What About the “God Particle”?
Is Christianity Logical?

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

The so-called “new atheists” (Wolf, 2006) are exceedingly rabid in their bitter denunciations of Christianity. Indeed, the severity and ferocity with which they press their case cause the objective person to ponder, with Queen Gertrude, “The lady doth protest too much, methinks” (Shakespeare, III.2). As is usually the case, many of their castigations are only properly directed toward poor practitioners of Christianity—those who profess to be Christians, but whose beliefs and/or practices do not fairly and accurately represent New Testament Christianity. The fact is that no atheist can validate his unbelief by pitting it against the true doctrines of Christianity. The truths of pure, New Testament Christianity are logically consistent. Indeed, they came from the thoroughly rational mind of the eternal God.

Atheists are big on insisting that truth may be known, arrived at logically, and sustained by evidence. They constantly allege that Christianity and the Bible are at odds with a logical approach to reality. They insist that Christianity is unreasonable and conflicts with the laws of logic. One of these contemporary critics of religion, Sam Harris, states in his book The End of Faith, “Religious faith represents so uncompromising a misuse of the power of our minds that it forms a kind of perverse, cultural singularity—a vanishing point beyond which rational discourse proves impossible” (2004, p. 25, emp. added). Harris has also insisted: “The problem with faith, is that it really is a conversation stopper. Faith is a declaration of immunity to the powers of conversation. It is a reason, why you do not have to give reasons, for what you believe” (as quoted in “Godless Quotes,” 2009, italics in orig., emp. added). He freely ridicules Bible teaching as unreasonable and illogical:

We either have good reasons or bad reasons for what we believe; we can be open to evidence and argument, or we can be closed; we can tolerate (and even seek) criticism of our most cherished views, or we can hide behind authority, sanctity, and dogma. The main reason why children are still raised to think that the universe is 6,000 years old is not because religion as a “social institution” hasn’t been appropriately coddled and cajoled, but because polite people (and scientists terrified of losing their funding) haven’t laughed this belief off the face of the earth (in Harris and Ball, 2009, emp. added).

Harris is certainly not alone. Richard Dawkins agrees: “[R]eligious faith is an especially potent silencer of rational calculation, which usually seems to trump all others” (2006, p. 346, emp. added). Christopher Hitchens summarizes the atheistic mentality of our day: “All attempts to reconcile faith with science and reason are consigned to failure and ridicule” (2007, p. 64).

Such invectives are not new. Skeptics, atheists, and unbelievers have railed against Christianity and the Bible for millennia, insisting that belief in the Christian religion and the divine origin of the Bible is irrational, illogical, and fraught with error and contradiction. As noted above, however, their indictments aptly apply only to those within Christendom who have embraced false depictions of Christianity (e.g., Catholicism, Protestantism, Mormonism, Calvinism, et al.). What the skeptic must realize is that fairness demands that the authenticity of Christianity be assessed—not on the basis of the thicket of confusion, diversity, and doctrinal disagreement that characterizes Christendom—but upon what the New Testament actually teaches.

Much of Christendom is irrational

Even as pluralism has seized Western civilization by the throat, branding the pursuit of truth an irrelevant and impossible enterprise (cf. Bloom, 1987), so many well-meaning, but incompetent, practitioners of Christianity have thrown their hands up in exasperation, concluding that arriving at certainty is a hopeless endeavor. They have relegated the pursuit of doctrinal correctness to the dust bin of antiquity. In its place, they have substituted entertainment (e.g., praise bands, hand waving, and “tongue-speaking”)—mindless, emotional stimulation (which they call “Christian worship”). Many churches have assumed the posture that truth is elusive, and no one should be “judgmental” of anyone else; no one should be so arrogant or dogmatic as to insist that a certain viewpoint is the only right one. Atheists sit back and, rightly, laugh at this unfortunate distortion of Christianity—this sellout to secular culture.

Without even examining the Bible and the claims of New Testament Christianity, a person ought to be able to see that pluralism in religion is self-contradictory and discredited. Those who espouse it inconsistently insist that they are correct. They are dogmatic in their insistence that no one should be dogmatic. They hold as absolute
truth the absurd notion that there are no absolute truths. They have to deny their viewpoint in order to hold their viewpoint. In the meantime, the atheist claims to transcend this malady by dismissing all religion as false, feeling confident that he has firmly legitimized his infidelity via logic and rationality.

Many well-meaning, religious people take the foolish position that truth is elusive and unattainable, and that doctrinal correctness is unimportant and unnecessary. Only in the task of interpreting the Bible do such people take the position that truth is relative, always changing, and something of which they can never be sure. Ironically, many religionists “reason” in religion in a way that differs from the way they reason in other facets of their lives—like driving their car or picking up their mail. For example, when they go to the doctor because they are not feeling well, they communicate to the doctor their symptoms, fully expecting to be understood. They expect the doctor to gather all the relevant evidence (the verbal information the patient gives, as well as the symptoms displayed by the body and test results). That evidence must then be properly interpreted to draw the right conclusions concerning the ailment and its proper treatment. The doctor then writes out a prescription that the patient takes to the pharmacist and, once again, the religious person expects the pharmacist to interpret properly the doctor’s instructions. The religious person then takes the prescription home and reads the label, fully expecting to understand the directions. The fact that doctors and pharmacists can make mistakes by drawing unwarranted conclusions about one’s physical condition does not change the fact that if they gather sufficient evidence and reason properly about the information, they can know the truth about a person’s physical condition. When it comes to their religion, however, many religious people abandon rationality.

Every single day that we live, we interpret thousands of messages accurately. We read the newspaper or watch television news, fully expecting to understand what we read, hear, and see. We read bills, books, and text messages with the same expectation. We go to the mailbox, get our mail, and browse through it, fully expecting to interpret properly the messages being conveyed. The fact that misunderstanding sometimes occurs does not negate the fact that more information can be examined in order to draw the right conclusions and arrive at correct interpretations.

We go through this process constantly—every waking hour of the day, day in and day out, year after year. You are reading this article with a reasonable expectation of being able to understand it. We give ourselves credit for having the ability to operate sensibly and communicate with one another intelligibly. Yet, a host of religious people turn right around and imply that the God of heaven, the One Who created our minds and our thinking capacity, the One Who is infinitely wiser and more capable than humans, is incapable of making His will known to humanity in a clear and understandable fashion. When some people who profess to be Christians come to the Bible, they suddenly do an about-face and insist that we cannot be sure what God’s will is, we cannot be dogmatic on doctrine, and we must allow differing opinions on what is spiritually right or wrong.

Many people who claim to embrace Christianity ridicule and denounce logic, debate, argumentation, and emphasis upon being rational and reasonable. The practical effect of such propaganda is the upsurge of subjectivity, emotions, and personal taste (often attributed to the Spirit) as authoritative standards in religious practice. The Bible as the comprehensive, comprehensible, unchanging source of religious authority is thereby supplanted, and the satanic severance of human culture from the God of heaven is complete. Such behavior fuels unbelief. Atheists can see the hypocrisy and inconsistency. They are rightly repulsed by such religion. Nevertheless, they are obligated to distinguish between the manifold manifestations of false religion and the one true religion of the New Testament.

**THE BIBLE AND CHRISTIANITY ARE EMINENTLY RATIONAL**

The term “logic” refers to nothing more than correct reasoning. A person is logical when he or she reasons correctly. Being “illogical” amounts to engaging in incorrect reasoning. Does the Bible reflect affinity with the laws of thought and logic? Did Jesus, Paul, and other inspired speakers and writers argue their cases, prove their propositions, and engage in rational, reasonable discourse? The truth is that those who were selected by God (prophets, apostles, and Bible writers) to communicate His will to the world always presented their divinely inspired communication with logical precision.
They never once committed a logical error. They always argued the case for Christianity accurately and rationally—precisely what one would expect if they were guided by the perfect rational Mind.

Jesus Christ: The Master Logician

While on Earth, Jesus demonstrated incredible proclivity for rationality in His sharp, potent, penetrating use of logic and sound argumentation. His first recorded responsible activity consisted of a logical dialogue between Himself (at the age of twelve) and the Jewish theologians. “All who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers” (Luke 2:47, emp. added). The next recorded instance of Jesus’ public cognitive activity was on the occasion of His baptism. He reasoned with John in order to convince John to immerse Him (Matthew 3:13-15), advancing a logical reason to justify the action.

Debate with Satan (Matthew 4:1-11)

Immediately after this incident, Jesus faced Satan in the desert. Satan posed three arguments, urging Christ to act on the basis of his erroneous reasoning. Notice carefully the sequence of the disputation between the two, with special attention to Christ’s superior (i.e., accurate) use of logic to defeat His opponent:

Argument #1:

Satan: “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”

Jesus: “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”

Christ offered authoritative Scripture (Deuteronomy 8:3) as evidence to contradict Satan’s conclusion. In other words, satisfying the legitimate need of hunger must never take precedence over the need to obey God and tend to spiritual needs first. Further, miracles did not have as their divine purpose to satisfy physical needs (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4). Jesus’ logical reply was sufficiently decisive that Satan attempted no rebuttal, but moved to a second argument in an effort to convince Jesus to succumb to His faulty reasoning from atop the temple.

Argument #2:

Satan: “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.’”

Jesus: “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’”

Observe that this time, Satan offered Scripture (Psalm 91:11-12) as supporting evidence to justify his proposal. Yet, this clever ploy, intended to create the illusion of legitimacy, was in fact a mishandling of the evidence—a twisting of Scripture (2 Peter 3:16). Jesus countered with additional Scripture (Deuteronomy 6:16) that demonstrated Satan’s misapplication of Psalm 91 to the situation at hand. In other words, Psalm 91, though intended to convey the care and protection that God extends to the faithful, was not intended to provide sanction for what Satan proposed: deliberately placing oneself in peril in order to force God to come to one’s rescue. God’s offer of assistance does not extend to purposely walking in front of an oncoming car just to see if He will miraculously prevent an individual from being struck. The context of Deuteronomy 6:16, the verse that Jesus quoted, refers to the kind of testing God extends to the faithful, was not intended to provide sanction for what Satan proposed: deliberately placing oneself in peril in order to force God to come to one’s rescue. God’s offer of assistance does not extend to purposely walking in front of an oncoming car just to see if He will miraculously prevent an individual from being struck. The context of Deuteronomy 6:16, the verse that Jesus quoted, refers to the kind of testing and tempting displayed by the Israelites when they murmured, grumbled, and challenged Moses to produce water—as if God was unable or unwilling to aid them. For Jesus to have complied with Satan’s challenge would have placed Him in the same posture as the spiritually weak, unbelieving Israelites who “tempted” God (“tempted” is from nabis—_to prove/test/_ Him due to doubting His aid/power) (Gesenius, 1847, p. 552); cf. Exodus 17:2, _re-ev—to chide, strive, contend_). The only logical response to such a challenge was the very one that Jesus, in fact, mustered: “Do not tempt God! Do not put Him to the test since such indicates your own lack of faith!”

This rebuttal, too, was sufficiently potent to discourage Satan from pressing his ploy any further. Instead, he shifted his verbal barrage to a third challenge, by daring before Jesus the glory of the kingdoms of the Earth.

Argument #3

Satan: “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.”

Jesus: “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord Your God, and Him only You shall serve.’”

Jesus, for the third time, marshaled scriptural proof to show the error of Satan’s position, while reaffirming the truth. Based on Deuteronomy 6:13, it would be sinful to worship Satan or anyone but Deity. God alone is worthy of worship. With this third display of devastating logic, Satan ceased his verbal assaults and fled the scene.

This marvelous demonstration of Christ’s mastery of debate and logical disputation is not an isolated instance. Jesus wielded logic and reason throughout His earthly sojourn. He consistently responded to His contemporaries with piercing, devastating logic. He continually was besieged with questions and verbal tests (Luke 11:53-54)—to which He consistently displayed rational, reasoned response. Consider these additional examples:

Exchange with the Pharisees Over Eating Grain (Matthew 12:1-9)

In responding to the Pharisees’ erroneous charge leveled against His disciples for eating grain from a standing grain field on the Sabbath, Jesus commenced to counter their accusation with penetrating logic, advancing successive rebuttals. Before He presented specific scriptural refutation of their false charge, He first employed a rational device designated by logicians as _argumentum ad hominem_ (literally “argument to the man”). He used the “circumstantial” form of this argument, which enabled Him to “point out a contrast between the opponent’s lifestyle and his expressed opinions, thereby suggesting that the opponent and his statements can be dismissed as hypocritical!” (Baum, 1975, p. 470, emp. added). This variety of argumentation spotlights the opponent’s inconsistency, and “charges the adversary with being so prejudiced that his alleged reasons are mere rationalizations of conclusions dictated by self-interest” (Copi, 1972, p. 76).
Higgs Boson—The “God Particle”?

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The Higgs Boson particle, presumptuously called the “God Particle” by some physicists, is a theoretical elementary particle that is predicted by the Standard Model of particle physics, but which has yet to be observed by physicists through experimentation. It is “thought to be the fundamental unit of matter” (“Has Quest for the Elusive…?” 2011). In theory, the particle could explain how other elementary particles have mass. But why do some call it the “God Particle”? To Big Bang-believers, the Higgs Boson is “a theoretical energy particle which many scientists believe helped give mass to the disparate matter spawned by the Big Bang” (“Scientists Close in…,” 2010). Big Bang theorists consider its existence “crucial to forming the cosmos after the Big Bang” (“Scientists...,” emp. added). Therefore, the particle is god-like to such sadly deluded individuals.

Recently, in an article titled, “Has Quest for the Elusive ‘God Particle’ Succeeded?,” Fox News reported on a “controversial rumor…based on a leaked internal note from physicists at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC)” that began circulating in the public eye (“Has Quest...”). The rumor suggests that the LHC, a particle accelerator located in Switzerland, may have run across proof of the Higgs’ existence. The leaked note “details an unexpected ‘bump’ in emissions that may be proof of the long-sought particle” (“Has Quest...”). Wait a minute. A “bump” could be proof of the Higgs Boson? Surely such an occurrence, which could be the result of any number of possibilities, would not constitute valid proof of anything to scientists. Although many scientists these days would consider such a vague incident enough proof to satisfy their longings, James Gillies, a spokesman for the European Organization for Nuclear Research responsible for building the LHC, admitted that “the leaked note faces several layers of scrutiny before it could be submitted for publication [in a scholarly scientific publication—JM],” He explains: “Things such as this show up quite frequently in the course of analysis.... It’s way too soon to get excited, I’m afraid. It’s not the physics find of the millennium, unfortunately” (“Has Quest...,” emp. added). So, atheistic evolution still stands as scientifically impossible.

As stated above, evolutionists consider the existence of the Higgs Boson “crucial to forming the cosmos after the Big Bang” (“Scientists...,” emp. added). Notice that without the existence of this theoretical particle, Big Bang theorists recognize that the Universe could not even form after the Big Bang theoretically occurred. Its existence would not prove that the Universe did form in the manner suggested by Big Bang Theory. Its existence would not even prove that the Universe could form after a hypothesized Big Bang occurred. Further, its existence would not prove that the Big Bang itself could occur at all. Its existence would not prove that matter could exist forever or pop into existence out of nothing, one of which must be true in order for the Big Bang to even get started. And its existence would certainly not prove that the scientific laws governing the Universe could write themselves into existence. However, without the existence of the particle, theorists know the Big Bang could not happen. Thus, discovery of its existence would not prove anything in the end, but only allow evolutionists to cross one of the many chasms that stand in the way of their theory even being considered a remote possibility. In other words, the Big Bang has not even reached square one in the realm of proof. It still lies firmly in the realm of impossibility. Bottom line: the Creation model still stands as the most logical explanation for the origin of the Universe—the model that matches the scientific evidence.

REFERENCES


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Observe carefully the technical sophistication inherent in Jesus’ strategy. He called attention to the case of David (vss. 3–4). When David was in exile, literally running for his life to escape the jealous, irrational rage of Saul, he and his companions arrived in Nob, tired and hungry (1 Samuel 21:1ff.). He lied to the priest and conned him into giving them the showbread, or “bread of the Presence” (i.e., 12 flat cakes arranged in two rows on the table within the Tabernacle [Exodus 25:23-30; Leviticus 24:5–6]), to his traveling companions—bread that legally was reserved only for the priests (Leviticus 24:8–9; cf. Exodus 29:31–34; Leviticus 8:31; 22:10ff.). In doing so, David clearly violated the law. Did the Pharisees condemn him? Absolutely not! They revered David. They held him in high regard. In fact, nearly a thousand years after his passing, his tomb was still being tended (Acts 2:29; cf. 1 Kings 2:10; Nehemiah 13:16; Josephus, 1974a, 13.8.4; 16.7.1; Josephus, 1974b, 1.2.5). On the one hand, they condemned the disciples of Jesus, who were innocent, but on the other hand, they upheld and revered David, who was guilty. Their inconsistency betrayed both their insincerity as well as their inability to bring a legal charge against the disciples.

After exposing their hypocrisy and inconsistency, Jesus next turned to answer the charge pertaining to violating the Sabbath. He called their attention to the priests who worked in the temple on the Sabbath (12:5; e.g., Numbers 28:9-10). The priests were “blameless”—not guilty—of violating the Sabbath law because their work was authorized to be performed on that day. After all, the Sabbath law did not imply total inactivity—as if everyone was to sit down for 24 hours and do nothing. The Law gave the right, even the obligation, to engage in several activities that did not constitute violation of the Sabbath regulation. Examples of such authorization included eating (cf. Exodus 12:16)—even from a neighbor’s grainfield (Deuteronomy 23:25)—temple service, circumcision (John 7:22), tending to the care of animals (Exodus 23:4-5; Deuteronomy 22:1-4; Matthew 12:11; Luke 13:15), and extending kindness or assistance to the needy (Matthew 12:12; Luke 13:16; 14:1-6; John 5:5-9; 7:23). The divinely authorized Sabbath activity of the priests proved that the accusation the Pharisees brought against Jesus’ disciples was false. [The term “profane” (vs. 5) is an example of the figure of speech known as metonymy of the adjunct in which “things are spoken of according to appearance, opinions formed respecting them, or the claims made for them” (Dungan, 1888, p. 295, emp. added). By this figure, Leah was said to be the “mother” of Joseph (Genesis 37:10), angels were said to be “men” (e.g., Genesis 18:16; 19:10), Joseph was said to be the “father” of Jesus (Luke 2:48; John 6:42), and God’s preached message was said to be “foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:21). Priests engaged on the Sabbath gave the appearance of violation when, in fact, it was not. Coincidentally, Bullinger classified the allusion to “profane” in this verse as an instance of catachresis, or incongruity, stating that “it expresses what was true according to the mistaken notion of the Pharisees as to manual works performed on the Sabbath” (1898, p. 676, emp. added).

After pointing out the obvious legality of priestly effort expended on the Sabbath, Jesus stated: “But I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple” (12:6). The underlying Greek text actually has “something” instead of “One.” If priests could carry on tabernacle/temple service on the Sabbath, surely Jesus’ own disciples were authorized to engage in service in the presence of the Son of God. After all, service directed to the person of Jesus certainly is greater than the pre-Christian temple service conducted by Old Testament priests—who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (Hebrews 8:5). For all practical purposes, the discussion was over. Jesus had disproved the claim of the Pharisees. But He did not stop there. He took His methodical confrontation to yet another level. He penetrated beneath the surface argument that the Pharisees had posited and focused on their hearts: “But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless” (12:7). In this verse, Jesus quoted from an Old Testament context (Hosea 6:6) in which the prophet of old struck a blow against the mere external, superficial, ritualistic observance of some laws, to the neglect of heartfelt, sincere, humble attention to other laws while treating people properly. The comparison is evident. The Pharisees who confronted Jesus’ disciples were not truly interested in obeying God’s law. They were masquerading under that pretense (cf. Matthew 15:1:9; 23:3). But their problem did not lie in an attitude of honestly desiring careful compliance with God’s law—which would have been commendable. Rather, their zest for law keeping was hypocritical and unaccompanied by their own obedience and concern for others. They possessed critical hearts and were more concerned with scrutinizing, accusing, and condemning people than with honest, genuine application of God’s directives for the good of their fellow human beings.

In their hypocrisy, the Pharisees had neutralized the true intent of divine regulations, making void the Word of God (Matthew 15:6). They had ignored and skipped over the significant laws that enjoined justice, mercy, and faith (Matthew 23:23). Consequently, though their attention to legal detail was laudable, their misapplication of it, as well as their neglect and rejection of some aspects of it, made them inappropriate and disqualified proclamators of God’s laws. Indeed, they simply did not fathom the teaching of Hosea 6:6 (cf. Micah 6:6-8). “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice” is a Hebraism (cf. Matthew 9:13; [McGarvey, 1875, pp. 82-83]). God was not saying that He did not want sacrifices offered under the Old Testament economy (notice the use of “more” in Hosea 6:6). After all, He was the author of such sacrifices (e.g., Deuteronomy 12:6,11). Rather, He was saying that He did not want sacrifice alone. He wanted mercy with sacrifice. Internal motive and attitude are just as important to God as the external compliance with specifics (cf. John 4:24; Joshua 24:14).

Samuel addressed this same attitude shown by Saul: “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?” Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
The Pharisees' propensity for enjoining
They "would not have condemned the
Christ further spotlights His propensity for enjoining in an attempt to appear
true and genuine. Their "constructive dilemma" (Baum, p. 210;
Copi, p. 274; Warren, 1982, pp. 82ff.)
He countered their question by proposing a disjunctive statement containing the
first premise composed of a disjunctive statement containing the consequents of the two elements of premise one, and the
third premise (the conclusion) consisting of the antecedents of the two elements of premise one. [See chart on page 58.]
The Jews could easily discern the logical import of Jesus' argument—and the predicament into which they were thrust. They could see that their attempt to discredit Jesus was logically and decisively defeated. They were effectively silenced. They had no choice but to bow out of the
interchange by feigning ignorance: "We do not know" (vs. 27). The fact is, they
did know; they were simply unwilling to answer Jesus' question and thereby damage their own public credibility. So Jesus concluded: "Neither will I tell you what source authorized His teaching. So, Jesus merely pressed them
to identify John the Baptist's source of authority. After all, both derived their authority from the same source. Yet these hard-hearted religious leaders rejected John and, by implication, his source of authority. So neither would they accept Jesus Who received His authority from the same source (i.e., Heaven). Hence, to spotlight their unjustified resistance to the truth, He pricked them with their own unbelief by placing them in a logical bind that would both silence them and expose their insincerity.
Placed into precise, valid argument form (see Warren, p. 82), Jesus' use of a
constructive dilemma entailed the first premise composed of the conjunction of two implicative statements, the second premise composed of a disjunctive proposition comprised of the antecedents of the two elements in premise one, and the third premise (the conclusion) consisting of the consequents of the two elements of premise one. [See chart on page 58.]

Dialogue with the Chief Priests and Elders
Over Authority (Matthew 21:23-27)
Another typical incident in the life of Christ further spotlights His propensity for rationality. On one occasion when He was teaching in the temple, the chief priests and elders confronted Him by asking two questions: "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?" (vs. 23). Commenting on the use of the term "authority" in this passage, Betz noted that the Pharisees used the term _exousia_ to refer to "the power to act which given as of right to anyone by virtue of the position he holds" (1976, 2:601). They were asking, in essence, "Who was it that conferred upon you this authority which you presume to exercise? Was it some earthly ruler, or was it God himself?" (Spence and Exell, 1961, 15:321). As Williams noted: "No one could presume to teach without a proper commission: where was his authorization?" (as quoted in Spence and Exell, 15:320).

With remarkable logical prowess, Jesus proceeded to "impale" His accusers on the horns of what logicians call a "constructive dilemma." 

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to identify John the Baptist's source of authority. After all, both derived their authority from the same source. Yet these hard-hearted religious leaders rejected John and, by implication, his source of authority. So neither would they accept Jesus Who received His authority from the same source (i.e., Heaven). Hence, to spotlight their unjustified resistance to the truth, He pricked them with their own unbelief by placing them in a logical bind that would both silence them and expose their insincerity.

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Dispute with the Sadducees Concerning Marriage and the Resurrection (Matthew 22:23–33)

Another impressive interchange between Jesus and His opponents, in which He demonstrated superb logical skill, is seen in the attempt by the Sadducees to entangle Him on the subject of the resurrection. The distinguishing doctrine of the Sadducee sect—the very doctrine that gave them their reason for existing as a distinct faction—was the rejection of afterlife. The inspired historian Luke explains: “For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit” (Acts 23:8). After seeing the Pharisees fail in their efforts to ensnare Jesus (cf. Luke 20:26), they submitted what they must have considered to be an unanswerable argument by which they hoped to discredit Him. Feigning genuine interest in Bible interpretation, they approached Jesus, addressing Him as “teacher,” and posed a technical question pertaining to the Law of Moses. This argument was intended to demonstrate logically the validity of their position, while simultaneously showing the falsity of the doctrine of the resurrection. They offered the following highly improbable scenario (which they claimed was an actual case):

Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her (vss. 24–28).

Here is their argument laid out in syllogistic form:

1. If the Law of Moses enjoins the Levirate marriage law in which a man must be dead before his brother may marry his surviving spouse (Deuteronomy 25:5–6), and
2. If there is a resurrection in which seven brothers and their one wife will rise from the dead,
3. Then the seven men will all be married to the same woman at the same time in the afterlife.

No doubt a favorite argument of the Sadducees, the purpose was to make the idea of resurrection appear ridiculous (cf. McGarvey, n.d., p. 601). One can easily imagine that the purveyors of this scenario delivered the phrase “in the resurrection” with a “tongue-in-cheek” tone of voice (since they did not believe in such), and perhaps elbowed each other with smirks on their faces, fully confident that they had delivered a decisive deathblow to the notion of resurrection, thereby establishing the validity of Sadduceism.

But their clever argument was no match for Deity. They were dealing with the Author of truth and the premiere controversialist whose knowledge and skill in the use of correct thinking and accurate
argumentation was unsurpassed, Jesus meticulously commenced to dismantle their seemingly formidable challenge. First, He delivered two decisive rebuttals to their postulated scenario that are preceded by the stinging reprimand that they are “mistaken” (“err/in error,” KJV/ NIV/ASV; “wrong,” RSV): (1) they do not know the Scriptures, and (2) they are ignorant of the power of God. These two assertions are followed by a forthright declaration of the circumstances that prevail in the afterlife (circumstances that only Deity could know): “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven” (vs. 30). In other words, once humans transcend this earthly existence and enter into the spirit realm, the fleshy relationships that characterized the physical realm will not continue.

Specifically, marriage is a function of earthly relationships, intended by God to serve a variety of purposes that are integrally related to earthly existence (foremost of which is propagation of the species—irrelevant in eternity). As a piece of concrete proof of this transition, Jesus directed the Sadducees’ attention to the angels—a direct “gig” at their views since they also denied the existence of angels. Here are spirit beings, also created by God, who inhabit the celestial realm (although they travel to the Earth to do God’s bidding and, while here, appear in male, human form [e.g., Genesis 18:2,16,22; 19:1ff.]). It is apparent, from the treatment of the subject of angels in the Bible, that they are beings who refrain from the fleshy relationships that humans engage in on Earth. Angels, therefore, constitute a suitable example of Jesus’ contention that the marriage relationship as we know it on Earth will not carry over into the heavenly realm.

With these points, Jesus won the “debate” by undercutting the assumption inherent in the Sadducee’s argument that earthly marriage will transpire in heaven as it does on Earth. However, the test case that this Jewish faction advanced was merely a ruse intended to authenticate their central doctrine: disbelief in the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Hence, Jesus proceeded to dismantle that preeminent contention: “But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (vs. 31-32).

With succinct, breathtaking brevity, Jesus demolished the core doctrine of Sadduceeism by showing its logical fallacy. He pointed their attention to Exodus 3:6, when Moses stood before the burning bush. On that occasion, God identified Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But at the time God made that statement to Moses (cir. 1500 B.C.), the bodies of those three patriarchs had been in the grave for hundreds of years (Genesis 25:8; 35:29; 49:33). God made clear to Moses that, though those patriarchs were deceased, He continued to be their God. As Jesus concluded: “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” Exodus 3:6 constitutes scriptural proof that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—though separated from their physical bodies—were still in existence. They were not extinct. They would one day be reunited with their bodies in the resurrection. With this decisive demonstration, Jesus essentially devastated Sadduceeism. To remain a Sadducee, after Jesus so effectively disproved the core doctrine of Sadduceeism, would be to live a life of irrationality and to conduct oneself in direct contradiction to the evidence.

This dazzling display of rationality and skilled, logical proficiency provides ample proof that the skeptic’s charge—that Christianity is irrational—is incorrect. Unlike the philosophers, pretenders, and conmen of history, who sought to gather followers around themselves to support their imposture, Jesus was consistently logical in His living of life, constantly insisting on the exclusivity of truth (John 8:32) and its power to transform individuals (John 17:17). He remained committed to truth and rationality, even when it meant the loss of followers (John 6:60-71). He, indeed, is the Master Logician—the supreme and quintessential example of right.

[to be continued]

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