

... always be ready to give a defense [Greek, *apologia*]
to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you ... 1 PETER 3:15

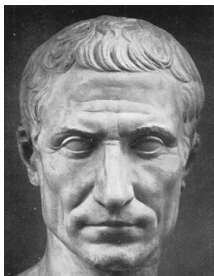
Why believe in Jesus?

10 OBJECTIONS TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

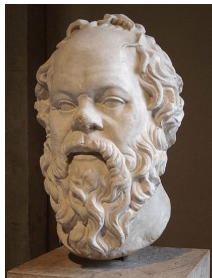
Why should we believe books written 2000 years ago?

This was the attitude of Scottish archaeologist William Ramsay - until he investigated the historical claims of the New Testament for himself. Ramsay became a Christian and was later knighted for his contribution to modern archaeology. In contrast, archaeology has completely discredited the claims of the Book of Mormon, which Mormon "prophet" Joseph Smith claimed to be "the most correct of any book upon the earth". (Strobel 107, 284)

There is far more manuscript evidence of Jesus than of Socrates, Plato, Julius Caesar, but no one disbelieves in their existence, or deeds. The great English archaeologist Sir Frederic Kenyon, formerly director and chief librarian of the British Museum, says of the New Testament: *"The interval, then, between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been*



**More evidence
for Jesus
than for
Julius Caesar
and Socrates — by far**



removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established." (**The Bible and Archaeology**, pp.288-89)

How can we trust the New Testament if it was written long after the events it reports?

William Foxwell Albright, one of the greatest archaeologists of the century, expressed his opinion that every book of the New Testament was written before 90 AD, well within the lifetime of many of the 500+ witnesses whom Paul says saw the risen Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-11) (interview by *Christianity Today*, Jan.18,1963).

Bruce Metzger, perhaps the leading authority on ancient New Testament manuscripts of the last generation, claimed that even without the ancient manuscripts (of which we have 1000s) we could still reproduce the contents of the New Testament from later quotations (Strobel 59). Metzger also asserts that the textual variations between all of the ancient manuscripts would affect no major claims or teachings of the New Testament. (Strobel 65)



Bruce Metzger

Didn't the church decide which books to include in the Bible, and which to leave out?

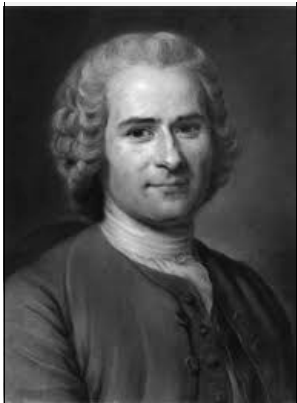
Metzger compares the claim that the church created the Bible canon to having a council of musicians come together to "authorize" Bach and Beethoven. The church councils merely compiled an official list of books that the universal church had already come to agree had innate authority. (Strobel 69)

B. Harris Cowper, translator of the Apocryphal Gospels (books rejected from the New Testament), comments on the difference between the authentic gospels and later counterfeits: *"All who read them with any attention will see that they are fiction and not histories, not*

traditions even, so much as legends ... Before I undertook this work I never realised so completely as I do now the impassable character of the gulf which separates the genuine Gospels from these.” (Translation of the Apocryphal Gospels, preface)

How can we know that the New Testament tells the truth about Jesus?

New Testament writers claim to be eyewitnesses of the death and resurrection of Christ (Peter, John and Paul), or to base their record upon eyewitness testimony (Luke). To reject their testimony, therefore, leaves us with few options if we are to explain the rise of Christianity.



Jean Jacques Rousseau

The philosopher rejected our best option besides accepting the historical Jesus – *someone invented Christ ?!*

French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau rejected the only real option to accepting the historic Christ - *someone invented Jesus!* (Farrar 53). Philosopher John Stuart Mill agrees about the impossibility of “inventing” the most influential human being who ever lived. (Anderson 38)

British legal expert (Sir) Norman Anderson comments on the approach of modern criticism to the New Testament: “This sort of attitude ... is singularly unconvincing to a lawyer. On these premises the whole of ancient history would be reduced to the barest minimum; but it is a singular fact that these principles seem to be applied almost exclusively to the Gospels”. (48)

John Warwick Montgomery, while serving as Dean and Professor of Jurisprudence at Simon Greenleaf School of Law,

emphasized the importance of eyewitness evidence even to Jesus, in that the Apostle John recalls how Christ reproved “doubting” Thomas for failing to believe the testimony of his fellow apostles,

who had already seen the risen Lord. Nevertheless, Christ even displayed his wounds to Thomas, in order to allay his doubts and confirm the resurrection to yet another eye witness. (36)

Even if the historical evidence for Christ is there, what difference does it make to me?

Christ claimed to be the only one who had the power of forgiving us our sins (John 8:24).

He also claimed that there would be a day of judgment, and that He was the One to Whom we will ALL answer at that judgment (Matt.25:31ff). The apostle Paul, who was, before his conversion, the bitterest enemy of Christianity, solemnly affirmed that ‘we will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ’ (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Why does Christianity claim to be the only true religion?

One reason the Bible seems to be treated with more skepticism than other comparably ancient documents is that its central figure makes such extraordinary claims about Himself. On the one hand, as even Bertrand Russell concedes, Christ is history’s model of compassion, love of neighbour, self-sacrifice and humility. On the other hand this man who invites us to ‘come to me, for I am meek and lowly of heart’ says **I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father but by me.** (John 14:6) Why do Christians make such claims for Jesus? Well, should not a religion be true to its founder?

Even the greatest of men have bowed to



What did the most famous conqueror of the modern era make of the One who said, on the night He died, *I have conquered the world ...?*

Napoleon about Jesus: “I know men, and Jesus Christ is not a man”

the superiority of Christ to other humans. General Bertrand records the words of Napoleon: *I know men, and Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founder of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christ and all other religions whatsoever the distance of infinity; from the first day to the last He is the same -- always the same, majestic and simple, infinitely firm and infinitely gentle.* (Comte de Montholon *Recit de la Captiv. de l'Emp. Napoleon*, cited in Farrar 81)

Hasn't Christianity been responsible for crusades, wars and persecution of its enemies?

Would one judge the Germanic race by Adolf Hitler -- or by Albert Schweitzer? Italians by Mussolini, the Mafia -- or Michelangelo? Should Christianity be judged by Judas -- or Jesus? The great 19th century historian W.E.H. Lecky, while not denying the responsibility of Christians for some disgraceful events in the past, comments on the net effect of Christ's teaching (when applied!): *"The character of Jesus has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice, and has exerted so deep an influence, that it may be truly said, that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind, than all the disquisitions of philosophers and than all the exhortations of moralists."* **History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne** (2nd ed, Vol.2 p.88)

Isn't Christianity outmoded -- that is, tried and found inadequate to today's problems?

Bertrand Russell, perhaps the 20th century's most famous atheist, comments on what it is that hinders human progress more than anything else: *"What stands in the way? Not physical or technical obstacles, but only the evil passions in human minds; suspicion, fear, lust for power, intolerance ... The root of the matter is a very simple and old-fashioned thing, a thing so simple that I am almost ashamed to mention it, for fear of the derisive smile with which wise cynics will greet my words. The thing I mean -- please forgive me for mentioning it -- is love, Christian*

love, or compassion ...". (**The Impact of Science on Society**, p.114)

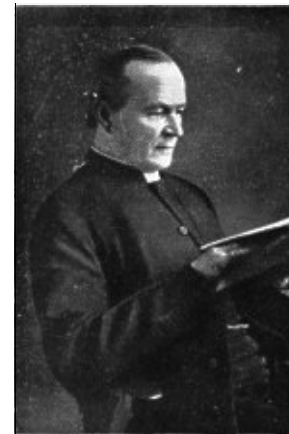
Isn't Christianity a religion for deluded or weak minds, or wishful thinkers?

Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Pascal & Newton, Faraday & Kelvin (among scientists); Augustine, Aquinas, Bacon, Descartes, Locke, Berkeley (among philosophers); Milton, Dickens, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, TS Eliot, CS Lewis (among authors); Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Stravinsky (among musicians) -- all these professed Christ. Feeble-mindedness can hardly be a factor in acceptance of Christ's claims.

While it is true that wishful thinking and self-delusion may account for *some* religious beliefs, the religious do not have a corner on self-deception. Lee Strobel, an award-winning journalist specializing in crime before he examined the evidence for Christ, remembers the

superficial reasons he had for rejecting Christianity (*The Case for Christ*, p.13). Aldous Huxley, scion of a family famous for its unbelief, admits his motives for rejecting religion were hardly objective (see Sybille Bedford's biography).

Historian and theologian F.W. Farrar sums up the options if we try to explain Christianity without accepting the witness of the NT -- *the greatest ethical and moral force the world has ever known is based on deception - - either deliberate, or self-deception!* (*The Witness of History to Christ*, especially p.86)



Frederic William Farrar

Could the greatest moral & ethical force in history have been created by a delusion?

Isn't Christianity responsible for slavery, oppression of women etc?

Slavery was a universal fact of the ancient Roman Empire, where even wives and

children were viewed as property of husbands/fathers. Christianity accomplished the gradual amelioration of this oppression without violence, in contrast to Islam, rationalism, and Marxism, which made their rapid advances by war and revolution.

While it cannot be denied that many responsible for modern slavery claimed to be Christians, how many know that the single most influential force in the anti-slavery movement was an evangelical Christian, William Wilberforce, who fought his entire life for the abolition of the slave trade? Parallel sacrifices might be cited: Lord Shaftesbury, who advanced educational and social-industrial progress more than any other individual; John Howard in prison reform; William and Catherine Booth, founders of the Salvation Army; Thomas Barnardo, pioneer in the care of street waifs. The rationalist historian Lecky, who lived during this great era of Christian philanthropy – Victoria's reign – conceded all this in the quote above.

Infanticide, by contrast, was common in the Roman Empire, as indeed it still is many non-Christian lands. Christianity was the decisive factor in advancing the protection of children. And too, Christianity was the deciding influence in raising the status of women, from property, as they were viewed in the Roman Empire, to free citizenship. All persons are equal at the foot of the cross. All of us – women, children, and men – have access to the Father in Christ. (Farrar 172)

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- 1 Sir Norman Anderson *A Lawyer among the Theologians*
 Jesus Christ: The Witness of History
2. F.F. Bruce *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*
3. Colin Chapman *The Case for Christianity*
4. F.W. Farrar *The Witness of History to Christ*
5. John Warwick Montgomery *Faith Founded on Fact*
 History and Christianity
6. Lee Strobel *The Case for Christ*