



AREOPAGUS PROCLAMATION

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My belief that Christianity is true has elements of both. Christianity is based partly upon claims about historical events that can be tested and verified through historical research. In addition to citing documents

and experts that confirm this, I want others to encounter the teachings of Jesus for themselves. Over thousands of years, the truth and power of his words have transformed the lives of countless hearers. I speak from personal experience—as one of them.

My best efforts to describe the beauty of the Davies and Balsom recording will never come close to the experience of actually listening to it. But since there is still value in attempting to describe something that surpasses description, here are three observations from my own experience of the truthfulness of Christianity. These are not arguments but rather invitations to explore.



What Most Convinces Me That Christianity Is True?

by Andrew Witmer

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I believe that both of the following statements are true. George Washington was the first President of the United States. Iestyn Davies's and Alison Balsom's recording of Handel's "Eternal Source of Light Divine" is exquisitely beautiful. But these are very different sorts of claims.

This becomes clear when I try to convince you to agree with me. I can show you thousands of documents from the eighteenth century that verify the first claim beyond the shadow of a doubt. My belief that the second claim is true is no less sure, but it is based on my personal experience of the music rather than historical investigation. So rather than citing documents or experts, my impulse is to point you to the recording and invite you to experience it for yourself.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCSQd8Nx4mI>

Christianity is honest. The Bible never flatters its subjects or its readers. We witness the failings and doubts of its most admirable figures, such as King David and John the Baptist. We see the struggles and agonies of Jesus himself. Jesus never seeks followers through sunny optimism or false hopes about human goodness. Christianity tells hard truths about how flawed and broken we are. This can be tough to hear, but it lines up with what I know about the world and myself.

Christianity rings true. In my work as an historian, I read many books and articles that describe the past. Some of them are filled with truths but don't ring true. What do I mean? Perhaps they report the facts correctly but don't explain convincingly how those facts fit together. Or perhaps they describe an event without illuminating its inner meaning or its broader significance.

By contrast, the biblical story of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration offers an overarching framework that makes sense of reality without flattening it. It explains why I long to be a better person than I am. It suggests why the greatest beauties and wonders of this world seem to point beyond themselves, holding out the promise of something even more beautiful and wonderful.

Christianity is surprising. This is not the religion I would have invented or even one that I could have predicted. I see this most clearly in Jesus. He is unique. In his acts and teachings he drew together the hopes and prophecies of the Scriptures and transformed them in utterly unexpected and utterly beautiful ways. Here is a leader who kneels to wash the feet of his followers; a man who perfectly understands and faultlessly follows the teachings of his religion only to announce, shockingly, that he is the new temple—the new meeting place between God and humanity—and the new priest, and the perfect sacrifice; a mighty king who establishes his kingdom and frees his people by dying for them, voluntarily embracing exile and ultimately conquering even death and the grave. There is no one else like Jesus, a status he claims by declaring, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

Christianity is much more than a body of beliefs and doctrines. It is a personal relationship with Jesus of Nazareth, a transformed experience of this often difficult world that leads not to futility but to new hope and abundant life. There are powerful reasons to believe Jesus when he claims to be the truth. I've discovered that some of the best can only be found by listening to his voice.

More Evidence in Defense and Confirmation of the Christian Faith