

WHY I BELIEVE: God, Jesus and the Bible  
David A. Renwick  
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Best Summaries of why and what I believe?

- **Tim Keller** (The Reason for God)
- **C.S. Lewis** ("Mere Christianity")

## CHILDHOOD

Baptized as an infant; Sunday School every Sunday -- learned the stories of Jesus  
Summer Christian camp 1965: made a specific commitment to Christ

Key Verses:

- John 3:16 "God so loved the world" . . . and me!
- Hebrews 13:5-6 I will never fail you or forsake you

Daily Bible Reading . . . from age 13 (*Scripture Union Bible reading notes*)

## FIRST INTELLECTUAL WRESTLINGS

1. Is there a god? *Bothered by Science*
2. What kind of a god? *Bothered by "Judgment"*

## IS THERE A GOD? WHAT ABOUT SCIENCE?

Is there /is there not a "maker"? Is this a toss up? If it is . . . then . . .

It seemed more reasonable to me to assume there was . . . but what about science?

- **Is there any room for a god** in a universe that can be explained scientifically?
  - Influence of **Donald McKay**: Prof neuroscience, Keele University (belonged the Ratio Club, that included Alan Turing)
    - Wrote "Clockwork Image; Christianity in a Mechanistic Universe"
    - Challenged the idea that God is primarily proved by the things that cannot be explained ("God of the Gaps"). But what if the gaps shrink?
  - God must be not only the extraordinary but for the ordinary (everything)
    - Universe filled with "clues" (Keller) and rumors (sociologist, Peter Berger in "A Rumor of Angels."
- Other questions: Does science explain everything? Or are there spheres of questions that simply are not within its realm? Like . . .
  1. "Why am I here?" Francis Collins ("The Language of God")
  2. "Why is there something rather than nothing?"
  3. "Where does our sense of 'ought'/moral obligation come from?" see C.S. Lewis in "Mere Christianity")
  4. Or, instead of the problem of evil, what about the problem of good?  
How does goodness arise in an arbitrary and meaningless universe?
  5. *Why is it not reasonable to assume that something else (god!) "runs through everything"* if math runs through the whole universe in all its complexity (i.e., the universe can be mapped/digitized in terms of 1s & 0s)  
[My own major was Applied Math]

6. *Why is life profoundly relational? Why do we need each other – or pets? Why des alone-ness kill us?*  
Could this be because there is a relational Creator God who made us to be relational, in God's image? -- **Francis Schaeffer** ("Death in the City"): God as the Perfect Cosmic Lover we crave, who does not disappoint

## WHAT IS GOD LIKE? IS GOD A JUDGE?

- Is God a god of Eternal Judgment . . . who allows some into heaven and sends the rest to hell?
- If salvation from hell was based on faith in Jesus -- what of those who've never heard? Is this fair?
- Would God send to hell those who had a faith or moral score of 49%?

MY responses

1. **If there is no judgment** ("final justice"),
  - a. then evil and unfairness win; there is no resolution for all the evil in the world.
  - b. Increasingly I see the Biblical understanding of human glory (made in the image of God) and human sin (our constant ability to mess things up), as profoundly correct – see **Reinhold Niebuhr**, "Moral Man and Immoral Society"
2. **If there IS Judgment**, then
  - a. Mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:13)
  - b. God is love (1 John 1:9): "slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (8 times in Scripture)
  - c. God makes no mistakes!
  - d. Jesus' death gives us a glimpse of "the last judgment" – the God who judges is never not the God who dies for us in Jesus

## WHO IS JESUS? DIVINE? UNIQUE?

### Biblical Scholarship:

- Jesus did not claim to be divine but became divine in the minds of his followers (See PBS 1998 documentary: "From Jesus to Christ")
  - The time gap in writing the Gospels? 40-60 years?
  - BUT NOTE: The time gap in writing the "epistles"? For some = 25yrs or less (think year 2000)
- You don't die for a made-up story – the first disciples who knew Jesus were willing to die for him
- You don't die for someone you've been camping with for 2-3 years -- unless there is incredible consistency in their lives!

**1 Peter 2:22-23.**

<sup>22</sup>"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." <sup>23</sup>When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.

- You die for someone who you see dead, and who appears alive again in the body

### Romans 1

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ . . . descended from David according to the flesh<sup>4</sup> and declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness *by resurrection from the dead.*

(NT Wright, *Surprised by Hope*)

### Resurrection of the Body – 1 Corinthians 15

- Anticipated by some Jews for the end of time (Pharisees)
- Not believed at all by some Jews (Sadducees)
- Greeks had no time for anything but the “resurrection” of the human spirit

### Jesus’ Resurrection & Divinity helps make sense of his death --

. . . as a death that is not merely tragic, but on purpose:

### Colossians 1 (Divinity and Death)

<sup>15</sup>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation;  
<sup>16</sup>for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him.  
<sup>17</sup>He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.  
<sup>18</sup>He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.  
<sup>19</sup>For *in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell*,  
<sup>20</sup>and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making *peace through the blood of his cross.*

### IF JESUS IS DIVINE, THEN

- Jesus’ death as atonement for our sins makes sense
  - God did not dump his wrath on anyone other than himself
  - God himself suffered – bore it all for us – in Jesus

### IF JESUS IS DIVINE, THEN . . . one part of the problem of evil is resolved

The incarnation and suffering of Jesus is not an afterthought

→ it is not Plan B, but Plan A

- **Rather: the God who decides to create, and opens the door to evil does not decide to do this without also deciding**
  - **to experience the evil he knows his creatures will suffer,**
  - **and to provide a way that is “right” to save those who wish to be saved**
    - Ephesians 1:3 the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . chose us in Him *before the foundation of the world*
    - 1 Peter 1:19-20 the precious blood of Christ, like a lamb without blemish or spot, foreordained *before the foundation of the world*,
    - Revelation 13:8 the Lamb slain *from the foundation of the world.*

- 2 Timothy 1:9 God saved us and called us . . . not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus *before time began.*
- John 1:1 *In the beginning* was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

## WHAT OF OTHER RELIGIONS?

### If Jesus is Divine, then Jesus is Unique

Q. Is forgiveness of sins possible only through him? **Yes!**

Q. Do all those who claim to believe in Jesus actually do so? **No** (Matthew 7:21-23)

Q. Is God at work in the lives of some of those who are not yet believers in him? **Yes** (Acts 10 – Cornelius; Jesus “I have sheep who are not of this fold” John 10:16)

The Second Helvetic Confession: We are to have “Good hope for all.”  
 See the Confession of 1967

## WHAT OF THE BIBLE?

### “Confession of 1967” – section on Scripture

#### The PCUSA vow for pastors and officers:

I believe that the scriptures are, by the Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ, in the church universal, and God’s word to me.

Q. “Is the Bible unique among all the religious books in the world?”

A. Definitely

Q. Is the Bible “inerrant”?

A. This is not a word that fits the kind of book we have

It fits a book of mechanics, or laws . . . but not a book with poems (Psalms)? Or an “apocalypse” (graphic poetry)?

Does inerrant this include

the Greek grammar of the Bible?

The translations of the Bible?

Q. Is the Bible perfect for the purposes that God has in mind for it?

A. YES!

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All scripture is **inspired by God and is useful**

- for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God
- may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

### Other Recommended Books:

Letters from a Skeptic – Gregory and Edward Boyd (coming to faith from unbelief)

Resident Aliens – Stanley Hauerwas & William Willimon (the importance of the church)

Book of Confessions – search “Book of Confessions pdf”; read Confession of 1967.