

REASONS FOR BELIEF

Easy-to-Understand Answers to 10 Essential Questions

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1

A Basic Question in Need of an Answer

“Why Are You a Christian?”

Has anyone ever asked you this? It’s a fair question, and also a pretty simple one. The inquirer wants to know why you believe in Jesus rather than in someone or something else.

It’s like being asked why you’re a fan of a certain team. Maybe you like the quarterback or one of the other players. Maybe you’re loyal to your area or hometown or school. Maybe you’re related to the coach. Whatever your reasons, you do have them for why you support and root for that team, and you’d gladly, probably even proudly, list them if someone wanted to know.

In the same way, if someone wants to know why you’re a Christian, they want to know why you have chosen to follow Jesus instead of Muhammad or Buddha or somebody else.

Why are you a believer instead of an atheist or an agnostic?
What are your reasons for being a Christian?

Whether or not you've yet been asked, sooner or later this question will come up. People are curious about religion, and many talk openly about their own ideas. Many celebrities promote some form of Buddhism. Tom Cruise and John Travolta are well-known to be Scientologists. Madonna has advocated her Kabbalist beliefs; Demi Moore, Paris Hilton, Ashton Kutcher, and others have dabbled with or delved into Kabbalah. Various organizations promote seminars designed to develop the different aspects of "spirituality." There are lots of other examples in almost as many different directions.

If you *have* been asked why you are a Christian, what was your answer? Do you think your response made sense to the person who asked it? Did it seem to satisfy their curiosity? Were you comfortable with what you said?

Many struggle with this, often feeling they can't come up with a straightforward, concise response. "Because Christianity is true" or "Because I believe the Bible" or "Because I love Jesus" (for example) might not be helpful or even make sense to the person asking.

Suppose you had only a moment to answer. How would you reply? Every believer should be, and can be, prepared with a response.

Our Culture Itself Is a Challenge

Not too long ago, most Americans accepted the basic claims of Christianity, even if they weren't Christians. Most believed there is a God. Most respected the Bible. Most were convinced

Jesus was an actual historical person. And most generally accepted the biblical moral code: Don't use God's name as a curse word; respect your parents; don't commit murder, lie, steal, or covet your neighbor's spouse or possessions.

This is no longer true. Many reject Christianity's core principles. Virtually everything Christians have always believed is being challenged or opposed. These challenges come from schoolteachers, college professors, commentators, writers—seemingly from every walk of life.

These are some of the allegations:

- There is no God.
- The New Testament is unreliable. Though it may have some good moral teaching, it contains fables and errors.
- If Jesus existed at all, he was not God; he certainly did not rise from the dead.
- The Bible is no different from any other religious book. All religions have their own truth.
- Many paths lead to God; Jesus is not the only way. Being good and being sincere about what you believe is what matters.

Many Christians don't know how to respond to these claims. They may believe they've found the truth but can't explain why it's true or why contrasting or contradictory beliefs are false. So they keep quiet. They love God, yet they hope no one asks "Why are you a Christian?"

Why Is This Important?

Today people from all over the world are living in the United States. Many know little about Christianity. Some have never considered the evidence for faith in Christ. Some have sincere and substantial questions about the Bible, God, or Jesus. Some only know what they see on TV or read online. Many young people only know what they hear from their parents, friends, or teachers.

People are right to ask questions about Christianity. They're right to ask how we can know that it's true; it's unreasonable to believe something unless there's evidence that it's correct. Anyone searching for God will want to find believable evidence that he exists. Anyone thinking of committing their life to anything will want to know why they should do so. What's the evidence that Jesus is God or that he died to forgive our sins?

Evidence does not save us, but many have turned to God when presented with the facts. God can and will use evidence to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul offered evidence for the faith when he "*reasoned*" with people about its foundational claims (Acts 17:16–34). Many who heard him "were persuaded" (Acts 17:4) and became believers.

Everyone who's ever become a Christian had some reason to believe that doing so made sense. For example, they believed that there is a God, that Jesus is God, and that he died on the cross for their sins.

The Bible encourages everyone to seek God. It promises:

If you seek him, he will be found by you. (1 Chronicles 28:9)

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:13)

Christianity provides honest answers backed up by evidence for the questions people ask. We need to know how to respond, though. We need to prepare ourselves to provide a biblical answer to life's biggest questions.

God has provided the current generation with more verification for the truth than at any previous time. Evidence substantiating the truth of the Bible has expanded rapidly in the past century. More than in any other era, we have access to powerful evidence for the God of the Bible, for the reliability of the Old and New Testaments, and for the deity and resurrection of Jesus.

The fact that God has sovereignly provided all this, now, is no accident. He expects us to know it and use it, and this isn't optional—the Bible directs us to be ready to defend our faith, so we're to be able to use facts and good reasoning to support what we believe.

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have . . . with gentleness and respect. (1 Peter 3:15)

The question is, can we do this? Are we equipped and ready to respond when someone asks, "Why are you a Christian?"

Ten Challenges to Christianity

Here are ten primary challenges facing believers today. We'll address each one. Every chapter that follows will help equip you to better explain the truth and explain why you believe.

Key Term: Apologetics

Apologetics doesn't mean to say you're sorry for something but rather to defend something, to give reasons that support what you believe is true. Apologetics is what we're doing through this book; its goal is to assist you in becoming a strong defender of your faith.

Challenge #1: “Real truth does not exist. ‘Truth’ is just truth to you.” (See chapter 2.)

Challenge #2: “God does not exist.” (See chapters 3–4.)

Challenge #3: “If God exists, he isn't necessarily the God of the Bible.” (See chapter 5.)

Challenge #4: “Miracles don't happen.” (See chapter 6.)

Challenge #5: “The New Testament's many errors make it unreliable. It's more like a collection of myths and legends.” (See chapter 7.)

Challenge #6: “Jesus never claimed to be God.” (See chapter 8.)

Challenge #7: “Jesus didn't prove he is God.” (See chapter 9.)

Challenge #8: “Jesus did not rise from the dead.” (See chapter 10.)

Challenge #9: “The Bible isn't the only true religious book.” (See chapter 11.)

Challenge #10: “Christianity is too narrow. There are many ways to God besides Jesus.” (See chapter 12.)

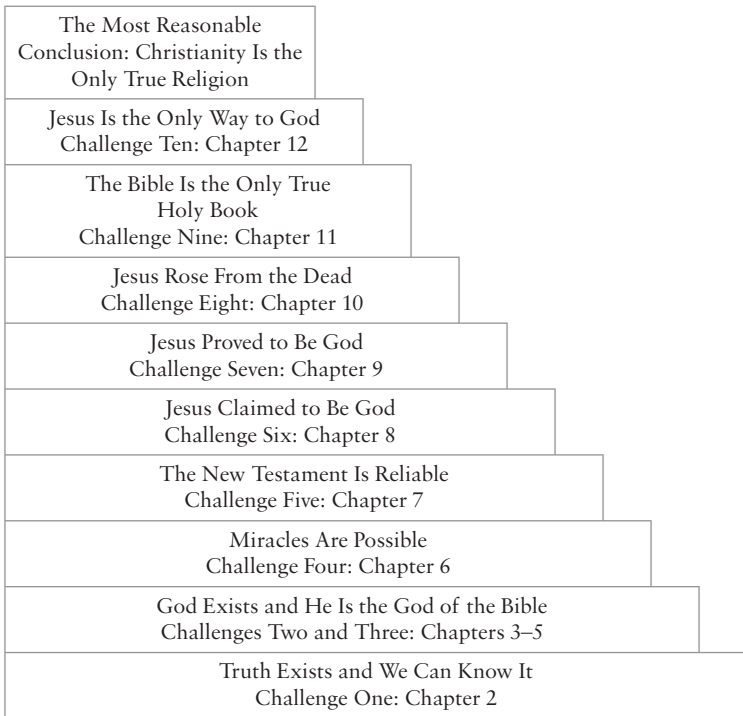
How We'll Respond to These Challenges

We'll approach this as a defense attorney would when seeking to prove a defendant innocent of a charge. They'd present solid evidence. They'd establish a fact-based alibi. To prove innocence beyond a reasonable doubt, they might appeal to fibers, prints, marks or tracks, even DNA.

We'll look at many facts. We'll examine eyewitness accounts. We'll appeal to science, to history and archaeology, and to prophecy. We'll appeal to manuscript evidence and more.

See the chart below for the steps we'll take as we build our case.

**Ten Points That Answer Our Ten Challenges
and Prove Christianity Is True**



Learning the facts isn't the ultimate end. Whatever proves to be true should impact our whole lives. So if you already believe, as you go through this book, pray that the information will help you to love God at a deeper level than you have

before. Pray that it will help you to love him more with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And pray for opportunities to share the truth of God's Word with others.

Each chapter will define terms and explain ideas with the intent of making them basic and straightforward. If a word or concept isn't clear at first, be patient. If you feel stuck at any point, you could ask someone for an explanation or illustration, or you might look up something unfamiliar in an online dictionary.

Let's start with our first challenge, a challenge about truth.

2

Truth

*Challenge #1: “Real Truth Does Not Exist.
‘Truth’ Is Just Truth to You”*

Potential problem: Most people probably would agree that truth is important, since no one wants to believe something that isn’t true. However, people also have very different ideas about what’s true. Christianity claims to be the Truth, and thus claims that whatever contradicts it—every other religion—is false. Many today contend that “truth” is only true to the person who believes it. These assertions can’t both be correct.

Teachers will say that two plus two *does* equal four. They’ll tell you George Washington *was* the first U.S. president. They’ll say there *is* a physical law we call the *law of gravity*. Statements like these are called *truth claims*.

Each day we all make statements we want others to accept as fact. That is, we make truth claims. Whenever someone asks

where you live, or when your birthday is, your response is a truth claim, and you expect others to believe that what you've said is true. They expect the same of you when they make similar statements. Every day life is filled with truth claims.

Two Contradictory Views: What Is Meant by “Truth”

Since life is permeated with truth claims, there's no avoiding them, so we need to address this issue right away. Generally, there are two ideas about truth today.

View #1: Truth Is What's True for You

In this view, truth is relative—a subjective opinion. “Truth” becomes true to you as you believe it. In other words, *I'm convinced of it, so that settles it*. Someone with this view might say, “You have your truth, and I have mine.”

View #2: Truth Is What Matches the Facts

In this view, truth is absolute—an objective reality. Truth isn't personal, and it doesn't belong to me or to you. Whether everyone, or most, or few, or nobody believes it, truth is what matches up with what's real. In other words, *It's true, so that settles it, whether or not I believe it*.

So What Is Truth?

Here is a solid definition: “*Truth* is what matches reality.” Or again, “Truth matches the facts.” People once believed the earth was flat and thought that if you sailed too far from land you'd fall off. It is true that people believed this, but that

didn't make it true. The earth was and is round, no matter what anyone has believed. No opinion about the planet's shape has altered reality.

Another way to describe truth is to say, "Truth is telling it like it is." What we claim to be true must match the way things really are. My claim to have a thousand dollars in my savings account is only true if I actually have a thousand dollars there. If only a hundred dollars is in my account, my statement isn't true—I did not tell it like it is.

Conversely, something is a *falsehood* if it does not match reality, if it does not tell it like it is. While insistence that Santa Claus really exists and has flying reindeer, including one with a red nose, might serve make-believe fun for kids, it isn't actually true. It's false because it does not match reality.

How Can We *Know* What Is True?

We have said that truth must match the real world—the way things really are. It must "tell it like it is." So how can we know? Two tests can help us discover whether or not something is true.

Test #1: Examining All the Facts to See What Matches Reality

Truth must be backed up by facts, supported by outside evidence rather than personal opinions. Here are three examples of what some people believe despite the facts: The Holocaust never happened (the Nazis didn't murder millions of Jews); the U.S. never landed anyone on the moon (it was a faked performance); a group of Jews attacked the World Trade Center.

How would you show that these statements are untrue?

You could use WWII newsreels, for example, to substantiate the Holocaust. You could appeal to the eyewitness testimony of those who worked on the lunar landing and of those who actually went. You could point to all of the evidence left behind by those who hijacked the planes on 9/11. Basically: You could prove your case by collecting the facts.

Some Truths About Truth

1. We don't invent truth; we discover it. In the early 1500s, Ferdinand Magellan sailed around the world by heading west and returning from the east. His demonstration of the earth's roundness wasn't the invention of a new truth. Rather, he discovered what had always been true.
2. Our understanding of the truth can change, but truth itself does not change. After Magellan's voyage, people had a new understanding of what had always been true: The earth is round.
3. Truth does not depend on how fervently or sincerely we believe something to be true. The correct answer to this true/false question: "The Twin Towers in New York City were attacked on September 11, 2000" is false. The date was September 11, 2001. It wouldn't matter how strongly someone believed that event took place in 2000; the answer is still false.
4. When something is true, it's true everywhere, for all people, at all times. Some cultures used to believe a dragon living under the earth (not the movement of tectonic plates) caused earthquakes—that the earth moved when the dragon moved. It's true that they believed this, but that didn't make it true. No one's beliefs make anything true or false. Truth is true, and falsehood is false, no matter what anyone believes.

Test #2: Learning to Think Correctly (Logically)

God has instituted certain unbreakable laws that operate throughout the universe. These are found, for instance, throughout the sciences, math, and even music. Two plus two is always four; if this varied from time to time or place to place, we couldn't operate machinery or computers—we couldn't even build a house. Middle C always vibrates at a certain frequency. If this varied from place to place, musicians couldn't tune their instruments accurately. There are even unbreakable laws regarding color. If you mix red and yellow, you'll always get orange, or some shade of orange—you'll never get green.

If we could break these laws, or if they only worked some of the time, the entire universe would be chaotic. But these laws do operate in the same manner, day in and day out.

God has also instituted certain unbreakable laws of right, or correct, thinking, which we call the laws of logic. One is known as the law of noncontradiction. First we'll look at what it says, and then we'll see what it means.

It says, "Two contradictory, or opposite, truth claims cannot both be true at the same time and in the same sense." Here's an example of how it works: The contradiction to "God exists" is "God does not exist," and the law of noncontradiction says these two truth claims can't both be true—God can't both exist and not exist. If you're reading this book right now, you can't *not* be reading this book right now. If your birthday is January 1, 1994, it can't also be true that your birthday is not January 1, 1994. When you really think about this, it just makes sense.

Why is this so important, and why should you spend your time on it? Because while it's common today to maintain that

all belief systems are equally true, or that no belief system has any “truth advantage” over any other, the fact is that religions *contradict* each other at many major points.

For example, let’s look at just three key Christian beliefs about Jesus: (1) Jesus is God; (2) Jesus has always been God; he did not at some point in time become God; (3) only Jesus is God; people are not God.

Here’s the issue: Every other system of belief contradicts these claims. Hindus say Jesus is one of many men who’ve become God. Mormons believe that Jesus was a man before he became God, and that worthy Mormons can become gods one day also. Muslims esteem Jesus as one of Allah’s great prophets, but they do not believe he is God. Buddhists hold Jesus to be one of many remarkable teachers. Judaism does not believe Jesus is God. Each religion believes something contradictory about who Jesus is or who he claimed to be.

This is where the law of noncontradiction becomes crucial. It tells us that someone is right and someone is wrong about Jesus. All these ideas about him cannot be right, because they are contradictory. If Christianity is true—if what it says about Jesus is true—then all these other belief systems are wrong.

To find out which truth claim matches reality, we must examine the facts, the data—the evidence. While we won’t always come to the same conclusion, we cannot pretend all the choices are correct. They can’t be, when they’re contradictory. So we will find that we are compelled to make a choice. Either God exists or he doesn’t. Either Jesus is eternally and uniquely God or he is not.

We’ll refer to the law of noncontradiction several times in this book. You might want to mark this page in case you want to come back to it at some point. Pretending that contradictory

truth claims can be true in the same way at the same time is not only sloppy thinking, it's also wrong thinking.

Three Reasons Why We Need to Have the Right View of Truth

Truth Affects Our Daily Life

If truth were merely what is true for you, then all of life would be chaotic bedlam. How could anyone say *anything* and expect you to take them seriously? Why should anyone teach—why should anyone ever take a test, if no answer key exists? It's naïve and unrealistic to believe that anything and everything is true. If that were the case, then *nothing* would be true.

Truth Affects Our Eternal Life

If truth is only my set of opinions, then there is no objective reality. If that were the case, we would have no basis for believing we can know anything true about God, about life, or about what happens after we die. It's not just the here and now that's at stake. Eternity itself hangs in the balance.

The Bible Makes Truth Claims

The Bible has much to say about truth. It claims that the God of the Bible is the one true God, the God of truth. It claims that his way and his Word are true (e.g., see Psalm 31:5; 119:30, 43).

Jesus claimed he is the truth: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Seventy-eight times in the New Testament Jesus explicitly claimed to be speaking the truth. And God's Holy

Spirit is called “the Spirit of truth,” who reveals the truth to people (John 15:26; see also John 19:35; Acts 28:25).

The Bible says the good news about Jesus Christ is true (Galatians 2:14) and that we can learn and know the truth (see Acts 24:8; 2 Corinthians 4:2). It claims to offer the answers to our most significant questions, the solutions to our most crucial problems, the fixes for all our failures, and the provisions for our every true need.

The Bible, then, does not leave itself open to being placed in the category of “books that contain intriguing ethics” or “sources of some decent ideas about how to construct our own reality.” It doesn’t say it may have some value for someone, depending on their circumstances and individual perspectives. It says it is God’s Word; it says it is the truth. So either it is the truth or it is not.

A Frequent Perception, or Accusation

Many people think Christians are closed-minded. When they hear believers say, for instance, “Jesus is the only way to God,” they come to the conclusion that Christians aren’t open to truth, or are against learning.

But think about this. An atheist’s claim that there’s no God is just as closed-minded. And the claim that there are many ways to God has the same degree of closed-mindedness. Each is a declaration that something is true and that, by definition, what contradicts or opposes it is false.

Every truth claim is narrow. Why? Because truth itself is narrow. If you jump off a tall building with no ability to remain aloft, you will fall to the ground, yet no one would say belief in the law of gravity is being narrow-minded.

All religious truth claims are equally narrow as well, for all such claims maintain that they are true and that opposing claims are false. A person is no more closed-minded for saying God exists than for saying he does not exist. The fact is that one of the statements is true; therefore, the opposing view is false. Believing either one automatically excludes believing the other.

Christians should be open to all truth, since all truth is God's—all truth flows from his nature. Not one single aspect of truth pops up and surprises God, for he is the source of all truth. Believers need not fear that somehow a new truth will come along and undermine the God of truth.

Christians ought to be willing to look at all the facts, all the evidence. We're to be closed-minded only when it comes to accepting something that is untrue, does not match reality, or does not tell it like it is. Let's say: *Bring on the truth!*

What We've Learned

1. Truth is what matches the facts, what corresponds to reality.
2. Contradictions (or opposites) cannot both be true at the same time and in the same sense. If a statement is true, its contradiction is false.

These two statements lay the foundation for our next challenge regarding the existence of God.

3

God (Part I)

Challenge #2: “God Does Not Exist”

Potential problem: Christianity rests upon God’s existence. If God does not exist, Christianity is false.

If you were to take a poll today and ask a random group of people if they believe there’s a God, aside from those who say they don’t know, naturally you’d get two opposing answers. Some would answer yes, others no.

Many today openly and strongly deny that God exists. They do this for many reasons, one of which is that they don’t think there’s any evidence for his existence. Lacking that, they conclude they would be foolish to believe a God is out there somewhere.

If you asked those who affirmed God’s existence to explain what *kind* of God exists, you’d discover that not everyone who believes in God agrees on what he’s like (his nature). The

poll's end product would show how much disparity there is about the existence and nature of God.

Our task in the coming chapters will be to answer two main questions:

1. What is the evidence that God exists?
2. Which god does the evidence point to? Is it a match for the God of the Bible or for a different god?

The answers to these two questions are foundational, because if there is no God, then there is no Word of God, Jesus is not the Son of God, Jesus did not die for our sins or rise from the dead; all the tenets of the Christian faith would collapse. The same is true as to God's nature. If the evidence supports a god other than the God of the Bible, then believers have misplaced their trust.

We will approach the question of God's existence as a sleuth would seek to solve a mystery. When a detective needs to determine whether someone was in a certain location, he looks for clues—such as fingerprints.

Think about the trail of evidence your fingerprints leave behind. They mark everything you touch from the time you rise in the morning until you're back in bed at night. From every dish, light switch, door handle, or book, to your keyboard, steering wheel, cell phone, and toothbrush, your prints provide evidence of where you've been throughout the day. Seeking an answer to the question "Does God exist?" we can look for whether God has left his prints on the universe to show us he is there. In this chapter and the next, we'll examine the evidence that demonstrates that God does exist, and he has left behind his fingerprints as proof.

Some Christians don't think it's important to consider the evidence for God's existence. They say it's enough just to have faith that he's there. But many nonbelievers are not persuaded or swayed by a faith-alone argument for God, since they believe they have evidence for God's *nonexistence*. The question is, which position does the evidence support? Do the facts support a belief in God? Can we demonstrate convincingly that the God of the Bible is there?

Your Worldview Will Determine What You Believe About God

Every person has something called a *worldview*, which is simply the way one views and understands life. It's how we answer the big questions, such as:

- Where did we come from? Are we a byproduct of evolutionary processes, or were we created by God?
- Why are we here? Does life have any meaning or purpose, or are we born only to die?
- What happens to us after we die? Is heaven real? Is hell real? Or do we simply cease to exist? Is reincarnation a possibility? Do we get a second, third, or fourth chance after we die?

Sooner or later everyone forms an answer to these questions. Even little children by the time they start school have begun to develop their own responses. Your answers on matters like these will determine your worldview, and how you think about God, about his nature, and about life in general.

There are a number of contradictory worldviews. We'll examine four of the most common: atheism, deism, pantheism, and theism. Our goal is to ascertain which view of God makes the most sense and has the most supportive evidence.

Atheism

Atheism is the worldview that claims there is no God, no matter how you think of him or what you choose to call him. There's no higher power, no Absolute Being, no universal Life Force, no World Spirit that originated the universe. Atheists believe the universe is eternal; it did not have a beginning and won't have an end. They say everything we observe (stars, space, planets [including earth]) has always existed—nothing was created. Thus humanity is the result of the blind natural forces that by chance combined in such a way as to form life on earth. Consequently, there's no particular purpose or reason for our existence. We're born, we live for a time, then we die, and life is over—there's no afterlife at all.

Deism

Deism is a word we don't hear much anymore. But many people today have chosen it as their worldview, whether or not they call it by that name. Deists believe there is a God who created the universe, so unlike atheists, they believe the universe is not eternal; it had a beginning. Deists also believe God created people; we're not the result of blind evolutionary forces. However, deists maintain that after creating, God simply withdrew and left us here on our own; he's no longer directly involved in his creation.

Deists, then, don't believe in miracles. The deistic God is inaccessible, remote, and not directly involved. He does not, and will not, intervene in our lives.

Thomas Jefferson believed there is a God but did not believe in miracles. To make Scripture match reality as he perceived it, Jefferson got out his Bible, took a pair of scissors, and cut out every reference to the supernatural in the four Gospels. Then he published his own version of them, which is still in print today, known as *The Jefferson Bible* (or *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*). Because he removed every miracle account, his book ends with these words: "There laid they Jesus, and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed"¹ (no mention is made of the resurrection).

Pantheism

The pantheistic view of life is popular today, though (like deism) the term *pantheism* is not often used in conversation. It comes from a combination of two other words: *pan*, which means "all," and *theos*, which means "God." Together they describe a worldview maintaining that everything we see—every animal, insect, tree, stream, person—is imbued with a divine god-force. So nature itself and every living creature is, in essence, part of God. One expression that illustrates pantheism is this: "There is a god, and you are him."

However, the god of pantheism is not a god to whom you pray or with whom you have a relationship. *You* are god. *We all* are.

Many saw the movie *Avatar*—a box-office smash from its time of release—primarily because of the new (at the time) 3-D technology. Relatively few seemed to recognize, though, that the film's basic worldview is pantheism.

The movie is about the Na'vi, a tall, blue-skinned tribe who live in very large trees and worship a nature goddess they call Eywa. Eywa inhabits the trees, the streams, and all of the forest. Na'vi goddess-worship actually is the worship of nature; Eywa's force flows through every aspect of creation. From the pantheistic perspective, all of nature is part of "God."

Many Americans have adhered to some form of pantheism, especially since the 1960s, when what became known as the New Age Movement became popular. Among the convictions of New Agers is that they, like the rest of nature, are part of God and that a time is coming when humankind will take its final evolutionary step (or leap). This will not be a biological transformation but a spiritual one; it will be achieved when we all recognize that we are god. Many who claim to have this godlike force within are waiting for the rest of us to come to the same conclusion and at last usher in an age of universal love, harmony, and peace.

Theism

Theism, the final worldview we'll examine,² contends that there is one and only one eternal God who created the entire universe—everything that exists. The universe is not eternal; it has not always been here. Rather, it came into being "in the beginning," when God spoke it into existence.

It's clear from the start that theism contradicts the three previously defined views. Theism contradicts atheism in denying that the universe is eternal and in rejecting the idea that life, including humankind, evolved from primordial soup by chance via the blind laws of nature. Theists assert that we are a unique act of a Creator God who *began* the universe.

Theism contradicts deism in affirming that God has remained actively involved in human matters; he did not create the universe and then walk away. We can pray to him for help and guidance. He can choose to answer prayers by natural or by supernatural (miraculous) means.

Theism stands in contradiction to pantheism in that the theistic God is not man, and man does not share in God's nature. God created man, but he did not create man out of himself. In contrast to pantheism, "There is a God, and we are *not* him." He is outside of us. We are not God and, theists believe, will never become God.

A Summary of Four Key Worldviews

1. *Atheism*: The universe is eternal. There is no God and no miracles.
2. *Deism*: The God who created the universe is absent and inactive. There are no miracles.
3. *Pantheism*: God made the universe out of himself. There are no miracles, since God is in all; all is part of God.
4. *Theism*: God created everything that is by speaking it into existence; he is an active God who has done, can do, and will do miracles.

We begin to see substantial contradictions between these worldviews. Does God exist or not? If he does exist, does he miraculously intervene in human affairs? Did he create us out of himself or out of nothing? Are we part of God, or are we a separate creative act that does not share in God's nature?

For each contradiction, someone is right and someone is wrong, for reality's unbreakable law of noncontradiction

says that contradictory truth claims cannot both be true at the same time and in the same sense.

Nothing is as important as what you think or believe about God, for this will determine what you believe about truth, about where we came from, about why we're here, and about what happens to us after we die.

So we'll be comparing these worldviews and asking, "Which best explains the real world?" Which best matches the evidence we'll examine in the chapters ahead?

God Isn't Santa Claus

There is one more popular view of God that should be mentioned. Some people think of God somewhat like Santa: You climb onto his lap, tell him you've been good, and then say what you want him to do for you.

If you're a "good" person, Santa (God) will give you what you want. If you are not so good, he'll tell you to try harder and come back next year.

Many people think if they're "good," God will give them what they request, treat them well, and eventually bring them to heaven (that's where "good" people go).

The problem is, this does not match the biblical God—a holy God whose standard we cannot meet on our own. God *doesn't* give us what we deserve, and for that we can be eternally thankful. We pray to him (and love him and serve him) because *he* is good, not because we are.

Three Basic Arguments for God's Existence

We will consider three primary lines of evidence, each of which provides support for the existence of a theistic God.

1. Science provides us with evidence that the universe had a beginning. Therefore, Someone, or Something, must have brought it into existence; that is, *began* it. The key question is: “Who or what brought the universe into existence?” (Someone/Something, Who/What are capped when indicating or referring to an ultimate being, i.e., God.)
2. Science also provides ample evidence that the universe was designed. Only a personal being, or a designer, can design something. Thus, if Someone or Something designed the universe, Who or What designed it?
3. There’s evidence too for the existence of a universal moral law. As all laws must be made or passed by a lawmaker, we must ask: Who is the lawmaker that made or passed the universal moral law?

We’ll consider the first argument now and the other two in chapter 4.

A Beginning: First Argument for God’s Existence

The first argument for the existence of God can be stated like this:

1. Everything that had a beginning, had a Beginner (or Causer).
2. The universe had a beginning (it’s not eternal).
3. Therefore, the universe had a Beginner (or Causer).

If the first two points are true, the third point is automatically true.

First Point: Everything That Had a Beginning Had a Beginner

One of the most basic laws of science is known as the law of causality. This law says, essentially, “Anything that had a *beginning* was caused by something outside of itself.” Another way to say this is that if something had a beginning, then Someone/Something had to bring it into existence. If we can show that the universe had a beginning, then the law of causality will demand that a Beginner of some kind created or caused it. This principle is so foundational that one of history’s most famous skeptics, David Hume, said, “I never asserted so absurd a proposition as that anything might arise without a cause.”³

The following all demonstrate how this law operates: animals, insects, trees, plants, chairs, books, ships, and jet airplanes all had a beginning; they all have a cause. Vehicles are caused by a variety of people who plan, design, produce, and assemble them. Computers are caused by people who design hardware and write software. Buildings are caused by architects, contractors, carpenters, and many others. It’s not difficult to come up with a very long list of things that had a beginning and are therefore subject to the law of causality that requires a beginner/causer for each.

Think about the song from *The Sound of Music* that tells us nothing can come from nothing. *Why* can’t something come from nothing? Because *nothing* is just that—it’s nothing! Something, or Someone, must begin or cause everything that comes into being.

The law of causality proves our first point: Everything that had a beginning had a Beginner (or Causer).