example, God revealed that non-Jews could become Christians without first becoming Jews. This doctrine was confirmed by miracles. The apostles were certain of it.

But Paul gives many arguments to explain why this makes sense. We must accept the doctrine. We do not have to think every one of Paul's arguments is perfect.

As one writer said: We must believe the conclusions the apostles teach. We do not have to agree with every step of their reasoning.

[End of Part III, Chapter II]

PART III

ANSWERING COMMON OBJECTIONS

CHAPTER III

Christianity and the Old Testament

What Jesus Accepted

Jesus accepted that the Jewish religion came from God. This makes sense for many reasons:

- d• The Jews believed in one God when all other nations worshipped many gods
- d• They were behind other nations in art and science but ahead in religion
- d• They understood God's unity, eternity, power, knowledge, and goodness
- d• Their religion had no cruelty or impurity in its practices
- d• They rejected superstitions that other nations practiced

Greeks and Romans believed that birds, weather, and other signs predicted the future. Jews rejected all such nonsense. Their religion was remarkably pure.

Jesus also accepted that some Old Testament writers were prophets. Christians must accept this too.

What Jesus Did Not Require

But this does not mean Christians must defend every detail of the Old Testament. It does not mean every book is genuine, every writer perfect, or every story exactly true.

This would create unnecessary problems for Christianity.

The Old Testament books were widely read by Jews in Jesus' time. Jesus and the apostles quoted them, as all Jews did. But quoting a book does not mean approving every word in it.

When Jesus specifically says a prophecy came from God, we must believe him. But not every casual reference is a divine stamp of approval.

Examples That Show This

James writes: "You have heard of the patience of Job." Christian scholars have always debated whether Job was a real person or a teaching story. James's reference does not settle this question. It only shows the book of Job existed and was read by Jews.

Paul writes about "Jannes and Jambres who opposed Moses." These names are not in the Old Testament. Paul got them from tradition or some other source. No one thinks Paul was guaranteeing that source was true. He was making a comparison, not certifying a history.

Why should other Old Testament references be treated more strictly? A New Testament reference to an Old Testament passage does not prove every detail of that passage is true. Each passage has its own evidence.

An Unfair Rule

Some people apply an unfair rule: Either every part of the Old Testament is true, or the whole thing is false.

We never apply this rule to other histories. No one says: Either every detail of Roman history is true, or none of it is true.

Why apply it to the Jewish history?

The Attack Through Judaism

Voltaire and his followers invented a tactic: attack Christianity by attacking Judaism. Find problems in the Old Testament. Then claim these problems disprove Christianity.

Some of these attacks are based on misunderstandings. Some exaggerate small problems. But all of them assume something that has not been proven.

They assume that Jesus endorsed every detail of the Old Testament. They assume that every small problem in Genesis or Judges or Kings is a problem for Christianity.

This is not true. Christianity depends on the New Testament witness to Jesus: his life, death, resurrection, and teaching. It does not depend on every detail in the Hebrew Scriptures being perfectly accurate.

[End of Part III, Chapter III]

PART III

ANSWERING COMMON OBJECTIONS

CHAPTER IV

Why Many People Rejected Christianity

The Objection

Christianity won many followers. But it did not convince everyone. Many Jews and Romans rejected it. Some people say this proves Christianity is false. If it were true, would not everyone believe?

We must examine two groups separately: the Jews and the non-Jews (called Gentiles or pagans).

I. Why the Jews Did Not Believe

For us today, miracles lead directly to belief. If we accept that Jesus did miracles, we accept that he was from God. There is no gap between seeing the miracle and believing the message.

But the Jews thought very differently. Even after accepting that a miracle was real, they still had reasons to doubt. Jesus was not the kind of Messiah they expected.

Evidence from John's Gospel

John records debates among Jews who saw miracles. Some said Jesus could not be the Messiah because he did not match their expectations. Others were more open. They asked, "When the Messiah comes, will he do more miracles than this man?"

Notice: Even believers did not argue as we would. They did not say, "He did a miracle, so he must be the Messiah." They used comparison: "Could the Messiah do better than this?"

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, some who saw it believed. But others went to the religious leaders to report what happened. They accepted the miracle. They still did not believe Jesus was the Messiah.

For us, believing the miracle and believing in Jesus are the same thing. For them, these were two separate steps.

Why They Thought This Way

Two beliefs created this situation:

- 1. They expected a different kind of Messiah. They wanted a king who would free them from Rome. Jesus did not fit this picture.**
- 2. They believed demons could do miracles. When Jesus did miracles, they could say: "He does this by the power of Beelzebub" (a demon). This gave them an excuse.**

We may think these beliefs were foolish. But we are not bound to defend them. We only need to explain why people held them. These ideas were taught from childhood. Everyone around them believed the same things. This is how opinions become strong—not because they are true, but because everyone accepts them.

Given these beliefs, we can predict what would happen. Humble and open people would believe Jesus. Proud and stubborn people would reject him.

II. Why the Romans and Greeks Did Not Believe

The educated Romans rejected Christianity for a simple reason: contempt before examination. They looked down on the religion without studying it.

Rome had six hundred different religions. Educated Romans thought they were all foolish. Christianity was just another one. Why bother to investigate?

Christianity had nothing to attract their attention. It was not connected to politics. It produced no famous writers at first. It seemed strange and unphilosophical.

Worse, Christianity was connected with Judaism. Romans despised Jews. They thought Jewish religion was just national superstition. When they heard about Christianity, they heard it was a quarrel among Jews about their own beliefs.

Evidence from Tacitus

Tacitus was a great Roman historian. Yet he wrote nonsense about Jews. He claimed they worshipped an image of a donkey! This shows how little educated Romans cared to learn the truth about non-Roman religions.

Tacitus called Christianity a "deadly superstition." Yet consider what Christians actually believed. Paul's letter to the Romans says:

"Hate what is evil. Hold on to what is good. Love one another. Bless those who hurt you. Do not repay evil with evil. Live at peace with everyone. Feed your hungry enemy. Overcome evil with good."

Is this a "deadly superstition"? Tacitus did not know what Christianity taught. He rejected it without investigating.

Four Lessons

First: Educated Romans saw Christianity only from far away. If they had examined it closely, they would have respected it even if they did not believe it.

Second: Even brilliant people make bad judgments about things they despise. If Christianity had not survived, history would remember it only as the "deadly superstition" that Tacitus described.

Third: Contempt before examination is a dangerous habit of mind. The greatest thinkers are sometimes most guilty of it. They sit high and look down on everything below them.

Fourth: We should not be surprised that many ancient writers never mention Christianity. Those who did mention it completely misunderstood it. If they had examined it, they would have written about it. But contempt leads to silence, not investigation.

PART III

ANSWERING COMMON OBJECTIONS

CHAPTER V

Why Early Writers Do Not Describe Miracles More Often

The Objection

Some people ask: If Jesus did miracles, why do early Christian writers not describe them more fully? The letters of Paul and Peter rarely mention specific miracles. Neither do other early Christian writings.

I. The Letters of the Apostles

The apostles' letters have two purposes: teaching morality and explaining doctrine.

When teaching morality, there was no need to mention miracles. The letters gave rules for behavior, comfort during trials, and warnings against sin.

When explaining doctrine, the miracles were already accepted. The letters were not written to prove Christianity was true. They were written to explain what Christianity meant. The readers already believed the miracles.

The miracles formed the foundation, not the building. You do not keep describing the foundation while building the walls.

The Speeches in Acts

Compare the letters with the speeches in Acts. Luke records that Peter, Stephen, and Paul did many miracles. Yet in their speeches, they rarely mention miracles in detail.

Peter is present at many miracles. Acts records him healing the lame man, causing the death of Ananias and Sapphira, healing Aeneas, and raising Dorcas from the dead. Yet in six recorded speeches, he mentions miracles only twice.

Stephen's long speech contains no miracle references. Yet Acts says he "did great wonders and miracles among the people."

Paul did many miracles according to Acts. Yet his speeches rarely mention them.

The reason is the same in speeches and letters. The speakers and writers assumed the miracles. Their question was: Given that Jesus did these things, what do they mean? Who is he? What should we believe about him?

II. The Early Church Fathers

Writers just after the apostles (called "apostolic fathers") also mention miracles infrequently. But their writings had specific purposes:

- d• One wrote to explain how the Old Testament points to Christ
- d• One wrote to stop arguments in a church
- d• One wrote about church organization

None of them were trying to prove Christianity was true. They wrote to Christians who already believed.

Yet the main facts of Christian history appear throughout their writings. They accepted the miracles as true.

III. The Early Defenders of Christianity

There is another group: Christians who wrote to defend their faith to outsiders. These writers did appeal to miracles.

Quadratus (about 70 years after Jesus) wrote to the emperor:

d"The works of our Savior were always visible, for they were real. Both those who were healed and those who were raised from the dead were seen. Not only while he was on earth, but after he left. Some of them have reached our times."

This is exactly the appeal to miracles we would expect.

Justin Martyr (about 100 years after Jesus) wrote:

d"Christ healed those who from birth were blind, deaf, and lame. He raised the dead. By his works he gained attention. Yet those who saw these things said it was magic and called him a deceiver."

Justin explains why he often appealed to prophecy instead of miracles: pagans would claim the miracles were magic tricks. Prophecy was harder to explain away.

Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Origen all made similar appeals to miracles. They stated them clearly and positively.

The "Magic" Excuse

Pagan critics like Celsus did not deny that Jesus did miracles. They claimed he was a magician. He learned tricks in Egypt. His power came from demons.

We now see this explanation is foolish. But at that time, many people believed in magic and demons. This belief gave them an excuse to reject the miracles' meaning while accepting that they happened.

Early Christian defenders did not appeal to miracles as often as we might wish. But the reason was not doubt about the facts. They simply faced opponents who had an easy way to dismiss miracles.

This objection is against their judgment in arguing, not against the truth of the miracles.

[End of Part III, Chapter V]

PART III

ANSWERING COMMON OBJECTIONS

CHAPTER VI

Why Is Christianity Not More Obvious?

The Objection

Some people say: If God sent a message to mankind, everyone would know it. The proof would be so clear that no one could doubt. Many people have never heard of Christianity. Many who have heard do not believe. Does this prove Christianity is false?

Christians admit that the evidence for Christianity is not overwhelming. God could have made it stronger. He could have given each person a private miracle. He could have created a permanent visible sign. He could have made belief automatic.

The question is not whether Christianity has the strongest possible evidence. The question is whether we should reject the evidence we do have.

The Argument from Nature

To judge something that comes from God, compare it with other things from God. Look at nature. God made nature. What do we find?

We find goodness and design. But we do not find perfection. We can always imagine something better.

Rain is clearly useful. It waters plants and sustains life. But rain falls unevenly. Much falls on the ocean where it does no good. Some lands are deserts because they get no rain. We can imagine rain falling exactly where and when it is needed.

Does the uneven distribution of rain prove God did not design it? No. We see the design is good. We cannot explain every detail.

The same applies to Christianity. We see the design is good. We cannot explain why God did not make it more obvious.

Nature shows us goodness in design but not perfection in every detail. Christianity shows the same pattern.

Comparison with Natural Religion

Critics say God would write his message in the sky. But is natural religion (belief in God without special revelation) written in the sky?

People in remote places may never hear of Christianity. But they may also never learn the basic truths about God that reason can discover. Does this prove those truths are false?

God's existence must be learned by observation. Not everyone makes these observations. Not everyone can. Does this prove God does not exist?

Why Stronger Evidence Might Not Be Better

What would happen if Christianity had overwhelming proof that no one could resist? Several problems might result.

First: Irresistible proof would not test character. It would not require honesty, humility, or careful thinking. It would not call us to submit our pride to evidence. It would leave no room for seeking truth.

In everyday life, we often must decide based on limited evidence. This is part of our moral test. Christianity continues this pattern.

Second: Overwhelming evidence would leave no room for internal evidence. Good people feel the truth of Christianity when they read the Scriptures. The words touch their hearts. This is part of how religion works.

If proof were irresistible, it would treat all people the same. The wicked and the good would have equal certainty. But this would defeat God's purpose. He wants to reward those who seek truth, not force belief on everyone equally.

Third: Too clear a view of the next life might disrupt this life.

When the first Christians saw miracles, they were so convinced that they sold their property and lived together. They expected Jesus to return immediately. This was natural. But if everyone lived this way, ordinary life would stop. Farming, building, and trade would end.

Paul had to remind Christians to keep working. He told them to do their jobs and care for their families.

The way Christianity now comes to us allows millions to prepare for heaven without stopping ordinary human life.

[End of Part III, Chapter VI]

PART III

ANSWERING COMMON OBJECTIONS

CHAPTER VII

Has Christianity Done Good or Harm?

The Objection

Some people claim Christianity has harmed the world. They point to religious wars, persecutions, and divisions. They say the world would be better without religion.

This is a strange claim. Christianity teaches that God will reward virtue and punish vice. It defines virtue as the wisest people have always understood it. How could such teaching make the world worse?

Those who make this claim make two mistakes:

1. They look for religion's influence in the wrong places
2. They blame Christianity for things it did not cause

I. Looking in the Wrong Places

History books record the actions of kings, generals, and politicians. They tell of wars, conquests, and power struggles. Religion's influence rarely appears in these places.

Religion's influence is in private life. It is found in homes, families, and quiet daily choices. It affects how parents raise children, how workers do their jobs, how neighbors treat each other.

d"The kingdom of heaven is within us." The most important effects of religion are invisible: peace of mind, control of desires, devotion to God, hope in suffering. These things affect millions but leave no trace in history books.

Religion works most powerfully among people history never notices: mothers, farmers, workers, ordinary villagers. Their happiness and virtue count for much. But historians do not write about them.

What is history anyway? It records the crimes and quarrels of powerful people fighting for control. Such records miss most of human life.

What Christianity Has Actually Done

Even in public life, Christianity has made real changes:

- d• It made war less cruel and improved treatment of prisoners
- d• It softened the rule of harsh governments
- d• It ended polygamy (having many wives at once)

- d• It limited divorce
- d• It stopped parents from abandoning unwanted babies
- d• It stopped masters from killing their slaves
- d• It ended gladiator fights (which killed thousands each month)
- d• It removed impure practices from religious ceremonies
- d• It gave workers a weekly day of rest
- d• It created hospitals and care for the poor
- d• It ended slavery in the Roman Empire

Compare this with Socrates. He was a great philosopher. But he did not change the religions of Athens or reform his country's behavior.

Who would not want their child to be a Christian?

II. Christianity Is Blamed for Things It Did Not Cause

Persecutions have happened in the name of religion. But most persecution comes from a simple cause: people in power want to stay in power. Religion is the excuse, not the reason.

Christianity does not command persecution. The New Testament says nothing about forcing belief or punishing unbelievers. Compare this with the Quran, which does command violence against non-believers.

If evil people want to fight, they will find reasons. Without religion, they would find other excuses.

Did the Roman Empire have peace before Christianity? No. It had constant wars, rebellions, and massacres. Was Alexander's conquest of Asia caused by religion? Was Caesar's invasion of Gaul? Are non-Christian nations peaceful?

Europe has had no religious wars for centuries. Yet it still has wars. Was Poland destroyed by religious crusade? Was the recent chaos in France caused by devout Christians? No— it was caused by enemies of Christianity.

In fact, unbelief can be worse than fanaticism. The French Revolution showed that people who reject all religion can commit terrible crimes.

On Religious Differences

Christians disagree about many things. But if they had the love that Christianity commands, these differences would cause little harm.

Without that love, people would fight about something else.

Differences of opinion are not entirely bad. They encourage investigation and discussion. They keep people thinking about religion instead of forgetting it.

[End of Part III, Chapter VII]

PART III

ANSWERING COMMON OBJECTIONS

CHAPTER VIII

Conclusion

The Right Way to Study Religion

When studying Christianity, start with the main facts. Do not begin with difficult details. Do not demand that every part be equally certain.

Build on solid ground first. Find the foundation. Once you are confident of the main facts, you can safely examine secondary questions.

What is clear in Christianity is sufficient and valuable. What is doubtful is usually less important. What is obscure should teach us patience with others who see it differently.

Throughout this book, I have kept evidence separate from doctrine. I have tried to defend Christianity in a way that all Christians can accept. Different churches have many disputes. But none of these disputes touch the foundation. The cracks never reach the base.

The Facts We Can Be Sure Of

Christianity depends on its leading facts. These facts have evidence that should satisfy us. We have some things that are beyond reasonable doubt:

A Jewish peasant changed the religion of the world. He did this without armies, without wealth, without political power, without any natural advantage. This has never happened any other way in all of history.

His followers, after he was executed, claimed he had a supernatural character proven by supernatural works. To share this message, they chose lives of hard work, hardship, and danger. They accepted persecution to the point of death. This has no parallel.

Just days after Jesus was publicly executed, in the very city where he was buried, his followers declared he had risen from the dead. They said they had seen him, touched him, eaten with him. They preached this message in front of those who had killed him. They carried this message across the world despite insult, hatred, and persecution. This is unique in history.

These three facts would be certain even if the Gospels had never been written. The Christian story has never changed on these points. No other version exists. Every Christian writing from that day to this agrees.

The Gospel Records

We have the miracle accounts from the source itself: from eyewitnesses and their close companions. We have not one book but four. Each contains enough to prove the religion. All agree on the main facts.

When we read these books, we find marks of truth. The writers knew what they were writing about. They understood local places and customs. Their writing is simple and realistic.

When we compare the four Gospels, they vary enough to rule out conspiracy. But they agree enough to show they describe the same real events.

The Book of Acts

Acts continues the story. It was written by someone connected to the events. It carries the narrative forward with detail and good sense.

Acts has the strongest confirmation a history can receive: original letters written by Paul, the book's main subject. The letters were written during the time Acts describes, about the very events Acts records.

This is strong historical evidence by any standard.

The Character of the Miracles

The miracles were not secret. They were not quick tricks that no one could check. They were not vague or uncertain. They were not performed before friendly crowds or to support popular beliefs.

The evidence for them was:

- d• Given at the time and place of the events
- d• Published openly
- d• Continued over time
- d• Connected to matters of great importance
- d• Against the fixed beliefs of the audience

Those who accepted the message faced serious consequences: loss, danger, insult, and persecution.

How could such a story be false? If false, how could it succeed against such obstacles?

The Value of the Message

Was the message worth revealing? Only one question matters: Was it important for mankind to know these things?

Consider the main Christian teaching: resurrection from the dead and future judgment.

Someone who gives me money does nothing. Someone who gives me health does little. But one who gives me good reasons to expect life after death and a day of justice— that person has done everything. Christianity has given this to millions.

The morality of Christianity— from Jesus' teaching and example— is wise and pure. It does not flatter popular opinions or excuse common sins. It truly promotes human happiness.

The Seed Planted

God gave miraculous proof when Christianity began. This was necessary to establish its authority. After that, he left it to spread by natural means.

The seed was planted and left to grow. The leaven was inserted and left to work. Both follow natural laws— laws controlled by God's providence, though in ways we cannot see.

The Importance of Life After Death

Once we believe in God, life after death becomes likely. God is good. Yet in this life, good people often suffer and wicked people often prosper. This makes no sense unless there is another life where things are made right.

A future life explains everything. If people are finally made happy or miserable according to how they lived, then the apparent unfairness of this world makes sense. The moral world matches the physical world.

The Resurrection

People needed stronger proof of life after death than reason alone could give. The sight of death is powerful. It shocks our senses. Something more was needed to overcome this shock.

When we think about it, the resurrection of a dead person is not stranger than the birth of a child. Both are beyond our understanding. Sleep proves that consciousness can stop and start again.

The great powers of nature— gravity, electricity, magnetism— are invisible. God himself is invisible. We should not be surprised that the power of resurrection is also hidden from us.

Final Confidence

A future life fits God's character. It removes the puzzle of unequal fortunes in this life. Strong historical evidence gives us reason to believe God has revealed this truth.

We can rest confident in this: In the resources of infinite wisdom, God has ways to accomplish what he has promised. Either a new power will descend to restore the dead to life, or— among the other wonderful workings of nature— he has made provision for bringing his people through death to their final reward.

He will fulfill his promise to distinguish virtue from vice, obedience from rebellion, right from wrong— according to how we have used the abilities and opportunities he gave us.

[End of Evidences of Christianity]

"A Jewish peasant changed the religion of the world."