

# A Brief Rationale for Christianity and the Bible

By Pastor Doug Baker, D.Min.

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## Introduction

The purpose of this essay is to two-fold. First, it is to demonstrate that reason based on a few basic scientific and historical facts can lead a person to much more truth about the purpose and meaning of life than most people realize. In other words, it illustrates that the correct religious perspective is just as rational as anything can be in this world. Second, it is to share the rational reasons for why I believe my particular religious perspective is the valid one. In doing this, I will confine myself to a philosophical approach, and even then I will not take it as far as I could. Having identified the sacred writings, its authority, and how to approach it, I will leave it to the reader to study those writings and flesh out more fully the truths taught in it. In turn, that will lead the student of those writings to the one specific, true religious organization—which, assuming it exists, will be the one which teaches what the sacred writings teach.

It might sound a bit odd, but the very first thing we need to do is to determine whether or not the material universe literally exists independent of our perceptions of it. The reason for this is that we cannot draw any logical deductions from the universe unless it actually exists outside of our perceptions of its existence. This will become clearer as we continue.

## Step #1: Nature of the Universe

If the material universe, including our own bodies, does not really exist, then there must be an immaterial Cosmic Mind that is deceiving all sentient beings into thinking that it does. If only the Cosmic Mind exists, then what we perceive as our own individual thoughts are simply reflections of the Cosmic Mind thinking about itself. Or perhaps all sentient beings are an immaterial mind in addition to the Cosmic Mind. If this is true, since there is no time or space, nothing can limit our immaterial minds in terms of knowledge. In either case—whether *only* the Cosmic Mind exists or the Cosmic Mind *and* the individual immaterial minds (sentient beings) exist—our minds would know that we know everything. The fact that every honest person in his right mind knows that he does not know everything proves that the material universe actually does literally exist independent of our perceptions of it. Therefore, we can deduce logical conclusions from our observations of that universe.

## **Step #2: The Universe had a Cause**

The second thing we need to do is to recognize that the material universe must have had a cause to bring it into existence and to have a rational reason for believing that it did. First, the universe cannot be eternal (always existed) because it consists of matter and energy. Modern physicists tell us that even energy is just another form of matter. The point is that anything whose essential nature is material exists in time and space. We know that because we measure changes in material things in terms of time, which means they exist within time. And anything that exists in time is limited by time and cannot therefore be eternal. Therefore, the universe must have had a beginning.

Second, the universe could not have created itself. This is an axiomatic truth because if anything created itself, its self must have already existed first in order to then create itself. Finally, the universe cannot have originated without any cause for it is also axiomatic that nothing cannot come from nothing. This is an axiomatic truth because it is the same thing as saying that nothing cannot produce something. If nothing can produce anything, then it—the nothing—must first exist. But the essence of nothing is nonexistence. Also, the nothing would have to have innate intelligence because no one and no thing would have existed before anything else did and would therefore have had to *decide* to produce it. Decision-making implicitly means that this nothing would be a personal being (not an impersonal force), which of course is something that exists and is not nothing.

Yet that is exactly what secular, atheistic cosmologists are now telling us—that the universe arose out of nothing without a cause. They say this is possible based on something called quantum physics. In quantum physics tiny subatomic particles come into existence and then vanish just as quickly as they appear. This is called a quantum fluctuation. Of course, vanishing as quickly as they appear is hardly a rational explanation for the existence of the universe, which has existed at the very least for about 6,000 years. Furthermore, a quantum fluctuation requires the existence of atomic elements, an energy field, and an external energy source. And those things are *not* nothing.

## **Step #3: The Uncaused Cause**

The third step in this philosophical process is to determine the basic *nature* of the cause that brought the universe into existence. This can be done by the use of deductive reason. Sometimes atheists theorize that aliens from another world planted the seeds of life on earth. But even if that were true, what made the aliens? Logic demands that one keep going back until you reach the First Cause, sometimes called the Uncaused Cause. So what can we know about the Uncaused Cause? First, the Uncaused Cause must exist outside time and space and thus be eternal, or else it would have had a beginning and could not therefore be the First or Uncaused Cause. Second, logic tells us that the Uncaused Cause is singular in nature because Occam's Razor says that one should

not postulate more than one cause for anything if one is sufficient to explain something. Since the idea of an Uncaused Cause is that it is immaterial and eternal, it would have infinite or absolute knowledge of and power over the created material universe. Therefore, one Uncaused Cause is sufficient to explain the origin of the universe.

Third, there must have been a time when nothing, including time and space, existed other than the one immaterial, eternal, and infinite Uncaused Cause. In turn this means that there was no outside entity to influence the Uncaused Cause to create the universe, implying that it must have an innate intelligence and a free will. Anything with innate intelligence that has a free will must be a personal being. Artificial intelligence, in contrast to innate intelligence, must be programmed to “think” a certain way and is not a personal being. By definition a personal, immaterial, eternal, and infinite personal Being is what mankind calls God. Therefore, we believe that a monotheistic God exists.

#### **Step #4: The Character of God**

The fourth step in this process is to use deductive reasoning in order to determine the basic *character* of God (the Uncaused Cause). In the previous step I deduced the basic *nature* of God as the Uncaused Cause, nature being what He is in Himself in contrast to all other things or beings. By character we are referring to what God is like in His relationships to all other things and creatures.

I notice three things when I look at the material universe, and especially at living organisms. First, the great complexity I observe requires that God must have created them as the Intelligent Designer; they could not have evolved that way. The reason for this is that whenever we see complexity in something—whether it be a television, computer, smartphone, or whatever—we know that it was designed by a personal intelligence. Therefore, God did not simply start some evolutionary process and leave it to nature to determine the outcome. He must have taken a personal, direct role in the act of Creation. This latter fact, in addition to the complexity in nature, tells me that God cares for His creation and loves beauty, for great complexity is also beautiful.

Second, I notice the existence of what science calls the Second Law of Thermodynamics (or Law of Entropy), that left to themselves all things, animate and inanimate, naturally tend toward decay and dissipation (with dissipation meaning death for living organisms). In turn this implies that if everything is going downhill, then if you reverse that process, everything must have been initially created as perfect and that something happened to introduce natural evil in the universe, defined as natural disasters and the process of decay and dissipation. Evil must have originated by a willful decision to live apart from God, the Author of all perfect life, which implicitly means that *one* intelligent being (again, Occam’s Razor) made a decision to live apart from God’s will and thus introduced all moral and natural evil into the universe.

Finally, I also see great beauty in the holistic sense (in addition to the beauty of detail in complexity) despite the natural evil in the universe, which implies that the Creator-God must be a loving God. In addition to this, because it is evident that He respected free will enough to allow evil to enter the universe rather than to simply obliterate it at its first appearance also demonstrates that He is loving because love requires free will; you cannot compel someone to love you. Therefore, because God created things beautiful and perfect in the beginning, and because He respects free will, God must be a loving Being. Moreover, since God is infinite—as an eternal Being unaffected by space and time—He must be infinite love *personified*, and not merely loving. But love is simply a high regard for others without justice to give it substance. Justice informs *how* love is to be expressed. Therefore, God must also be justice personified. In these two character qualities we understand what God is like.

### **Step #5: Truth is Objective**

By definition God is Ultimate Reality. Philosophers correctly identify reality with truth because what is real is true, and what is true is real. Therefore, as Ultimate Reality, God is also Ultimate Truth. And since God is one, then there is one objective truth, not many different truths. This rational conclusion directly contradicts the philosophy of postmodernism, which teaches that truth is subjective and individual in nature rather than objective and applicable to all people (absolute truth). We live in an era, particularly since the end of World War II, in which people often speak of *their* truth and *your* truth, as if all truth was subjective, multiple in nature, and with each truth applicable only to the individual who believes it.

Now it is one thing to say that there are many different *understandings* of truth, but quite another to say that there are many different, and often conflicting, truths. One can illustrate the fallacy of postmodernism with a simple illustration. If you were given driving directions on how to get to Los Angeles, California, from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, by driving north on Interstate-35 north and never getting off that highway going that direction, you would never get to Los Angeles. One can believe that any set of directions is right, but the self-evident truth is that there is only one *direct* way to drive from Oklahoma City to Los Angeles, and it starts by heading west on Interstate-40. Why is it that when it comes to religion, too many people throw logic and common sense out the window and say the dumbest things?

### **Step #6: God's Plan**

Having deduced that there is a God who is love and justice personified, several things logically follow from that central truth. The process of identifying those things is the fifth step. First, a God of love must care for His creation, which refutes Deism, the idea that God created the universe and then allows it to take care of itself without ever, or rarely, intervening in human history. Second, since God cares for His creation and is justice itself, He will not allow moral and natural

evil to exist indefinitely. Third, since He loves His creation, He will have a plan of liberation for His intelligent creatures to be able to choose to accept or reject. And since love requires free will, His plan of liberation cannot overwhelm intelligent creatures so as to essentially force them to accept it. This is the probable reason that evil has existed for so long. Eventually, His justice requires that He must conduct a judgment and destroy evil once and for all.

Fourth, it is axiomatic that He would communicate His plan of liberation to mankind. So as not to overwhelm people with excessive free will-crushing evidence, He cannot simply appear supernaturally and speak His plan of liberation or to supernaturally place a holy book on the earth and proclaim that this is His revealed will for mankind. Instead, He will probably supernaturally convey His will to a few select people He chooses to be His official spokespersons; we call these people prophets. Then He will provide us with sufficient reason to believe that these are indeed His prophets. Such evidence will probably include predicting the future, in addition to giving counsel and then allowing people to see that good results come from following that counsel. Then, given man's tendency to forget, eventually God would probably have His prophets' messages written in a holy or sacred book or collection of books.

Then at some point in history God would probably take on the additional nature of mankind and live among us for at least two reasons: (1) to confirm His holy book or books by giving rational evidence of His divine nature because it is always better to "see a sermon than hear (or read) one any day;"; and (2) to live a perfect life and pay the death penalty that all mankind owes to God, thus enabling people to choose to accept or reject His Substitutionary mission and ultimately be lifted up from their fall into moral evil. This latter point is deduced from the fact that a God of justice personified cannot simply wink at evil but must provide a just plan of liberation in which people can meet the standard of perfection required by God's own character. Honesty compels us to conclude that we are all born with evil in our very natures. Even an "innocent" baby, although indeed innocent in some ways, is inherently selfish; a mother knows the difference between her baby's cry for physical needs to be met and a cry of a temper tantrum. It follows from this evil nature that merely changing our behavior is not sufficient to afford people liberation from evil because that nature contaminates even our good thoughts, words, and actions and makes them less than perfect. Therefore, because we cannot meet that standard of perfection, God must become a human being and meet that standard as our Substitute. Then because moral evil deserves eternal death because it is living apart from God the Life-Giver, He must die as our Substitute as well. Finally, He must rise again because a dead Savior is not a Savior at all.

To the argument that God is too transcendent and different from us to stoop so low as to become a human being, we say that a God of love personified should be expected to do just that. Then after God fulfilled His mission on earth, He would be expected to have one or more additional prophets who would make a written record of His life and mission for future generations until God decided to finally judge the world and end all evil forever. Finally, this complete collection of documents would undoubtedly have powerful enemies because it would not be flattering to

mankind and his natural inclinations. Therefore, God would also need to provide sufficient evidence to show reasonable people that He has supernaturally preserved those holy documents against attempts to corrupt its text, destroy it, ban it from most people, undermine the integrity of its history and any scientific statements, or otherwise prevent them from being fully utilized and relied upon by people. Logically, such evidence must be greater for that book than for all the other books in the world.

### **Step #7: The Christian Bible**

The sixth step in this process is to survey the world's major religions to see if there is such a holy book or books that meet(s) all of the rational requirements. When we do that there is one and only one that does so in every respect. That is the Christian Bible. The Quran, Islam's holy book, is a distant second. But it (1) only portrays a loving God, not One who is love personified; (2) does not teach an actual plan of liberation except to seek forgiveness and to correct one's mistakes—which seems inadequate considering the extent to which mankind has fallen into moral evil; (3) refutes the concept that the transcendent God would ever take on human nature; and (4) although it has produced enemies, it does not have the kind of history that the Bible has in this regard. Moreover, Islam teaches that its existence would not even be necessary if Christians had not corrupted their Scriptures to make them teach that Jesus was God incarnated as a man. But the historical evidence is very strong that the New Testament documents that form the second part of the Bible (the record of the God-man's life and mission) were all written within the first century A.D., the same century the events are said to have occurred. And historians tell us that it takes 150 to 200 years for ancient accounts, both oral and written, to become corrupted.

The entire Christian Bible teaches (1) that God is love and justice personified; (2) a detailed plan of liberation that centers around the God-man Substitute; (3) that this God-man validated the sacred book or books available in His day (the Jewish Scriptures or what Christians call the Old Testament), gave rational evidence that He was God, and fulfilled a mission that is described as necessary to His plan of liberation. Moreover, the Bible's history shows that God has supernaturally preserved it from all its many powerful enemies, including ensuring that thousands of manuscripts of the New Testament in particular be discovered that confirms we have the message unchanged from the original documents. [Note: There are many more ancient Greek manuscripts for the New Testament than for any other ancient book, from about 6,000 to 10 for the second-place book.] Finally, the book of Daniel in particular (a book that is part of the collection called the Bible) contains prophecies that require the conclusion that its origin is from God. And if that book is part of the collection of books called the Bible, it follows that the entire Bible is God's message to mankind.

For all these reasons I believe the Christian Bible must be the genuine written record of God's acts in history. This in turn compels me to be a Christian.

## Step #8: The Christian's Final Authority

The final step, having become a Christian, is to determine the extent of the Bible's authority and then how to understand its teachings.

### Authority of the Bible

First, it is only logical that if God inspired prophets to write the Holy Scriptures for mankind, that given the numerous different human languages in the world, it would not only be acceptable, but the Bible *should* indeed be translated from its original languages into as many different languages as possible. Second, it also follows that a person would not have to have a degree in theology in order to understand it. God would have superintended it so that any person who has ordinary intelligence and can read can understand its basic teachings. Third, God would not then appoint an intermediating entity to be His followers' ultimate authority or to have the last word on what the Bible teaches. Therefore, the Bible, not any church leader or hierarchy of church leadership, is the ultimate authority for the Christian. Instead, reading all of what the Bible says about a particular topic will tell the common person what its basic teaching is. In other words, the Bible is its own best interpreter. Finally, whatever the Bible teaches, whether on theology, ethics, history, or science, one should accept it as the truth because it comes ultimately from God.

Some Christians have limited the Bible's authority to matters of theology and spiritual concerns, and are thus skeptical of the history and implications for science. In this way they feel justified in rejecting the literal Creation story and the global Flood account as mythological in nature. However, scholars are generally agreed on the characteristics of mythology. Since this idea is so common in our postmodern world, let me summarize those characteristics for you here:

- Myths are often set in pre-historic times, where gods, goddesses, supernatural monsters, or other mystical beings exist.
- Myths tend to have an abundance of stories where natural laws are bent or broken.
- Myths focus on the mysterious or the unknown.
- The hero in a myth is often a sophisticated storyteller.
- Myths tend to be concerned with the cosmology of a culture, not with ordinary life.

It is true that the Bible speaks of a supernatural Being called God. But there is nothing fantastic about His recorded actions in human history. Miracles are occasionally recorded, but these are also not of a spectacular show for the sake of displaying God's power, but always have a serious

unselfish purpose. It does not focus on the mysterious or unknown; it does not even attempt to systematically describe God's nature. The Bible speaks of a supernatural *ex nihilo* creation ("out of nothing"), but it does not focus on that event but simply describes it in a matter-of-fact manner. Finally, the Bible is very concerned about the lives of ordinary people. Therefore, I must conclude that the Bible is not mythological in nature.

Instead, the Bible is largely a history book which proclaims God's acts in history on behalf of mankind. And God is the Author of all that is true science. Therefore, to reject the accuracy of the Bible's historical and scientific statements is to undermine the theological message of the Bible. Of course, we must be certain that we are interpreting things accurately and not make the mistake of the Medieval Church that insisted on the basis of their interpretation of Scripture that the sun and the entire universe revolved around the earth as the center of the universe. For example, when the Bible speaks of the rising and setting of the sun, it is not speaking in a literal, scientific way. We know that the sun only appears to rise and set because the earth is rotating on its axis. But we ordinarily speak of it rising and setting because that is how it appears. So why should we criticize the Bible writers for speaking about ordinary things in the way we all speak of them?

Other Christians have asserted that the Bible can only be believed with certainty if the prophets received their information directly from God in the form of a vision, a prophetic dream, or an epiphany (an audio and/or visual message from God or an angel). If, they claim, the prophet wrote about what he believed to be strong impressions from God or from research of human sources, then we should be skeptical of the accuracy of what he wrote. But surely God would not allow one of His prophets to teach something that was not true no matter how He inspired that message. To not have faith that God would not always lead the prophet to an accurate source or that he would allow him to falsely believe strong impressions were from Him when they were not is to undermine one's own faith in everything the Bible teaches.

Some critics have stumbled over an apparent contradiction or discrepancy in some incidental detail in Scripture. But we should remember that the Bible is both a divine and a human book since imperfect men wrote it in human language. The point is that some discrepancies may later be found to be reconciled. Even for those which cannot be reconciled, one will find them always to pertain only to incidental details and not to the essential spiritual, historical, or scientific truth. If you focus on those, it will ultimately lead to doubt of all the Scriptures. So move off from those and obey the truth that you know the Bible teaches.

### Understanding the Bible

The Bible is both a divine and a human book in that *God* inspired His *prophets*, who in turn wrote it in human language. This tells us two vital things. First, the Bible is a spiritual book that must

be discerned by a spiritually minded person. In other words, a Christian must make a persistent effort to faithfully accept and obey what he conscientiously understands the Scriptures to teach. If he does not do this, how can he expect that God will lead him into more truth? Although we are not anyone's judge, it is apparent from many people's outward actions that this is where most people fail because much of what God commands in His Word is contrary to what many of us naturally want to do. Thus, it is imperative that the believer make a commitment to live up to the truth as he conscientiously understands it if he is to expect to understand more truth and to be liberated at the final day of judgment.

Second, as a human book we must interpret the Bible in the same general sense that we would interpret any other book. First, that means we should understand it literally unless the immediate or broader context requires a symbolic interpretation. Second, it also means that we should interpret each genre of literature according to its common sense rules. For poetry, that means remembering that it paints word pictures, and it is not always necessary to interpret every word. For parables and allegories, it means seeking the main message the passage is conveying. For obviously symbolic parts, it means checking the entire Bible to determine how that symbol is used elsewhere and to select the best meaning that fits the context. Finally, we should compare what the entire Bible says about a topic and then allow the clear passages to interpret the more obscure ones. This will undoubtedly leave some texts unexplained. However, the main points of the topic will be plainly revealed by following these guidelines in the context of being willing to obey what you learn.

## **Final Conclusion**

We hope this essay has demonstrated that Bible-based Christianity is the most rational religious worldview that has ever existed among humanity. Christians do not have to take a back seat to the secularists who sometimes ridicule us. Their ridicule only covers up the fact that they do not have rationality on their side. As the apostle Peter advised, "always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (I Peter 3:15, NKJV). This essay is an attempt to do just that for the basic truth of Christianity and of the Holy Scriptures.

Reason based on a few scientific and historical facts has led us to the traditional conservative Protestant Christian tradition. We have not argued for that tradition because we first adopted it. Rather, we arrived at that particular Christian paradigm because reason based on certain facts led us there. We pray that it will also lead you there. May the God who lived and died for you and inspired the Bible lead you into all truth as you search His Scriptures diligently and with a readiness to follow what you learn! [Note: For a more thorough discussion of the philosophical and historical reasons why I have adopted Christianity and its Bible as my final authority, please read

my essay entitled “The Case for Christianity,” the first 14 chapters of my book *Jesus and His Teachings*, or the first three chapters of my book *Bible Answers*.]