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THE ISSUES AND THE OPPOSITION

The trial of a lawsuit is preceded by careful preparation. The rules of procedure permit each party to “discover” a great deal about his opponent’s case. In this way the parties can identify the issues that must be presented to the jury, and can learn just who the opposition is, and just what claims the opposition makes. To avoid distracting the jury, a skillful attorney will weed out unnecessary details, and concentrate his efforts on those issues that really count.

Our study of Christian Evidences should be preceded by similar preparation. We need to define the important issues, and we need to identify the opposition. Who are the people who reject Christianity, and what do they offer in its stead? What evidence will we

need to prove our case?

MOST PEOPLE REJECT CHRISTIANITY

The first thing we notice about the opposition could be very discouraging. Without a doubt the overwhelming majority of mankind do not believe the claims of Christianity. Furthermore, included among the unbelievers are most of the better educated people in the world today. Certainly this would cause Christians to question their own convictions, except for two very important facts:

1. Jesus told us it would be this way:

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it (Matt. 7:13-14).

Thus, despite the overwhelming evidence, which demonstrates the truth of Christianity, and despite Christianity's offer of rich blessings to all who will come, Jesus predicted that most people would reject it. The fact that this amazing prophecy has been clearly fulfilled, shows the divine foreknowledge of Jesus, and therefore strengthens, rather than weakens, Christian faith.

2. All this unbelief is based more on prejudice, emotion, and lack of knowledge, than it is on reason and sound evidence. And this is true of even the most highly educated unbelievers. It is not only possible, it is probable, that those graduating from most of the great universities in the world today, will have little

knowledge of the evidence for the truth of Christianity. Furthermore, much of this ignorance of the evidence for Christianity is deliberate. Again, Jesus, with His divine foreknowledge, predicted that it would be this way:

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil (John 3:19).

Light is knowledge, and darkness is ignorance. Even well educated men and women avoid knowledge that might condemn the way they choose to live. Jesus said the evidence is readily available to anyone who chooses to do God's will:

If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own (John 7:17).

This is the basic cause of unbelief. In Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, we will consider the evidence that has been offered against Christianity, and will see its obvious weakness. In the other chapters in this book we will see the strength of the evidence in favor of Christianity. There is plenty of proof, but people do not want to believe. They seek to escape from God and His judgment because they do not want to change their life style. It suits their purpose for the world to have no meaning.

Aldous Huxley, in *Ends and Means*, Harper and Brothers, 1937, candidly admitted as much:

I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning; consequently assumed it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for

this assumption.

Most ignorance is vincible ignorance. We don't know because we don't want to know. It is our will that decides how and upon what subjects we shall use our intelligence. Those who detect no meaning in the world generally do so because, for one reason or another, it suits their books that the world should be meaningless (p. 312).

The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics. He is also concerned to prove that there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do, or why his friends should not seize political power and govern in the way that they find most advantageous to themselves (p. 315).

This is not to say that all unbelievers are bad people. Judged by human standards, many unbelievers are good people. But by God's standards they are rebellious sinners, creatures who defy and deny their own Creator. And the unbelievers philosophy of meaninglessness, that the universe is an accident and man is just a chance combination of chemicals, can lead to great evil. Any unselfishness exhibited by an unbeliever, is done in defiance of the unbeliever's own philosophy. Aldous Huxley in *Ends and Means*, page 313, said this concerning the atheistic philosopher, the Marquis de Sade:

De Sade's philosophy was the philosophy of meaninglessness carried to its logical conclusion. Life was without significance. Values were illusory and ideals merely the inventions of cunning priests and kings. Sensations and animal pleasures alone possessed reality and were alone worth living for. There was no reason why any one should have the slightest consideration for any one else. For those who found rape

and murder amusing, rape and murder were fully legitimate activities. And so on.

UNBELIEF IS EMOTIONAL

Not only is unbelief based on an amazing lack of knowledge, it also has a strong emotional content. Men do not come to the light because they love the darkness. (See John 3:19 above). People do not come to Jesus because they are emotionally attached to their own self-centered life style. They love to think that they are the chance product of evolution, and thus are not accountable to a Creator.

A very recent book, *Darwin on Trial*, Regnery Gateway, Washington, 1991, written by Phillip E. Johnson, professor of law at the University of California at Berkeley, recounts an incident which illustrates the strong emotional character of unbelief. In 1981 the British Museum of Natural History celebrated its centennial by opening a new exhibition on Darwin's theory. After asking the visitor to consider why there are so many different kinds of life, a sign stated, "The exhibition in this hall looks at one possible explanation – the explanation of Charles Darwin." A nearby poster stated that, "Another view is that God created all living things perfect and unchanging."

These seemingly innocent, and obviously true, statements, along with others in a similar vein, elicited a furious response from many prominent scientists. The managers of the museum were accused of having "lost their good sense" and even of giving support to Marxism. In the end the museum was forced to withdraw the offending statements.

Professor Thomas Barnes of the University of Texas, El Paso, told of a revealing incident that occurred on that campus. A lecture on evolution had been advertised, with the assurance that the speaker would answer questions at the end of his talk. Dr. Barnes attended the lecture and began asking questions that revealed obvious fallacies in the theory of evolution. The audience, composed of college teachers and students, became emotionally upset, with expressions of anger toward Dr. Barnes, and some even got up and left the meeting.

In truth, what Dr. Barnes was attending was not a scientific lecture and discussion, but instead a sort of pagan religious revival. The audience became angry because their faith was under attack. They loved the darkness and resented the intrusion of any light. But when unbelievers put aside their prejudice and emotion, and make an honest, intelligent study of the evidence, most will come to the light.

In a book entitled *A Lawyer and the Bible* written by a lawyer named I.H. Linton, the author tells how he encouraged other lawyers to study Christian evidences. Mr Linton stated he had never known of a lawyer who had made a careful, lawyer-like study of this evidence and remained an unbeliever. An English journalist named Frank Morison set out to prove the story of Christ's resurrection was nothing but a myth, but his investigation of the evidence caused him to place his faith in the risen Christ, and he ended up writing *Who Moved the Stone*, affirming the truth of the resurrection.

Many others have had similar experiences. Very few have made a careful, open-minded study of Christian evidences and remained unbelievers. Thus a

Christian's faith should not be threatened by the fact that most do not believe, nor should he be intimidated by the scholarship of some of the unbelievers. A true verdict is not rendered by a jury that refuses to listen to the evidence, or refuses to set aside its prejudices, or that imposes unreasonable standards of proof.

WHAT DO UNBELIEVERS BELIEVE?

In John, Chapter 6, is recorded some difficult teaching which Jesus gave to the crowd, with the following results:

From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God" (John 6:66-69).

Peter asked a good question. If men choose to reject Jesus, to whom shall they go? If men deny the Bible, where will they look for authority? If men turn away from God, where will they find the meaning of life? Those who refuse to believe the claims of Christianity – what do they believe?

Of course, unbelievers do not all believe alike. Some believe in no deity while others believe in a multitude of deities. Non-Christians include the other world religions with millions of followers and hundreds of cults, some with only a few followers. Many in America today, in a desperate search for meaning, have turned to Eastern cults of a pantheistic nature. Recognizing

the impossibility of explaining the universe on purely materialistic grounds, they add a spiritual dimension, but still avoid responsibility by claiming that God is all and all is God.

But to examine the beliefs and fallacies of all these religions and cults, would be to fall into an error that is avoided by any good trial lawyer. We must not become distracted with minor issues and lose sight of our real purpose. We must identify the real opposition so we can meet the real issues head-on. None of the other religions or cults makes any serious attempt or offers any evidence to disprove Christianity. Christianity claims to be the only God-approved religion. Jesus said that no one comes to God except through Him. Thus, if our evidence proves the claims of Christianity to be true, this necessarily disproves all the others.

THE REAL OPPOSITION: SECULAR HUMANISM

Without a doubt, the real opposition to Christianity today; that which would meet Christianity head-on and seek to disprove its claims, can be broadly defined as secular humanism. The numerous "isms" of unbelief can be most accurately grouped under this heading. The preface to the *Humanist Manifesto II* contains this statement:

Many kinds of humanism exist in the contemporary world. The varieties and emphases of naturalistic humanism include "scientific," "ethical," "democratic," "religious," and "Marxist" humanism. Free thought, atheism, agnosticism, skepticism, deism, rationalism, ethical culture, and liberal religion all claim to be heir to the humanist tradition.

While all the adherents to these various "isms" do not agree on every issue, for our purposes it is fair to group them under the broad title of secular humanism. Humanists are an extremely powerful force in America today, having great influence in our educational systems, in our news and entertainment media, in our Federal judiciary, and in other areas of power.

Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer in *A Christian Manifesto*. Crossway Books, Westchester, Illinois, 1982, emphasized the basic and irreconcilable conflict between Christianity and secular humanism in these excerpts from pages 19 to 21:

When I say Christianity is true I mean it is true to total reality — the total of what is, beginning with the central reality, the objective existence of the personal-infinite God. Christianity is not just a series of truths but Truth — Truth about all of reality.

Now let's go over to the other side — to those who hold the materialistic final reality concept. They saw the complete and total difference between the two positions more quickly than Christians. There were the Huxleys, George Bernard Shaw, and many others who understood a long time ago that there are two total concepts of reality and that it was one total reality against the other and not just a set of isolated and separated differences. The *Humanist Manifesto I*, published in 1933, showed with crystal clarity their comprehension of the totality of what is involved.

They understood not only that there were two totally different concepts but that they would bring forth two totally different conclusions, both for individuals and for society. What we must understand is that the two world views really do bring forth with inevitable certainty not only personal differences, but also total differences in regard to society, government, and law.

There is no way to mix these two total world views. They are separate entities that cannot be synthesized.

At pages 112 and 113 of his book, Dr. Schaeffer describes the complete intolerance of humanism toward Christianity, and refers to humanist's efforts to make their world view the only one taught in our public schools:

We must never forget that the humanistic position is an exclusivist, closed system which shuts out all contending viewpoints — especially if these views teach anything other than relative values and standards. Anything which presents absolute truth, values, or standards is quite rightly seen by the humanist to be a total denial of the humanistic position.

As a result the humanistic, material-energy, chance world view is completely intolerant when it presents itself through the political institutions and especially through the schools.

The humanistic, material-energy, chance world view intolerantly uses every form of force at its disposal to make its world view the exclusive one taught in the schools.

It is obvious that humanists recognize Christianity as their chief opposition, and are doing all they can to remove Christian influence from our culture. Through their control of textbook publishing, teacher's colleges, library selection, etc., they have practically eliminated any mention of the vital role of Christianity in our nations history. And our news media and our entertainment industry, who are normally careful to avoid offending any minority group, never hesitate to demean and ridicule the Christian faith. The fact that humanists see Christianity as their real opponent, con-

firms our view that the primary struggle today is between Christianity and secular humanism.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

Having identified secular humanism as the main opponent of Christianity, now in our "pre-trial discovery," we need to define the issues. We can accomplish this by means of "interrogatories" to be answered by our opponent. For our answers, we will look to *Humanist Manifesto II*, published in 1973, and containing what is probably the most modern and most complete statement of the humanist faith. In this document, under the sub-title "religion," are the following:

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.

. . . But we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species. While there is much we do not know, humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.

. . . 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. There is no credible evidence that life survives the death of the body. We continue to exist in

our progeny and in the way that our lives have influenced others in our culture.

From these statements we can define the main issues as follows:

1. The existence of God.

According to the Christian faith, God does exist and He is the Creator of all things. He is eternal, all knowing, all powerful, and everywhere present. He gives purpose to our lives and meaning to the universe.

According to the humanistic faith, God does not exist; evolution is a scientific fact; and the universe has no meaning or purpose other than what we can give to it.

2. The existence of the spiritual realm.

According to the Christian faith, the spirit world does exist, and it is permanent, whereas the physical world is temporary. God is spirit, and by creating man in His own image, He made us spirit, and thus gave us individual worth. The spirit is eternal and lives on after the death of the body.

According to the humanistic faith, there are no spiritual things. Nothing exists except physical mass/energy. Human beings are nothing but the chemicals that make up the body, and nothing survives the death of the body.

3. The existence of supernatural things.

According to the Christian faith, the all-powerful God who created the universe and all of its "natural" laws, can and does intervene in His universe and, when it suits His purpose, does supernatural things.

According to the humanistic faith, supernatural events do not occur. Everything happens in keeping with the ordinary laws of nature.

4. The nature of the Bible.

According to the Christian faith, the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and as such it is completely true and accurate. It is accredited by the supernatural power of God through miracles and fulfilled prophecy.

Since humanism denies the existence of God and supernatural events, it follows that it denies that the Bible is inspired and denies its truth and accuracy.

5. The identity of Jesus.

According to the Christian faith, Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He was actually God in human form, and thus has shown us the true nature of God, rich in mercy and great in His love, and is worthy of our complete trust and confidence.

Since humanism denies the existence of God, it follows that it denies the deity of Jesus. If such a person existed, He was only a human teacher.

These then are the issues to which the evidence must be directed. First will come the evidence to prove that God exists, that the spirit world is real, and that supernatural events do occur. Proof of these issues will lay the groundwork for proof that the Bible is the Word of God and that Jesus is the Son of God.

We will also look at the evidence for the other side, which consists mainly of the opposition's efforts in the field of evolution. Because admission of special creation would force humanists to admit that God exists, they have devoted millions of man hours over the last 130 years in futile attempts to prove the theory of evolution. Because evolution is absolutely essential to the humanistic faith, they cling tenaciously to the theory, and use the Federal courts to maintain evolution's monopoly in our public schools.

Although *Humanist Manifesto II* speaks at great length about tolerance and the free exchange of ideas, humanists act vigorously and ruthlessly to suppress any teaching of creation science in our public schools, thus showing the vital importance of evolution to their faith, and showing their emotional attachment to humanism. Because of its great importance to our case, two full chapters are devoted to the evidence pertaining to evolution.

CONVERGING LINES OF EVIDENCE

Unlike other religions, Christianity may be proved or disproved, because, unlike other religions, Christianity is based on reason and historical fact. As we saw in Chapter One, Christianity invites and welcomes honest examination. In fact, Jesus and His apostles took the initiative in presenting evidence to prove the claims of Christianity.

Since we are dealing with questions of fact, the highest standard of proof possible is proof beyond a reasonable doubt, which is the highest standard required in a court of law. Lawyers seek to meet this standard by presenting converging lines of evidence, that is, by presenting as many different lines of evidence as possible, all of which point to the same fact.

How this works can be illustrated by considering the evidence in a typical burglary case. The victims are a rural couple who work in town. Upon return from work one evening, they find the back door of their home has been pried open. Missing are a 21 inch, Motorola television in a maple cabinet, and a General Electric micro-wave oven. The serial numbers are

unknown. The pry mark on the door frame is $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches wide and contains red paint marks. A neighbor saw an older model, green pickup in the victims driveway on the day of the burglary. Make and model are unknown, but he did notice a large dent in the left fender and rust on the hood.

The sheriff remembers that defendant owns an older model, green pickup, and going to defendant's home sees the pickup in defendant's driveway. There is a large dent in the left fender and there is rust on the hood. This is important evidence pointing to defendant, but is not enough to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. There are many older model, green pickups, and it is reasonable to believe that others may have large dents in the left fender and rust on the hood.

In the bed of defendant's pickup the sheriff sees a red pry bar. Its blade is $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches wide. Here is a second line of evidence pointing to the defendant. By itself it is not very strong, but taken together with the first line of evidence, it is more significant. It is reasonable to believe that very few people in the area own older model green pickups with large dents in the left fender and rust on the hood, and also own red pry bars with $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch blades. Still this should not be enough to find guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

On defendant's back porch, the sheriff sees a 21 inch, Motorola television in a maple cabinet. The victims say it looks like their television. The defendant says some man whose name he does not know left it there for safe keeping. The sheriff finds a used furniture store in a neighboring town where defendant sold a General Electric micro-wave oven on the morning after the burglary. The victims say it looks like

their oven. The defendant says the same unknown man gave it to him for keeping his television. He doesn't know when the man will be back.

Note the cumulative effect of these four lines of evidence. Taken together, they are sufficient to prove the defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The total is much more than the sum of the parts. In this study, look for converging lines of evidence pointing to the truth of all the issues listed above, and pointing ultimately to the truth of Christianity. You will find far more than four and thus a far greater cumulative weight of evidence. With an open mind, ask yourself if all these different lines of evidence, pointing inescapably to this great fact – Christianity is true – are not proof beyond a reasonable doubt.

Study Questions

1. Give two reasons why Christians need not be discouraged by the fact that most people do not believe the claims of Christianity.
2. Why do highly educated people often reject Christianity?
3. What do John 3:19 and 7:17 tell us about unbelief?
4. Why do some people choose to believe that life has no meaning?
5. What is the logical conclusion of the philosophy of meaninglessness?
6. What is the usual result when unbelievers make an honest, open-minded study of Christian evidences?
7. What is the real opposition to Christianity in America today and how have they become so powerful?
8. What are the main issues to be proved by Christian

evidences?

9. Why is evolution vitally important to secular humanism?
10. What is the significance of converging lines of evidence?

