

# **Christian Apologetics**

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## **I. Proofs of God's Existence**

### **A. Natural Knowledge of God**

1. Aquinas: a confused knowledge of God is implanted in us by nature.  
Romans 1: God's divine nature is evident to all men in what God has created.  
Romans 4: the law of God is written on our hearts.
2. Sin causes men to suppress the truth.
3. Can we believe without Proof?  
Some beliefs are "properly basic" -- e.g., what we perceive and remember, the existence of other minds.  
The existence of God is also properly basic: a natural belief, reliably directed by our Creator toward the truth.
4. Classical empiricism is self-refuting, because it cannot itself be empirically verified. (That is, one cannot empirically refute the possibility of super-empirical evidence)

### **B. The First Cause Argument**

1. Everything that exists either exists by necessity (by its own nature) or contingently (by drawing its existence from something separate from it).
2. Something containing only contingent parts is wholly contingent.
3. Define the 'cosmos' as the sum of all the wholly contingent things.
4. The cosmos itself is wholly contingent, and so must draw its existence from something separate from it.
5. Anything separate from the cosmos must (by the definition of 'cosmos') not exist contingently -- so, it must exist necessarily, by its own nature.
6. This first cause must be infinite (unlimited), eternal, immaterial, and absolutely simple (without parts).
7. Why believe the principle of causality?
  - a. All of our experience confirms it.
  - b. It is presupposed, at least as a presumption, by all of science, history and law.
  - c. Denying even a presumption of causality leads to skepticism. The possibility of uncaused perceptions & memories would "defeat" all our claims to empirical knowledge.
8. If we adopt causality as a presumption, the first cause argument gives us good prima facie grounds for belief in God's existence, unless rebutted.

### **C. Evidence of Design**

1. Simple, elegant laws of nature.

2. Anthropic fine-tuning. The constants of nature, the ratios of fundamental forces are adjusted to permit the formation of carbon, planets.
3. The design of the earth, as an ideal environment for life, intelligence, astronomy
4. The origin of life (within a few million years of the formation of liquid water).
5. Irreducibly complex molecular machines, including the DNA mechanism, that couldn't have formed by chance.

#### **D. Moral Argument #1**

1. The conscience has an absolute authority -- superior to that of any human being or institution.
2. Authority is personal in character.
3. The principles of morality, represented by the well-formed conscience, are eternal, immutable and necessary.
4. Therefore, the conscience represents the demands of an eternal, necessary and immutably good person.

#### **E. The Moral Argument # 2**

1. Human life has a natural meaning and purpose, which includes the attaining of wisdom and moral perfection.
2. The First Cause of human existence must be have ordered human life to that end.
3. So, God is the ground of morality.
4. It is self-defeating to suppose that human life is meaningless, or that we create our own meaning. Meaning cannot come from meaninglessness.

## **II. Evidence for the Bible's Authority**

### **A. Manuscript Evidence for the Bible**

#### **Reliability of the New Testament as Historical Documents**

- "Astounding" number of ancient manuscripts extant: 5,000 Greek manuscripts, 10,000 Latin and 9,000 other--totaling over 24,000 manuscript copies or portions of the New Testament. These are dated from 100 to 300 years after the originals. (There are no original manuscripts ["autographs"] extant, but the number and similarity of copies allows scholars to reconstruct the originals.)
- Early fragments: John Ryland manuscript 130 A.D. in Egypt; Bodmer manuscript containing most of John's gospel 150-200 A.D.; Magdalen fragment from Mat. 26 believed by some to be within a few years of Jesus' death; Gospel fragments found among the Dead Sea Scrolls dated as early as 50 A.D.
- Comparison with other ancient documents (available copies versus the originals):
  - Caesar—10 copies—1000 year gap
  - Tacitus—20 copies—1000 year gap
  - Plato—7 copies—1200 year gap
- F. F. Bruce: "There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good attestation as the New Testament."

- William F. Albright: "Thanks to the Qumran discoveries, the New Testament proves to be in fact what it was formerly believed to be: the teaching of Christ and his immediate followers circa.25 and circa. 80 AD."

## Quotations from Early Church Fathers:

- Clement of Rome (a disciple of the apostles) cited Matthew, John, and 1 Corinthians in 95 to 97 A.D. Ignatius (who knew the apostles well) referred to six Pauline Epistles in about 110. Polycarp (disciple of apostle John) quoted from all four Gospels, Acts, and most of Paul's Epistles from 110 to 150.
- Taitian's harmony of the Four Gospels completed in 160 A.D. Irenaeus (who apparently heard the apostles) quoted from Matthew, John, Acts, and 1 Corinthians in 160 A.D.
- Of the four Gospels alone, there are 19,368 citations by the church fathers from the late first century on. Even if we had no manuscripts, virtually the entire New Testament could be reconstructed from these quotations. This argues powerfully that the Gospels were in existence before the end of the first century, while some eyewitnesses (including John) were still alive.

## Primary Source Value

- Testimony of the New Testament authors themselves: Luke 1:1-3, 3:1, John 21:24, Acts 26:24-26, 2 Peter 1:16, 1 John 1:3.
- Both liberal and conservative scholars in recent years have moved to the view that ALL of the New Testament was written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. (Liberal scholar John A. T. Robinson's book *Redating the New Testament*. Conservative scholar Kenneth Gentry's book *Before Jerusalem Fell*). One reason for their argument for early date for the New Testament is because there is no mention in the past tense of the devastating destruction of Jerusalem and the temple anywhere in the New Testament, and there is consistent mention of it still standing (even in the book of Revelation). Though the Gospels include prophecies of such a destruction, they are prophetic stock-in-trade. These prophecies lack any details that certainly would have been added if written after this important historical event.

## B. Archaeological and External Evidence for the Bible

*Archeology consistently confirms the Bible!*

### Archaeology and the Old Testament

- Ebla tablets—discovered in 1970s in Northern Syria. Documents written on clay tablets from around 2300 B.C. demonstrate that personal and place names in the Patriarchal accounts are genuine. In use in Ebla was the name "Canaan," a name critics once said was not used at that time and was used incorrectly in the early chapters of the Bible. The tablets refer to all five "cities of the plain" mentioned in Genesis 14, previously assumed to have been mere legends.
- Greater proportion of Egyptian words in the Pentateuch (first five books) than in rest of the Old Testament. Accurate Egyptian names: *Potiphar* (Gen.39), *Zaphenath-Paneah* (Joseph's Egyptian name, Gen. 41:45), *Asenath* (Gen.41:45), *On* (Gen. 41:45), *Rameses* (Gen. 47:11), *Oithom* (Exodus 1:11).
- Finds in Egypt are consistent with the time, place, and other details of biblical accounts of the Israelites in Egypt. These include housing and tombs that could have been of the Israelites, as well as a villa and tomb that could have been Joseph's.

- Confounding earlier skeptics, but confirming the Bible, an important discovery was made in Egypt in 1896. A tablet—the Merneptah Stela—was found that mentions Israel. (Merneptah was the pharaoh that ruled Egypt in 1212-1202 B.C.) The context of the stela indicates that Israel was a significant entity in the late 13th century B.C.
- The Hittites were once thought to be a biblical legend, until their capital and records were discovered in Turkey.
- Crucial find in Nuzi (northeastern Iraq), an entire cache of Hittite legal documents from 1400 B.C. Confirms many details of Genesis, Deuteronomy, such as: (a) siring of legitimate children through handmaidens, (b) oral deathbed will as binding, (c) the power to sell one's birthright for relatively trivial property (Jacob & Esau), (d) need for family idols, such as Rachel stole from Laban, to secure inheritance, (e) form of the covenant in Deuteronomy exactly matches the form of suzerainty treaties between Hittite emperors and vassal kings.
- In 1986, scholars identified an ancient seal belonging to Baruch, son of Neriah, a scribe who recorded the prophecies of Jeremiah (Jer. 45:11).
- In 1993, archaeologists uncovered a 9th century B.C. inscription at Tel Dan. The words carved into a chunk of basalt refer to the "House of David" and the "King of Israel." And the Bible's version of Israelite history after the reign of David's son, Solomon, is believed to be based on historical fact because it is corroborated by independent account of Egyptian and Assyrian inscriptions.

## Archaeology and the New Testament

- The New Testament mentions specific individuals, places, and various official titles of local authorities, confirmed by recent archeology. Luke sites exact titles of officials. (Titles varied from city to city so they are easily checked for accuracy.) Lysanias the Tetrarch in Abilene (Luke 3:1)—verified by inscription dated 14-29 A.D. Erastus, city treasurer of Corinth (Romans 16:23)—verified by pavement inscription. Gallio—proconsul of Achaia (Greece) in A.D. 51 (Acts 18:12). Politarchs ("city ruler") in Thessalonica (Acts 17:6). Chief Man of the Island on Malta (Acts 28:7). Stone Pavement at Pilate's headquarters (John 19:13)—discovered recently. Pool at Bethesda—discovered in 1888. Many examples of silver shrines to Artemis found (Acts 19:28). Inscription confirms the title of the city as "Temple Warden of Artemis". Account of Paul's sea voyage in Acts is "one of the most instructive documents for the knowledge of ancient seamanship."
- Diggers recently uncovered an ossuary (repository for bones) with the inscription "Joseph Son of Caiaphas." This marked the first archaeological evidence that the high priest Caiaphas was a real person. According to the gospels, Caiaphas presided at the Sanhedrin's trial of Jesus.

## External References to Jesus and the Christian Church.

- Josephus. Born to priestly family in A.D. 37. Commanded Jewish troops in Galilee during rebellion. Surrendered, and earned favor of Emperor Vespasian. Wrote 20 books of *Antiquities of the Jews*. Refers to John the Baptist (killed by Herod) and to James, the brother of Jesus (condemned to death by stoning by the Sanhedrin). He referred to Jesus in his *Antiquities* 18:63.
- Early Gentile writers, referred to by Christian apologists in 2nd century.
  - Thallus—wrote a history of Greece and Asia Minor in A.D. 52. Julius Africanus (221 AD), commenting on Thallus, said: "Thallus, in the third book of his histories, explains away the darkness [during the crucifixion] as an eclipse of the sun—unreasonably, as it seems to me [since the Passover took place during a full moon.]"
  - Official Roman records of the census, and Pontius Pilate's official report to the Emperor. Justin Martyr wrote his "Defense of Christianity" to Emperor Antonius Pius, referred him to Pilate's report, preserved in the archives. Tertullian, writing to Roman officials, writes with confidence that records of the Luke 1 census can still be found.

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- Roman historians
  - Tacitus—Greatest Roman historian, born 52 A.D., wrote a history of the reign of Nero in 110 A.D. "...Christus, from whom they got their name, had been executed by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate when Tiberias was emperor; and the pernicious superstition was checked for a short time only to break out afresh, not only in Judea, the home of the plague, but in Rome itself, .." (*Annals* 15:44)
  - Suetonius—AD. 120. In his *Life of Claudius*: "As the Jews were making disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome."
  - Pliny the Younger—Governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor, wrote the emperor in A.D. 112 about the sect of Christians, who were in "the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day, before it was light, when they sang an anthem to Christ as God."

## **C. Fulfilled Prophecy as Evidence for the Bible's Divine Origin**

- 2,000 prophecies including some 300 prophecies and implications about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- There are no prophetic failures.
- While there are both obvious and subtle prophecies, most are very detailed and specific.
- No other religion has specific, repeated, and unfulfillment of predictions many years in advance of contingent events over which the predictor had no control.
- Studies of psychics show only around 8% of their predictions come true and virtually all of these can be attributed to chance and a general knowledge of circumstances.

### **Examples of Non-Messianic Prophecies**

- The Succession of Great World Kingdoms (Daniel 2:37-42). Even negative critics agree that Daniel foretold the governments in order of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.
- The Closing of the Golden Gate (Ezekiel 44:2-3). The Golden Gate is the eastern gate of Jerusalem, through which Christ made his triumphal entry on Palm Sunday before the crucifixion (Matthew 21). Ezekiel predicted its closing and in 1543 Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent closed the gate and walled it up, not knowing he was fulfilling prophecy. It remains sealed to this day exactly as the Bible predicted.
- The Destruction of Tyre (Ezekiel 26:3-14). The prophecy was partly fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city and left it in ruins. Alexander the Great later attacked the seemingly impregnable Island of Tyre by taking the stones, dust, and timber from the ruined mainland city to build a causeway to the Island. This prophecy is comparable to saying that Chicago will be destroyed and never rebuilt.
- The Doom of Edom (Petra) (Jeremiah 49:15-17). Given the virtually impregnable nature of the ancient city carved out of rock and protected by a narrow passageway, this was an incredible prediction. Yet, in 636 AD it was conquered by Muslims and today stands deserted but for tourists.
- Flourishing of the Desert in Palestine (Ezekiel 36:33-35). Since before the turn of the twentieth century, Israel has been renovated and Israel's agriculture is flourishing.
- Destruction of Jerusalem (Mark 13:1-2). Fulfilled literally when the Romans completely destroyed Jerusalem and the temple buildings. According to historian and eyewitness Josephus, some of the stones were 37 feet long, 12 feet high and 18 feet wide. Stones were even pried apart to collect the gold leaf that melted from the roof when the temple was set on fire.

## Examples of Messianic Prophecies

Messiah to be the seed of Abraham	Genesis 12:2-3, 18:18	Matthew 1:1-2 Luke 3:34 Acts 3:25 Galatians 3:16
Messiah to be of the tribe of Judah	Genesis 49:10	Matthew 1:1-2
Messiah to be of the seed of David	2 Samuel 7:16 Psalm 132:11 Jeremiah 23:5, 33:15	Matthew 1:6, 22:42-45 Luke 1:31-33 Acts 2:29-30 Romans 1:3
Messiah to be born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:18-25 Luke 1:26-38
Messiah to be born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1-6 Luke 2:4-6
Tribute paid to Messiah by great kings	Psalm 72:10-11	Matthew 2:1-11
Messiah to be heralded by a messenger	Isaiah 40:3 Malachi 3:1	Matthew 3:1-3
Messiah to be the Son of God	Psalm 2:2,7	Matthew 3:17 Luke 1:32-33
Messiah to be anointed by the Holy Spirit	Isaiah 11:2	Matthew 3:16-17
Galilee to be the first area of Messiah's ministry	Isaiah 9:1-7	Matthew 4:12-16
Messiah to be meek and mild	Isaiah 40:11, 42:2-3, 53:7	Matthew 12:18-20, 26:62-68
Messiah to minister to the Gentiles	Isaiah 42:1, 49:6- 8	Matthew 12:21 Luke 2:28-32
Messiah will perform miracles	Isaiah 35:5-6	Matthew 9:35, 11:3-6 John 9:6-7
Messiah to be a prophet like Moses	Deuteronomy 18:15-19	Matthew 21:11, 24:1-35 John 1:45, 6:14 Acts 3:20-23
Messiah to enter the temple with authority	Malachi 3:1-2	Matthew 21:12
Messiah will enter Jerusalem on a donkey	Zechariah 9:9-10	Matthew 21:1-11
Messiah to be betrayed by a friend	Psalm 41:9	John 13:18-21
Messiah to be forsaken by his disciples	Zechariah 13:7	Matthew 26:31, 56
Messiah will be smitten	Isaiah 50:6	Matthew 26:67, 27:26,30
Messiah to experience crucifixion (long before crucifixion was invented)	Psalm 22:15-17	Matthew 27:34-50 John 19:28-30
Messiah will be pierced	Zechariah 12:10	John 19:34-37
Details of Messiah's suffering and death and resulting salvation (hundreds of years before Christ!)	Psalm 69:21 Isaiah 53:2-12,	Matthew 26-27 Mark 15-16 Luke 22-23

		John 18-19
Messiah to die in 33 AD	Daniel 9:24-26	33 AD is the widely accepted historical date of the crucifixion
Casting of lots for His garments	Psalms 22:18	John 19:23-24
Messiah to be raised from the dead	Psalms 16:10	Acts 2:25-31, 13:32-37, 17:2-3
Messiah, the stone which the builders rejected, to become the head cornerstone	Psalms 118:22-23 Isaiah 8:14-15, 28:16	Matthew 21:42-43 Acts 4:11 Romans 9:32-33 Ephesians 2:20 1 Peter 2:6-8
Messiah to be the seed of the Woman	Genesis 3:15	Luke 2:5-7 Galatians 4:4
Messiah to be the seed of Abraham	Genesis 12:2-3, 18:18	Matthew 1:1-2 Luke 3:34 Acts 3:25 Galatians 3:16
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Messiah, the stone which the builders rejected, to become the head cornerstone	Psalms 118:22-23 Isaiah 8:14-15, 28:16	Matthew 21:42-43 Acts 4:11 Romans 9:32-33 Ephesians 2:20 1 Peter 2:6-8

### III. Evidence for Catholicism

#### A. How do Catholics Know that the Catholic Church is the True Church? Authority

1. Because the Church teaches that it is so, and it teaches with the authority of God.
2. The Holy Spirit confirms to our spirits that the Church speaks to us in God's name.
3. This is a legitimate source of knowledge: no further knowledge of the authority of the Church is required.
4. Can Protestants claim this too? No
  - a. The Protestant denies that any church, any human institution, speaks with such authority. Only the Bible has such authority.
  - b. A preacher speaks with divine authority only insofar as he can demonstrate the truth of what he says from the Biblical text.
  - c. Hence, in principle, every Protestant believer must be a super-theologian, capable of demonstrating the truth of his church's doctrinal commitments (both what is true/false, and what is essential/optional) from the Scriptures alone.
  - d. This is humanly impossible: the Bible is complex, allusive, figurative, consisting primarily of narratives, and virtually devoid of systematic theology.



## **B. Positive Case for Church's Authority**

1. God wills the perpetual unity and orthodoxy of the Church, rooted in the ministry of the apostles. (John 14:26, 16:13, 17:19-23; Matthew 28:20)
2. If God wills an end for humanity, he must will an adequate means for that end that is appropriate to human nature.
3. Given the social nature of human beings, the only means that are adequate for the unity and orthodoxy of the Church and appropriate to human nature is the creation of a self-sustaining society, with its own internal government.
4. Therefore, God must have willed that the Church be a self-sustaining society with its own internal government, rooted in the ministry of the apostles.
5. As a matter of historical fact, the Church's internal government consists of a self-perpetuating college of bishops, originating as the successors of the apostles, with the Pope (the successor of Peter) as its head.
6. Therefore, God willed that the Church should consist of a society governed by the college of bishops, with the Pope as its head.

## **C. Sola Scriptura: First Contradiction**

1. The Church should teach the doctrine of Sola Scriptura (assumed by Protestants)
2. If (1), then the Church should teach the doctrine of Sola Scriptura only if that doctrine is taught in the Scriptures.
3. The Scriptures do not teach Sola Scriptura.

## **Second Self-Contradiction**

1. The Church should teach the doctrine of Sola Scriptura.
2. If (1), then the Church should teach which books are belong to the canon of Scripture.
3. If (1), then the Church should teach which books are part of the canon of Scripture only if the Scriptures themselves teach which books belong to the canon of Scripture.
4. The Scriptures do not teach which books belong to the canon of Scripture

## **Third Self-Contradiction**

1. The Church should teach the doctrine of Sola Scriptura.
2. If (1), then the canon of Scripture was decided by a competent theological authority.
3. The canon of Scripture was decided by the Catholic Church of the 2nd and 3rd centuries.
4. A competent theological authority would accurately teach the central doctrine of the Gospel, namely, justification.
5. The Catholic Church of the 2nd and 3rd centuries did not teach accurately the central doctrine of the Gospel, namely, justification.