Christianity and the Bible

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Abstract

This paper exists to discuss many of the major points of the Christian religion, predominantly, the historicity and accuracy of the Bible as well as our response to God. I combined my prior knowledge of the topics discussed, two separate interviews, as well as several months of research in order to produce the most in depth work I could. I am writing this paper for one main reason. It has been mandated of all believers to engage in all kinds of apologetic encounters to defend, and also to show the truth of God. I believe that it is our lot in life to fulfill our saviors will for our lives through our work and lives as a whole.

Introduction

Humanity was created in a specific way, and most people, whether one believes in evolution completely devoid of any type of intelligent design, or in an omniscient and omnipresent God, agree. There is one aspect of almost every belief that cannot be denied. Deeply ingrained in every person is a desire: a desire to know, discover, and live the truth. It is plainly seen through all cultures, all times, and all organizations of people that what one believes as truth defines how they act, and who they are. I believe that there is a one, single truth for which everyone is searching. That truth is all around us: in nature, in literature, in relationships, and most evident in the very word of God. God, the one true God, has sent His word to everyone through his messengers to the entire world and everyone in it. His messengers are those people whom God had chosen to chronicle the words that are now known as the Bible. The Bible is God's completely inspired word, inherent in its original writings. It transcends all cultures to bring the message of God's great power, love, and grace. This power, love, and grace are available to all people, if they will only accept it. All of God's power, love, and grace are revealed through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, God's son. Through His son is provided the salvation that everyone is looking for, a chance to live forever in the presence of a holy, loving God. On the contrary, if the salvation is not accepted, an eternity apart from God awaits. Regardless of one's beliefs, if the salvation given by God trough the death and resurrection of His son Jesus is not realized, then there can only be pain and suffering in the most extreme. This paper exists because of the importance of having belief that is rooted in truth. First, this paper will discuss what truth is held in Evangelical Christianity, followed by the validity of the Bible, and lastly, how humanity and I need to respond. God's truth, the only truth, is made clear throughout the words of the Bible as well as the traditions of the church, and it is humanity's responsibility to respond to it.

Weltanschauung

Prolegomena

Necessary for any real faith and belief is a strong base, an unshakable foundation upon which all truth may stand. This first chapter is entitled “Weltanschauung, What is Truth?” The purpose of this chapter is to explain what is accepted as truth by the people of my denomination: Evangelical Free. My church believes in a certain base of truths which is outlined in our statement of faith. This statement of faith details the truths about the trinity, the human condition, the Church, how we are to respond and live, and the final days. I have been going to Cornerstone Evangelical Free Church for my entire life and this statement of faith has undergone only one small revision, long before I was old enough to even understand the content. For this reason, I have grown up in the same body and the same belief structure for my whole church-going career. While at times questioning aspects of my own faith and beliefs, I have remained true to this day to the validity of those beliefs. This chapter is completely focused on the base of my and my congregation's beliefs.

Bibliology

Bibliology is defined as the doctrine of the Holy Scripture. Scripture is the perfect word of God sent through His human channels, amalgamated in the Old and New Testaments. “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” (2 Timothy 3:16) Scripture is meant to be lived by and used as a tool to grow with. The original writings are without error, however over several translations the total accuracy has depressed; scholars generally agree that the content that we have today is 95.5% accurate. (Strobel, Christ) Despite the slight inaccuracy, I have full faith and confidence that the scripture we read and live by is the scripture we are purposed to. 2 Timothy says that ALL scripture is breathed out by God, and this encompasses the Scripture we read today. “Inasmuch many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus.” (Luke 1:1-3) Here Luke is saying that historians like him as well as the other writers had the full intention of writing down exact accounts of what had happened. (Milne) Scriptures that were wholly inspired at their creation tell of their accuracy into infinity. The Bible promises things that God will accomplish in the future. He says that he will sanctify all His followers “...He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it.” (1 Thessalonians 5:24) The ultimate message of the Scriptures is one of hope and peace for those who trust in the LORD.

Theology

Theology is thought of as the doctrine of God. Theology encompasses God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as well as the relationship that they share within the Holy Trinity. The Trinity is the perfect unity of the three equally infinite persons of God to form one being. (Ryrie) Genesis uses plurals like “us” and “our” to show the relationship within the Trinity. Isaiah also uses language like “us.” The Trinity is who all Christians live for and what makes Christians desire “to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:16) God existence is relevant because we need redemption and salvation from ourselves, and our sinful nature. God is an eternal, self-existent being with a wholly loving nature. (Boice) 1 John 4:8 says, “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” God loves all of His creation and grieves when that creation falls away from Him. God is rich in love, “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love,” (Psalm 103:8) but He is also wrathful against those He sees as unrighteous and conflicting with His holy nature (Test): “Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, bringing upon it all the curses written in this book, and the LORD uprooted them from their land in anger and fury and great wrath...” (Deuteronomy 29:27-28a) God is Omniscient (1 Jn. 3:20), omnipotent (Jer. 32:17-27), immutable (James 1:17), incomprehensible (Rm. 11:33), infinite (Jer. 23:24), and not to be disobeyed, but to be loved, feared, and followed (Test).

Christology

Christology is defined as the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is one of the three persons contained within the Holy Trinity as well as the only means for salvation for a sinful race of humans. Jesus is God incarnate, fully God, “And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14) and fully man, “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” (Luke 2:52) These two natures are combined into one being, one person. (Boice) Having lived the perfect, sinless life, Jesus is the only intermediate between us and God. He showed that He was overcome by grief at the garden of Gethsemane because of His absolute love for all humanity. Jesus was tempted like us but remained sinless (Mt. 4:1-11). Jesus was sent by God to live, die, and conquer death so as to create a means of salvation for all sinners, “For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our LORD Jesus Christ.” (1 Thess. 5:9) Mark 10:45 states that the purpose of Jesus becoming man was to quench the wrath of God. (Boice) Jesus is our perfect example and our perfect sacrifice, who took our sin upon Himself and died in our stead. Only by and through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ may people attain atonement for their sins.

Pneumatology

Pneumatology is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity. The Holy Spirit is through whom we are sanctified and made new. (Ryrie) Paul says this, “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.” (1 Corinthians 2:12) The Holy Spirit works within us to make us more pure in the sight of God. He also opens our eyes to the wonders of God’s love and divine grace. Baptism happens through the Holy Spirit to join us to Christ when we realize the wonders of God. Jesus says that He left His spirit on Earth when He ascended into heaven (Mt. 28:20). This Spirit is what drives all Christians to learn and be more like God. (Milne) The Holy Spirit is also how we are filled with God's grace and love. (Ryrie) He gives us realization that we would be lost without God, “Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.” (Psalm 51:11) Without the third person of the Trinity, all Christianity is a lost cause for it is by the Spirit that we can continue to live with our sinful nature and have any hope for a future with our Savior. (Milne) The Holy Spirit completes the work of the other two persons, all three of which are necessary for the salvation of a sinful race, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them inthe name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” (Matthew 28:19)

Anthropology

Anthropology is the doctrine of man. All people are created in the image of God. This means that originally man was created no to die. Beyond this however, being made in the image of God refers to our immaterial self: our soul. Depending on when you look at humanity, what you see is radically different. There are two main distinctions: before the fall, and after the fall (Boice). Only two people ever created fall into the former category. Adam and Eve were created perfect in the eyes of God. “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created Him; male and female He created them.” (Gen 1:27) They were blameless before the LORD until they were tempted by Satan to disobey God's command not to eat of The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. (Boice) After Genesis 3, mankind is born with a sinful nature and apart from God. “Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."(Gen 3:17-19) This second category is damned to be born apart from God and only is able to attain salvation through Jesus Christ. (Ryrie) Humanity both before and after the fall are sinful by choice, as shown through disregard for the law of God but only the second category, those who come after the fall, are also infected with the disease of sin (Thiessen). No person is above reproach, save Jesus Christ. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.” (Rom 3:23-25)

Hamartiology

Hamartiology is the doctrine of sin. Sin is the only reason humanity needs a savior. Sin pollutes, corrupts, changes, defiles, and destroys God's perfect creation. All people are born into sin, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” (Ps 51:5) After the fall there is not a single person, excluding Jesus, who is born blameless. (Milne) Sin comes from Satan, the first sinner, who roams the Earth promoting sin and all unrighteousness. “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (John 8:44) Sin leads inevitably to death. (Ryrie) We are naturally sinful, God is all perfect and totally apart from sin, therefore we are (in our natural state) apart from God. (Thiessen) God delights in the Holy and hates the sin that His creation commits. (Ryrie) As God's greatest creation, we should be sorrowful for our sins. Only a perfectly loving God could save us from our sins and lead us into new life. “For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Cor 5:21)

Soteriology

Soteriology is defined as the doctrine of salvation. As discussed in previous loci, the only way to salvation is through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Salvation can be said to happen in two parts: justification and sanctification. (Boice) Justification is simply put accepting Jesus as your savior and making the conscience decision to follow Him. It happens through faith and the desire to trust God, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have a peace with God through our Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1) Sanctification is what happens afterward. “For it is God who works in you, both to will and work for His good pleasure” (Phil 2:13) Sanctification is a process from the moment of the decision to turn from all that is unrighteous and turn towards God's love and salvation to the day that God calls you to join Him in His perfect paradise. The salvation that is given from God is completely free. (Ryrie) It is the job of every man to accept that salvation and live in a way pleasing to God. Justification and sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit living within all who desire to know God and serve Him. (Boice) That is the essence of salvation. “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.” (Ps 23:6)

Ecclesiology

Ecclesiology is the doctrine of the church. Regardless of what we see in church membership and attendance, the church is only those believers who are truly part of God's kingdom. (Milne) We see that Jesus died for those who are part of the church, “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.” (Ep 5:25) The church exists for a few reasons. First, the church administers sacraments, the two being baptism and communion. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father in the name of the Son and in the name of the Holy Spirit.” (Matt 28:19) Both baptism and communion are meant to be done as a community and are ways that believers show their faith to the body of Christians around them. (Boice) The second purpose of the church is to teach. It is where God's word is proclaimed to all, especially those who are outside of the church itself, “For so the LORD has commanded us saying, 'I have made you a light to the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the Earth.'” (Acts 13:47) The church has a very specific role to play in the lives of believers and those who do not yet understand. (Boice)

Angelology

Angelology is defined as the doctrine of angels. Angels make somewhat sporadic appearances throughout the Bible as the messengers of God. The most famous visit to Earth by an angel is the account of Joseph and Mary seeing Gabriel who tells her of the coming Messiah, “But as he considered these things, behold, and angel of the LORD appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.'” (Matt 1:20) However, they also are said to carry out God's wrath during the end times (Thiessen), “Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea,” (Rev 7:2) Angels are fearful creatures made by God to serve His outlined purpose. (Theissen) Angels were created as Holy beings, totally sinless but with the ability to sin, as we see with Lucifer. God says that those angels who did not rebel against Him will remain Holy forever, “For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:38)

Eschatology

Eschatology is the doctrine of the Last Things. The Bible says, “But concerning that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angles of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.” (Matt 24:36) The time of the second coming of Jesus remains a mystery to us, however, that does not mean we would live any differently if we did know. (Milne) At the second coming, those who have died with be raised back to life, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.” (1 Cor 15:51-53) Those who have trusted in God during their lives will be given a new body, a heavenly body to dwell and reign with God for all of eternity. (Thiessen) Those who denied God during their lives will be sent away to an eternity of damnation and turmoil, “Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'” (Matt 25:41) After God judges the souls of every person, those who are alive in Christ will live on in God's paradise for the rest of eternity, proclaiming the wonder of the LORD.

Apologia

What is the Bible and how should it be interpreted? There is no more pressing matter in the realm of Christianity, one of the world’s largest religions, than the matter of where this faith-based knowledge comes from. There is, of course, only one place to get the “knowledge that produces faith” and that place is in the writings of the Bible. The Bible is God’s word, wholly inspired, which is the only book by which humanity was made to live.

The first step in determining the source and purpose of the Bible is to analyze the time in which it was written. The Old Testament was written over a span of a thousand years from 1400 B.C. to 400 B.C. The first five books, known as the Pentateuch, were used as Jewish law up until the coming of Christ (as well as after). Authors include Moses, David, various Israelites and other reputable historians and scribes (Christianity). The Jews used what we now know as the Old Testament to guide every aspect of their lives. For this reason, the writings of every single book of the Old Testament were preserved from generation to generation. The facts that we see laid out in the Old Testament are very much in agreement with what is found both in archaeology and the history from other nations. This is why the Old Testament has very few enemies who would say it is bad history. King lists, excavations, records of Canaanite gods, outside corroborative sources like Mereptah Stele, the Moabite Stone and the Sennacherib Prism are just a few of the evidences that the people of the Old Testament did what is said about them. This shows agreement that the ancient writings of the Bible do have historical significance. The credibility of these writings is augmented in the New Testament as well through the many prophesies about the future.

The New Testament is mainly analyzed today and for this reason, its reliability is more often questioned. It was written between A.D. 35 and A.D. 70, with each book having been written between that time (and not in chronological order) (Christianity). It serves as the basis for most modern day Christian theology. It surrounds the birth (~4 B.C.), life, teachings and death (~A.D. 30) of Jesus of Nazareth. When analyzing the validity of the New Testament, it is crucial to keep in mind a basic timeline. Jesus died about A.D. 30 with some of the books (the gospels) of the New Testament were written down as early as A.D. 60 and other books (such as the letters of Paul) being written around A.D. 60, that leaves up to 30 years in between the events and the accounts of said events, with some accounts being written even closer (Christianity). Very little time transpired between the events themselves and the written record, meaning the authors could not have forgotten what they were talking about. That being said, a careful analysis of the culture that surrounded the writings of the New Testament needs to follow.

First we must establish the authorship of the books so as to have a foothold in believing the writings at all. We start with the gospel of Matthew. No internal evidence is found that Matthew wrote Matthew (Gospel); however there is much external evidence that points to the Apostle Matthew as the author. Philosophers and great thinkers of the era after the New Testament attribute the book of Matthew to the Apostle: Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius, Jerome and Papias; all respected philosophers; all say that Matthew had to have been written by Matthew. Topics discussed within the gospel show that the author was Jewish and extremely well-versed in the Jewish practices. (Gospel) Jesus had twelve disciples and Matthew was certainly one of them, giving him more than enough credibility to write down an accurate account of the teachings and life of Jesus. We cannot know beyond the shadow of a doubt that the author was Matthew, but we can be fairly sure. Next we move onto Mark. Mark was not one of the twelve disciples, but he did have another advantage. Mark was one of the companions of Peter, who was one of the “in” crowd within the twelve disciples. Of course this would give the gospel of Mark plenty of credibility, but how do we know that Mark was aided by Peter? Mark is known for using a specific literary technique in his gospel: this technique is called *inclusio* and this means placing corresponding text surrounding a body of material with the purpose of marking off the material within. (Arlandson) This was a very common technique in literature from that day and in Mark it is used to highlight Peter. Simon (Simon’s name was later changed to Peter; they are the same person) is the first mentioned in this gospel, “Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, [Jesus] saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.” (Mark 1:16) There is something else to notice within this passage: the writer says “Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon…” This is significant because nowhere else in this gospel does the author pass up the opportunity to use pronouns, as paper was a rare commodity. (Arlandson) At the end of the gospel, the author says this: “But go, tell [Jesus’] disciples and Peter that [Jesus] is going before you to Galilee.” (Mark 16:7) This is at the very end of the gospel, thus framing Peter’s role. Next we come to Luke. Once again, Luke’s name does not appear in the gospel but there is unmistakable evidence that points to him as the author. The gospel of Luke is a companion volume of Acts and has very similar style and language use which points to the fact that they were written by the same person (Smith). They were also addressed to the same person, Theophilus. The pronoun “we” referring to he and Paul is used in Acts, which means that the author was with Paul when the events transpired. Luke is the most likely candidate for authorship by process of elimination. He used Mark’s gospel as one of his sources as well as people he had interviewed, “just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us,” (Luke 1:2) Finally we come to John, the last of the gospels. The author was the apostle John who, like Peter, was one of the “in” disciples. John’s gospel was written later than the others, so he had the advantage of seeing what others wrote about and “filling in the blanks” so to speak, which could be why this gospel is so different. (Deffinbaugh) John, being the “disciple that Jesus loved,” was more than qualified to speak on the matters concerning Jesus’ teaching. The gospel does not mention the apostle John by name, which is normal if he was the author, but would be hard to explain if he was not. This author, like the other three, was well versed in Jewish tradition, shown by the fact that he took several liberties while going over specific traditions. John will come up a few more times as the author of other New Testament books.

The authorship of all the books of the New Testament is very important because if the authors were not mentally sound and respected in their circles, then their words would have been worthless. After the gospels, authorship generally becomes easier to determine. Acts was written by Luke and we know this for the same reasons we know he wrote the gospel of Luke. After this comes the letters of Paul. We know from the greetings of the letters that Paul authored Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, 1st and 2nd Timothy, Titus and Philemon. Each book is named for the recipient of the given letter. Paul needs no further identification since it is clear he had a great amount of theological weight to the churches of the area. After the letters, we come to Hebrews. This writer does not identify himself, but there are certain requirements that are made clear in the book. The writer had to be well versed in the Jewish theology and he had to be well known to the recipients of the letter. Hebrews 2:3 says, “How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the LORD, and it was attested to us by those who heard.” This indicates the author had not seen Jesus, as Paul had. Many scholars agree that two potential authors could have been Barnabas or Apollos. Both Jewish Christians and fulfill the requirements that are made clear in the text. Next we come to James. The author identifies himself in the first sentence, however this could create confusion. There were four James’ in the New Testament but the author is clearly the brother of Jesus. The apostle James had died too early to have written it and the other two did not have the theological weight that James the brother of Jesus had. The author of 1st and 2nd Peter identifies himself as Peter the apostle, the same who had aided Mark. 1st, 2nd and 3rd John are all written by the apostle John. This is clear throughout the book by how he refers to himself as well as striking similarities between these three books, his gospel and Revelation. Jude is written by Jude, as identified in the first verse. Being a common name, there are a couple possibilities for authorship. One is the apostle Judas (not Iscariot) and the other is the brother of Jesus. The latter is more likely, seeing as the author talks of the apostles as a group which he is not part of. Finally we come to Revelation, the only apocryphal book in the New Testament. The author identifies himself as John and it is clear it is John the apostle. Revelation consists of a vision that John had about the end of the world. It is clear that all the authors of the New Testament were who they said they were, all very respected, and all very qualified to be truthful about the events that transpired.

The New Testament era was a time of incredible change. Those who subscribed to the new view of Jesus as the messiah underwent great persecution, the apostles suffered (1 Cor. 4:9), Paul and John were imprisoned (Phil. 1:13 Rev 1:9), and Peter, James, and Paul were martyred (Acts 12:2 John 21:18-19 2 Tim. 4:6-8). These are just a few of many examples of the first believers sacrificing for their faith. Anyone would admit that they will not die for something they do not believe it, therefore the original Christians, who made a visual claim to the deity of Christ and wrote the Bible, really believed Christ was the messiah and wrote down their accounts. (Strobel, *Christ*) These accounts would have been read with an incredible amount of scrutiny. (Strobel, *Christ*) Those who spread the word of Jesus were asked questions and needed to provide proof. They had that and more: they had eyewitness reports of hundreds of others: “Then He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.” (1 Cor. 15:6) Christians in the first century believed Jesus was the messiah. And they for good reason: Jesus is the only person in history who fulfilled all prophesies made about the Messiah, “Either the Messiah came two thousand years ago or the prophets were wrong and we can discard the Bible. But they weren’t wrong. Yeshua is the Messiah - or nobody is.” (Strobel, *Real Jesus*)

Some say that the Bible was written so long ago that no one can be sure that it hasn’t changed a huge amount. No one can deny that there has been a great gap in time between now and the time the Bible was written. Bart D. Ehrman, a well-known New Testament scholar, says, “The only way to copy a book in the ancient world was to do it by hand, letter by letter… It was a slow… process but there was no alternative” (Ehrman). This is completely true, but we need to examine the process of copying. First of all, those who were copying the scriptures respected the words as the word of God and nothing less. (Strobel, *Christ*) It is then logical to say that the scribes who copied the scriptures gave their complete attention to what they were doing. Using the same dating techniques used to determine the age of other writings, we have determined the age of several copies of Biblical books that have been found (McDowell). All of these copies agree with the scriptures we have today, so much so that scholars contend that what we have today is 95.5% accurate. (Strobel, *Christ*) The Bible that we have today is beyond the shadow of a reasonable doubt the same Bible written two thousand years ago. It has been preserved and caused Christianity to grow exponentially.

Vocare

The mystery of the future is one of the several points of contention between those of faith and those who dismiss religion. Using the two preceding sections as the basis, I will establish my beliefs on the future and more specifically, my future profession. I desire to become a civil engineer, so this will dictate how I go about thinking through my current place as well as where I could be down the road. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matt. 28:19-20a) This is, quite unarguably, the greatest calling to the Christian. No matter what one does, or where, this command stands as the second greatest thing a person can do, apart from living the word of God. Wherever I end up, I can take solace that the most important thing is living and spreading Gods word to those in and of the world.

Everyone at some point has worried about his/her future. It is natural, to some extent, to not trust God completely in regards to the mysterious future. From a biblical standpoint, there is no real reason to worry or fret about the unknown future. God would not be God if He could not control the world He created. This is an aspect of trust: that we would not worry about the future, “do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:6, 7) Another reason not to be perturbed is the fact that worry causes damage. Worry is a psychological state of mind that can, and often does, cause physical illness. It is an unnecessary burden, “Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs him down…” (Prov. 12:25a) Even beyond this, worry puts one's focus in the wrong direction. “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.” (Matt. 6:31, 32) This is the whole point. God knows exactly what you need and He has a purpose for everyone; He knows what you need to get what He wants you to get done, done. So why worry? “[Cast] all your anxieties on [God], because He cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7)

I interviewed a member of my church regarding purpose and the future. Mr. Pete Hill is a marine engineer working for the government. His job is looking at specific cases where a dam failed or a ship sunk and piece together what happened to cause the failure. “Using flawed science and logic will always produce results that are just wrong.” (Hill) Referring to damage reports of dams or ships, the parallel was drawn as well to Christian study. We can use thought processes similar to the way Mr. Hill finds flaws in design of a structure to think about how, for example, the earth came into being. He said that looking back through history we can see that science has not always been reliable. “Who’s to say we are just a little more enlightened than we were a thousand years ago, as opposed to greatly more enlightened.” (Hill) His point was that science has been shifting with new technology and new understandings so it is difficult to even say that it is a firm platform upon which to base a set a beliefs. The only way to think about how we came into being is from a non-biased standpoint. “Who’s to say that now we have all knowledge?” (Hill) People were once called heretics who said the sun was the center of the universe. People once used leeches to cure disease. Science changes constantly and we are discovering new things every day that change formulas and theories of yesterday. There is one thing that never changes, and that is the Bible. My next interview was of a fresh-out-of-college civil engineer. His name was Billy Brubaker and he as well had insight into the relationship of faith and work. I asked him in what areas being a Christian affect being an engineer. As he answered, I got the impression that his faith was seen everywhere. And this is what should be true of every Christian. Because being a Christian is the number one thing in my life, it permeates every aspect of it. Especially in engineering, in the future I may oversee projects as an engineer but I will always work as a Christian. Hard work is commanded by God in several places. It is mandated that everyone work for the glory of God, “If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the LORD Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.” (2 Thess. 3:10-12) Being willing to work is one of the most direct ways to bring glory to God. It is true that in most professions there will be required hard work, but engineering has always been acclaimed to be a hard profession. I expect to have to put out a great amount of effort through college and afterward. Why do it? I will do it because I love it, because I have felt led to this profession, but above all I will do it because God has told His followers to work hard to bring glory to Him.

Within the realm of engineering, there is a code of ethics to which everyone is held. I was intrigued when I first heard of this code, and after reading it, was surprised to see similarities between it and the way Christians are told to act. Engineers are told to act truthfully as they work. (Code) Christians are as well told to never give false testimony as well as live in a way that is, in every aspect, honorable. Another aspect of the code of conduct for engineers is to act as faithful trustees. (NSPE) Engineers work for someone and they are to make sure that someone is informed about problems faced as well as keep from serving two people at once for the same project. “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” (Gen. 2:15) God gave us a project and a purpose. He told us to keep and care for the world He put under our feet. The engineering code of conduct says that and engineer is only to serve one person for one project and not to fraternize with other employers for the same project. This is because both employers will give the engineer different ways of working. The Bible also talks about serving two masters: “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or her will be devoted to one and despise the other.” (Matt. 6:24) God knows that there is only one way to live: to only serve Him.

The future is a scary thought. However God says that He will care for those who love Him. Our purpose is clear throughout the Bible; we are to serve God and only God. He gave us minds that can be used to either promote falsities and discord or to come to right conclusions concerning the Bible and God Himself. God is truth, whether we deny Him and abuse what we have been given, or use what He has given us to obey Him and lead us into a right standing with our savior.

Conclusion

Most people would content that there is right and wrong within the world. If there is right and wrong, then there is also truth. Everyone desires to know this truth, while it may be hard to accept at times. Truth is everywhere and in everything; God's creation shows us His divine power and nature. His nature is manifest through His Holy Scriptures, the Bible, which outline the saving grace of God. It tells of His infinite compassion, love, and power. It tells us that we are sinful, but not completely lost. Humanity has hope for a new life apart for sinful nature; this hope only comes by and through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God in human form. God's truth has transformed the way that we can view each other and ourselves and has opened the door to everlasting salvation.

Works Cited

Arlandson, James M. “Eyewitness Testimony in Mark’s Gospel.” *Bible.org*. Web. 13 Mar. 2012. <[http://bible.org/seriespage/eyewitness-testimony-mark%E2%80%99s-gospel](http://bible.org/seriespage/eyewitness-testimony-mark’s-gospel).>

Bible.org exists to educate the masses on the basic doctrines of Christianity by answering questions in the form of well thought out and composed articles. They are a group of tightly knit Christians who are using the internet to reach as many people as they can. They back up their claims with direct scripture throughout their many articles. I agree with most if not all of the doctrines they present. All of their authors are reputable educators with Biblical education. I used this site to further my understanding of the Gospels of Jesus.

Boice, James M. *Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive & Readable Theology.*

Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1986. Print.

The late James Montgomery Boice (Th.D.) was a very well-known reformed theologian during his life. He was a prolific author who wrote over 50 books and a collection of hymns. His books are viewed in the highest regard as sound theology. I used this book to further my knowledge of the basic doctrines of Christianity and learn how better to present them.

Brubaker, Billy. "Interview of a Civil Engineer." Telephone interview. 16 Feb. 2012.

Billy Brubaker is a recent college grad, Virginia Tech class of ’06. Since he has been out of college he has been in charge of several design projects all over the greater Washington area. It was easy to see how his Christian faith has impacted his work. I used the information and experience that he provided me with to better understand how greatly one’s faith changes the way he/she works.

“CHRISTIANITY – The Bible – Reliability of the Old Testament.” *Exploring Christianity.* Web. 17 Feb. 2012. <http://www.christianity.co.nz/bible-4.htm>

This web page outlines a brief timeline of the Old Testament books of the Bible. It was composed by Dick Tripp (MA), an Anglican Clergyman with experience in parish ministry in the Diocese of Christchurch, New Zealand. He has his Master of Arts in Theology from Cambridge University. I used this source to learn more about the context of the Old Testament.

"Code of Ethics." *American Society of Civil Engineers*. Web. 16 Feb. 2012.

<http://www.asce.org/content.aspx?id=7231>.

The Engineering Code of Ethics is a strict set of ideals that all engineers must follow. It outlines how and engineer should act in response to his/her work. It also shows why engineers are held to such a high standard. I used this information to reference how I will need to implement Christian ideals in my work and how these ideals are like the Code of Ethics.

Deffinbaugh, Bob. “An Overview of John in Retrospect.” *Bible.org*. Web. 13 Mar. 2012 <http://bible.org/seriespage/overview-john-retrospect>

Bible.org exists to educate the masses on the basic doctrines of Christianity by answering questions in the form of well thought out and composed articles. They are a group of tightly knit Christians who are using the internet to reach as many people as they can. They back up their claims with direct scripture throughout their many articles. I agree with most if not all of the doctrines they present. All of their authors are reputable educators with Biblical education. I used this site to further my understanding of the Gospels of Jesus.

Ehrman, Bart D. *Misquoting Jesus: The Story behind Who Changed the Bible and Why*. New York: Harper Collins, 2005. Print.

Bart Ehrman (Ph.D. M.D.) is a New Testament scholar who has abandoned his faith and taken up trying to tear down the Bible. He has earned his doctorate in philosophy and his masters in divinity over the years. He has grown cynical towards the reliability of the New Testament scriptures and has written several books to that end. I used this book to show some opposing beliefs to my own.

"THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW." *Crandall University*. Web. 06 Mar. 2012. <http://www.abu.nb.ca/courses/ntintro/Matt.htm>.

Crandall University is a Christian university whose motto is “Christ First.” They have published several online articles about the reliability of the New Testament. Using internal and external evidence, they establish cases for the accuracy and authorship of the Gospels. I used this particular article to help establish a better case for the authorship of Matthew’s gospel.

Hill, Pete. "Interview of an Engineer." Telephone interview. 16 Feb. 2012.

Pete Hill is a nautical engineer who works on undersea projects. He and I share many of the same beliefs because we attend the same church. He has been a Christian his whole life and now he teaches a Sunday school class for adults. I used the knowledge gained to better understand how I will need to act within my future profession.

*Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005. Print.

"NSPE Code of Ethics for Engineers." *National Society of Professional Engineers*. Web.

16 Feb. 2012. <http://www.nspe.org/Ethics/CodeofEthics/index.html>

The Engineering Code of Ethics is a strict set of ideals that all engineers must follow. It outlines how and engineer should act in response to his/her work. Though it may differ in exact word, the Code is the same at heart. It has the same purpose everywhere. It also shows why engineers are held to such a high standard. I used this information to reference how I will need to implement Christian ideals in my work and how these ideals are like the Code of Ethics.

McDowell, Josh. *Evidence That Demands a Verdict.* Thomas Nelson, 1999. Print.

Josh McDowell is a well-known Christian apologist and writer. The book I referenced has been ranked number 13 on the Christianity Today’s most influential Christian books written after World War II. I used this book to further my understanding of external evidences for the Bible.

Milne, Bruce. *Know the Truth: A Handbook of Christian Belief.* Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity,

1998. Print.

The Reverend Bruce Milne is currently a minister at Unity Center of Peace Church. He specializes in counseling by the Gospel. Milne also does a great deal of work speaking about the psychology of spirituality as well as basic and more general principles of the Christian faith. I used this book as a guide to the general beliefs of Christianity.

Smith, Bary D. “THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.” *Crandall University.* 29 Sept. 2011. Web. 13

Mar. 2012. <http://www.abu.nb.ca/courses/ntintro/luke.htm>

This is the second article that I have used from Crandall University. I find that their method of teaching and proving what they teach is very effective. Using internal and external evidence, they establish cases for the accuracy and authorship of the Gospels. I used this particular article to help establish a better case for the authorship of Luke’s gospel.

Strobel, Lee. *The Case for Christ: A Journalist’s Personal Investigation of the Evidence*

*for Jesus.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998. Print.

Lee Strobel is a journalist who uses a very unique way of proving his theses. He has a law degree from Yale and a journalism degree from University of Missouri. Both of these he uses in this particular book to prove the external evidences for Jesus. I used this book to further my understanding of other evidences for Jesus that I may not have seen before.

Strobel, Lee. *The Case for the Real Jesus: A Journalist Investigates Current Attacks on*

*the Identity of Christ.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007. Print.

Again in this book, Strobel uses his very personal method to prove the identity of Christ. His work in Christian apologetics makes this book ideal for learning more about who Jesus was beyond a historical figure. He was an atheist before he started to investigate into the person of Jesus. I used this book to better understand who Jesus really was.

"Test All Things." Test All Things. Web. 14 Mar. 2012. <http://testallthings.com/2008/07/15/what-does-

the-bible-say-about-god/>.

This source was primarily used as reference. It gives a great selection of scripture references towards what the Bible says about God. I used this site as a basis for researching into the person of God.

Thiessen, Henry Clarence and Vernon D. Doerksen. *Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979. Print.

Henry Thiessen is a well-known evangelical dispensationalist. He graduated from The Bible Training School in Indiana after which he pastored for many years. He studied New Testament Greek from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is a well-respected theologian, a status that was gained with works such as this book. I used this book as a guide and base for other research as well as a better understanding of several Christian doctrines.

Ryrie, Charles C. *Basic Theology.* Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1986. Print

Charles C. Ryrie (Ph.D. Th.M. Th.D.) is another theologian and dispensationalist. He has served as professor of systematic theology as well as dean of doctoral studies at Dallas Theological Seminary and president of Philadelphia Biblical University. This book entails many basic theological aspects of Christianity. I used it to supplement prior knowledge about the basic loci of Christian belief.