

Why I am a Christian

Why am I a Christian? It's amazing how such a complex issue can be contained within such a simple five-word question! This question can be answered on several different levels.

Before I explain why I am a Christian, I will give some common motivations that do *not* apply to me. Someone has said that the best reason for becoming a Christian is other Christians, and the best reason for *not* becoming a Christian is other Christians. This paradoxical statement emphasizes the point that religion brings out both the best and the worst in people. It is undeniable that people have accomplished great things in the name of Christianity (Mother Theresa comes to mind). It is also undeniable that people have performed horrendous acts in the name of Christianity (The Crusades comes to mind). Bertrand Russell, the famous mathematician and philosopher, wrote a book called *Why I am not a Christian*. One of his primary reasons for rejecting Christianity was the hypocrisy of Christians. I am sure that this reasoning motivates many nonChristians today also. On the other hand, author G. K. Chesterton wrote that "the reason why I am a Christian is that the Church is living and not a dead teacher." Like Chesterton, there have been many others who converted to Christianity because of the influence of other Christians. Having been around Christians all of my life I can see both Russell's and Chesterton's point of view. But, like Russell, I have seen too many bad Christians to join them on their own merit. If my impression of Christians (in general) was the sole criterion, I would choose not to be a Christian.

Another common motivation for Christianity which does not apply to me is the avoidance of hell. This is the idea behind Pascal's Wager, named after the famous mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal. He said that if Christianity is true, then after death Christians will go to heaven while nonChristians will go to hell. But if Christianity is false, then after death both Christians and nonChristians will simply cease to exist. So if Christianity is false then Christians have nothing to lose. But if Christianity is true then Christians have everything to gain and nonChristians have everything to lose. So, given the available options and the potential consequences, it makes sense to be a Christian. This is a way of "covering your bets." While I think that Pascal's Wager does have merit, it does not especially appeal to me. I try to choose the right thing in spite of the consequences. (This is my idealistic streak coming out.) So if I was convinced that Christianity was false I would not be a Christian, even though I would knowingly be taking a small risk of going to hell. And if I was convinced that Christianity was true, I would be a Christian even if I knew there was no heaven or hell.

This brings me to my primary thesis – the reason why I am a Christian. I am a Christian simply because I believe that Christianity is true. On one level I can say that I am a Christian because my parents raised me that way. If my parents raised me as an atheist or in some other religion, perhaps I would not be a Christian. What would I be like if I had different parents or if I was raised in a different religion? This is a speculative question, and the bottom line is that I simply do not know the answer. But I like to think that I would be a Christian today even if my parents did not raise me that way. I can honestly

say that if I became convinced that Christianity was not objectively true, I would renounce my faith. I am committed to truth and I believe that Christianity is true. Hence I am a Christian.

This brings me to the question, “Why am I convinced that Christianity is true?” I have been convinced on the basis of nature and the Bible. Evidence for the truth of Christianity is explored in the discipline known as *Christian Apologetics*. (According to the popular usage of the word *apologetic*, this seems to indicate that Christians are embarrassingly apologizing for their beliefs. However, the word *apologetics* is derived from the Greek *apologia*, which means the communication and defense of Christianity.) Here are a few summaries of the evidence for the existence of God and the truth of Christianity.

1. **Throughout time and in all cultures, people (in general) have always been convinced that God exists and that right and wrong exist.** Why? Does a belief in God have some evolutionary or survival value? This general belief in the supernatural points to the imprint of God on the conscience of humanity.
2. **The complexity of the universe indicates the existence of a designer.** The physical characteristics of the universe and the earth are perfect for the existence of life in general and human life in particular. These characteristics include the expansion rate of the universe, the distance of the earth from the sun, the complexity of the human brain, and many more. The well-known atheist J.L. Mackie wrote [1], “There is only one actual universe, with a unique set of basic materials and physical constants, and it is therefore surprising that the elements of this unique setup are just right for life when they might easily have been wrong.”
3. **The origin of life defies natural explanation.** The famous astronomer Sir Frederick Hoyle (an agnostic) made the following analogy of the possibility of the chance origin of life [2]: “What are the chances that a tornado might blow through a junkyard containing all the parts of a 747, accidentally assemble them into a plane, and leave it ready for take-off? The possibilities are so small as to be negligible even if a tornado were to blow through enough junkyards to fill the whole universe!” University of Virginia astronomer J.S. Trefil estimates the probability of life existing anywhere in the universe to be one in a billion. “If I were a religious man,” Trefil wrote [3], “I would say that everything we have learned about life in the past twenty years shows that we are unique, and therefore special, in God’s sight.” Sir Francis Crick wrote [4], “The origin of life appears to be almost a miracle.” Harold Klein, in the same article, says that “the simplest bacterium is so damned complicated from the point of view of a chemist that it is almost impossible to imagine how it happened.”
4. **The nature of the Bible indicates a supernatural source.** It was written over a 1500-year time span by 40 different authors in different cultures and languages. Yet it contains an astounding consistency in its message. There are certainly errors in the Bible (like in any book), yet they are relatively insignificant errors on peripheral issues. The truth of the Bible continues to be verified independently by archaeologists and historians, and the fulfilled prophecies contained in the Bible can only be described as amazing.

The existence of God and the truth of the Bible cannot be proved. But although the evidence summarized above are by no means definitive, they are convincing enough to me (and I think to most honest and rational persons) to conclude that Christianity is true. And that is why I am a Christian.

Here are some web sites that contain many resources on the relationship between science and Christianity.

[Reasons to Believe](#)

[The American Scientific Affiliation](#)

[Leadership University](#)

[Probe Ministries](#)

[The John Templeton Foundation](#)

Here are some recommended books on the issues discussed above.

The Anthropic Cosmological Principle, by John Barrow and Frank Tipler.

The Accidental Universe, by Paul Davies.

Christian Apologetics, by Norman Geisler.

The Creation Hypothesis, edited by J.P. Moreland.

Scaling the Secular City, by J.P. Moreland.

The Creator and the Cosmos, by Hugh Ross.

The Fingerprint of God, by Hugh Ross.