



FAITH ON TRIAL

Twenty Christian Women
Confront the Arguments Against God

A REWRITTEN AND EXPANDED EXAMINATION OF THE DEBATE:

An Atheist vs. 20 Christian Women

DAVID CLARKE

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TWENTY CHRISTIANS
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Dedication

To my beloved daughters,

Esther, Eleanor, Rebekah and Maisie

Long before this book was written, you were part of the reason for it.

As your father, I have watched you grow, learn, question and discover the world around you. I have seen your curiosity, your kindness, your courage and your willingness to ask difficult questions. Those qualities are precious, and I pray you never lose them.

The world you are growing up in is very different from the one in which I was raised. You will encounter countless voices competing for your attention. Some will tell you that there is no God. Others will insist there is. Some will encourage faith, while others will ridicule it. Some will speak with confidence, yet possess little wisdom. Others will speak quietly, yet possess much.

You must learn to distinguish between them.

This book concerns one of the oldest conversations in human history—the question of God, truth, suffering, morality and the meaning of life. These are not merely intellectual matters. The answers we give shape the way we live, the decisions we make and the hopes we hold for the future.

Throughout my own life I have discovered that truth is not always found where the loudest voices are heard. It often requires patience, humility and a willingness to examine our own assumptions. It requires us to listen carefully, think honestly and sometimes admit when we have been wrong.

I do not ask you to believe something simply because I believe it.

Rather, I encourage you to seek the truth with all your heart. Ask questions. Read widely. Examine every claim. Test every argument. Never be afraid of honest enquiry. Truth has nothing to fear from investigation.

As you do so, remember that behind every debate, every philosophy and every worldview stand real people—people who experience joy and sorrow, hope and disappointment, faith and doubt. Treat them with kindness, even when you disagree with them.

Most of all, I pray that the Lord Jesus Christ, who has been my hope through many trials and blessings, may reveal Himself to each of you in His own time and way. My greatest desire is not that you remember anything I have written, but that you come to know Him for yourselves.

Should these pages survive me, let them stand as a small testimony of a father's love for his daughters and his sincere desire that they walk in truth.

May God bless you, guide you and keep you all the days of your lives.

With all my love,

Dad

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Author's Note

This book was written from the contents and audio transcript of a YouTube debate entitled *An Atheist vs. 20 Christian Women*, which was sent to me by my daughter, Maisie.

Having watched the discussion, I felt it raised some of the most important questions that can be asked concerning God, suffering, morality, truth and the meaning of life. The debate was thoughtful, respectful and, at times, challenging for both sides.

The original discussion was presented as a video conversation. However, like many spoken discussions, important arguments were often scattered throughout the debate, interrupted by responses, or hidden amongst repetition. For that reason, I decided to rewrite the transcript into book form, arranging the material into chapters and presenting the arguments in a clearer narrative style.

My purpose has not been to alter the views of the participants, nor to declare winners and losers. Rather, it has been to help readers follow the discussion more easily and to encourage careful consideration of the questions being raised.

I should also make my own position clear.

I write as a Christian. My convictions are rooted in the Scriptures and are broadly aligned with the historic Reformed faith. Consequently, there are occasions where I believe important assumptions were left undefined or where theological issues deserved further explanation. Nevertheless, I have sought to present the discussion fairly and respectfully.

This book is not intended as an attack upon atheists, nor is it merely a defence of Christianity. It is an exploration of ideas and arguments that have occupied thoughtful men and women for centuries.

Whether you approach these pages as a Christian, an atheist, an agnostic, or simply as someone interested in life's deeper questions, my hope is that you will read with an open mind and a willingness to consider the issues honestly.

I am grateful to my daughter Maisie for bringing this debate to my attention and thereby providing the inspiration for this book.

David Clarke

Introduction

This book is not an attempt to preach at atheists, nor is it an effort to score points for Christianity.

Rather, it is an examination of a public discussion between one atheist and twenty Christian women, each bringing their own experiences, convictions and understanding to some of life's biggest questions.

The debate covered subjects that have occupied philosophers, theologians and ordinary people for centuries:

- *Does the existence of suffering disprove the existence of God?*
- *Is the Christian doctrine of hell morally defensible?*
- *Has Christianity done more harm than good throughout history?*
- *Does the existence of the universe require a Creator?*
- *Are Christian views concerning men and women beneficial or harmful?*
- *What role should faith, reason and personal experience play in determining what is true?*

These questions matter because they touch upon issues that affect every human being, regardless of whether they identify as religious or non-religious. Questions about suffering, morality, purpose, justice and truth are not merely theological concerns; they are human concerns.

The format of the discussion was simple. Casey, an atheist and former Christian, presented a series of propositions challenging key Christian beliefs. The Christian participants then responded, offering arguments, personal experiences and biblical explanations in defence of their faith. The discussion was followed by a more personal one-to-one conversation exploring some of the issues in greater depth.

Readers should be aware that neither side represented all atheists nor all Christians.

Atheism itself is not a single philosophy. Some atheists are materialists, some are humanists, some are sceptics, and others simply lack belief in God without subscribing to any wider worldview.

Likewise, Christianity is not a single denomination or theological tradition. Christians differ on many subjects, including church government, baptism, the nature of hell, free will, predestination, and the relationship between faith and culture.

Consequently, this debate should not be viewed as a final contest between “Atheism” and “Christianity.” Rather, it is a conversation between real people attempting to explain and defend their beliefs.

The purpose of this book is not to declare winners and losers.

Instead, it seeks to present the arguments fairly, explain the reasoning behind them, and help readers understand what was actually being said. In doing so, I have rewritten the original discussion into a clearer narrative form, removing repetition and improving readability while preserving the substance of the conversation.

As the discussion unfolds, readers may find themselves agreeing with some arguments and disagreeing with others. That is entirely to be expected.

The important thing is not whether one immediately changes one’s mind, but whether one honestly considers the questions being asked.

For atheists, this book provides an opportunity to hear how thoughtful Christians attempt to defend their beliefs.

For Christians, it provides an opportunity to understand the objections that many sceptics raise against the faith.

And for everyone else, it offers a window into one of humanity’s oldest and most important discussions:

Is there a God, and if so, what difference does it make?

A Note on Terms

Before proceeding, it may be helpful to explain some of the key terms used throughout this discussion. Many of these words carry different meanings for different people, and some of the disagreements in the debate arose because participants were using the same words in different ways.

Atheist

An atheist is a person who does not believe in the existence of God or gods.

Some atheists actively argue that God does not exist. Others simply remain unconvinced that sufficient evidence exists to justify belief in God.

Not all atheists share the same worldview, philosophy or moral beliefs.

Agnostic

An agnostic is someone who believes that certainty regarding God's existence is either impossible or presently unavailable.

Many agnostics neither affirm nor deny the existence of God, choosing instead to suspend judgement.

Casey frequently described herself as agnostic in the sense that she did not claim absolute certainty regarding ultimate questions.

Christianity

The term Christianity can be used in several different ways.

It may refer to:

- *The teachings of Jesus Christ.*
- *The doctrines taught by Christian churches.*
- *Organised Christian institutions.*
- *Nations and cultures historically influenced by Christianity.*
- *Individuals who identify as Christians.*

During the debate these distinctions were not always made clear, particularly when discussing Christianity's historical impact.

Faith

In popular usage, faith is often defined as believing without evidence.

Most Christians, however, understand faith differently. They regard faith as trust based upon what they believe to be sufficient evidence, experience and revelation.

Whether that evidence is persuasive remains one of the points under debate.

Deconstruction

Deconstruction is a modern term describing the process of critically re-examining previously held religious beliefs.

For some, it results in a revised understanding of Christianity. For others, it leads to agnosticism, atheism or another belief system.

Casey described her own deconstruction as a gradual process of questioning the authority of Scripture and then re-examining the doctrines built upon it.

The Problem of Evil

The problem of evil is one of the most common arguments against the existence of God.

It asks how an all-good, all-powerful and all-knowing God can permit suffering, evil and injustice to exist in the world.

This argument formed the basis of the first discussion.

Free Will

Free will generally refers to the ability of human beings to make choices.

However, Christians do not all understand free will in the same way.

Some believe that every person possesses the ability to accept or reject God.

Others, particularly within the Reformed tradition, teach that mankind's will has been corrupted by sin and that people freely choose according to their fallen nature until changed by God's grace.

The debate frequently appealed to free will without carefully defining the term.

Sin

In Christian theology, sin is any thought, word, action or attitude that falls short of God's perfect standard.

Sin is not merely wrongdoing against other people but is understood as rebellion against God Himself.

Salvation

Salvation refers to God's work of rescuing sinners from the guilt, power and consequences of sin through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Different Christian traditions explain the details differently, but all regard salvation as central to the Christian faith.

Hell

Hell was one of the most controversial subjects discussed.

Among Christians there are differing views concerning its nature.

Some understand hell as eternal conscious punishment.

Others believe it refers to final destruction after judgement.

Still others emphasise separation from God.

These differences became apparent during the debate itself.

Objective Morality

Objective morality refers to moral standards that are true regardless of personal opinion, culture or circumstance.

Many Christians argue that objective morality requires God.

Many atheists argue that moral values can exist independently of belief in God.

Worldview

A worldview is the overall framework through which a person understands reality.

It includes beliefs about truth, morality, human nature, purpose, knowledge and the nature of the universe.

The debate was ultimately a discussion between competing worldviews rather than merely a disagreement over isolated facts.

Reformed Christianity

Reformed Christianity is a branch of Protestant Christianity strongly influenced by the teachings of the Reformers of the sixteenth century.

It places particular emphasis upon the sovereignty of God, the authority of Scripture, salvation by grace alone, and mankind's fallen condition after Adam's sin.

Many Reformed Christians reject the popular notion that fallen man possesses complete spiritual free will.

Why Definitions Matter

Many debates fail because participants use important words differently.

A Christian and an atheist may both use words such as faith, freedom, morality, Christianity, truth and God while meaning very different things.

For this reason, readers are encouraged to pay careful attention not only to the arguments being presented but also to how key terms are being understood by those making them.

Chapter 1

The Problem of Suffering

The first topic chosen for discussion addressed one of the most enduring challenges to Christian belief:

If God is all-good, all-powerful and all-knowing, why does suffering exist?

For centuries, philosophers, theologians and sceptics alike have wrestled with this question. It is often referred to as the problem of evil or the problem of suffering, and it remains one of the strongest objections raised against belief in the God of Christianity.

Casey began by carefully defining the terms of her argument.

According to the traditional Christian understanding, God possesses three essential attributes.

He is all-good (or perfectly loving), all-powerful, and all-knowing. Casey argued that if all three of these characteristics are true simultaneously, then the existence of suffering appears logically inconsistent.

An all-loving God would desire to prevent suffering.

An all-powerful God would possess the ability to prevent it.

An all-knowing God would be fully aware of every instance of suffering. Yet suffering undeniably exists. Therefore, she argued, something within the traditional definition must be wrong.

Before directly addressing the argument, several Christian participants challenged what they believed to be an underlying assumption.

One woman questioned where Casey's understanding of suffering and morality came from. If suffering is truly wrong, she asked, what objective standard exists by which such a judgement can be made? If morality is merely a product of evolution or personal preference, then suffering itself becomes difficult to define in any universal sense.

Casey responded that she did not view the discussion primarily as a moral issue. In her view, suffering is a conscious experience that can largely be explained through evolutionary processes. Human beings naturally avoid pain and seek experiences that

promote survival and flourishing. Therefore, suffering can be understood biologically without appealing to any divine moral framework.

The Christians disagreed.

Several argued that Casey's objection actually depended upon objective morality, whether she recognised it or not. To describe suffering as genuinely wrong rather than merely unpleasant assumes some standard by which right and wrong are measured. Christianity, they argued, provides such a standard because moral truth is grounded in the character of God Himself.

One participant then shifted the discussion towards the person of Christ.

She argued that Christianity does not merely explain suffering intellectually; it presents a God who entered suffering personally. According to the Christian faith, Jesus Christ willingly endured betrayal, humiliation, torture and crucifixion. Far from being detached from human pain, God Himself experienced it. The participant described in vivid detail the brutality of Roman crucifixion and argued that Christ's suffering demonstrates both God's awareness of human pain and His willingness to bear it.

Casey acknowledged the significance of the Christian story but challenged whether it truly answered the original problem.

She insisted that examples of suffering, even those attributed to Jesus, do not explain why suffering exists in the first place. More importantly, she pointed to innocent children suffering in the present world. For her, the existence of extreme suffering among those least responsible for wrongdoing remained a serious challenge to Christian explanations.

This led naturally to one of Christianity's most common responses to the problem of evil: free will.

Several Christians argued that God created humanity with genuine freedom.

Such freedom allows people to choose love, obedience and goodness, but it also permits rebellion, cruelty and evil. A world containing free moral agents inevitably contains the possibility of suffering. Without freedom, human beings would merely be programmed machines rather than creatures capable of genuine

love and meaningful relationships.

They further argued that suffering, while painful, can produce character, perseverance, hope and spiritual growth. Scripture frequently presents suffering not as evidence of God's absence but as part of the process through which human beings mature and draw nearer to Him.

Casey remained unconvinced.

While she agreed that individuals can sometimes find meaning within suffering, she objected strongly to the suggestion that suffering itself should be valued. Throughout history, she argued, such ideas have often been used to encourage passivity, compliance and acceptance of injustice. People experiencing suffering should not simply be told that their pain serves some greater purpose.

More fundamentally, she questioned whether free will adequately explains the scale of suffering found in the world.

If God is truly all-powerful, she argued, surely He could create a universe in which free will exists without the immense levels of suffering currently experienced. Why should children suffer? Why should animals suffer? Why should natural disasters devastate entire populations? Such suffering seems excessive and unnecessary.

One Christian participant responded by drawing upon the biblical account of creation and the Fall.

According to this understanding, God originally created a good world. Human rebellion introduced disorder, corruption and suffering not only into human society but into creation itself. The world, therefore, no longer reflects God's original intention. Human suffering exists within a creation that has been damaged by sin.

She pointed to the biblical figure of Job as an example. Job endured immense suffering despite being described as righteous. Yet the Book of Job ultimately teaches that human beings cannot fully comprehend God's purposes. God's answer to Job is not a detailed explanation but a reminder of the vast difference between divine knowledge and human understanding.

This answer, however, raised another concern for Casey.

She argued that appealing to a hidden divine plan does not

prove that such a plan actually exists. Simply because human beings do not understand suffering does not mean there is necessarily a meaningful reason behind it.

At this stage, the discussion moved from philosophical arguments to deeply personal convictions.

Casey stated that if free will truly requires the amount of suffering present in the world, she would willingly surrender her own freedom to eliminate such pain. In her view, no amount of personal autonomy could justify the atrocities witnessed throughout human history.

The Christians responded that free will is not merely a convenience but an essential aspect of genuine love and relationship.

Moreover, they argued that God's patience in delaying judgement allows people time to repent and seek redemption. Immediate justice against every evil act would result in universal condemnation rather than mercy.

As the discussion drew towards its conclusion, one participant summarised what she believed Christianity uniquely offers.

In her view, Christianity not only explains suffering but also provides hope beyond it. Human rebellion brought suffering into the world, but Christ entered that suffering and offers ultimate restoration. The promise of Christianity is not merely temporary relief but a future in which mourning, pain and death themselves are abolished.

Casey appreciated the sincerity behind these convictions but remained unsatisfied.

For her, the central question remained unanswered. No appeal to free will, redemption, divine mystery or future restoration adequately explained why an all-good, all-powerful and all-knowing Creator would permit such immense suffering in the first place. The existence of innocent suffering, particularly among children, remained the strongest challenge to the traditional Christian conception of God.

The debate ended without resolution.

Yet it highlighted a question that has troubled humanity for thousands of years: whether suffering points away from God,

as Casey argued, or towards humanity's need for God, as the Christians maintained.

The discussion would continue with another equally controversial topic: the morality and logic of hell.

Chapter 2

Hell: Illogical or Immoral?

The second discussion centred upon one of Christianity's most controversial doctrines: the existence of hell.

Casey's challenge was direct and uncompromising:

"The concept of the Christian hell is both illogical and immoral."

She divided her argument into two parts.

First, she questioned whether hell is logically consistent with Christian theology. If God is omnipresent—present everywhere at all times—then how can there be a place entirely separated from Him? Second, she challenged the morality of eternal punishment. No finite action committed during a brief human lifetime, she argued, could possibly justify endless suffering.

For Casey, the idea of eternal conscious torment represented a moral problem far greater than many Christians were willing to acknowledge.

Even the worst crimes committed by human beings occur within a finite span of time. However terrible they may be, they remain limited. Eternity, by contrast, is endless. Therefore, she argued, eternal punishment appears radically disproportionate to any earthly wrongdoing.

The first Christian response came from a legal perspective.

One participant, drawing upon her background as a prosecutor, argued that punishment is not always measured merely by the length of time required to commit a crime. Society regularly considers the significance of the victim, prior offences and other aggravating factors when determining a sentence.

She then applied this reasoning to theology.

According to Christian teaching, sin is not merely a mistake against another human being. Every sin is ultimately committed against God Himself. Since God is eternal, offences against Him carry eternal significance. Therefore, eternal consequences are not necessarily disproportionate.

She also introduced another idea.

If an individual spends a lifetime rejecting God, why assume

that disposition suddenly changes after death? In her view, hell may simply represent the continuation of a person's chosen separation from God. God respects human freedom, even when that freedom leads people away from Him.

Casey rejected this explanation.

She argued that it still failed to address the deeper issue. According to Christian theology, God knowingly creates every individual. He creates them understanding exactly how they will live, what choices they will make, and where they will ultimately end up. If God creates people while fully aware that some will experience eternal torment, then responsibility cannot simply be shifted onto human beings alone.

To illustrate her point, she compared God's creative act to human parenthood.

The Christian participant had argued that parents choose to have children despite uncertainty about who those children may become. Casey responded that the comparison breaks down because human parents do not possess foreknowledge. God, according to Christian theology, does. Therefore, creating individuals destined for eternal punishment appears morally problematic.

The conversation then returned to the issue of free will.

Several Christians argued that genuine love requires genuine choice. If human beings are truly free, then they must also possess the freedom to reject God. Hell, therefore, is not primarily something God imposes upon unwilling victims but the consequence of freely chosen separation from Him.

Casey responded by questioning whether belief itself is a choice.

People can choose many actions, she argued, but can they simply decide what they believe? If salvation depends upon sincerely believing certain doctrines, then the issue becomes more complicated than merely choosing obedience or disobedience. A person cannot force themselves to believe something they find unconvincing. Therefore, eternal punishment based upon belief appears deeply unfair.

This observation led to one of the most interesting developments

in the discussion.

Not all of the Christians agreed about the nature of hell.

Several participants defended the traditional doctrine of eternal conscious punishment. Others openly questioned it. One argued that the Bible does not clearly teach that ordinary unbelievers will suffer conscious torment forever. Rather, she maintained that Scripture often describes judgement as a “second death” — an ultimate destruction rather than endless torture.

This created an unexpected point of agreement.

Casey noted that if hell were understood as final destruction rather than eternal torture, many of her moral objections would lose some of their force. The primary target of her criticism was the widespread Christian belief that billions of people will consciously suffer forever.

The discussion then shifted briefly into broader questions concerning justice.

One participant argued that consequences are a necessary feature of any moral universe. If actions have no ultimate consequences, justice loses its meaning. Hell, in this view, represents the final consequence of rejecting God and choosing evil.

Another Christian emphasised that hell was originally prepared not for humanity but for rebellious spiritual beings. Human beings only share in that fate if they choose the same path of rebellion.

Yet Casey continued returning to the same fundamental objection.

If God is perfectly moral and possesses unlimited power, why create a system in which eternal suffering remains a possible outcome at all? Why not create a world where redemption is achieved without such horrific consequences? The existence of heaven itself appeared to undermine some of the arguments she was hearing. If God can create a future reality free from suffering and sin, why was such a reality not established from the beginning?

Towards the end of the discussion, a remarkable admission emerged.

One Christian participant openly stated that she agreed

eternal conscious torment would indeed be immoral if that were what Scripture taught. In her understanding, however, the Bible teaches final destruction rather than everlasting torture.

This highlighted a significant reality often overlooked in debates about Christianity.

The word hell carries different meanings among different Christians. Some envision eternal conscious punishment. Others believe in annihilation after judgement. Still others understand hell primarily as separation from God. Consequently, criticisms of hell often strike different targets depending upon which interpretation is being discussed.

As the conversation concluded, no consensus emerged.

The Christians maintained that divine justice, human freedom and eternal consequences form a coherent moral framework. Casey remained convinced that eternal punishment—particularly eternal conscious torment—cannot be reconciled with the idea of a perfectly loving Creator.

The discussion ended much as it had begun: with profound disagreement, but also with a surprising willingness on both sides to acknowledge the complexity of the issue.

The next topic would move from theology to history and culture:

Chapter 3

Has Christianity Done More Harm Than Good?

Casey presented perhaps her most provocative claim of the day:

“Christianity has done more harm globally than good.”

She clarified that by globally she meant both geographically and historically. Her argument was not directed primarily at individual Christians but at Christianity as an institution, a movement, and a civilisational force. While acknowledging that Christians and Christian organisations have accomplished much good, she maintained that the overall balance sheet of Christianity contains more harm than benefit.

Immediately, several Christians challenged this conclusion.

One participant argued that many of the institutions modern society takes for granted owe their existence to Christian influence. Hospitals, orphanages, universities, care for the elderly, organised charity, and relief work all developed significantly through Christian initiatives. These contributions, she argued, represent some of the greatest acts of public good in human history.

She further noted that even secular historians have acknowledged Christianity’s influence upon modern moral values. Ideas such as the dignity of the individual, care for the vulnerable, and universal human worth were profoundly shaped by Christian thought.

Casey challenged both claims.

First, she disputed the notion that modern moral values are uniquely Christian. Compassion, generosity, and concern for others existed long before Christianity. Secondly, she argued that hospitals and charitable institutions are not inherently Christian merely because Christians established or funded them. Healthcare and humanitarian aid can exist independently of religious belief.

The central issue, she insisted, was not whether Christianity had done some good.

Rather, it was whether the good outweighed the harm.

To Casey, the historical record included forced conversions, religious persecution, colonialism, cultural destruction, wars fought under religious banners, and centuries of institutional

oppression. When viewed collectively, she believed these harms outweighed Christianity's positive contributions.

The Christians strongly disagreed.

One participant suggested that Casey's reasoning could be applied to civilisation itself. Every major civilisation has committed atrocities while simultaneously producing immense benefits. The existence of wrongdoing within a system does not automatically prove that the system itself has been harmful overall.

The discussion then moved to an important distinction.

Casey argued that Christianity differs from ordinary social systems because it claims moral authority. A political system may simply exist as a practical arrangement of society, but Christianity presents itself as a divinely revealed truth and often claims to represent the highest moral standard. Therefore, its failures carry greater significance.

One Christian participant responded passionately.

She argued that to claim Christianity has done more harm than good requires overlooking vast amounts of evidence. Christian charities feed the poor, build homes, support disaster victims, establish schools, care for orphans, and provide aid worldwide. She pointed to groups such as the Amish and countless missionary organisations whose efforts have improved millions of lives.

She then offered a personal perspective.

As a Black woman, she acknowledged the painful history of slavery. Yet she argued that Christianity ultimately played a crucial role in ending slavery. Christian abolitionists fought against the institution, often appealing directly to biblical principles regarding human dignity and equality before God.

Moreover, she argued that Christianity frequently challenged harmful cultural practices wherever it spread. In her view, many pagan societies practised forms of violence, human sacrifice, female oppression and other customs that Christianity helped eliminate.

Casey replied that this argument failed to engage with her central point.

She was not claiming that atheism was morally superior, nor was she defending pagan religions. Her argument was specifically

about Christianity's own claim to moral excellence. The fact that other belief systems have also committed atrocities does not excuse Christianity's failures.

The debate then turned towards history.

Casey cited examples such as the Crusades, the Inquisition, colonial expansion, forced conversions, indigenous cultural destruction, and the Salem witch trials. These events, she argued, were not incidental. They occurred under explicitly Christian banners and were often justified through Christian language and authority.

Several Christians responded that such events represented distortions of Christianity rather than its authentic teachings.

Casey immediately challenged this reasoning.

Throughout the discussion she repeatedly resisted what she viewed as a "No True Scotsman" defence—the argument that whenever Christians commit wrongdoing they are simply dismissed as not being genuine Christians. In her view, if people acted in the name of Christianity and were widely recognised as Christians by their societies, those actions must be included when assessing Christianity's historical impact.

The Christians acknowledged many historical failures but argued that Casey was overlooking the broader picture.

Several pointed to historians such as Tom Holland and Bart Ehrman, both of whom, despite not being orthodox Christians, have recognised Christianity's profound influence upon Western moral development. Concepts such as universal human dignity, equality before the law, care for strangers, and concern for the vulnerable emerged with particular force through Christian teaching.

One participant highlighted the parable of the Good Samaritan as an example.

The revolutionary aspect of Jesus' teaching, she argued, was not simply caring for one's own community but extending compassion across ethnic, social and cultural boundaries. This principle helped shape many of the charitable institutions that followed.

Another participant raised an important challenge regarding

measurement.

How exactly should “harm” and “good” be quantified? Should the assessment be based upon deaths, institutions, social reforms, charitable works, cultural influence, or something else entirely? Without a clear standard, determining whether Christianity has done more harm than good becomes difficult.

Casey acknowledged the challenge.

She admitted that precise calculations were impossible. Nevertheless, she maintained that the cumulative effects of Christian colonialism, religious violence, cultural suppression, and political domination were substantial enough to outweigh Christianity’s positive contributions.

At this point, the conversation became increasingly focused on numbers.

One participant argued that even if every death attributed to Christian conflicts throughout history were counted, the total would still be outweighed by the number of lives saved through Christian hospitals, charities, humanitarian work, and anti-abortion efforts. From her perspective, the claim that Christianity has done more harm than good was not merely questionable—it was mathematically indefensible.

Casey rejected that calculation, arguing that historical harms cannot be measured solely through death counts. Cultural destruction, coercion, oppression, and lost generations must also be considered.

As the discussion progressed, a surprising area of agreement emerged.

Both sides acknowledged that Christianity contains ideas which have inspired extraordinary acts of compassion and extraordinary acts of violence. Both sides recognised that political institutions have often exploited religious belief for their own purposes. Both sides agreed that the historical record is deeply complex.

The real disagreement lay elsewhere.

For the Christians, the core teachings of Christ produced far more good than harm, and many of history’s worst atrocities represented departures from genuine Christian principles.

For Casey, Christianity must be judged not merely by its ideals

but by its real-world consequences. If large numbers of people have repeatedly used Christian beliefs to justify oppression and violence, then those outcomes form part of Christianity's historical legacy whether believers like it or not.

The chapter ended without a clear victor.

Yet it exposed one of the central questions underlying all discussions about religion and history:

Should a belief system be judged by its teachings, by its followers, or by the outcomes it produces?

That question would continue to linger as the discussion moved to a different subject altogether:

Does the existence of the universe imply a Creator?

Chapter 4

Does Creation Require a Creator?

The fourth topic brought the discussion to one of the oldest arguments in support of belief in God:

Does the existence of the universe itself point to a Creator?

Casey opened with a challenge to what is commonly known as the cosmological argument. The argument, in its simplest form, suggests that everything which begins to exist must have a cause, and since the universe began to exist, it too must have a cause. Christians typically identify that cause as God.

Casey argued that this reasoning raises an obvious question:

If everything needs a creator, who created God?

To her, the argument appeared special pleading. Christians insist that the universe requires an explanation but then exempt God from the same requirement. If God can simply exist without a creator, why could the universe not exist without one as well?

Several Christian participants immediately responded that this objection misunderstands the argument.

The claim is not that everything requires a cause. Rather, the claim is that everything which begins to exist requires a cause. God, according to classical Christian theology, did not begin to exist. He is eternal and self-existent. Therefore, He does not require a creator.

Casey remained unconvinced.

She argued that if Christians are permitted to posit an eternal being as the explanation for reality, then atheists are equally entitled to posit an eternal universe or eternal natural laws. Simply replacing one mystery with another does not provide a satisfactory answer.

The discussion then turned towards the origins of the universe.

Several Christians pointed out that modern cosmology generally supports the idea that the universe had a beginning. The Big Bang theory suggests that space, time and matter all came into existence at a finite point in the past. If time itself began at that moment, they argued, then whatever caused the universe must exist beyond time and space.

One participant argued that this description closely resembles the traditional concept of God: an eternal, immaterial, powerful being capable of bringing the universe into existence.

Casey replied that the existence of a beginning does not automatically imply a personal creator. Unknown natural processes may eventually explain the origin of the universe. Human ignorance should not be filled with theological assumptions.

The conversation then moved to the question of fine-tuning.

Several Christians pointed to the remarkable precision of the physical constants that govern the universe. If gravity, electromagnetism, or other fundamental forces varied even slightly, life as we know it could not exist. They argued that the extraordinary balance found within nature appears more consistent with design than with chance.

One participant compared the universe to a highly complex machine.

When people encounter a functioning watch, they naturally infer the existence of a watchmaker. Likewise, the complexity and order of the universe suggest an intelligent designer behind it.

Casey challenged the analogy.

A watch exists within the universe and can be compared with naturally occurring objects. The universe itself has no such comparison. Since we possess only one universe, we cannot determine whether its apparent fine-tuning is unusual or inevitable.

She also raised the possibility of a multiverse.

If countless universes exist, each with different physical properties, it would not be surprising that at least one happened to possess the conditions necessary for life. Observers would naturally find themselves in a universe capable of supporting observers.

The Christians replied that the multiverse itself merely pushes the question back another step.

If multiple universes exist, what explains their existence? What explains the laws governing the multiverse? The need for an ultimate explanation remains.

The discussion then shifted towards consciousness.

Several participants argued that human consciousness presents a challenge for purely materialistic explanations. Thoughts, reasoning, self-awareness, morality and rationality seem difficult to reduce entirely to physical processes. If human beings are nothing more than collections of atoms, why should their reasoning be trusted as genuinely rational?

One Christian suggested that the existence of reason itself points towards a rational Creator. Human minds are capable of understanding reality because both the universe and the human intellect ultimately originate from the same divine source.

Casey disagreed.

Evolutionary processes, she argued, provide a sufficient explanation for consciousness and reasoning. Organisms capable of accurately understanding aspects of reality possess survival advantages. Over time, natural selection can account for increasingly sophisticated mental abilities.

At this point, the discussion touched upon a deeper philosophical issue.

Why does anything exist at all?

Even if science eventually explains every physical process, many philosophers argue that a further question remains: why is there something rather than nothing? Why does reality exist in the first place?

Several Christians maintained that God provides the most coherent answer to that question. God is understood as a necessary being whose existence explains all contingent realities.

Casey responded that the question itself may be impossible to answer. Human beings may simply lack the capacity to understand why reality exists. Admitting uncertainty, she argued, is more intellectually honest than claiming certainty about a divine creator.

Towards the end of the conversation, both sides recognised that the debate had reached fundamental differences in worldview.

The Christians saw order, rationality, fine-tuning, consciousness and existence itself as signposts pointing towards God.

Casey viewed those same phenomena as areas where science continues to investigate and where uncertainty remains acceptable.

Neither side could produce absolute proof.

The Christians argued that belief in God provides the best explanation for reality.

Casey argued that unexplained mysteries do not automatically justify belief in God.

As the discussion concluded, the question remained unresolved:

Does the universe require a Creator, or is reality ultimately self-explanatory?

The debate would next move away from cosmology and philosophy and into a topic that generated some of the strongest emotions of the day:

Christianity, patriarchy, and the role of women.

Chapter 5

Christianity, Patriarchy, and the Role of Women

As the discussion moved into its fifth major topic, the atmosphere noticeably changed.

The previous debates had centred largely upon philosophy, theology and history. This subject, however, touched upon personal experience, family life, identity and social relationships.

Casey presented the proposition:

“Christianity promotes patriarchy.”

Unlike some of the earlier topics, there was little disagreement regarding the historical reality.

Most participants acknowledged that Christianity has traditionally taught some form of male leadership within both the family and the church. The real disagreement concerned whether such leadership should be regarded as beneficial, harmful, or morally problematic.

Casey began by defining her terms.

By patriarchy, she meant a social structure in which men hold primary authority and leadership while women occupy subordinate roles. She argued that Christianity has historically promoted precisely such a system through its teachings concerning marriage, church leadership and gender roles.

Several Christian participants agreed that Christianity teaches distinct roles for men and women.

However, they rejected the assumption that different roles necessarily imply inequality.

One woman explained that, in her understanding, men and women possess equal value before God while serving different functions. She compared the relationship to different parts of a body. Each part performs a unique role, yet all contribute equally to the wellbeing of the whole.

Casey challenged this distinction.

Throughout history, she argued, claims of “separate but equal” have often been used to justify unequal treatment. If men consistently occupy positions of authority while women are expected to submit, practical inequality inevitably follows

regardless of how equality is defined theoretically.

Several participants responded by referring to biblical teaching regarding marriage.

According to the New Testament, husbands are called to love their wives sacrificially, following the example of Christ's love for the church. Christian leadership, they argued, is intended to be servant leadership rather than domination or control.

One participant noted that Christ washed the feet of His disciples, demonstrating that leadership within Christianity is fundamentally different from worldly concepts of power.

In this view, biblical headship requires responsibility, sacrifice and service rather than privilege.

Casey remained sceptical.

She argued that even benevolent authority remains authority. No matter how kindly exercised, a system in which one gender possesses final decision-making power still establishes a hierarchy. The question is not whether male leadership can be exercised kindly, but whether it should exist at all.

The discussion then became increasingly personal.

Several Christian women shared their own experiences of marriage and family life.

Far from feeling oppressed, they described their relationships as fulfilling, supportive and mutually respectful. Some stated that they willingly embraced biblical gender roles because they believed those roles contributed positively to family stability and personal wellbeing.

Casey acknowledged their experiences but argued that individual satisfaction does not settle the broader question.

People can sincerely support systems that nevertheless contain structural inequalities. The issue is whether the underlying principles themselves are justifiable.

Attention then turned towards church leadership.

Casey noted that many Christian denominations restrict pastoral or elder roles to men. Such restrictions, she argued, demonstrate that Christianity continues to reserve positions of authority for one sex while excluding the other.

Different responses emerged among the Christians.

Some defended male-only eldership as a biblical requirement rooted in creation order and apostolic teaching. Others came from traditions that permitted women to serve in pastoral leadership and therefore interpreted the relevant passages differently.

This revealed that Christianity itself contains significant diversity on questions of gender and authority.

Not all Christians understand biblical teaching on these matters in exactly the same way.

The conversation then shifted towards contemporary culture.

Several participants argued that modern society increasingly treats any distinction between men and women as discriminatory. They believed Christianity offers an alternative vision in which differences can be celebrated without implying superiority or inferiority.

Casey responded that many traditional distinctions have historically limited women's opportunities and freedoms.

She questioned whether appeals to complementarianism genuinely preserve equality or simply provide a more attractive vocabulary for maintaining traditional hierarchies.

One particularly interesting exchange centred upon the meaning of submission.

Christian participants argued that biblical submission is voluntary, relational and rooted in love.

Casey questioned whether genuine consent can exist when submission is presented as a divine requirement. If God commands a particular structure, refusing that structure may appear equivalent to disobeying God. This, she suggested, complicates the notion of voluntary choice.

The discussion eventually broadened into questions about human flourishing.

Several Christians argued that the decline of traditional family structures has produced significant social problems, including family instability, fatherlessness and relationship breakdown. They suggested that biblical patterns continue to provide valuable guidance for modern society.

Casey challenged the assumption that these problems result from abandoning traditional gender roles. Social changes are

influenced by numerous economic, cultural and political factors, making simple explanations difficult to sustain.

As the conversation drew towards a close, the central disagreement became increasingly clear.

The Christian participants generally viewed biblical gender roles as part of God's design for human relationships. They believed men and women possess equal dignity while fulfilling complementary responsibilities.

Casey viewed those same structures as forms of hierarchy that inevitably concentrate authority in male hands.

Both sides agreed that men and women possess equal worth as human beings.

What they fundamentally disagreed about was whether equality can coexist with role distinctions involving authority and submission.

The discussion concluded without resolution, but it highlighted a recurring theme present throughout the entire debate.

Again and again, the participants found themselves asking whether traditional Christian teachings should be understood as expressions of divine wisdom or as cultural ideas inherited from the ancient world.

The final chapter would move away from formal propositions and into a more open and personal exchange, where the participants reflected on faith, doubt, experience and the deeper reasons behind their beliefs.

Chapter 6

Faith, Experience, and the Search for Truth

With the formal propositions concluded, the discussion entered its final phase.

The atmosphere was noticeably different.

The earlier exchanges had focused upon arguments, evidence, history, philosophy and theology. Now the conversation became more personal. Rather than debating abstract ideas, the participants began exploring the experiences and convictions that had shaped their beliefs.

At its heart, the discussion revolved around a simple question: Why do people believe what they believe?

For Casey, this question was deeply personal.

She explained that she had not always been an atheist. In fact, she had spent many years as a committed Christian. Her journey away from faith had not been sudden or rebellious but gradual. Through study, questioning and reflection, she found herself increasingly unconvinced by the answers Christianity offered to some of life's most important questions.

She emphasised that her deconstruction of faith had not been motivated by a desire to reject morality or pursue a different lifestyle. Rather, it had arisen from an honest search for truth. Eventually, she reached the conclusion that she could no longer sincerely believe the claims of Christianity.

Several Christian participants expressed appreciation for her honesty.

Although they disagreed with her conclusions, they recognised the sincerity of her journey and acknowledged that many believers experience periods of doubt and questioning.

One participant explained that faith should not be confused with blind belief.

In her understanding, faith involves trust based upon evidence, experience and reason. Christians do not claim to possess absolute proof of every doctrine. Rather, they believe that the cumulative evidence points towards the truth of Christianity.

Casey responded that many religious people from different

traditions make exactly the same claim.

Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and members of countless other religions often point to personal experiences, spiritual encounters and deeply held convictions. If people from conflicting belief systems all appeal to experience, how can experience alone determine which belief is true?

This question led naturally into a discussion about religious experience.

Several Christians shared accounts of prayers they believed had been answered, moments of divine guidance, personal transformation and experiences they regarded as evidence of God's presence.

One woman spoke of profound peace during difficult circumstances.

Another described how faith had transformed her life and relationships.

Others referred to moments in which they felt God had directed, comforted or sustained them through hardship.

For these women, Christianity was not merely a collection of doctrines. It was a living relationship with a personal God.

Casey listened respectfully but remained cautious.

She acknowledged that such experiences are meaningful to those who have them. However, she argued that personal experiences are inherently subjective. Human beings are capable of misinterpreting emotions, drawing false conclusions and finding patterns where none exist.

Throughout history, people have attributed powerful experiences to many different gods and belief systems.

Therefore, she argued, personal experience alone cannot reliably establish religious truth.

The Christians agreed that experiences can be misunderstood.

However, they argued that Christianity does not rely upon experience alone. It also rests upon historical claims concerning Jesus Christ, His life, death and resurrection.

Several participants explained that their faith ultimately centres upon the person of Christ rather than merely upon feelings or experiences.

If Christ truly rose from the dead, they argued, Christianity stands upon a unique historical foundation.

Casey responded that the resurrection remains one of the very claims she finds unconvincing.

Like many sceptics, she regards the resurrection accounts as insufficient evidence for such an extraordinary event. While she acknowledges that the disciples sincerely believed something happened, sincerity alone does not prove historical accuracy.

The discussion then touched upon certainty.

One Christian asked Casey whether she could be absolutely certain that God does not exist.

Casey answered that she could not.

She explained that her position is not one of absolute certainty but one of insufficient evidence. She does not claim to know that God does not exist. Rather, she remains unconvinced that the evidence supports belief.

Several Christians appreciated this distinction.

Likewise, some acknowledged that faith involves living with unanswered questions. Christianity does not provide complete explanations for every mystery of existence.

Questions concerning suffering, free will, consciousness, eternity and divine action remain subjects of ongoing reflection even among believers.

The conversation gradually became less adversarial and more reflective.

Participants began discussing humility, intellectual honesty and the importance of remaining open to truth wherever it may lead.

One Christian observed that every worldview eventually encounters mysteries.

Atheism, materialism, Christianity and other belief systems all face questions that remain difficult to answer. The issue is not whether mysteries exist but which worldview best explains reality as a whole.

Casey largely agreed.

The disagreement, she suggested, lies not in the existence of unanswered questions but in how people respond to them.

Christians often see mystery as pointing towards God.

Sceptics are more inclined to suspend judgement until further evidence becomes available.

Towards the end of the discussion, participants were asked whether the conversation had changed their views.

No dramatic conversions occurred.

No one abandoned their position.

Yet there was a noticeable increase in mutual understanding.

Casey appeared to gain a clearer appreciation of how many thoughtful Christians understand and defend their beliefs.

Likewise, the Christian participants gained greater insight into the concerns and objections that lead some people away from faith.

The debate concluded on a surprisingly cordial note.

Despite deep disagreements regarding God, morality, suffering, hell, history and gender roles, the participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to engage openly and respectfully.

The discussion demonstrated that difficult conversations need not descend into hostility.

People holding profoundly different worldviews can still listen, challenge one another and seek understanding without abandoning conviction.

Concluding Reflections

The debate ultimately revolved around several enduring questions:

Does suffering disprove the existence of a loving God?

Can eternal judgement be morally justified?

Has Christianity benefited or harmed civilisation overall?

Does the universe point towards a Creator?

Are traditional Christian teachings about gender wise or oppressive?

What role should personal experience play in matters of faith?

No final answers emerged that satisfied everyone.

For the Christians, the discussion reinforced their conviction that Christianity offers the most coherent explanation of reality, morality, purpose and hope.

For Casey, the conversation reinforced her belief that many

central Christian claims remain unproven and philosophically problematic.

Yet perhaps the most valuable outcome was not agreement but understanding.

The debate revealed that behind every worldview are real people wrestling with life's deepest questions—questions concerning truth, meaning, morality, suffering and the possibility of God Himself.

And those questions remain as relevant today as they have ever been.

Chapter 7

Beyond the Debate: What Was Really Being

Discussed?

As the cameras stopped rolling and the formal discussion came to an end, it became clear that the debate had been about far more than atheism and Christianity.

On the surface, the participants had discussed suffering, hell, morality, creation, history and gender roles. Yet beneath each of these topics lay a deeper question:

How do we know what is true?

Throughout the discussion, Casey and the Christian participants often found themselves approaching the same evidence from entirely different starting points.

When they looked at suffering, Christians saw a fallen world awaiting redemption. Casey saw evidence that challenged belief in an all-good and all-powerful God.

When they considered morality, Christians saw objective standards rooted in God's character. Casey saw moral values emerging through human experience, reason and social development.

When they discussed the universe, Christians saw signs of design and purpose. Casey saw unanswered scientific questions and the limits of human knowledge.

Again and again, the disagreement was not simply over facts. It concerned the framework through which those facts were interpreted.

This became especially apparent during discussions about evidence.

The Christians frequently argued that Christianity provides the best overall explanation for reality. They pointed to history, morality, consciousness, religious experience, fulfilled prophecy and the life of Jesus Christ.

Casey did not necessarily deny every piece of evidence presented. Rather, she questioned whether those pieces of evidence justified the conclusions being drawn from them.

In many ways, both sides were examining the same world while arriving at different interpretations.

One of the most striking features of the discussion was the repeated appeal to personal experience.

Christians spoke of answered prayers, life transformation, guidance, comfort and encounters with God.

Casey acknowledged the sincerity of those experiences but questioned whether they could establish objective truth.

This revealed a tension found throughout human history.

Personal experience is often one of the strongest reasons people hold their beliefs. Yet personal experience can also be difficult to verify independently.

Consequently, both sides found themselves wrestling with the relationship between subjective experience and objective truth.

The discussion also exposed differing understandings of faith itself.

For many sceptics, faith is often understood as believing without sufficient evidence.

For the Christian participants, faith was presented quite differently.

They described faith as trust based upon what they regarded as compelling evidence. In their view, faith is not the absence of reason but a response to reason.

Whether one accepts that claim or not, it became clear that both sides were using the same word while sometimes meaning different things.

Another theme repeatedly surfaced throughout the debate: human limitation.

The Christians frequently argued that finite human beings should not expect to fully comprehend an infinite God.

Casey responded that appealing to mystery can sometimes function as a way of avoiding difficult questions.

Yet neither side escaped mystery entirely.

The atheist must still account for the existence of the universe, consciousness, reason and morality.

The Christian must still account for suffering, divine hiddenness and unanswered prayers.

Both worldviews ultimately encounter questions that remain unresolved.

Perhaps the most revealing moment came when certainty itself was discussed.

Casey openly admitted that she could not prove that God does not exist.

Likewise, many of the Christians acknowledged that they could not provide mathematical proof for every aspect of their faith.

In that sense, both sides demonstrated a degree of intellectual humility.

The disagreement was not between certainty and uncertainty.

It was between different conclusions drawn from the available evidence.

As the conversation drew to a close, something unexpected had happened.

No one had won.

No one had lost.

No dramatic conversion occurred.

No worldview collapsed under scrutiny.

Instead, what emerged was a clearer understanding of how thoughtful people can examine the same questions and arrive at very different answers.

For the Christians, the debate reinforced the conviction that Jesus Christ remains the answer to humanity's deepest problems—sin, suffering, death and separation from God.

For Casey, the discussion reinforced the importance of critical inquiry, evidence and the willingness to question inherited beliefs.

Yet both sides shared at least one important common ground.

Each believed that truth matters.

Each believed that ideas have consequences.

And each believed that the questions under discussion were important enough to deserve serious consideration.

Final Reflections

The debate highlighted several realities that continue to shape modern society.

We live in an age where traditional religious beliefs are increasingly questioned. At the same time, many people continue

to find meaning, purpose and hope within those beliefs.

The conversation demonstrated that disagreements about religion are rarely merely intellectual.

They touch upon identity, family, morality, purpose, suffering, death and the meaning of life itself.

For that reason, debates about faith often become deeply personal.

What this discussion showed, however, is that disagreement need not result in hostility.

People can challenge one another vigorously while still treating each other with dignity and respect.

In a world increasingly divided by ideology, that lesson may be as important as any theological or philosophical conclusion reached during the debate.

The questions remain.

Does God exist?

Is Christianity true?

Can morality exist without God?

Why does suffering occur?

What happens after death?

Each reader must answer those questions for themselves.

But whatever conclusion is reached, the search for truth remains one of the most important journeys any human being can undertake.

Conclusion

Having listened carefully to the discussion between Casey and the twenty Christian women, I was reminded that the most important questions in life have not changed.

Human beings continue to ask the same questions that have occupied thoughtful men and women throughout history:

Why is there suffering?

What is truth?

Does God exist?

What happens after death?

Why are we here?

The debate revealed that these questions are not merely intellectual. They are deeply personal. Behind every argument stood real people attempting to make sense of the world, their experiences, and their place within it.

Casey presented her objections thoughtfully and sincerely. She challenged Christianity on some of the very issues that have troubled believers and unbelievers alike for centuries. Her concerns regarding suffering, hell, divine hiddenness, religious history and the reliability of belief deserve serious consideration. They should not be dismissed lightly.

Likewise, the Christian participants offered thoughtful responses rooted in their understanding of Scripture, history, personal experience and reason. While they did not always agree with one another, they consistently pointed to the person of Jesus Christ as central to their faith and understanding of reality.

One observation became increasingly apparent as the discussion progressed.

Many of the disagreements arose not merely from differing conclusions but from differing definitions.

Words such as faith, Christianity, free will, morality, justice, love, goodness and truth were often used by both sides but understood in very different ways. Frequently, the debate turned not on the evidence itself but on the assumptions brought to the evidence.

This is one reason why discussions concerning God often

prove so difficult. People may be examining the same facts while operating from entirely different worldviews.

Another observation is that neither side escaped mystery.

The atheist faces questions concerning the origin of the universe, consciousness, morality and reason itself.

The Christian faces questions concerning suffering, evil, unanswered prayer and divine providence.

Neither worldview provides answers to every question. Both require us to wrestle with realities that extend beyond the limits of human understanding.

Yet the Christian faith does not ultimately rest upon philosophical arguments alone.

Christianity stands or falls upon the person of Jesus Christ.

The central claim of Christianity is not merely that God exists, but that God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ; that Christ died for sinners; that He rose again from the dead; and that through Him men and women may be reconciled to God.

If Christ did not rise from the dead, Christianity is false.

If Christ did rise from the dead, then His claims deserve the most serious consideration possible.

For this reason, I would encourage every reader, whether atheist, agnostic or Christian, not merely to examine the arguments presented in this debate but to examine the person of Jesus Christ Himself.

The debate has ended.

The questions remain.

Each reader must decide what they believe and why they believe it.

My prayer is that this book may encourage honest enquiry, careful thinking and a sincere search for truth.

For if truth exists, it is worth finding.

And if Jesus Christ is who He claimed to be, then no question is more important than what we do with Him.

David Clarke

2026

About the Author

David Clarke is a Christian author, preacher and former lecturer from Hampshire, England.

His life story is one of remarkable transformation. Raised in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, David became involved in crime during his youth and was imprisoned in the 1960s for malicious wounding and possession of a firearm. On 16th January 1970, during what began as a terrifying LSD experience, he cried out to God and experienced a life-changing conversion to the Christian faith.

Having left school with very limited educational qualifications, David taught himself to read and study through the Bible and Christian literature. He later pursued further education, qualified as a lecturer and spent many years teaching in further education.

David became a member of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church and was later called to preach the gospel. Throughout his Christian life he has written extensively on theology, church history, Christian experience and the doctrines of grace.

In 2001, David founded Trojan Horse International and travelled to the Philippines to support prison ministry work among inmates in New Bilibid Prison and other correctional institutions. This work followed the conversion of his brother Michael Clarke, who had been imprisoned in the Philippines and later became a Christian whilst serving his sentence.

Over the past twenty-five years David has authored numerous books, including *Converted on LSD Trip*, *The Fall: Desperation and Recovery*, *Trojan Warriors*, *Let Christian Men Be Men*, *Christ the Rest*, *Not Moses*, *Called from Darkness into His Marvellous Light*, and other works dealing with Christian testimony, doctrine and church history.

David continues to write, preach and support Christian ministry in the United Kingdom and the Philippines.

He is the founder of Bierton Particular Baptists and remains committed to the historic Christian faith as expressed in the Holy Scriptures and the doctrines of grace.

For further information and publications visit:
www.BiertonParticularBaptists.co.uk

FURTHER PUBLICATIONS
CONVERTED ON LSD TRIP



By David Clarke (Author)
 3rd Edition Paperback – 3 Jun. 2020

This third edition of *Converted on LSD Trip* bears powerful witness to the life-transforming grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, as revealed through the remarkable true accounts of David Clarke and his brother, Michael Clarke.

David's dramatic conversion occurred on the night of 16th January 1970, during a harrowing LSD experience. In the depths of terror and despair, he cried out unto God—and from that moment onward, his life was utterly changed. Nearly three decades later, his brother Michael likewise came to a saving knowledge of Christ whilst serving a prison sentence in the Philippines. Each went on to devote his life to the preaching of the gospel and to ministering unto others.

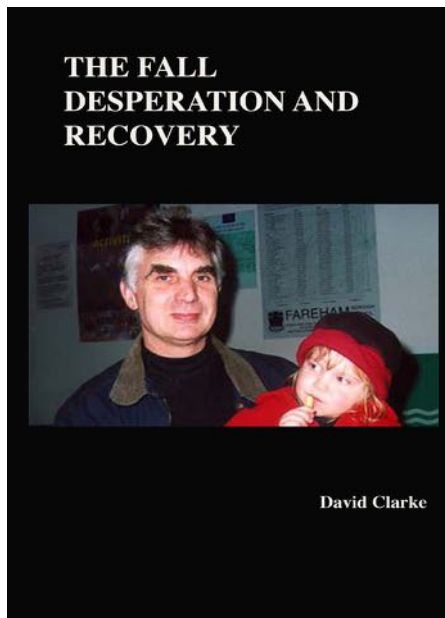
This latest edition serves not only as a deeply personal testimony but also as a compelling evangelistic tool—intended to encourage fellow believers to proclaim the gospel of Christ with boldness, clarity, and conviction. It also draws attention to the continuing

work of Christian ministry in Baguio City, Philippines, under the faithful leadership of William O. Poloc, a former inmate of New Bilibid Prison, who now labours in the gospel, reaching others with the glad tidings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The author rightly underscores the pressing need to teach the traditional Christian doctrines of grace in this present age—doctrines which uphold the sovereignty of God in salvation, the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the divine authority and infallibility of Holy Scripture. The book stands unflinchingly against the prevailing errors of modern ungodliness, including unbelief, moral relativism, homosexuality, radical feminism, and the propagation of false religions such as Islam.

Converted on LSD Trip is both a moving testimony and a rousing call to action. It exhorts the reader to stand firm in the faith and to contend earnestly for the truth of the gospel in a world that is perishing for lack of it.

[THE FALL DESPERATION AND RECOVERY](#)



The Sequel to *Converted on LSD Trip*
By David Clarke

This gripping continuation of *Converted on LSD Trip* follows David Clarke's real-life journey through personal failure, spiritual

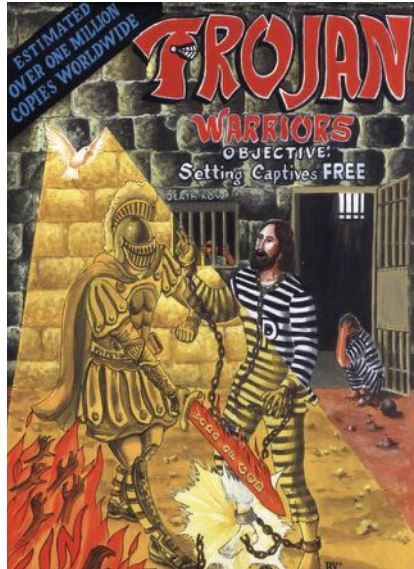
trial, and remarkable recovery. Having once been radically transformed from a life of crime and drugs by a profound Christian conversion, David now recounts the sobering aftermath of that mountaintop experience—what happened when the fervour faded, the fellowship fractured, and the battles began.

After seceding from the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptists due to deep doctrinal disagreements, David found himself cast adrift, wrestling with spiritual isolation, the struggles of family life, and opposition from those closest to him. In this raw and honest account, David details his attempts to find godly fellowship, his unexpected help from believers like David Oldham and John Metcalfe, and his confrontation with the damaging influence of false teaching.

Told with clarity and conviction, *The Fall: Desperation and Recovery* is not simply a story of relapse—it is a story of resilience. Readers are taken through the author's trials at Fareham College, his battles with church leadership, and the ongoing call to stand for truth in an age of compromise. It's a timely reminder that the Christian life is not a straight line, but a path paved with repentance, perseverance, and grace.

For those who were moved by David's first testimony, this sequel offers a deeper, more searching look at what it means to walk the narrow road—even when that road becomes lonely.

TROJAN WARRIORS



Setting Captives Free

Authored by Mr David Clarke Cert Ed, Authored by Mr Michael J Clark

Trojan Warriors: Setting Captives Free is the true and extraordinary account of two brothers—Michael and David Clarke—raised in Aylesbury, England, who turned from a life of crime to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the 1960s, both brothers were convicted and imprisoned for malicious wounding and carrying firearms without a license. David, the younger, experienced a radical conversion in 1970 after a terrifying LSD trip. He went on to teach himself to read using the Bible, pursued higher education, became a lecturer, and later served as a Baptist minister.

Michael, however, continued a flamboyant and criminal lifestyle, eventually landing in a Philippine prison in 1996, sentenced to 16 years. It was there—after five years in maximum security—that he too came to faith in Christ.

Moved by his brother's transformation, David launched a mission to the Philippines, determined to help and support Michael. Together, they began working with inmates in New Bilibid Prison—many of whom were former gang leaders,

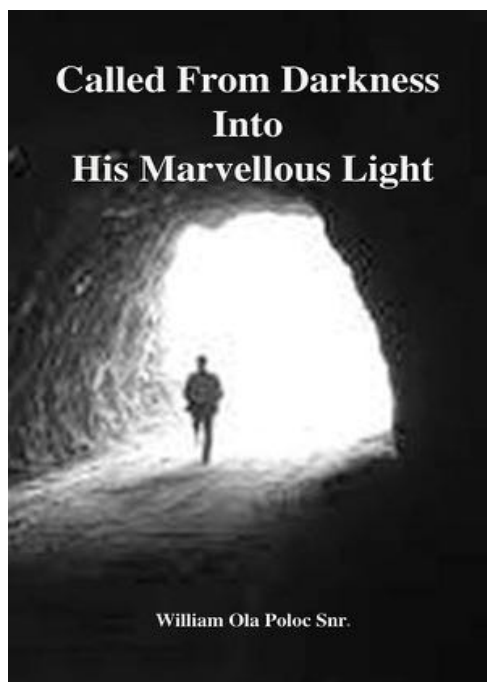
murderers, and drug traffickers—who had also experienced profound conversions.

This book tells the story of that mission and includes 66 handwritten testimonies from inmates whose lives were changed by the gospel. Among them were **22 men on Death Row**, awaiting execution by lethal injection—yet now living in hope, bold in faith, and committed to spreading the message of Christ.

These are the Trojan Warriors—once captives to sin, now soldiers of Christ.

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.” — Revelation 12:11

[CALLED FROM DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELLOUS LIGHT](#)



William Poloc

William Poloc was once an inmate of New Bilibid Prison in the Philippines, having been sentenced to 14 years for the crime of homicide. Yet it was during his time in prison that the Lord Jesus Christ called him to repentance and faith. Turning his back

on a life of sin, William began to read the Holy Scriptures and study theology. In time, he came to understand and embrace the doctrines of grace, and he was soon teaching the gospel to his fellow inmates.

I first met William in October 2001 while visiting New Bilibid Prison, where I was serving as Director of the Christian mission, Trojan Horse International.

Upon his release in August 2002, William was commissioned by Trojan Horse International and sent back to his home city of Baguio to preach the gospel to the inmates of Baguio City Jail and Benguet Provincial Jail.

In October 2002, I travelled to Baguio City Jail in my capacity as Mission Director and as a sent minister of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptists. There, I had the privilege of baptising 22 inmates who had been truly converted—from crime to Christ—through the ministry of William Poloc. I also baptised a further 8 souls at Benguet Provincial Jail who likewise testified of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. These remarkable events coincided with the final worship service ever held at the Bierton Strict Baptist Chapel in the United Kingdom, which took place on 22nd December 2002.

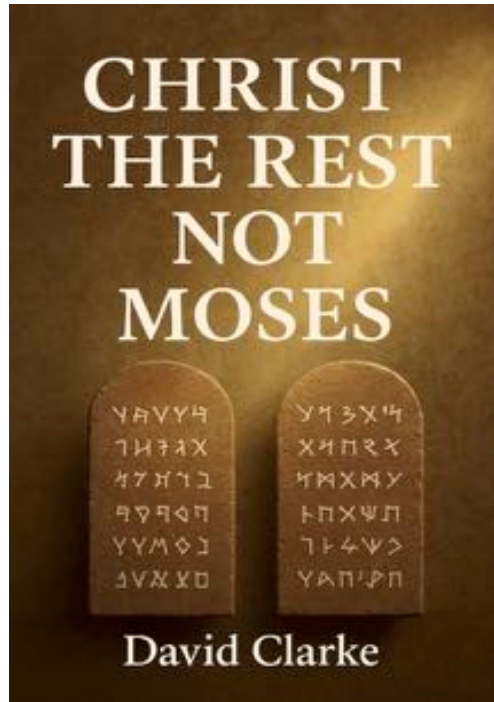
Over the past two decades, Brother William has faithfully laboured in the gospel ministry. As his testimony shows, he has continued to preach and teach the Word of God, and has established what is now known as the Baguio Christ-Centred Churches.

We give thanks to Almighty God for His wondrous works in the salvation of sinners, and for raising up faithful men like William Poloc, who proclaim the message that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15, KJV).

David Clarke

Director, Trojan Horse International

April 2022



By David Clarke

“Let us labour therefore... to enter into that rest.” – Hebrews 4:11

What is the true rest promised to the people of God? Is it found in observing days and laws — or in Christ Himself?

In this bold and thought-provoking work, David Clarke draws from Scripture and personal experience to confront a foundational issue at the heart of Christian doctrine: justification by faith alone.

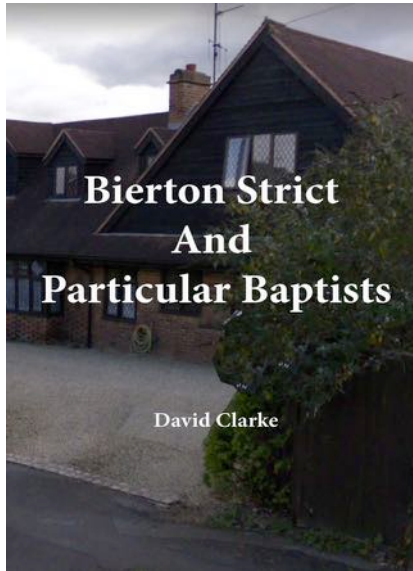
Clarke, once rejected by a Gospel Standard minister over his understanding of Hebrews 4, writes not to stir controversy, but to call believers back to the simplicity and power of the gospel. With a serious tone, pastoral heart, and unwavering conviction, he urges readers to turn from legalism and shadows to the finished work of Christ.

Written especially for those who love the doctrines of grace, yet feel isolated or misunderstood, this book is a call to clarity,

courage, and confidence in the rest that is found in Christ — and Christ alone.

This is not merely a theological issue. It is a matter of liberty, peace, and the very ground of our standing before God.

[BIERTON STRICT AND PARTICULAR BAPTISTS](#)



My Testimony and Confession

Authored by Mr David Clarke Cert. Ed

This book, originally published under the title *Converted on LSD Trip*, is the gripping true-life account of David Clarke, told in autobiographical form. But it is no ordinary story. It traces the astonishing journey of two brothers—David and Michael Clarke—who, during the 1960s, were well-known criminals in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, and active participants in the Mod subculture. In 1967, both were sentenced to prison—David for malicious wounding and the unlawful possession of a firearm.

The turning point in their lives came at different times. David experienced a dramatic and life-changing conversion in 1970 after a terrifying LSD trip brought him to the brink of despair. In

that moment of fear, he cried out unto God—and the Lord heard him. From that night forward, he turned from a life of crime and embarked on a new path of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Though he had left school barely able to read, he taught himself using the Bible and classic Christian writings to gain a deeper understanding of the gospel. His transformation was so complete that he later confessed to 24 additional crimes, committed after his release from Dover Borstal in 1968. Remarkably, when these were brought before the courts, he was shown mercy and not sentenced.

David went on to become a member of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church, a Gospel Standard cause, and was later called and sent out by the church to preach the gospel. Along the way, he encountered numerous doctrinal errors within various denominations, and he faced significant opposition in his efforts to uphold biblical truth. These challenges were recorded in his earlier work *The Bierton Crisis* (1984), now republished under the title *Let Christian Men Be Men*, intended to help others facing similar trials of faith.

Meanwhile, Michael remained untouched by David's conversion. He continued to live flamboyantly and lawlessly, a path that led him to a 16-year prison sentence in the Philippines in 1996. Sadly, he died in prison in 2005 from tuberculosis.

In 1995, David became aware of Michael's arrest via an ITN television news broadcast. This prompted him to begin writing the story of their lives, which was first published as *Converted on LSD Trip*. In 1999, he received word that Michael—after five years in prison—had also experienced a profound conversion. His heart was moved after reading *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis. Convinced that Jesus was indeed “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16, KJV), Michael too turned from crime to Christ.

In 2001, David journeyed to the Philippines to support his brother and engage in gospel outreach among inmates. Together, they laboured to bring the message of redemption to those within New Bilibid Prison and other institutions across the country. Their shared ministry is chronicled in the book *Trojan Warriors*,

which contains 66 stirring testimonies of men whose lives were transformed by the grace of God—22 of whom were on Death Row.

This book stands as a powerful testimony to the sovereign grace of God, the wonder of redemption, and the transforming power of the gospel. David Clarke's journey is a light of hope for all who seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, and a reminder that, no matter one's past, true freedom is found in Him.