

BOOK REVIEW

of

Dinesh D'Souza,
What's So Great About Christianity,
Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2007.

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This review is by Larry D. Paarmann.

In the confusing society in which we live, where academic and intellectual circles are predominately committed to materialism at the same time that a majority of the citizenry of the United States apparently believe in God, how should Christianity be presented apologetically? Where the press, TV media, movies, public schools and universities, simply assume Darwinian evolution and materialistic origins for the universe, what arguments can be made? Where Darwinism, even after 150 years of looking for objective evidence to support it and seemingly very little found so far is nonetheless tenaciously held, what can one say? Where absurd theories of multiple universes are seriously put forward by cosmologists as though it was science, where does one begin? Yet, on the other hand, in a society where Christianity is so experientially based that serious intellectual arguments can be thought suspicious by Christians themselves, what approach should be taken by serious thinkers who wish to challenge society with Christianity? Nevertheless, there are those who make the attempt. One such person is Dinesh D'Souza. Note that the title of this book does not end with a question mark. It is a declaration. This book is D'Souza's attempt to intellectually present Christianity as great and provide arguments as to why it should be embraced. It is a perfect example of where someone who has made his mark as a thinker and author in secular society has decided to use his God-given talents in the cause of Christianity. The result is a book that is a main selection of the Conservative Book Club and is also a New York Times bestseller. D'Souza is a former White House domestic policy analyst, and is currently the Rishwain Research Scholar at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

The book is somewhat encyclopedic and covers a lot of ground. However, details may be followed up by using his end-notes, which are, for the most part, nothing more than references. The book has eight parts and twenty-six chapters: Part I The Future of Christianity, Chapter One *The Twilight of Atheism: The Global Triumph of Christianity*, Chapter Two *Survival of the Sacred: Why Religion is Winning*, Chapter Three *God Is Not Great: The Atheist Assault on Religion*, Chapter Four *Miseducating the Young: Saving Children from Their Parents*. Part II Christianity and the West, Chapter Five *Render unto Caesar: The Spiritual Basis of Limited Government*, Chapter Six *The Evil That I Would Not: Christianity and Human Fallibility*, Chapter Seven *Created Equal: The Origin of Human Dignity*. Part III Christianity and Science, Chapter Eight *Christianity and Reason: The Theological Roots of Science*, Chapter Nine *From Logos to Cosmos: Christianity and the Invention of Invention*, Chapter Ten *An Atheist Fable: Reopening the Galileo Case*. Part IV The Argument from Design, Chapter Eleven *A Universe with a Beginning: God and the Astronomers*, Chapter Twelve *A Designer Planet: Man's Special Place in Creation*, Chapter Thirteen *Paley Was Right: Evolution and the Argument from Design*, Chapter Fourteen *The Genesis Problem: The Methodological Atheism of Science*. Part V Christianity and Philosophy, Chapter Fifteen *The World Beyond Our Senses: Kant and the Limits of Reason*, Chapter Sixteen *In the Belly of the Whale: Why Miracles Are Possible*, Chapter Seventeen *A Skeptic's Wager: Pascal and the Reasonableness of Faith*. Part VI Christianity and Suffering, Chapter Eighteen *Rethinking the Inquisition: The Exaggerated Crimes of Religion*, Chapter Nineteen *A License to Kill: Atheism and the Mass Murders of History*. Part VII Christianity and Morality, Chapter Twenty *Natural Law and Divine Law: The Objective Foundations of Morality*, Chapter Twenty-One *The Ghost in the Machine: Why Man Is More Than Matter*, Chapter Twenty-Two *The Imperial "I": When the Self Becomes the Arbiter of Morality*, Chapter Twenty-Three *Opiate of the Morally Corrupt: Why Unbelief Is So Appealing*, Chapter Twenty-Four *The Problem of Evil: Where Is Atheism When Bad Things Happen?* Part VIII Christianity and You, Chapter Twenty-Five *Jesus among Other Gods: The Uniqueness of Christianity*, Chapter Twenty-Six *A Foretaste of Eternity: How Christianity Can Change Your Life*.

In Part I, D'Souza presents his arguments that Christianity is growing and expanding rapidly worldwide while atheism is declining. While atheists, thinking they have science on their side, assumed and predicted that "science" would soon spell the demise of religion, were wrong on both counts: science is not on their side and religion, especially Christianity, is rapidly expanding.

In Part II, D'Souza argues that Christianity is what has made the West free and prosperous. D'Souza writes that "Christianity is the very root and foundation of Western civilization. . . . Christianity is responsible for many of the values and institutions secular people cherish most." He also writes that "Nowhere has human aspiration reached so high or more deeply touched the heart and spirit than in the works of Christian art, architecture, literature, and music."

In Part III, D'Souza writes that Christianity is largely to be credited for the rise of science. He writes that "science as an organized, sustained enterprise arose only once in human history. And where did it arise? In Europe, in the civilization then called Christendom." "So where did Western man get this faith in a unified, ordered, and accessible universe? How did we go from chaos to cosmos? My answer, in a word, is Christianity."

In Part IV, D'Souza argues that design is apparent in nature, and that that conviction holds up to very thorough, detailed scientific enquiry. While it does not prove the existence of God or the truth of Christianity, it is certainly consistent with it whereas atheism is not. D'Souza writes that "Naturalism and materialism are not scientific conclusions; rather, they are scientific premises. They are not discovered in nature but imposed upon nature. In short, they are articles of faith."

In Part V the argument is made that sense perception and even the powers of reason have limitations. At least some philosophies and religions, and specifically Christianity, is open to things beyond the physical. Those who are not open to anything beyond the empirical get caught by their own principles. For example, Hume's principle of empirical verifiability is not, itself, empirically verifiable.

In Part VI, D'Souza argues that while it is true that great wrongs have been done in the name of Christianity, this has been the exception rather than the rule and it is always inconsistent with Christian teachings. He also points out that by far and away much greater wrongs have been done in the name of atheism.

In Part VII it is argued that man is inherently moral and those who think otherwise are frequently referred to as psychopaths. The philosophical study of the details of this phenomenon is frequently referred to as natural law. D'Souza suggests that "people's objections to Christianity seem to derive mainly from their resistance to Christian morality." He also suggests that "the existence of a universal, absolute morality is also a powerful argument for the existence of God." Nevertheless, our acquired concepts of morality can be very wrong, especially if guided by wrong philosophy or wrong religious beliefs. Often, a significant philosophical difficulty that Christians address is the problem of evil: reconciling an all-powerful, loving God with evil in the world. However, D'Souza puts an interesting twist on it by writing that it is at least equally a difficulty for atheists: if there is no God how can anything be evil? "Here we see the underlying horror of materialism: everything becomes dark and meaningless."

In Part VIII, D'Souza makes it personal and evangelical. He makes a direct appeal to the reader to believe in Jesus Christ.

While D'Souza does not cover certain topics that could also be used as an apologetic for the Christian faith, such as the historical accuracy of the Bible, the historicity of the resurrection, etc., what he does cover is quite broad, and in my opinion is well presented.