

## ▸ 8. Introducing the Case for Christianity

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### I. ▸ Introduction

A. ▸ The essential case for Christianity

1. ▸ claim that God came to earth in Christ and died for men

a. ▸ in order to take care of our problem of sin and evil

2. ▸ In order to prove this claim to be true, we must first show what is necessary to prove *anything* to be true.

### II. ▸ Three Kinds of Statements

A. ▸ Twentieth century analytic philosophers have stressed that all statements are one of three types:

1. ▸ “Analytical” [or] “synthetic” [or] and “nonsensical”

2. ▸ Each type has (or does *not* have!) a potential proof for it

### III. ▸ Analytic Statements

A. ▸ are statements of pure logic or mathematics

B. ▸ are *definitional* statements

C. ▸ provide *no* information concerning the nature of the world

D. ▸ are absolutely certain, not “up for dispute”

1. ▸ Why? Because their certainty is *defined* into the situation to begin with.

E. ▸ are proven by working a given statement back to the axiom of the system in a logical fashion

1. ▸ ex.: Euclid’s geometry

### IV. ▸ Synthetic Statements

A. ▸ assertions as to what the world consists of

1. ▸ think “the assertions of science”

2. ▸ claim something about the nature of the universe and what is in it

B. ▸ are proven or disproven by empirical evidence [but]

1. ▸ evidence in behalf of them can *never reach 100%* certainty.

2. ▸ evidence “pro” or “con” always a matter of *probability*

### V. ▸ No Absolute Certainty

A. ▸ “Synthetic” statements are considered “proven” even *without 100%* certainty.

1. ▸ empirical evidence can never reach such a level

a. ▸ All “synthetic” observation(s) can – at least theoretically – be “off-base.”

b. ▸ Conclusion-altering new data may arise.

- 2. ▶ are unlike “analytic propositions” (which are inevitable)
  - a. ▶ In the case of these (that is, “analytic propositions”), certainty is defined into the situation to begin with.
- 3. ▶ All propositions about the nature of the world are “synthetic.”
  - a. ▶ We all daily & constantly make these statements, operate according to probability of their being true.

#### VI. ▶ **Faith Is Necessary**

- A. ▶ Because 100% certainty is impossible in the case of “synthetic propositions,” we must act on faith.
  - 1. ▶ We have no choice about this.
    - a. ▶ A decision not to act is still a decision.
      - i. ▶ is a decision *not to act*
    - b. ▶ (Again) no one has 100% certainty with regard to the truth of any “synthetic” proposition.
  - 2. ▶ means “faith” is part of our ordinary existence, our daily lives
    - a. ▶ “faith” *not* limited to matters of “religion”
    - b. ▶ Everyone has had contact with “faith” prior to, apart from religious claims.
      - i. ▶ e.g., whether to cross the street or not, necessity of looking both ways before stepping off the curb
        - (1). ▶ theoretical possibility of being run down by a bus
        - (2). ▶ Faith “bridges the gap” between probability and certainty.

#### VII. ▶ **Unreasonable Objection**

- A. ▶ To demand 100% certainty of religious claims is unreasonable.
- B. ▶ In daily life, people constantly accept claims *without* 100% certainty
  - 1. ▶ is a necessity for daily survival
  - 2. ▶ is impossible for us to “take only 85% of ourselves” across the street
- C. ▶ Consider: *If* religious claims were 100% certain, they would verify only a religion of perfect *formality*.
  - 1. ▶ would be a religion of pure logic or mathematics—a religion which contained no information about the world!
  - 2. ▶ Logic is strictly a matter of *relations*—tells us how to put propositions about what we already know together

#### VIII. ▶ **The Ground of All Being**

- A. ▶ In contemporary philosophy some have said (paraphrasing Billy Graham!), “May the Ground of all Being bless you real good.”
- B. ▶ Alternate form (with 100% certainty): “May the God of Pure Formality bless you real good.”
  - 1. ▶ You would receive *zero* blessing!
    - a. ▶ A blessing by definition has substance

- b. ▶ But such a God is only a statement of *relation(s)*!
- C. ▶ People who demand 100% certainty for religious truth limit what that religious truth could be.
  - 1. ▶ And what it would have to be would not do them any good anyway.
- D. ▶ can be demonstrated by applying it to an ordinary situation: Think of the problem of getting married.
  - 1. ▶ You can never be 100% certain of your love for a person [or]
    - a. ▶ of that person's sufficiency for a relationship
  - 2. ▶ If a person demanded 100% certainty they could only marry a system of complete formality – something not worth having!

#### IX. ▶ **Meaningless Assertions**

- A. ▶ “Meaningless” or “nonsensical” assertions are claims that are *neither* true by definition *nor* demonstrable by evidence
  - 1. ▶ Example: a religion which involves a toasted-cheese-sandwich-deity who loves those who eat toasted cheese sandwiches
    - a. ▶ is a god who “lives beyond reach of our strongest telescopes”
      - i. ▶ If our telescopes improve, this god (by definition) moves just beyond our new, better telescopes
    - b. ▶ Such a “god” is *unverifiable in principle*.
      - i. ▶ propositions about “him” are neither true nor false
      - ii. ▶ actually, are *worse* than false! They are, technically speaking, *nonsensical*.
        - (1). ▶ are incapable in principle of being verified *or* falsified
      - iii. ▶ is no way of demonstrating this being's existence *or* his non-existence

#### X. ▶ **Unprovable Religions**

- A. ▶ Most religious claims are (in this sense) *nonsensical*.
  - 1. ▶ is no way—even in principle!— to demonstrate whether claims are true or false
- B. ▶ Example: Hinduism
  - 1. ▶ Fundamental claim: “Bramhan is all.”
    - a. ▶ can mean one of two things:
      - i. ▶ that “Bramhan” is a name you apply to everything
        - (1). ▶ but in this case, is *not an argument*
        - (2). ▶ is simply lexical trivia
      - ii. ▶ [or] that “Brahman” is something that you *can* test for
        - (1). ▶ But this is impossible to verify, as “Brahman is coterminous with everything!”
        - (2). ▶ There is no way at all to test this.
          - (a). ▶ You can accept it if you like it, disagree with it if you don't.
          - (b). ▶ But you *cannot* test the proposition for truth-value.
- C. ▶ Classifying religious claims according to their testibility

1. ▶ Are the religion's claims "analytic?"
  - a. ▶ Are they definitions following from axioms?
  - b. ▶ Then they will contain absolute certainty—but *no informational content!*
2. ▶ [or] Are the religion's claims "synthetic?"
  - a. ▶ Do they marshal evidence in their behalf?
  - b. ▶ Then they can be considered proven if there is enough evidence in behalf of their central proposition(s).
3. ▶ [or] Are the religion's claims "nonsensical?"
  - a. ▶ key propositions *neither* definitional nor verifiable?
  - b. ▶ If so, do not dwell on them as you *will not get anywhere, can't get anywhere.*

#### XI. ▶ **"All Husbands Are Married"**

- A. ▶ Example to illustrate the difference between "analytic," "synthetic," and "nonsensical" propositions:
  1. ▶ Say a government survey-taker comes to your door. He asks you whether any married bachelors live in your house, and, if so, how many of them live there.
    - a. ▶ You would be crazy to attempt to answer his question! Why?
      - i. ▶ is "answered" by definition of the terms "bachelor," "husband" & "married"
    - b. ▶ Question is, finally, an "analytic" one
      - i. ▶ You are not acquiring any more information than you had before.
      - ii. ▶ is only supported *by definition*, by what we understand by the terms "bachelor" & "married"
  2. ▶ Contrast the case in which the surveyor asks, "How many children there are in your family?"
    - a. ▶ is an actual "synthetic" question
    - b. ▶ You *can* give empirical evidence for your answer.
      - i. ▶ How? By counting the children.
    - c. ▶ [but again] evidence for your answer is *not* 100% certain
      - i. ▶ One child may be an adult dwarf, switched at birth in the hospital
  3. ▶ Consider the question of ". . . whether the universe is uniformly shrinking (or not!)"
    - a. ▶ This is a "nonsensical" proposition, inherently impossible to verify or to falsify
    - b. ▶ How so? Because if everything were shrinking, all measuring devices would shrink along with it.
      - i. ▶ Measuring the universe's "universal shrinkage" would be impossible.

#### XII. ▶ **Epistemology and the Christian Claim**

- A. ▶ The central Christian claim is that "God was in Christ, reconciling Himself to the world."
- B. ▶ Claim is that God once came to earth in Christ, lived as a man, died on a cross, and rose again from the dead.
  1. ▶ These are all "synthetic" assertions.

- a. ▶ are testable as matters of fact
- 2. ▶ They are *not* “analytic.”
  - a. ▶ do not rest upon axioms or definitions
- 3. ▶ They are *not* nonsensical.
  - a. ▶ Evidence *can* be collected on their behalf.

### XIII. ▶ **The Illogic of Contemporary Theology**

- A. ▶ Analytic philosophers have blasted contemporary Protestant Christianity.
  - 1. ▶ their arguments directed to contemporary – *not* historical – Christianity.
- B. ▶ example: Karl Barth
  - 1. ▶ “Christ’s resurrection really occurred, but there is no way to verify it.”
    - a. ▶ Statement is (technically) “nonsensical”
    - b. ▶ is no different from the “toasted-cheese-sandwich-deity” referred to above
    - c. ▶ It is understandable why people would not bother with the Christian claim, if Barth’s view were the case.

### XIV. ▶ **The Historicity of the Christian Faith**

- A. ▶ Historical Christianity is the *only* religion that bases itself on the historical evidence concerning actual events.
  - 1. ▶ means that if these happenings did *not* occur, then Christianity is not even worth considering
    - a. ▶ 1 Corinthians 15 : “If Christ be not risen from the dead, we are of all men most miserable; we have been deceiving others, we have been deceiving ourselves, and we are still in our sin.”
    - b. ▶ If Christ did *not* rise from the dead, then the Christian faith is simply *not true*.
- B. ▶ Of course, all religions are “historical” in the general sense of “historical” (had a beginning at some time)
  - 1. ▶ If they did not occur in history, we wouldn’t know about them!
- C. ▶ But Christianity is historical in a *special* sense.
  - 1. ▶ The truth of Christianity *depends* on certain events occurring in history.
    - a. ▶ If they did *not*, the Christian faith is a fraud.
    - b. ▶ But if they *did*, they offer confirmatory evidence on behalf of the truth of Christianity.

### XV. ▶ **The Real Issue of Christianity**

- A. ▶ The real issue as to the truth of Christianity is whether the claims about Jesus are true.
  - 1. ▶ (meaning that they have enough evidence going for them to be accepted)
- B. ▶ How much evidence is enough?
  - 1. ▶ What is *not* required: infinite evidence
    - a. ▶ As we have shown, that we *cannot* demand “infinite evidence” of any position claiming to deal with the real world, with facts.

- b. ▶ Especially anything worth having [sense? (ed.)]
- 2. ▶ What *is* required: the same amount of evidence needed to validate any other historical event of a comparative nature.
  - a. ▶ If claim based on evidence for (in behalf of) historical event “X,” we accept that event “X” actually happened .
  - b. ▶ Then if equivalent or better evidence is found for the resurrection of Christ than for event “X,” we must accept that the resurrection of Christ actually happened.
- 3. ▶ We must use the *same standard of evidence* for “religious” and “secular” matters.
  - a. ▶ (Unless we can justify dictum that “Religious matters cannot be proven except at a higher level”—which we *cannot!*)
    - i. ▶ But we cannot test this when we cannot test whether there are “religious evidences.” [sense? (ed.)]

#### XVI. ▶ **The Historicity of Christ**

- A. ▶ Example application: What evidence would be necessary in order to show that Christ really died?
  - 1. ▶ We must use the same standard of evidence as we would to show that anyone else during that period of time died.
    - a. ▶ example: reliable accounts of that person, after having been subject to a Roman crucifixion team,
      - i. ▶ having a sword thrust into his side [and],
      - ii. ▶ as a result, blood and water poured out of His side
- B. ▶ Example application: What *degree* of evidence would be necessary in order to show that Christ was really alive after His death?
  - 1. ▶ would involve use of the *same standard* of evidence as we would to show that anyone else who lived during that period of time was alive
  - 2. ▶ example: reliable accounts of that person appearing and eating fish (Ghosts don’t eat fish!)

#### XVII. ▶ **The Trustworthy Documents**

- A. ▶ The fundamental argument for the historicity of the Christian claim:
  - 1. ▶ The four Gospels are trustworthy historical documents
    - a. ▶ All scholars admit that every Gospel, even with late dating, was written by 65 A.D.
    - b. ▶ This can be checked out in almost any reputable encyclopedia.

#### XVIII. ▶ **The Validated Claims of Christ**

- A. ▶ Christ claimed to be God in human flesh.
  - 1. ▶ documents record that Christ claimed to be God
  - 2. ▶ documents record that others believed that He was God
    - a. ▶ even those that did later only on account of the things He did
- B. ▶ Christ was bodily resurrected after He was crucified.

- 1. ▶ documents record this event in great detail
- C. ▶ Christ's resurrection demonstrates His deity.
  - 1. ▶ documents themselves claim this
    - a. ▶ record His claim that *it* (His resurrection from the dead) would be *the* sign with regard to His claims, deity
    - b. ▶ as it is something only God could do
    - c. ▶ as it is something which is worthy of worship – particularly when it is done on our behalf!
- D. ▶ Corollary: Because Christ is God, whatever He says is true.
  - 1. ▶ Application: If He says that the Bible is authoritative, then it *is* authoritative.
    - a. ▶ Christ's assertions on the character of the Bible are *definitive*.
      - i. ▶ (His assertions *on any subject* are definitive!)
  - 2. ▶ Application: If He says that the *only* way for a person to be saved is through a personal relationship with Him, by admitting that they are not able to save themselves and coming to Him to take care of the problem of their sin (which He has taken care of by dying on the cross for their sins), then this *is* the only way to be saved.
    - a. ▶ His assertion as to how a person is saved is definitive.
      - i. ▶ (again) His assertions *on any subject* are definitive!