

Faith in Fact

By Pastor David C. Forsyth

America is now a pluralistic society. Gone are the days when Americans considered themselves Christians by virtue of their citizenship. A result of the influx of multinationals has been not only a plethora of great restaurants, but a questioning of the fundamental notion that to be American means, at least nominally, to embrace Christianity. In at least one way this cultural revolution is beneficial to America, since it forces people to consider the truth claims of the various world religions and decide for themselves which one they believe is correct.

Why Should I Embrace Christianity?

When Christianity is compared against the other great religions of the world the question has to be asked, “Why follow Christianity rather than Islam, Hindu, or Buddhism”? These religious systems have a greater number of worldwide adherents than Christianity and claim to be the way to find peace with God. The Christian response to this question will surprise some and anger the rest, but its most fundamental expression is that **Christianity is true and all other religions are not**. The claim to exclusive truth originated in the mouth of the founder and namesake of Christianity itself when he claimed to embody truth and thus be the only true path to God (Gospel of John 14:6).

How Do I Know That It Is True?

The common process of establishing the truthfulness of Christianity has been based for years upon an evidentiary methodology whereby the apologist gathered evidence (“indicia”) for the existence of God, the historicity of Christ, and the reliability of the Christian Bible. The weakness in this methodology is that it presupposes that, given sufficient evidence, the rational mind will understand the evidence and arrive at the desired conclusion; i.e. that Christianity is true. The reason this methodology is flawed is that Christianity teaches that the human mind is unwilling and incapable of correctly processing the evidence and arriving at the desired conclusion (Romans 3:11). Thus if Christianity is true, then it cannot be embraced based upon pure, unaided rationality; and

if it is not true and pure rationality is able to fathom it, it would be rejected. So how can a person know for certain that Christianity is true?

The Missing Ingredient Is Faith

Christianity has never been a religion of pure rationality, but has instead always relied on the supernatural intervention of God to attest to its claims. This supernatural attestation, known as the “inner testimony” or “Testimonium” is a ministry of the Holy Spirit (third person of the Godhead) which takes place instantaneously in the hearts and minds of all that embrace the faith. As defined by Christian theologians, the Testimonium means that the Holy Spirit of God reverses the noetic (pertaining to the intellect) effects of sin upon the mind and brings “belief, persuasion, and conviction” (Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology, pg. 250) regarding the truthfulness of the Scriptures. Once the truthfulness of the Scriptures is firmly established in the mind of an individual, the questions regarding the indicia, contained in those same Scriptures, melt away.

Does This Mean Christianity Is A Blind Leap Of Faith?

In answering this question, Christians would respond with an emphatic **NO!** Faith is indeed a prerequisite to peace with God; however, it is not a “blind faith” or an existential “faith in faith.” Rather it is faith in the existence and unilateral action of God to pardon our rebellion, the truthfulness of which, is reliability revealed in the Scriptures. Thus the Christian has a two-fold faith, the first is in God and His saving work; the second is in the historical reliability of the Scriptures. Admittedly the second is a by-product of the first, however it is a necessary, not an optional one. Throughout the centuries brilliant minds have struggled with this issue before finally bowing the knee to Christ and confessing him as the God and Savior. In the early centuries of the Church, men such as Origen, Justin Martyr, and Tertullian were drawn out of paganism and became great intellectual defenders of the Church. Many scientists of the 17th and 18th century were men in whose heart the Holy Spirit had brought the Testimonium and who easily reconciled their belief in the Scriptures with the scientific knowledge that they were accumulating. Men such as Robert Boyle (Father of Modern Chemistry) and Michael Faraday are just a couple of the many

examples which could be cited. Finally, in our own time, we have the example of C. S. Lewis who embraced Christianity because of the Testimonium, without having to abandon or amputate his brilliant mind.

Then Why Doesn't Everybody Embrace Christ?

Man without God is incurably addicted to evil. A simple reflection on the events of today's news, let alone an honest appraisal of our own lives, will prove that as a race we are awash in what the Bible calls sin. If Christianity is the answer to mankind's problem why doesn't everybody embrace it?

Therein lies the mystery of God, for the Scriptures say that the "natural man," that is the man without the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, considers the things of God to be foolishness and he neither wants to, nor is able to, understand them (I Corinthians 2:14). In man's present state of addiction to sin his heart and mind are closed to the truth of Christianity. Therefore unless God acts supernaturally to open the eyes of the natural man he is forever separated from the truth and the Bible says he is without hope. One may think at this point that God is unfair and should open everyone's eyes and save the whole world, but that is really not the main issue. Questions of fairness presuppose that there exists a standard of fairness to which all agree and are bound. Unless that standard of fairness is divinely given, no such standard could exist. Therefore what God does or does not do is in itself the ultimate standard of fairness. So, the main issue is will you acknowledge your need for God's forgiveness and ask Him to open your eyes that you might see and believe the truth? Or will you remain in unbelief, hoping Christianity is wrong and that in the end you will escape the judgement of your Creator?

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