

## Chapter I

# Why Study Christian Evidences?

### Introduction

The purpose of this book is to survey in systematic and comprehensive fashion the “many infallible proofs” of the unique truth and authority of biblical Christianity, together with a refutation of its alleged fallacies and a reconciliation of its alleged discrepancies. It will be seen that, not only is there no mistake or contradiction in the Bible, but also there are innumerable evidences of its divine inspiration and authority. Not only are there no legitimate objections to a true Christian theology, but rather there are overwhelming evidences that Christianity is uniquely and completely true.

As a matter of fact, the entire subject of evidences is almost exclusively the domain of *Christian* evidences. Other religions depend on subjective experience and blind faith, tradition and opinion. Christianity stands or falls upon the objective reality of gigantic supernatural events in history and the evidences that they really happened. This fact in itself is an evidence of its truth.

### Definitions

The terms “apologetics” and “evidences,” as they relate to the Christian faith, are often used more or less interchangeably. In the formal sense, however, the first is the broader of the two terms as understood by theologians. Apologetics involves the systematic scientific defense of the Christian faith in all its aspects against the intellectual attacks of its adversaries. There are various philosophical systems of apologetics,

each attempting to build a logical defense of Christianity upon its own specific or implied presuppositions.

That aspect of apologetics which is more positive and objective, setting forth concrete reasons for accepting the Bible as God's word and Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, is what is commonly understood as the field of Christian evidences.

This book does not deal with the various systems of philosophical apologetics. These are important in theological studies, especially at the seminary level, but our concern here is with practical and factual evidences supporting the Bible and the Christian faith. This approach should produce at least three very important and practical results.

1. It will confirm and solidify the faith of those who read it, enabling them to withstand the attacks of both rationalistic and irrationalistic unbelief.
2. It should prepare them to witness more knowledgeably and effectively to people of the present generation, influenced as they have been with the pervasive attitudes of skepticism and unbelief that are so characteristic today.
3. It will equip them to maintain a clear and uncompromising stand on the full integrity of God and His Word under all circumstances, despite the pressures of modern life.

### **Reasons for Studying Christian Evidences**

Many people in professedly Christian circles today advocate an almost completely subjective approach to the discovery of Christian truth. Believing that the Bible is not really reliable in its traditional literal and historical sense, they feel the religious experience must be realized either through some sort of subjective "encounter" with Christ or else through involvement in social action movements. The emphasis is on "relevance" and "fulfillment," rather than truth.

Nevertheless, paraphrasing C.S. Lewis, the only really important question is not whether it works, but whether it's true! The criteria of feeling and personal satisfaction are highly unreliable as indices of truth. There are many false systems of belief (e.g., Christian Science, Spiritism, Buddhism, etc. — even Communism!) whose adherents often profess to have found real peace and satisfaction through submission to

them, but this fact hardly proves that all such diverse and contradictory systems are therefore true!

Thus there is a clear need for criteria by which to establish the unique validity of biblical Christianity. A credulous faith in some artificial “Christ” of one’s own imagination, rather than in the real Christ of biblical history, is not that faith by which men are saved.

Further justification for understanding and using Christian evidences is found in the following partial list of reasons:

1. The Bible commands it. Note especially 1 Peter 3:15: “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.” In this verse, the Greek word for “answer” is *apologia*, from which is derived our English word “apologetics.” This same word is translated “defense” in Philippians 1:7 and 1:17, in which Paul indicates his deep concern for the “defense and confirmation of the gospel.” See also Jude 3 (“earnestly contend for the faith”), Colossians 4:6 (“know how ye ought to answer every man”), Titus 1:9 (“convince the gainsayers”), and others.
2. The early Christians consistently used Christian evidences in their witnessing. This was especially true of the evidential value of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 4:33; 1 Cor. 15:1-8, etc.), of the evidence of God in nature (Acts 14:15-17; Rom. 1:20), and of the objective testimony of their own transformed lives (Acts 26:9-22; 1 Tim. 1:12-16; etc.). Whenever they first approached pagans, who neither believed nor even knew the Old Testament Scriptures, they never began by quoting Scripture. Rather, they first approached them in reference to the physical creation and their intuitive knowledge of a primeval Creator (note especially Acts 14:11-17 and Acts 17:18-31).
3. The almost universal climate of skepticism and unbelief today, together with an appalling ignorance of the Bible and Christian doctrine, makes it almost mandatory that a sound exposition of Christian evidences accompany a presentation of the gospel if lasting results are to be obtained. It is often possible

to secure a quick emotional “decision for Christ” without this, but such a person is too often like “he that received the seed into stony places . . . that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended” (Matt. 13:20-21). Indeed, very often it is impossible today even to obtain a hearing for the gospel unless the ground has been prepared by clearing away some of the stones of misinformation about the supposed errors in the Bible and fallacies of Christian doctrine.

4. It is experimentally true that many who today are strong and fruitful Christians were either won to Christ initially in part by the judicious use of Christian evidences or else were materially strengthened in their faith and witness by this means. In our work at the Institute for Creation Research, for example, we have received very large numbers of testimonies — both written and spoken — from men and women and young people who have been led to Christ as a result of our creation seminars or books or other materials, all of which place strong emphasis on literal creationism and Christian evidences in general. Even more have testified that they have been enabled to win many others to Christ, partly through use of our books, videos or periodicals. The Christian faith *does work*, all right, but it works because it is based on *truth*, provides abundant evidence of its truth, and people everywhere need urgently to know that fact. On the other hand, those Christians who rely exclusively on their personal feelings and experiences in their belief in Christ and the Word, too often lose their zeal and settle into the rut of a routine and fruitless Christian life.

### **The Use of Evidences**

While emphasizing the importance of knowing and using the evidences of Christianity, it is important to insert a few words of caution. If one is frequently in the arena of debate and polemics, there is the possibility that he or she may develop an

overly argumentative, too-critical, possibly even bitter and sarcastic, attitude toward opponents. This by all means must be avoided.

Our purpose in using the evidences is not to win arguments but to win souls, and also to win a more favorable intellectual environment for the presentation of the gospel. Many of the Scriptures that enjoin the defense of the faith also give this same caution: “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and with fear” (1 Pet. 3:15). “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Col. 4:6). “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves” (2 Tim. 2:24-25).

Skill at persuasion and argumentation is no substitute for prayer and sincere concern for souls, and certainly no substitute for the use of the Word of God itself. At the same time, it is a serious mistake to teach, as many do, that the use of Christian evidences (in *addition* to prayer and concern and the *judicious* use of Scripture) is unnecessary. In a world of almost universal hostility to Bible Christianity, where unbelief in the Bible is only exceeded by ignorance of the Bible, it is obvious that to most people at least, the testimony of Scripture and personal experience alone (even *that*, of course, can be a form of Christian evidence) will be pointless. Some basis must also be given for believing the Bible to be true and the experience to be more meaningful than experiences offered by other religions.

Those who feel that only the Bible need be used in witnessing rely on the mystical power supposedly resident in the words of Scripture themselves. Charles Haddon Spurgeon’s remark to the effect that the Bible is like a lion which can defend itself is often quoted in support of this belief. However, Spurgeon himself was a strong defender of the faith. He said on one occasion: “We *must* defend the faith; for what would have become of us if our fathers had not maintained it?”

The lassitude of Christians in contending intelligently and earnestly for the faith during the past century especially for the doctrine of special creation, has been one primary cause of the almost universal drift into a modernistic apostasy and a secularized society. This drift has occurred in spite of the