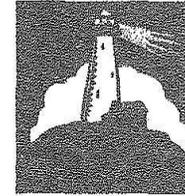


UPON THE ROCK

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WHAT IS FAITH?

Mark E. Reynolds

There is no better place to begin a discussion on the topic of faith than Hebrews chapter eleven. This chapter is sometimes called “The Great Faith Hall of Fame,” and with good reason. It is in this chapter that the writer of Hebrews gives a definition of faith, then uses great Old Testament characters as examples of people who understood and lived by faith. We could do no better than to look at God’s divine definition of faith, and examine those that God said exemplified faithfulness.

As the inspired writer began the “Great Faith Chapter,” he begins by defining the word faith, which is the purpose of this article. “Now **faith** is the **substance** of things hoped for, the **evidence** of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1, emphasis mine). Faith is that which “stands under” our spiritual life. How important is our faith? We must have it to please God: “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). Without a strong foundation, that which stands under a structure, the structure will fall. If it were possible, we should like to question the foolish man who built his house upon the foundation of sand: “And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon the house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it” (Matthew 7:26). The foolish man would have done well to follow the example of the wise man, and build his house upon a rock, because when the rain and floods came, and the winds blew, the wise man’s house stood strong (Matthew 7:24-25). Faith is the foundation which stands under everything we have and hope for. It stands under our living faithfully

to God here on earth; it stands under our belief and conviction in the word of God; it stands under our desire and willingness to obey that which God has commanded; and, since God demands obedience (Matthew 7:21), it stands under our hope to have a home in heaven when this life ends! Is our faith important? It seems like a ridiculous question when we understand all that is at stake. Our faith is the substance of everything we are as a Christian. If our Christian life is built upon sand, it will fall. But, if one builds his Christian life on a strong foundation of faith, the storms may come, but he will be able to withstand!

Further, the faith one develops is based upon evidence. Many today define faith as “a leap in the dark...” They reason that since God cannot be seen, one cannot know or truly trust in Him. But notice again the inspired definition of faith, “The substance of things hoped for, the EVIDENCE of things not seen.” Faith is based upon evidence. Paul told the Romans that it was reasonable (logical) for them to present their bodies as a living sacrifice. Faith is a logical decision based upon the evidence. The idea that we cannot have complete faith and trust in God, because we cannot see Him, is ludicrous. I may never have been to the city of Jerusalem, but I believe it is there. I have never seen it, never touched it, or never walked the streets. Does that mean I cannot KNOW that it exists? Of course not. I have friends, who are reliable witnesses, that have been there. That have told me about the city, brought back souvenirs, and have assured me that it exists. Weighing the evidence that they have given to me, I can KNOW that Jerusalem exists. In much the same way, I can read the evidence of faithful witnesses that God does indeed exist. A person can study the Bible thoroughly, and make a rational determination as to the existence of Almighty God. John wrote that he, as well as others, had heard, seen and handled Jesus Christ, the Word of life (I John 1:1). Based upon John’s writings, as well as the other Old and New Testament writers, one can, after studying the evidence, make a strong stance, and can know God. Over five hundred people saw Jesus after He was resurrected from the dead. Their testimony enters into our evidence. Even a centurion (a captain in the army) said, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Matthew 27:54). A long and diligent study of all the evidence is what produces faith, not a quick “leap in the dark.”

A REASON FOR OUR FAITH

UPON THE ROCK

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UPON THE ROCK is published monthly for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material concerning first principles and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for Christians and non-Christians.

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EXAMPLES OF WHAT FAITH IS

The writer of Hebrews did not stop at defining faith, but continued on and gave examples of what faith is. The examples he uses come from Old Testament characters who exhibited outstanding faith in times of uncertainty and adversity. Space does not allow the discussion of each of these examples, but studying just a few of them will suffice to show what faith is.

The writer begins with Abel saying: “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh” (Hebrews 11:4). When the time was come for Cain and Abel to offer sacrifices to God, Abel offered his by faith and Cain did not. Cain and Abel, both the children of the first man and woman, had the same evidence to examine to develop their faith. They could talk to their parents about the way they were created, Adam from the dust of the earth, and Eve from Adam’s rib. They could have discussed with them the naming of the animals, and a plethora of other information. Abel examined the evidence, and offered a sacrifice by faith. Why did he do this? Abel saw the evidence of God and His love was overwhelming, and he desired to please the God of heaven. Cain, on the other hand, did not weigh the evidence in the correct manner, thus he offered a sacrifice that was displeasing to God.

Noah is also mentioned as a man who had great faith: “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Hebrews 11:7). How did Noah exhibit great faith in building a huge ship? Countless numbers of people have built ships since the days of Noah. What made his ship so special? First, one must consider the time in which it was built. The Bible teaches that during this time the earth was watered from a mist of the ground (Genesis 2:6), so it is possible that Noah had never even seen rain, let alone a local flood, much less a UNIVERSAL flood! But what did he do? He began building a ship that was 450 feet long, three stories tall, and would hold about 550 boxcars, in the middle of the land where it had never flooded, or even rained! Second, notice how detailed the

blueprints were he had to follow. He was told the type of wood he was to use, how to pitch it, how long to make it, how wide to make it, how tall to make it, where to put the window, where to put the door, all the animals he was to put into the ark, and much more. Notice what God said about how Noah followed directions:

“Thus did Noah according to all that God commanded him, so did he” (Genesis 6:22). Because Noah believed God, and acted on his faith, Noah and his family were saved from the flood!

How did Noah make the decision to obey God? He made it by faith. “God, I’ve never seen a flood, nor have I built a ship, but I will do it, because You told me to.” He looked at the evidence. God had never let him down before, but had taken care of him and his family. Noah did not have to see a flood to know that God kept His promises. As Noah was building the ark, he trusted God so much, it was as if he were knee-deep in water as he worked. Why? Because the evidence was overwhelming that God would do what He said He would do.

The writer of Hebrews went on to use many other examples, such as, Enoch, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, the walls of Jericho, Rahab and others to show what true faith is. Faith is looking at the evidence, and making a logical decision based upon the faithfulness of God. There is only one promise that can be found that God has not kept yet, and that is the Second Coming of Christ. It is not that He has broken that promise, but has just not fulfilled it at this time. Looking at the evidence that God has kept every single one of His promises up to this point, it is logical for me to obey the gospel of Christ by faith, and continue to be faithful until my death, or until Christ comes, whichever comes first, because the evidence shows that God will keep His promise to destroy the world, and send His Son to get His faithful children (II Peter 3:10).

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the homeless and other needs in our society. Even President Bush himself was overcome with alcohol for awhile, but through a Church he was restored. He now is attempting to use churches to restore others. God overcomes the sinful world and the sinful things that the world does. God saves Christians and restores them to the true church of the Lord.

Many are the obstacles that the devil uses to try to destroy our faith. However, one thing is for certain: God is more powerful than the devil, and the instructions God gives us are more than adequate to overcome the traps Satan sets for us (Philippians 4:13).

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Elijah contended with the prophets of Baal and prevailed. There were 450 prophets of Baal. They made a great ceremony and cut themselves, but the sacrifice was not consumed by Baal. Elijah called upon God to consume his sacrifice, which had been poured 3 times with water and his sacrifice was consumed. He was told to take the prophets of Baal and kill them, and he took them and slew them there at the altar. God's power will prevail and God's people will prevail for God will prevail over the evil! God is truly God and His prophets have shown themselves to be prophets of God from of old. God's prophets exercised power and God exercised power through them. God made Abraham, Isaac and Jacob rich. God made Solomon wise and rich. God's wondrous works have not stopped.

God has destroyed in this century the third ruche of Germany, and the powerful empire of Stalin and Russia. Perhaps in our lifetime He will destroy the ACLU and those who taunt themselves against God. In the past those like the ACLU have cried out against God, Voltaire of France berated God and prophesied His fall, but rather Voltaire fell and 100 years after his death several copies of his book sold for only \$2.00. He was not so powerful that he could stand against God.

Another obstacle against faith is the many false doctrines that men teach and false churches that men have. The other day I heard that we have about 2,000 religions in America. Mostly they are false teachers and teach contrary plans of salvation and contrary to the obedience of God. God has worked for nearly 500 years amidst these and His kingdom has grown stronger in all of these years. When God is ready He will bring these false religions to nothing. Maybe the 21st century is the century for this. God indicates that the purpose of these false Religions is to divide Christians and to cause people not to believe in God. Yet they do not have power against God and God's religion has continued to spread in spite of the false religions.

Still another obstacle against faith is sinfulness and the doctrines of pleasure, which many men teach and practice. God still prevails against them and against the false practice of pleasure.

Liquor is one of the drugs the devil uses. Recently, President Bush has called upon religious organizations to help with alcoholics and

FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE

Roger A. Rush

Faith and superstition are often considered synonymous, but they are not. A superstition is defined as "1 a: a belief or practice resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic or chance, or a false conception of causation b: an irrational abject attitude of mind toward the supernatural, nature, or God resulting from superstition. 2: a notion maintained despite evidence to the contrary" (Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition, page 1183). Faith, as that word is used in relationship to Jesus Christ, is belief based upon evidence, and that faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). Faith is the result of knowledge, and superstition is the product of ignorance.

Let us look at what we believe (know) about Jesus. Faith in Christ is under assault. The critics are constantly seeking to undermine the foundations of our faith by denying the deity of Jesus.

An ABC special presentation by Peter Jennings on the search for Jesus (June 26, 2000) raised far more questions than answers. It was clear from the start that truth would take a back seat to error. The preponderance of material favored the views of liberal theologians. In typical fashion, under the guise of fair and objective investigation, a thoroughly one-sided presentation was made.

Throughout the program the reliability of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) was called into question. Frequent references to contradictions were made. Accounts of events not found in John but in the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark, Luke) were immediately suspect. (If the gospels provided identical narratives the charge of collusion would be immediately leveled and their use as historical documents dismissed just as readily). The slight differences or discrepancies between the gospels are easily explained. And, they do not constitute contradictory testimony. The gospels provide complementary accounts of Jesus, not contradictory ones.

We must take into consideration both the purpose of the narrative and the audience to which it was originally addressed. Consider the following. Matthew was written primarily for Jewish readers, and thus emphasized Jesus as the Messiah (Matthew 1:18-25). Mark was designed for Gentile readers, and is briefer with fewer references to the Law. Luke wrote as an historian (Luke 1:1-4). From a strictly historical perspective, it would be impossible to improve upon his work. And, John specifically wrote to produce faith (John 20:30,31). Though as historically reliable as the Synoptics, it was not John's intent to provide a strictly historical document.

It would be a mistake to conclude that any similarities between various accounts in the gospels constitutes differing records of the same historical events. Although similar in content, Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and Luke's account of the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:17-49) are records of two different sermons presented on two different occasions at two different locations. It would not have been uncommon for Jesus to have preached similar sermons before different audiences. In fact preachers do it all the time. These two sermons in no way provide contradictory material.

Jesus did some things more than once. John records the cleansing of the Temple early in the ministry of Jesus (John 2:13-17). The Synoptics record a similar event during the week of His crucifixion (Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:12-19; Luke 19:45-48). Given the lucrative nature of the practice, those driven from the Temple by Jesus would have quickly returned to their dishonest ways as soon as Jesus left Jerusalem. It is not surprising that He discovered them engaged in the same reprehensible conduct when He entered the city at the close of His ministry. Again, there is no contradiction, just additional historical information.

Inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16) does not negate an author's personality or individual background. Inspiration does insure accuracy. It is not surprising that Luke's gospel contains many medical terms not found in the other three, or that John, written after the Synoptics, would mention things not found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so would ye sin against Jehovah your God" (Deuteronomy 20:13-18). This passage commands that the males of the foreign cities be totally destroyed, but the women and children be saved. It also commands, however, that the women and children, as well as the males, be destroyed of the cities of the land where they live. Then it states, "that they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so would ye sin against Jehovah your God." These people were to be destroyed less they teach the children of Israel to worship other gods and sin against Jehovah God. The reason for killing them was good. First of all, the children would be saved from doing evil to God and worshipping the false Pagan gods and the Israelites, secondly, would be saved from being led into the worship of false gods. The purpose then of God was good and would destroy physical life, but would save spiritual life in the long run.

This is generally the purpose for any "evil" that God commands men to do. It is to save man from his own sin and from the things that would cause him to sin, and it is to save sinners from growing up in sin and committing sin against God so they can be saved.

One of the things that man can do to cause evil is to cause others to do wrong, to commit sin. God acts in such a way as to avoid this by destroying the sinners that would lead men astray to commit sin. The sinful adults would be destroyed or lost anyway because of sin, the little children would grow up among sinful people and commit sin so they are better cut off in the tender age and then they can be saved. So it is not *evil* but *good* that God commands. We could look at many examples of so called evil in the Bible and find that it is not really evil, but it is good to keep people from doing evil and to save people from evil.

Another obstacle to faith is ignorance. Those who do not believe largely do not believe because of ignorance. They have learned a little bit, but the little bit they have learned is wrong and they use it in the wrong direction. Jeremiah's opponent, the false prophet Hananiah, was told that for his false prophecy he would die within the year and he died within the year (Jeremiah 28:1-17).

suffering in general is evil and God is the cause, or God could stop it if He wanted to. Some of the evils are war, famine, earthquake, tornado, hurricane, disease, sickness, and such like. Many argue that if God is all-powerful His all powerfulness could stop the evil that is done to people. If He is omnibenevolent He could stop the evil things that happen.

God is omnipotent and God is omnibenevolent, but this does not mean that He cannot accomplish good through our dealing with and overcoming evil. Fire hurts and causes damage and it seems at times not to be good, but what would we do in life when it is cold without fire or what would we do when we are hungry and want to cook our food without fire. Fire is necessary for many good things and we misuse fire when it causes damage. The devil is the cause ultimately of any evil and any evil use of fire or storm or disease. We do not need to lay blame on God when the blame is to be laid on the devil.

The problem of evil is very extensive but the basic point is that God is not the cause of any evil that is done. It is the devil that is the cause or our improper use of the good things that God has given us. Medicine is good, but when taken wrongly or used wrongly, sometimes it is poisonous. This is evil but it is not God's fault that it is taken improperly or used improperly. It is our fault and the devil's fault.

Sometimes people say that God commands us to do evil and be evil; this is untrue. God has a purpose for every command of His. Take, for instance, Deuteronomy 20:1-20, God does not command that some evil be done. God, however, said, "And when Jehovah thy God delivereth it (the city) into thy hand, thou shalt smite every male there of with the edges of the sword, but the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take for a prey unto thyself, and thou shalt eat the spoil of thy enemies, which Jehovah thy God has given thee. Thus shalt thou do unto all the people, that Jehovah thy God giveth thee for inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth; but thou shalt utterly destroy them; the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite, as Jehovah thy God hath commanded thee. That they teach you not to

The full picture of Jesus is seen by examining all four gospels. Each in itself provides only a partial view of Him. I can illustrate it this way. Suppose a photographer took a picture of the west side of a building. From that picture would we know how many entrances there were to the building? Of course not! Only upon seeing pictures of all four sides would it be possible to provide the correct answer. One perspective is incomplete. Though we would have an accurate picture of one side, it would still be an incomplete picture. In the same sense, one gospel presents an accurate but incomplete picture of Jesus. By looking at all four gospels we get a full and complete view of Him.

There is no reason to question the reliability of the gospels (or any book of the Bible). All four were written before the close of the first century by individuals in a far better position to know what actually happened than any modern day liberal theologian. An honest evaluation of the evidence will lead to faith. Those knowledgeable of the facts will be compelled to say of Jesus, as Peter did, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).

The deity of Christ is not the only aspect of our faith that is under attack. The credibility of the entire Bible is under assault. The Bible clearly claims to be of a divine origin (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20,21). Often, those who assail the Bible's credibility have never read the book, or have read it, not with a desire to know God, but to find fault with His revelation. The evidence, however, supports our faith in the Sacred Text.

In addition to efforts to undermine the inspiration of Scripture similar attacks have been leveled against faith in a Divine Being. If the Bible is not the Word of God, then the Creation account (Genesis 1,2) must be nothing more than myth. If we can not have faith in the Biblical narrative, then we cannot have faith in the God of the Bible either. Over the past few months I have encountered numerous statements in the media from various sources belittling the concept of faith. Religion is portrayed as a crutch for weak-minded people. The existence of God, the deity of Jesus, and the inspiration of the Bible are all denied, and those who continue to believe are labeled as superstitious fools. There is nothing new about all of this. Faith is always under assault. The enemies of faith come and go with

regularity, but one thing remains secure—FAITH. Truth has nothing to fear from careful investigation, and faith rests on an unshakable foundation of truth.

We must not let unbelievers sow the seeds of doubt in our hearts. We must read and study our Bibles every day as we seek to grow in our knowledge of God and His Word (2 Peter 3:18). The more we know of Him and His divine revelation, the more secure our faith will be!

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WHY I BELIEVE IN GOD—COSMOLOGY

Phil Gear

In the beginning was nothing, and suddenly for absolutely no reason whatsoever, nothing exploded, and created everything! That statement is so absurd as to be laughable, and yet it is exactly what many intelligent people believe explains the origin of the universe. That statement is so absurd that it would be rejected out of hand if it were offered to explain the origin of anything else. “Nothing exploded and created a car.” Who, in their right mind, would believe that? It is a proven law of science that the only thing that comes from nothing is nothing. And yet, this is exactly what we are expected to believe if we are to be considered “enlightened” and “intelligent” when it comes to the origin of the universe.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). Those of us who believe this are said to be “superstitious” and “ignorant”. It is supposedly more “scientific” to believe it all “just happened”, than it is to believe there was intelligent power behind it. Both of these views, however, have one thing in common. They both recognize the need for explaining “cosmology” — the law of cause and effect. It is an accepted law of science that every effect must have an adequate cause. The universe is here. “Where did it come from?” is a question that demands an answer.

If you were walking along a beach and saw human footprints in the sand, you would logically conclude that someone had walked along

The Bible claims to be inspired (II Timothy 3:16-17).
 Its amazing unity from diversity.
 Its complete, accurate fulfillment of prophecies.
 Its historical accuracy.
 Its impartial reporting of facts.
 Its higher code of conduct.
 Its indestructibility and accurate preservation over the years.
 Its scientific accuracy.

When all these facts are assembled, there is only one conclusion. The Bible must have originated with God. It is God’s revelation to mankind that has been preserved by Him over the years so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31). The Bible is the sole, authoritative means by which we can know God’s expectation for mankind. In a nation which prides itself on education why are so many unwilling to open that book? Is there an authoritative difference between the teachings of a university professor and the directives from the eternal, omnipotent, omniscient Creator of the universe? I say yes, and that is why I am a believer today.

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OBSTACLES TO FAITH

F. Furman Kearley

There are many obstacles to faith and they are increasing in our society today. We must be on guard and alert to ward off these obstacles to faith.

First of all, the most serious obstacle to faith is the problem of evil. Many people do not know the goodness of God, and are confused by the devil and by people in the world to think that many things are of God that are evil. For example, many people feel that the suffering of children is evil and that God is the cause. Many others think that

How did God reveal Himself to mankind? On the very day of their creation, God provided Adam and Eve with instructions for living (Genesis 1:28-29). The Old Testament is filled with dialogue between God and the patriarchs (Genesis 3:9; 6:13; 12:1) and prophets (Exodus 3:4; I Kings 17:1-3), but in these last days, God has chosen to speak to us through His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2). God the Father empowered Jesus to speak for Him on this earth (Matthew 17:5; John 14:24). Jesus claimed to have that authority (Matthew 28:18), and all who heard Him recognized that fact (Matthew 7:28-29). Before ascending to Heaven, Jesus gave authority to His apostles so that God's Word might be spread (Matthew 28:18-20). Knowing the fragility of human vessels, God furthermore sent the Holy Spirit to empower the Apostles (Acts 1:8; 2:1-4) and guide them unto all truth (John 14:26; 16:13).

How does God reveal Himself to us today? The Apostles taught with words from the Spirit (I Corinthians 2:9-13) not from men (I Thessalonians 2:13), and God confirmed their message and authority through miracles (Hebrews 2:3-4). These teachings were preserved for eternity (Matthew 24:35) in the writings of the Apostles (I Corinthians 14:37; II Thessalonians 2:15) just as God had directed the Old Testament prophets to record things for the remembrance of others (Exodus 17:14; 24:4). Since the Apostles have long ago passed away, we must rely on the written Scriptures as our source of authority in spiritual matters. That is exactly as God intended (II Timothy 2:15). In His infinite wisdom as a loving Father, God nurtured His people first tutoring them through the law (Galatians 3:24) and finally bringing them to perfection through the teachings of His Son (Matthew 5:21-22; I Corinthians 13:8-13). This truth was delivered once for all (Jude 3) to all, and we possess it today in the form of the Bible.

How do we know that the Bible really is God's Word? The evidence is overwhelming. No reasonable person could study the issue objectively and not conclude that the Bible is God-breathed (inspired). Indeed many authors have addressed this subject. Wayne Jackson has compiled an excellent summary in defense of the Bible's inspiration (*Fortify Your Faith*, Apologetics Press, Inc. 1974). Consider these facts:

that beach before you. The "effect" of the footprints must have a "cause". You would not believe that those footprints were the haphazard, chance result of the surf washing up on the beach and creating perfectly formed footprints. You would never be persuaded that a dog running along the beach earlier that day made those footprints. Neither surf nor dogs are adequate causes for the effect you have found. The only adequate, and hence believable, cause for the "effect" is that some other human being was on that beach before you.

The universe is an "effect" for which there must have been a "cause." Only four possible explanations exist to explain our universe. (1) The universe does not really exist, but is only an illusion. Such is too ridiculous even to consider. (2) The universe spontaneously arose out of nothing. But such flatly contradicts known laws of science. Even those who believe in the "Big Bang Theory" have to start with something. Dr. Robert Jastrow, well-known professor of astronomy and geology and self-proclaimed agnostic, stated that at the time of the "Big Bang", "all the matter in the universe was packed into a dense mass, at temperatures of many trillions of degrees." But that does not answer the question of the origin of that dense mass of matter. Dr. Jastrow said the universe began in the explosion of a "cosmic hydrogen bomb." He stated, "The Instant in which the cosmic bomb exploded marked the birth of the universe." But where did the material that exploded in that "cosmic bomb" originate. And what caused it suddenly to explode? Even the belief in the "Big Bang" demands a cause for the effect. (3) The universe had no origin, but is eternal in its existence. But this also can be scientifically demonstrated to be impossible. If the universe were eternal, it would have long ago wound down to nothing and the sustenance of life would have been impossible. (4) The universe was created. But "creation" demands a "creator", and that creator must be intelligent enough to be an adequate cause for the effect – the universe.

When the Murrow Federal Building in Oklahoma City exploded, killing 168 innocent people, investigators immediately began looking for the "cause". Can anyone imagine they would have been taken seriously if they said their investigation revealed the explosion "just happened", and there was no cause? Would they have been believed if they had decided the building, for no reason whatsoever, just suddenly and

spontaneously exploded? We would have demanded to know what they were trying to hide by offering so inadequate, unscientific, and completely illogical an explanation. And yet we are expected to believe that very theory when it comes to the “explosion” that supposedly resulted in our universe.

The existence of a building demands a builder. “For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God” (Hebrews 3:4). We would be considered ignorant and “superstitious” if we argued that house was not built, but suddenly materialized when hydrogen in the atmosphere exploded for no reason. So why should we be thought “intelligent” and “educated” if we believe the entire universe just happened without cause?

Sometimes it is asked, “If every cause must have an effect, then what caused God?” In other words, from where did God come? Usually the questioner thinks he has placed the believer in God in a dilemma, but not so. The question is invalid. God is not an effect, He is pure cause. The scientific law does not say, “Every cause must have an adequate cause.” It says “every effect must have an adequate cause.” Since He is a “cause,” then He need not have a cause. He is the only adequate cause of the universe.

The apostle Paul wrote, “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:19-20). Notice the words “manifest,” “showed,” and “clearly seen” in this passage. The invisible things of God, His eternal power and Godhead are seen in the “things that are made.” The visible universe can only be explained by an all-powerful cause, better known as “God.”

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information about God and basic principles for Christian living. What became fuzzy were my artificially imposed boundaries separating things that were binding from things that were not. Clearly, denominational doctrines arise from a combination of accepting, ignoring and modifying Scriptures to suit the tastes of men. Is this acceptable or does it violate some underlying tenet? I had taken this right for granted, and yet I would have never considered modifying the “limit” definition found in my differential calculus book. What was so different?

At the root of all Christian belief is the question of God’s existence. Like it or not, this immediately thrusts one into the origins issue (i.e., creation versus evolution) for it is the role of creator that provides us with the identity for God. The Apostle Paul appealed to such reasoning repeatedly when introducing the Gentiles to the concept of Jehovah God (Acts 14:15; 17:22-25) Since God transcends that which He creates (i.e., space, matter, time), we have only two ways to learn about the Creator: (1) Through viewing His creation (Romans 1:20) - the universe and all it contains, and (2) Through God directly revealing Himself to mankind (Romans 1:16- 17; I Corinthians 2:10). An individual’s belief in God necessarily must arise from one or both paths. Having already acknowledged the existence of God, I now was being forced to deal properly with His divine revelation. To me, personally, the strongest case for belief in God comes from appreciating and fully understanding God’s planned revelation to mankind.

As creator and owner, it becomes God’s right to impose behavioral bounds, authorize actions and enforce obedience. He must communicate that information to us, and our responsibility is to acknowledge and obey. I am convinced that the underlying cause of “Christian” division (i.e. denominationalism) is man’s disregard for God’s authority. Substituting our views for His is a bit like trying to convince a police officer that it is acceptable to drive 50 mph through a school zone if you don’t see any children. Although it may seem reasonable to us at the time, we have neither the right nor the wisdom to re-write the law. How could I unequivocally accept the teachings of my calculus book and yet dispute the teachings of the Bible? Was one more authoritative than the other? Is the Bible God’s Word?

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WHY AM I A BELIEVER'?

Robert S. Chambers

If you had asked me this question thirty years ago, I would have said, "because that was the way I was raised." As a small-town boy from a middle-class family with two loving parents, I grew up in denominational Christianity. Sprinkled as an infant confirmed as a teenager, and attending worship service weekly, I was a self-proclaimed, spiritually content "believer" leading a good moral life.

The first real challenger to that reasoning came when a young, Christian classmate (whom I was to marry seven years later) pushed me to defend my faith (I Peter 3:15). In striking contrast, her explanations were rooted in what the Bible said while mine came from what I thought. This fact caught my attention and quickly expanded the issue from what I believed to why I believed it. For the first time, I began wondering what it meant to be a believer.

Because people are different and learn in different ways, I should digress for a moment to introduce myself personally. A psychologist most certainly would classify me as a *strong*, analytic type, i.e., one governed by logic, reason and consequence. This became apparent when upon taking a social styles test I exclusively selected 100% of the analytic personality traits and furthermore identified three attributes that I was certain had been omitted. At this point, my peers were convinced that DNA studies would find me related to *Star Trek's* Mr. Spock. Needless to say, I am not an emotionally driven decision maker. If you add to this mix a passion for learning, then you have a pretty good description of what makes me tick. To engage such a person in a challenging discussion of spiritual issues is a bit like throwing meat to a hungry dog.

All "Christian denominations" share a belief in God. Indeed, most "members" carry a Bible back and forth to and from services, but how do they use it? For me, the Bible was a guide providing general

WHY I BELIEVE: TELEOLOGY

Rick Lawson

It is a fact of life that as Christians, we must defend our faith. Because of the distinctive nature of the Christian life, we will stand out from the world. People around us will want to know what we believe, and why we believe it. We must be ready to answer. The Holy Spirit tells us through the pen of Peter, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet 3:15). Our most fundamental belief, of course, is that the God of the Bible does indeed exist. Even in our country, a country founded on Biblical principles, more and more people are questioning the very existence of God. How shall we answer those who ask us why we believe that God is real?

Teleology: Argument from Design

One of the most ancient proofs of the existence of God is known as the teleological argument. This argument in plain terms, is the argument from design. This is the idea that anything that is designed necessarily implies the work (and existence) of a designer. Any rational person applies this reasoning when it comes to that which is designed by men. If one looks up in the sky and observes an airplane, he does not doubt that it was designed and built by human hands. When modern day adventurers come upon ancient city ruins deep inside a steamy jungle, they know that long ago men, women, boys, and girls once lived and thrived in that very spot. This argument is certainly a scriptural idea. God's word expresses it this way, "For every house is builded by some man..." (Heb. 3:4). This same principle can be applied to the universe in which we live. If there is design, then there must be a designer.

Put into syllogistic form, the teleological argument for the existence of God might look this way.

Anything exhibiting design implies a designer.
 The universe exhibits design.
 Someone designed the universe.

This conclusion is unacceptable for the atheist. The major premise in the above syllogism is undeniable. Even the most hardened atheist does not deny that design implies a designer. In seeking to escape the inescapable, their attacks are hurled against the minor premise. The claim of the evolutionist/atheist is that the natural universe does not exhibit design. In our limited space, let us examine some evidence for the design of God's creation.

Design In Our Solar System

Let me convey from the outset, I am not a scientist. I can, however study what true science teaches us. Many of these scientific facts come from the excellent writings of Dr. Bert Thompson of Apologetics Press. The evidence demonstrates that this solar system was designed to be perfect to support life on earth. The Sun's interior temperature is estimated to be over 20 million degrees Celsius. The Earth, however, is located at exactly the correct distance from the Sun to receive the proper amount of heat and radiation to sustain life as we know it. If the Earth were moved just 10% closer to the Sun (about 10 million miles), far too much heat and radiation would be absorbed. If the Earth were moved just 10% further from the Sun, too little heat would be absorbed. Either scenario would spell doom for life on the Earth.

As the Earth moves in its orbit around the Sun, it departs from a straight line by only one-ninth of an inch every eighteen miles. If it departed by one-eighth of an inch, we would come so close to the Sun that we would be incinerated; if it departed by one-tenth of an inch, we would find ourselves so far from the Sun that we would all freeze to death.

Earth's closest neighbor also has tremendous effects on our lives. The Earth is poised about 240,000 miles from the Moon, whose gravitational pull produces ocean tides. If the Moon were moved closer to the Earth by just a fifth, the tides would be so enormous that

The Lord did not refuse to prove that He is who He claims to be. He said that He would give them the ultimate sign; HE WOULD RISE FROM THE GRAVE!!! And so He did. The resurrection of Jesus from the grave is the ultimate sign proving that He is the Christ, the Son of God!

Jesus was betrayed, arrested, ridiculed, lied about, beaten, spit upon, make a mockery of, given a farce of a trial, and ultimately killed between two malefactors on Calvary's hill! (Matthew 26:30- 27:56; Mark 14:26-15:41; Luke 22:39-23:49; John 18:1-19:37). He was laid in the borrowed and new tomb of one Joseph of Arimathaea. They brought the dead body of Jesus to this tomb, wrapped it in linen and laid it there, rolling a stone over the opening (Matthew 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42). Guards were placed at the tomb upon the insistence of the chief priests (Matthew 27:62-66). All of this occurred on Friday and on Saturday. Sometime early on Sunday (the first day of the week) HE AROSE!!! The tomb was EMPTY!!! (Matthew 28:1- 10; Mark 16:1-11; Luke .23:56-24:12; John 20:1-18).

But, what about the guards? Well, they obviously knew what happened, but the chief priest bribed them with large sums of money, and they lied about it and said that the disciples came and stole His body at night while the guards were asleep (Matthew 28:11-15).

Jesus then appeared to Mary Magdalene, to some disciples as they walked to Emmaus, to the disciples, to Thomas, to some at the Sea of Galilee (Tiberias), and to above 500 brethren at one time (Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:9-14; Luke 24:13-53; John 20:11-29; 21:1-25; Acts 1:1-11; I Corinthians 15:3-9). This was not just some kind of fable made up by two or three people. Hundreds saw Him after His resurrection, and went to their deaths, often times miserable and agonizing deaths, saying that their testimony is true.

Yes, I believe in Jesus. I believe He is who He claims to be. He is my Savior and yours IF we will submit to Him as Lord in humble and meek obedience to His gospel.

Universe. (John 1:1-2, 14; Hebrews 1:1-4). He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:31), and born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:20-23). His birth came “when the fullness of time come” (Galatians 4:4). Jesus was subject to His parents and grew “in wisdom, and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:49-52). He went about doing good; healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, even raising the dead. He did it all primarily to prove that He is who He claims to be.

When John the Baptist was in prison he sent two of his disciples to Jesus asking, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” Jesus’ answer is clear. He said, “Go show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them” (Matthew 11:1-5). Are you the Christ? “Yes, and these signs prove or confirm it!” You will want to compare passages like Mark 2:1-12 also, and ask, “Why did Jesus heal the one with palsy?” It is clear that he did it to prove or confirm that He is who He claims to be. “But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion” (Mark 2:12).

There was a time when some of the scribes came to him and said, “Master, we would see a sign from thee” (Matthew 12:38). His response is often taken out of its context by those modern-day false prophets who claim to be able to work miracles. They will refer to Matthew 12:39 when we ask them to prove that they have miracles today. Here Jesus said, “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign,” and they will usually stop right there. But Jesus went on to say, “...and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whales belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:39-40).

twice a day they would reach 35-50 feet high over most of the Earth’s surface. Life would be devastated. Thankfully, the Moon is in her perfect place.

The Earth is tilted on its axis at exactly 23.5 degrees, the only tilt angle that could give us the seasons and plant growth cycles that allow farming of food crops over most of the world. If the tilt were changed in either direction, scientists tell us that the world would be mostly a desert wasteland. If not for a designer, how did the earth’s axial tilt get to exactly 23.5 degrees?

Can a person reasonably be expected to believe that these exacting requirements for life as we know it have been met “just by accident”? The Earth is exactly the right distance from the Sun; it is exactly the right distance from the Moon; it has exactly the right diameter; it has exactly the right atmospheric pressure; it has exactly the right tilt; it has exactly the right amount of oceanic water; it has exactly the right weight and mass; and so on. Obvious evidence for design!

Design in the Human Body

The psalmist wrote, “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well” (Psalm 139:14). The design that is apparent in our own bodies proves to the clear thinker that there is a God who designed us. Each human body is made up of about 100 trillion cells. If each cell in your body were lined up end to end, the line of cells would wrap around the earth 200 times! The human body is composed of 206 bones, 600 muscles, 10,000 nerve fibers, 2 million optic nerve fibers, 100 billion nerve cells, 30 trillion blood cells, 300 million feet of blood vessels and capillaries, all coordinated to work together, and all fitted in the right place in the body. Because of God’s design, each of these works in conjunction with the others in perfect harmony. We can eat, breath, speak, think, procreate, and sense our environment because of God’s design for our bodies.

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Volumes more could be written. The evidence of God's perfect design for His creation is plentiful. Dear reader, consider prayerfully the following passages from God's Word. To Him be the glory!

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork.

For of him, and through him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.

Psalm 8:3-4; Psalm 19:1; Romans 11:36; Psalm 104:24; Hebrews 34.

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WHY I BELIEVE IN JESUS

James E. Farley

George W. DeHoff wrote a wonderful little book entitled, *WHY WE BELIEVE THE BIBLE*. His first chapter is entitled "What We Want To Believe The Bible." I want to borrow from brother DeHoff's book a little as we begin our study together of *Why We Believe In Jesus*, by simply stating, first of all. **I WANT TO BELIEVE IN JESUS!**

I want to believe in Jesus because He teaches me that I will live after death (John 5:28-29). I want to believe in Jesus because He teaches that I have a better home up yonder (John 14:1-4). I want to believe in Jesus because I want to see my Grandma Spaulding again. I want to see my Dad again. I want to see all of my friends and loved ones who have died as faithful Christians, and the Lord gives me such great and precious promises (I Peter 1:3-4; Titus 1:2). I think that this is a good way to begin our study. I want to believe in God (Hebrews 11:6). I want to believe in Jesus (John 8:24). I want to believe the Bible is right and that it completely furnishes me on this journey to heaven (2 Timothy 3:16-17). I want to go to heaven, don't you? (2 Corinthians 4:16 - 5:11).

Jesus Christ is pictured in the New Testament as "the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). But there are those who consider this as foolishness. There are those who reject Jesus as the Son of God. These folks range from those who believe that Jesus was just another "good man" to those who profess that He was a fraud! These categories of people existed even during the time when the Lord walked the by-ways of Palestine. Once Jesus asked the Pharisees "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?" (Matthew 22:42). This is a question for people of all ages.

I believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God. (Matthew 16:13-19). This is the very epicenter of our religion. He has existed from the beginning and is the Creator and the Sustainer of the entire