

13

THE CLOSING ARGUMENT

The final step in the trial of a lawsuit, before the case is submitted to the jury, is the closing argument. The lawyers are permitted to address the jury directly, reviewing the evidence, and attempting to show the strength of their case and the weakness of the opponent's case. The length of the argument is limited by the judge, and also by the jury's endurance, so it is not possible to rehash every piece of evidence in a long trial. Instead the skillful attorney will remember the main issues in the case, and will focus on the ultimate purpose of the trial.

In this study of Christian Evidences, our purpose has been to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the claims of Christianity are true. The key issues upon

which we have concentrated are, first, that God does exist; that the spiritual realm is real; and that supernatural events do occur; and then that the Bible is the inspired Word of God; and that Jesus is the Son of God. We have considered many converging lines of evidence which point to the truth of each of the issues. Instead of restating all of these lines of evidence here, our closing argument will be organized by an outline that will be easy to remember and that will emphasize the strength of the case for Christianity, and the weakness of the opposition. The main points in our argument are:

1. Christianity tells us the truth about the universe.
2. Christianity tells us the truth about human beings.
3. Christianity is the truth.

Helping the jury to see the weakness of the opponent's case is a necessary part of a good closing argument. As pointed out in Lesson Two, non-Christians include a wide variety of religions, cults, and "isms". It is impractical to deal with each of these because of the great number of them, and unnecessary because it is only those faiths which can be broadly grouped under secular humanism, that have made a serious attempt to disprove Christianity. Although they may differ on some details, it is fair to include atheists, agnostics, pantheists, evolutionists, deists, and others of like-mind, under secular humanism, because the results they achieve are virtually the same.

Also, in discussing the doctrines and beliefs of humanism, it seems fair to use those that have been set forth in Humanist Manifestos I and II. It is recognized that not every humanist agrees with every detail of these two documents, but these documents do set

forth what are probably the most widely held beliefs of humanism. And by quoting directly from Manifestos I and II, we can avoid misstating the claims of our opponent. With this understanding, we proceed with the closing argument.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE UNIVERSE

The Origin of the Universe

The Bible begins with this simple yet marvelously profound statement: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In just ten words, seven of them of one syllable, we are told all that we need know about the origin of the physical universe. By one stupendous, supernatural act, God brought into existence from non-existence, time, space, and mass/energy. Of course, we do not understand how He did it. We do not need to understand it. Christians recognize that God's ways are so far above man's ways that it would be foolish arrogance to expect to understand all that He does. What do our opponents have to say about the origin of the physical universe? Humanist Manifesto I also deals with the problem with about ten words: "Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created." Apparently, by the term "self-existing" they mean that the physical universe has no origin — it has always been here.

This theory that the universe has always been here, was refuted back in Lesson Three. We saw that to deny the existence of the supernatural, and yet claim that something exists without beginning, is inconsistent and unreasonable. Anything that exists without beginning is supernatural. Furthermore, the second

law of thermodynamics refutes the idea that the universe is “self-existing.” This is the law that tells us that the universe is running down — that energy is being dissipated into space and becoming unusable. Thus the universe had a beginning and is coming to an end. The universe is not eternal. Only the supernatural God is eternal.

The idea of a “self-existing” universe was not satisfying to anyone, including humanists, so Humanist Manifesto II handled the problem differently. It says, “We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural; it is either meaningless or irrelevant to the question of the survival and fulfillment of the human race. As non-theists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity.”

The dilemma of humanism is obvious. The whole idea and purpose of this faith is to make man the highest thing in the universe — to “begin with humans not God.” In order to do this, humanists must eliminate the supernatural, because if the supernatural exists, then something exists that is higher than man. Yet, they cannot deny the existence of the universe, and they cannot conceive of any natural means of bringing the universe into existence. So they dispose of the whole problem by declaring that it is “meaningless or irrelevant.”

What a strange position to take. Humanists espouse a religion that purports to show people how to live purposeful lives, yet they assert that it makes no difference whether or not there exists a supernatural Creator who placed us here for a purpose. To a non-humanist it seems that nothing could be more meaningful and relevant “to the question of the survival and fulfillment of the human race” than the

existence of a supernatural God who is our Creator.

The physical universe is composed of vast reaches of space and contains vast quantities of mass/energy. Christianity tells us that all this had a supernatural beginning – created by a supernatural God. This view is in perfect harmony with the laws of nature, and is satisfying to human reason. Humanism, unable to find any natural means for bringing the universe into existence, avoids the problem by declaring it irrelevant. On this great question, “Where did the universe come from?”, a question so basic and so obvious that it occurs even to small children, the opposition utterly fails. Christianity gives the only satisfactory answer we can imagine. Humanism attempts to sweep the issue under the rug.

The Origin of Life

But in seeking the truth about the universe, we must deal not only with the origin of the mass/energy, space, and time that make up the physical universe, but also with the origin of life. Christianity tells us that God is the author of life. This agrees with the laws of nature that say that all life on earth comes from prior life. Life came from the living God, who endowed it with the ability to produce more life.

Humanist Manifesto I states that, “Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he emerged as the result of a continuous process.” *Manifesto II*, just assumes that evolution is a proven law of science by declaring, “. . . science affirms that the human species is an emergence from natural evolutionary forces.”

Evolution is a vital doctrine of secular humanism. If man got here by special creation, then the highest

thing in the universe is not man, but his Creator, and the basic belief of secular humanism is gone. Thus, humanists are stuck with evolution. As the evidence against evolution continues to mount, it is obvious that evolution is becoming an embarrassment to humanism. The weakness of their position is exposed by the fact that, unable to answer the evidence for creationism, they have been forced to turn to the Federal Courts to suppress the teaching of creation science in the public schools. For people who espouse the free exchange of ideas, and profess to abhor censorship of any kind, this is indeed a bitter pill to swallow.

As shown in Lessons Six and Seven, the evidence against evolution is overwhelming. We saw the absurdity of the supposed spontaneous generation of life in a "prebiotic soup", and of the supposed sudden appearance of whole new species as "hopeful monsters." We saw that the fossil record, which evolutionists had counted on for their main support, has instead testified against them. We considered instinctive behavior so complex and bizarre, as to preclude any possibility that it developed by accident. And we heard Dr. Michael Denton, the molecular biologist, tell how this new science, which evolutionists had eagerly hoped would support their cause, has also become a witness for the other side.

Secular humanism cannot explain the origin of the physical universe. Instead, they attempt to dismiss this vitally important issue, by saying it is irrelevant. Secular humanism cannot explain the origin of life. Since 1859, they have expended enormous resources attempting to explain life by supposed evolutionary processes. They have failed. Today the theory of evolution is weaker and far less believable than when

Darwin first propounded it.

Christianity explains the origin of the universe in the only reasonable and satisfactory way. God did something that is beyond our ability to comprehend. He brought the whole vast universe into existence from non-existence. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." And Christianity explains the origin of life in the only reasonable and satisfactory way. Life did not arise accidentally from dead chemicals. The living God is the Author of life. Truly, Christianity tells us the truth about the universe.

THE TRUTH ABOUT HUMAN BEINGS

The Christian View of Man

The truth which Christianity tells us about human beings consists of two basic facts. First, human beings are created in the image of God:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (Gen. 1:26-27).

Since God is Spirit (John 4:24), being created in His image means that man also is spirit. Throughout the Bible, human beings are treated as spiritual beings. The physical body is not all there is to us. We are both body and spirit, and the spirit lives on after the body dies.

The other basic truth which the Bible tells us about human beings is that we have fallen from our original good condition. Part of being human is having a free

will, that is, the power to choose, and beginning with the first humans, we have chosen to rebel against our Creator. By thus cutting ourselves off from God, we have allowed evil influence into our lives and have corrupted human nature:

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned . . . (Rom. 5:12).

As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one" (Rom. 3:10-12).

The great theme of the Bible is the story of man's redemption from this lost condition. Even though his nature is corrupted, man is still created in the image of God, and thus, is of great value in the eyes of God, and is worth saving.

The Humanist View of Man

Secular humanism paints a very different picture of man. *Humanist Manifesto I* has this to say:

Second: Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as the result of a continuous process.

Third: Holding an organic view of life, humanists find that the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected.

Humanist Manifesto II states it this way:

But we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species. . . .

Modern science discredits such historic concepts as the "ghost in the machine" and the "separable soul." Rather, science affirms that the human species is an emergence from natural evolutionary forces. As far as we know, the total personality is a function of the biological organism transacting in a social and cultural context.

Thus, humanism tells us that a human being is nothing but an accidental combination of chemicals. By chance, some chemicals in some ancient sea came alive, and through a long series of random accidents, became human beings. There was no intelligence behind any of this; no one planned any of it; there was no meaning or purpose to any of it.

The logical result of the humanist view of man is determinism – the doctrine that we do not choose or control what we do because our actions are entirely determined by external forces. If we are nothing but chemicals, there is no one there to make choices or to control what we do. Our behavior is nothing but chemical reactions.

Francis A. Schaeffer presented the contrast between the two views of human beings, as follows: *Death in the City*, Inter-Varsity Press, 1969.

Increasingly educated, twentieth-century men tend to emphasize some sort of determinism. Usually it is one of two kinds: chemical determinism (such as the Marquis de Sade put forward and as Francis Crick maintains today) or psychological determinism (such as that emphasized by Freud and those who follow him). In the former, man is a pawn of chemical forces. In the latter, every decision that a man makes is already determined on the basis of what has occurred to him in the past. So whether it is chemical determinism or psychological determinism, man is no longer

responsible for what he is or does, nor can he be active in making significant history. Man now is no more than part of a cosmic machine.

The Bible's view of man could not be more different. Romans 1:21-22 says, "When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their reasoning, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise they became fools." The whole emphasis of these verses is that man has known the truth and deliberately turned away from it. But if that is so, then man is wonderful: he can really influence significant history. Since God has made man in His own image, man is not caught in the wheels of determinism. Rather man is so great that he can influence history for himself and for others, for this life and the life to come.

Which View of Man Fits Reality?

Although the humanistic belief that human beings are nothing but accidental combinations of chemicals, leads inexorably to chemical determinism, humanistic philosophers (with the exception of the Marquis de Sade) do not live that way. In fact, sometimes they are unable even to talk that way. *Humanist Manifesto II* contains this statement:

Fifth: The preciousness and dignity of the individual person is a central humanist value. Individuals should be encouraged to realize their own creative talents and desires. We reject all religious, ideological, or moral codes that denigrate the individual, suppress freedom, dull intellect, dehumanize personality. We believe in maximum individual autonomy consonant with social responsibility. Although science can account for the causes of behavior, the possibilities of individual freedom of choice exist in human life and should be increased.

That certainly doesn't sound like they are talking

about accidental combinations of chemicals. What could be so precious and dignified about a couple of dollars worth of chemicals? And how do chemicals realize creative talents or exercise social responsibility? If we are nothing but chemicals, how can "possibilities of individual freedom of choice" exist? Although humanists say that they reject such concepts as the "ghost in the machine", even they are forced to think of humans as more than chemicals, because the humanistic view of man just does not fit reality.

Human beings are precious and do possess dignity, for one reason only – we are created in the image of God. Human beings can realize creative talents and can exercise social responsibility, for one reason only – God gave us those abilities. We can be creative because He gave us a sense of beauty, and we can be responsible because He gave us the power to choose, and a conscience to tell us we ought choose what we believe to be right. None of these things belong to chemicals. They are attributes of spiritual beings, created in the image of God.

According to the scientific method, a theory that does not test out is discarded. By that standard, the humanistic view of human beings should be thrown out. It does not fit what we see in ourselves and in others. But the Christian view of man, created in the image of God, and thus capable of great goodness, but fallen, and thus often guilty of great meanness, fits perfectly with what we see in ourselves and in others.

Again the opposition fails to give a consistent and believable answer to a simple and basic question, "What is a human being?" The humanistic-evolutionary doctrine that life appeared by chance in an ancient chemical broth, and developed by chance into human

beings, can only mean that humans are nothing but chemicals and human behavior is nothing but chemical reactions. But that doctrine does not fit reality. We all can see in ourselves and in others, attributes that do not belong to chemicals. We know that the real person is something more. The real person is the God-given spirit. Christianity tells us the truth about human beings.

CHRISTIANITY IS THE TRUTH

We have seen so far in this closing argument, that Christianity, speaking through the Bible, tells us the truth about the universe and tells us the truth about human beings. "Where did the universe come from?" and "What is a human being?" are perhaps the two most basic questions that have puzzled philosophers through the centuries. Humanism, despite all the education and scholarship of its leaders, has failed to provide believable answers. Christianity gives answers that are entirely satisfactory to both reason and science. Surely there is a strong presumption that a religion that can do that is true.

But there remains a great deal more evidence to support the truth of Christianity. The evidence that makes Christianity absolutely unique, that makes it the true, and only true, religion from God, is the evidence showing that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and the evidence showing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

The Bible is the Word of God

As we saw in Lessons Three and Four, it is possible

to know many things about God from reason and nature. But we know a great deal more about Him because He has revealed it to us. He has intervened in human history, He has revealed His will in various ways, and He has even come here in human form. As is reasonable to expect, God has caused all this to be written down so we would have a permanent record of His revelation, and so we would have true and objective standards to guide our lives and worship. This written record, of course, is the Bible.

Since the Bible records God's dealing with man and His intervention in human affairs, it records many supernatural events. An ill-founded bias against anything supernatural has caused many people to reject the Bible. We have already seen that God does exist, that it is impossible to explain the universe without Him, and since He does exist, that supernatural events are possible. Furthermore, we have seen that the supernatural is probable, in fact necessary, because, if men are to accept God's revelation, it must be authenticated by some evidence of God's power, that is, by miracles.

When we put aside the unreasonable bias against miracles, and look at the Bible with open minds, we see the most remarkable Book the world has ever known. We note first that the Bible repeatedly claims to be from God. Written by some forty different men over a span of at least fifteen centuries, we marvel at its unity of theme and purpose. We are surprised at the Bible's frankness in recording the weakness and misconduct of its greatest heroes. We are impressed by its amazing brevity and lack of coloring. We recognize the mark of true accounts in the Bible's undesignated coincidences and record of familiar details.

When we compare the Bible to contemporary historical records, we find only confirmation, no contradictions. We note that the Bible not only avoids the scientific errors of other ancient writings, but that it actually anticipated many scientific discoveries by many centuries. We are astonished by the numerous archeological discoveries of fragile artifacts that have been preserved for two or three thousand years, and which confirm statements found in the Bible.

We find conclusive proof that the Bible is from God in the "prophetic word made more sure." Prophecies containing minute detail and made a thousand or more years before being exactly fulfilled, could only have come from the mind of God. One such fulfilled prophecy is proof of divine intervention. The Bible contains many. Most of all, we are convinced of the inspiration of the Bible by Jesus, the central character of the Bible, who put His stamp of approval on this great Book.

All these converging lines of evidence point to one vital fact — the Bible is the inspired Word of God. The Bible, the only book that tells us the truth about the universe, and the only book that tells us the truth about human beings, is from God, and therefore is completely true and infallible. It follows, because the Bible tells us so, that Christianity is the truth.

Jesus is the Son of God

The central claim of Christianity is that God came to earth in human form; taught the most wonderful teachings humans have ever heard; demonstrated God's love and authenticated His teachings by performing many miracles; offered Himself as the Lamb of God, the perfect sacrifice for human sin; and then

gave us the eternal victory by His resurrection from the dead. If this claim is true, then the central claim of Christianity is also the central event of all history. Nothing else can even remotely approach it in importance.

God, in His wisdom, gave us plenty of evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that all of the claims of Christianity are true. The evidence is overwhelming that Jesus is the Son of God. Without a doubt, He has had far more effect on human history and the lives of people, than anyone else who has lived on earth. If He were only a peasant carpenter, without formal education, without social standing, without ever holding any office or position of authority, merely going about in a small area teaching for three short years, and then executed as a common criminal, how could He have had such a profound effect on the human race? He claimed to be the Son of God and made many statements that make sense only if He is God. Thus, it is correct to say that He was either dishonest, or deranged, or what He claimed to be. But He was far too good to be dishonest, and far too wise to be deranged.

In Lesson Ten we saw that the Old Testament contains many prophecies concerning the coming Messiah, which were exactly fulfilled in the life of Jesus. These prophecies, made many centuries before Christ, contain such minute detail as to make accidental fulfillment impossible. Some of them were fulfilled by His enemies, making deliberate fulfillment impossible. Consider again the prophecies concerning Christ discussed in Lesson Ten. Remember, these are only a few of the approximately three hundred such prophecies in the Old Testament. The only reasonable explana-

tion is that the prophecies came from the mind of God, and the One who fulfilled them is the Son of God.

Fulfilled prophecy alone is sufficient to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Jesus is the Son of God. His matchless teaching, far above anything produced by human minds, and the many miracles which He performed during His ministry, are sufficient to prove that He is the Christ. Remember, the apostles preached about these things while thousands of people who had witnessed them, were still alive and could have contradicted them had the apostle's claims been false.

Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know (Acts 2:22).

But the greatest proof of all remains. It is fair to say that the resurrection of Christ from the dead, is alone enough to prove all of the claims of Christianity, because His resurrection proved Him to be, as even doubting Thomas cried out, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). Thus, we can rely on everything Jesus said as being the perfect truth. And we can rely on everything the Bible says, because Jesus gave the Bible His approval.

Of course, it is no accident that we have such overwhelming proof of the truth of the resurrection. God does not call us to a blind faith, but to an intelligent faith. He wants our faith to be firmly grounded on sound evidence and historical fact. So, in addition to all the other evidence which He has given us, He made absolutely sure that no honest seeker for the

truth need remain in doubt, by giving us sure proof of the resurrection.

God gave us a large number of competent, credible, witnesses who are clearly worthy of our belief. He left for us ample evidence of the amazing transformation of the lives of the early Christians, which could have been caused only by a risen Lord. He left for us the empty tomb, just outside the gates of Jerusalem, a problem that unbelievers have never solved. We have considered the conversion of thousands of Christ's former enemies, intelligent men and women who were there at the very time and place of the resurrection, and who never would have made the great sacrifices involved in becoming Christians, unless they were convinced beyond a reasonable doubt that Christ is risen.

We have looked at the writings of secular historians and at artifacts discovered by archaeologists that confirm the resurrection. God gave us the Church which, with its worship and practices, established immediately after the resurrection, is a living memorial to Christ and His resurrection. We have examined the Biblical accounts of the resurrection and have seen that they bear all of the marks of true records. And we have seen that Christ arose according to the Scriptures, according to Old Testament prophecy and according to His own repeated predictions, made in the presence of many who there to witness the fulfillment.

All of these converging lines of good sound evidence point inescapably to one great fact — Jesus did arise from the dead and thus He is the Christ the Son of God. And this great fact of the resurrection is itself a powerful line of evidence which, together with all

the other lines of evidence considered in this study, converge to prove that Christianity is the true religion from God.

A favorite statement often made by lawyers in their closing arguments to the jury is, "You were not required to leave your common sense behind you when you came into this courtroom." By this they mean that there is nothing illogical about the elements of proof, but that it is all based on good common sense. Likewise, it is not necessary to abandon your common sense when you consider the claims of Christianity, for those claims are amply supported by sound evidence and the facts of history.

The Bible contains many wonderful promises pertaining both to this life and to the life to come: that Christians can rejoice under any kind of circumstances; that all things work for good for those who love God; that Jesus came that we might have eternal life; that Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us; that in the coming ages, the all-wise, all-powerful, God is going to show the riches of His grace in kindness to us. How grateful we should be that we do not have to abandon our common sense in order to lay hold of these promises. We do not have to take an irrational leap of faith. God has given us the evidence. Christianity is the truth.

Study Questions

1. Why does proof of the truth of Christianity necessarily disprove all other religions and all cults?
2. What facts show that secular humanism is the main opposition to Christianity in America today?

3. Why is it inconsistent to deny the existence of the supernatural, and yet to claim that the universe is "self-existing?"

4. Why have humanists now taken the position that the existence or non-existence of anything supernatural is "meaningless or irrelevant?"

5. Why is evolution a vital doctrine of humanism?

6. What two basic truths does Christianity tell us about human beings?

7. What is chemical determinism and why does the humanist view of man lead to this?

8. How does the humanistic view of man compare to reality?

9. Why is the resurrection, even by itself, enough to prove all the claims of Christianity?

10. Why is the idea of an "irrational leap of faith" contrary to the teaching of the Bible?