

Christianity Never Could Have Originated in the Human Imagination

Originally Published by B. Nathaniel Sullivan on June 30, 2018

My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord.
"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.
—Isaiah 55:8-9—

The gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.
—Paul to the Galatian Christians in what we now know as Galatians 1:11-12—

An unenlightened mind is one never exposed to the truth of God....The Christian faith is always equated with truth. And truth is always the opposite of error (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12). People who have not yet believed are called by Paul as those who "reject the truth" (Romans 2:8). It follows that these statements would be meaningless unless there were a way to establish truth objectively. If there were no such possibility, truth and error would, for all practical purposes, be the same.
—Paul Little¹—

Key point: Christianity is so preposterous to natural human instincts, it could not have originated from any human source; therefore, it had to come from God. At the same time, it is reasonable and rational; it makes sense. God is a God who welcomes intellectual inquiry. He offers adequate, though not exhaustive, answers; and He invites us to know Him intimately.

You can find links to all the articles in this series at <https://t.ly/EgJlf>.

Early in the Book of Isaiah we read of an invitation from God, the importance of which cannot be overstated.

"Come now, and let us reason together,"
Says the Lord,

"Though your sins are like scarlet,
They shall be as white as snow;
Though they are red like crimson,
They shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18).

The Hebrew word translated *reason* carries² a number of meanings, including "to prove or to show to be right, to convict or to convince, and to judge or decide." Significantly, it also

¹ Paul Little, *Know Why You Believe*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 21.

² <https://t.ly/qcack>

can mean “to chide, reprove, correct, or rebuke” — things that are necessary if an individual is going to repent of sinful ways and live for God. Yet the Hebrew word also means just what the English translation in this verse conveys: “to reason or to reason together.”

Christianity is a reasonable faith. God does not forgive sins arbitrarily, in ways that follow no pattern or in ways that make no sense. At the same time, His plan to bring forgiveness to those who desire to have it confounds the human mind. The title of this post says it well: “Christianity never could have originated in the human imagination.” In other words, the very fact that Christianity defies conventional human wisdom is evidence it didn’t originate from human sources at all—but from God. As Paul wrote to the Galatians in Galatians 1:11-12, “I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

The very fact that Christianity defies conventional human wisdom is evidence it didn’t originate from human sources at all—but from God.

And yet, Christianity makes a great deal of sense. This, too, indicates it comes from God. It also strongly suggests that God is personal, and that His ways are reasonable, assessable to the human mind. While there is much³ we do not and in fact cannot fathom about Him, we can understand enough to know how He wants us to approach him (see Isa. 55:6-7). As Francis Schaeffer frequently indicated,⁴ God hasn’t spoken to us about Himself exhaustively, but truly and adequately.

³ See Job 9:10; Rom. 11:33

⁴ <https://t.ly/vPERn>

⁵ <https://wordfoundations.com/unconventional-wisdom/>

Further, as Deuteronomy 29:29 declares, “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” Of course, Deuteronomy 29:29 is an Old Testament passage, and at the time it was written, God had not revealed to His people all He has revealed today. Thankfully, God’s revelation to us now includes Jesus’ personal arrival on the earth—His life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension. It also includes the New Testament, which fully explains that we receive God’s gift of salvation, which is based on Jesus substitutionary death, by grace through faith, or total reliance on, Jesus Christ. Good works are a part of the mix, but not to earn salvation. We perform good works not to be saved, but *because* we have been saved! (See Eph. 2:8-10 and “How to Become a Christian at <https://t.ly/INQWu>).

In this article I want to explore two important pieces of evidence that Christianity never could have originated in the human imagination. We can classify these items in two broad categories. **First**, no one is like Jesus, and **second**, no plan is like God’s.

No One Like Jesus

First, no mere human being ever could have or would have come up with a character like Jesus.

Eyewitness accounts attest to the fact that Jesus constantly surprised His hearers (1) with what He said⁵ and (2) with what He did.^{6,7} Demonstrating divine authority in what He taught and the miracles He performed, Jesus became the talk of the town. In his Gospel, the apostle John in John 7:37-44:

⁶ <https://t.ly/F2RBW>

⁷ <https://t.ly/cBCpu>

7:37 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.”³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

⁴⁰ Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, “Truly this is the Prophet.”⁴¹ Others said, “This is the Christ.”

But some said, “Will the Christ come out of Galilee?”⁴² Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?”⁴³ So there was a division among the people because of Him.⁴⁴ Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

Opinions abounded! Everyone noticed! Many had questions, and many refused to believe in Him,⁸ but many others believed.⁹ Yet, even Jesus’ closest followers were confused about the primary task He came to accomplish—and how He would accomplish it. They came to understand these things only after His resurrection, which caught both the women¹⁰ and the men¹¹ totally off guard.

Jesus was perfect, so He got everyone’s attention—but this isn’t all. In the annals of recorded history, no perfect character ever has been created, even in the imaginations of storytellers and writers. Making the point that the New Testament is self-

authenticating, lawyer and author David Limbaugh quotes Bible scholar W. H. Griffith Thomas¹² (1861-1924). Thomas, says Limbaugh, noted

that it is common knowledge that in the world’s entire corpus of literature, past and present, “there is no trace of the picture of a perfect character. Poets, novelists, dramatists, philosophers, essayists, have given the world wonderful creations and yet no writer has ever attempted to portray a perfect man or woman....And yet in the Gospels, written by ordinary men, not literary geniuses, we have a perfect character depicted. How did the Evangelists accomplish what no writer has ever attempted with success?”¹³ In other words, is it more likely that these four men created a literary miracle or that their presentation of Christ is true?¹⁴

The answer is self-evident.

No Plan Like God’s

Second, no human being ever would have or could have conceived the plan of salvation presented in the Bible. This is true both with regard to (1) what the Bible says is man’s core problem, as well as (2) what it says is the only possible solution.

1) The problem. The Bible teaches that human beings are corrupt, guilty before God and hopelessly lost without Him^{15,16}. Not only do people sin by choice, but they also sin because they have a natural proclivity to

⁸ <https://t.ly/ByIcP>

⁹ <https://t.ly/j4mQI>

¹⁰ <https://t.ly/w-iCr>

¹¹ <https://t.ly/0IcBB>

¹² <https://t.ly/BN0zn>

¹³ The quote comes from chapter 6 of Thomas’s book titled *How We Got Our Bible and Why We Believe it Is God’s Word*. The complete book is

available as a PDF download at

<https://t.ly/WRsWW>.

¹⁴ David Limbaugh, *The True Jesus: Uncovering the Divinity of Christ in the Gospels*, (Regnery Publishing, 2017), 51.

¹⁵ <https://t.ly/F2C73>

¹⁶ <https://t.ly/Qa4g4>

sin.¹⁷ Their sinful attitudes and actions, moreover, make them unfit to experience eternal life with God.¹⁸ While people are willing to admit that “no one’s perfect,” it is beyond credibility that any person or group of people ever would devise a belief system that says that absolutely everyone is hopelessly corrupt and sinful, that “[t]he heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9).

Furthermore, conventional human wisdom says that growing closer to God is a journey measured in terms of degree. But the reality is totally different from that. When Dr. R. C. Sproul would speak to a group of middle-class Christians, he often would shock them with the statement, “You all are more like Adolf Hitler than you are like Jesus Christ.”¹⁹ This underscores the fallacy of typical human assumptions with regard to one’s quest to know God. The truth is that all of us *really* are more like Hitler than Jesus, so we have no hope of knowing God apart from Jesus!

Because all of us are more like Hitler than Jesus, we have no hope of knowing God apart from Jesus!

The difference between a Christian and a non-Christian isn’t one of degree, but of kind! In a letter to his employees titled *The Reason Why*, Christian businessman Robert A. Laidlaw explained to his employees why he believed in the God of the Bible. In the letter, he answered many of the common questions people have about Christianity. Laidlaw writes,

But, says someone, here is a problem that puzzles me. I know a polished, cultured gentleman who is not a Christian and states so quite definitely, and I know a rather crude uncultured man who is a

Christian and who shows his genuine belief in many ways. Do you mean to tell me God prefers the uncultured man simply because he has accepted and acknowledged Christ as his Savior? This question arises from a confusion of ideas. A Christian is not different in degree from a non-Christian, he is different in kind, just as the difference between a diamond and a cabbage is not one of degree, but of kind. The one is polished, the other is crude, but the one is dead while the other is alive. Therefore the one has what the other has not in any degree—life, and such is the difference God sees between a Christian and a non-Christian. Here is one of many such statements He makes in His Word: “And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:11, 12). So the vital and all-important question for every one of us becomes not am I cultured or uncouth, but am I alive or dead toward God. Have I received God’s risen Son who brings me life from above, the life of God, called in the Bible eternal life, or have I not received Him and am therefore classed by God as among those who have “not life”?²⁰

2) The solution. Additionally, no human source ever could have come up with the solution for human sin that the Bible presents. God came down in human flesh and was executed on a cross in the place of humankind for human sin.²¹

The idea of God’s dying in the place of humanity is totally foreign to human thinking and sensibilities. While we might aspire to get up to God’s level by meeting His standard of righteousness, God is perfect, and His

¹⁷ https://t.ly/LG1_t

¹⁸ <https://t.ly/DEZSJ>

¹⁹ <https://t.ly/vDGC4>

²⁰ <https://t.ly/jN-A3>

²¹ <https://t.ly/xkSEF>

standard is hopelessly beyond our reach. We never can earn God's favor. Recall that our need is not to achieve God's prescribed level of righteousness in terms of degree. That quest is hopeless, because God hasn't prescribed a standard at all. Instead, He *is* the standard,²² and, as we have said, He is perfect. We are spiritually dead and need the spiritual life that only Christ can give. As the fully righteous One, Christ died our death and offers us His righteousness and His life. When we rely on Him for forgiveness and as our only hope for access to God, we move from death to life (see Rom. 5:6-11; Eph. 2:1-7).

The idea of God's dying in the place of humanity is totally foreign to human thinking and sensibilities.

This is why Peter wrote, "Christ also suffered once for our sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). And it's why John wrote in his Gospel, "^{1:10} He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:10-13). In this we see, therefore, why Paul said that the salvation of God is foolish to those who refuse to believe, but the power of God to

those who rely on Christ (see 1 Cor. 1:18-25). To reiterate, no human being ever would have invented a character like Jesus Christ or been able to devise the plan of salvation God revealed to us in His Word, the Bible.

Accordingly, the apostle Paul declared to the Corinthian believers in 1 Corinthians 2:7-10,

^{2:7} But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, ⁸ which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

⁹ But as it is written:

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared
for those who love Him."

¹⁰ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

Christianity, therefore, has God's "fingerprints" all over it! It didn't come from man. Indeed, it couldn't have.

It came from God Himself.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture has been taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

This article may be reproduced in its entirety without changes and distributed freely.

²² <https://t.ly/kzuIS>