



# Christian Book Summaries

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CLASSICS

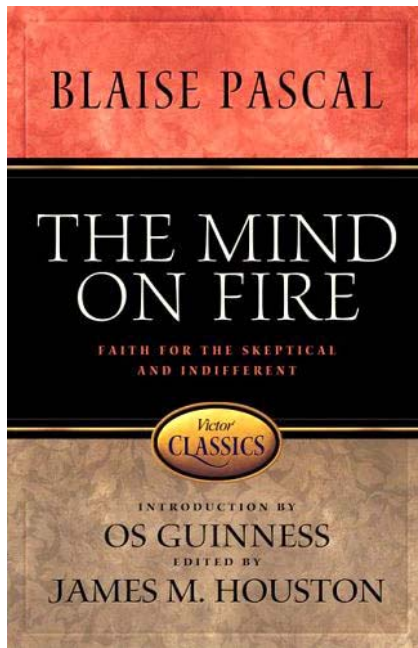
## The Mind On Fire

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*From the Classics Collection*



### A Quick Focus

#### THE BOOK'S PURPOSE

- Prove the wickedness, misery, and pride of man
- Show the greatness of man
- Delineate the limitations of reason and instinct, and the necessity of faith
- Demonstrate the supremacy of Christ and Christianity over all philosophy and religion

#### THE BOOK'S MESSAGE

Mankind is wicked and full of contradiction. Finding no relief, he encounters Jesus Christ and the Scriptures and he comes face-to-face with his limitations, his wickedness, and his need for faith. Then, interacting with Christ's claims and recognizing his own frailty, man finds the answers to his greatest dilemma.

#### THREE MAIN POINTS

- The Misery of Man without God . . . . . 2
- The Human Initiative of Reasoning . . . . 5
- The Divine Initiative . . . . . 6

#### COUNCIL OF REFERENCE

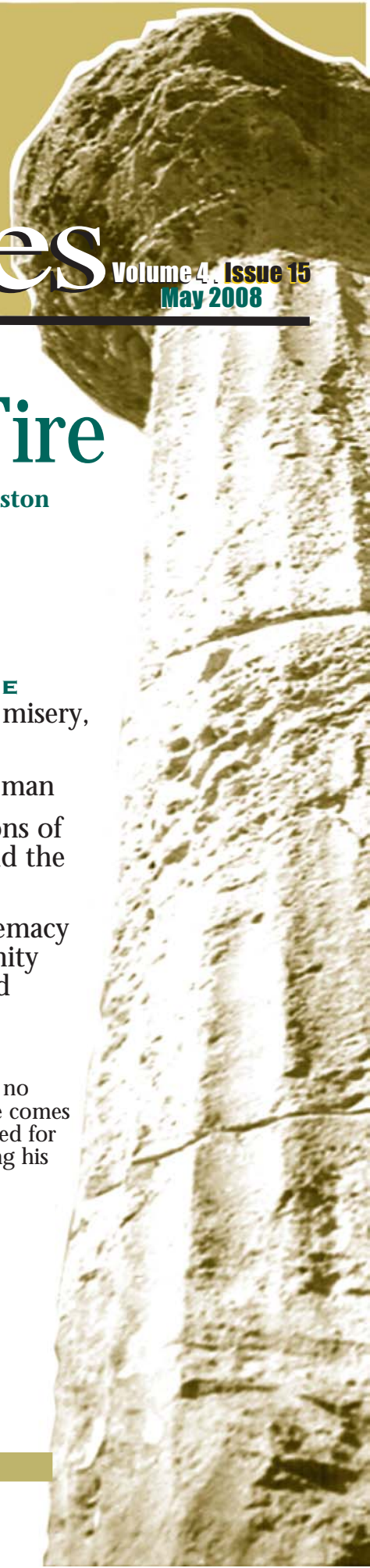
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## Part 1

*The Misery of Man Without God***Man's Natural Condition**

All our observations point either to the wretchedness of man or the mercy of God. Man is preoccupied with the trivial, overcome with anxiety, and continually bored. Because of his condition, mankind hates the Christian faith, fearing that it may be true.

Mankind is twisted. He lives perversely and condemns as perverted those who do not. This moral relativity necessitates the existence of a fixed moral standard. Otherwise, we are stranded in a sea of relativity.

The imagination of man, his dominant faculty, is the source of the fallen nature within him. It dominates the senses and reason, deceiving man in many ways. It creates perception, which in turn determines man's opinion on many matters. However, because it is not always wrong, nor always right, it is dangerous and it must be governed. But governed by what?

**“Man is so fashioned that he has no reliable guide of truth, but instead has many to guide him falsely.”**

Man insatiably desires esteem. He desires an imaginary life where he is able to create others' impression of him. He stops at nothing for fame. He proves his vanity and pride by his inability to recognize them. He is frivolous and thoughtless.

Man is unable to consider today because he is preoccupied with the past and the future. In the future lay his plans for self-promotion. In the past are lessons which help him achieve glory. He plans to accomplish and so achieve happiness. But he never considers today, and he is inevitably never happy.

In such a state, man wants to reject Christianity. Therefore, the Christian must demonstrate that Christianity is reasonable, honorable, and respectable. Its winsomeness should make good men desire it to be true. Then he can demonstrate that it really is true, that it understands and that it explains the human condition, and promises true goodness.

**Man's Unhappy Condition**

Man demonstrates his unhappiness through many bizarre and contradictory behaviors. He is fickle in his pursuits. He is spoiled with praise and unmotivated without it. He assumes he is worthy of others' adoration and envisions himself at the center of everything.

He is full of faults, and yet he refuses to recognize them. At his heart, man desires to gain tyranny over all things. He desires to be lawless but

gives no thought to the laws he requires of others. In this, he violates reason and increases his unhappiness. When man considers the smallness of his place in the universe and in time, he should recognize the immensity of his limitations and ask himself: *“Who put me here? By whose command and action was this time and place allocated to me?”*

**Man's Boredom**

Even man's boredom turns upon him. He becomes curious, normally so he can learn something new and thus increase his image. Without trivia, he becomes restless. His most intolerable state is rest. *“It is then that he thinks he faces emptiness, loneliness, a sense of inadequacy, feeling a sense of boredom, pessimism, depression, frustration, resentment, and despair.”*

**Man Living Rationalistically**

Man by his nature demonstrates he is a slave to rationality. He lusts for something and naturally pursues it. If he is under the power of another, he is involuntarily driven. Either way, it is rational to act in accordance with both forces.

**“Lust and power are the springs of all our actions. For lust leads to voluntary actions and power to involuntary.”**

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## Part 1: The Misery Of Man Without God

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Man takes risks because it is rational to do so, but it involves a measure of faith as well. No man should pursue religion if he is not prepared to take risks, and every man should be prepared to take risks because life requires it.

However, rationality cannot lead to everything because men do not always agree, especially on right and wrong. It is easy enough to agree on external fact, but belief creates contradictions. Consequently, it is easy to agree on who is in power but not who is just. Justice should govern power. But man, being driven by his rationality, governs justice with power because it makes sense to him. ***“Equality of goods is doubtless just. But since might cannot be forced to obey justice, the theory has been devised that might is right. Unable to enforce justice, might is justified, so the strong tend to be associated with the just to bring about peace, which is viewed as the sovereign good.”***

So, mankind is governed by rationality. But his imagination corrupts the truth, and so while his decisions are rational, they are not right.

### The Greatness of Man’s Dignity

**“The greatness of man is so obvious that it can be deduced even from his misery. What is natural in animals is seen to be wretchedness in man. Who does not feel unhappier at not being a king except a king who has been deposed?”**

Man’s ability to think is what distinguishes him from all other creation. It is the emblem of his greatness. While the universe is so expansive that man is but a speck within it, by his comprehension of it he rises above it and holds it.

Man validates his belief in the greatness of man’s thought by the importance he gives the esteem of other men. Even those who adamantly deny the greatness of man want to be admired by their fellow men.

So man, by seeking to understand the truth with regard to all things, demonstrates his greatness. He also demonstrates his dual nature, for man discovers truth both by instinct and by reason. These serve to insulate man both from skeptics and dogmatists, for ***“with instinct and reason we have an incapacity for proving anything which no amount of dogmatism can overcome. Yet we have an idea of truth which no amount of skepticism can overcome.”*** Therefore, faith must also exist.

### Human Contradictions

In the search for truth, man must acknowledge two difficulties: He is hampered by his own inherent contradictory nature; and he must acknowledge

that truth is paradoxical.

Mankind’s contradictory nature bars him in his pursuit of truth. Man is confident and skeptical, bold and timid. He may hate his life, yet refuse to lay it down for anyone. But above all, man must recognize that he is both great and wretched. Man proves both truths at the moment he recognizes his wretchedness. If man knows he is wretched, then it proves he is so. However, it also proves he must have been great. Otherwise, he could have no awareness of his wretchedness. It would be normal to him and he would be unconscious of it.

It is dangerous to recognize either truth about man without recognizing both in a paradoxical balance. If man is convinced of his greatness without an awareness of his wretchedness, he will be a slave to pride. If he sees only his wretchedness, he debases himself to the level of an animal.

Both truths, then, must be emphasized. Man should love himself because of his greatness, but hate himself because of his wretchedness. If a man cannot answer the question of his origin, then he becomes a great mystery to himself. Man then seeks the answer to his own puzzle through reason, which always leads to error for it cannot account for the paradox of man’s condition.

**“If man had never been anything but corrupt, he would have no idea of either truth or blessing. But unhappy wretches that we are, and the more so if there were no element of greatness in us, we have a vision of happiness that we are unable to attain.”**

## Part 1: The Misery Of Man Without God

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Man finds the answer to this paradox in the doctrine of original sin. While he is so corrupt as to condemn the transmission of sin from previous generations, he cannot find another explanation for his condition. Even more offensive to him is that he discovers this explanation not through the proud use of his reason, but through humble submission to the revelation of God.

***“From this it appears quite plain that it is by grace that man is made in the image of God and partakes of His likeness, while without grace he is like the beasts of the field.”***

### Human Distractions

Because of man’s instinct, he must preoccupy himself. He is aware that his existence is not required. Though he covets immortality, he cannot attain it. Because he cannot control the forces that make him unhappy, he decides not to think about them and instead to entertain himself.

However, he cannot derive pleasure from such distractions because they are external from him. He needs them but may lose them at any moment. This frustrates him.

So man’s true pleasure comes from busy preoccupation. He enjoys noise, commotion, and the challenge of his pursuits. All these keep him from an awareness of his true condition. He genuinely thinks he wants rest, but because of his inherent sense of misery will do anything to avoid it.

Thus man struggles with two competing instincts: one, a remnant of his original glorified nature, which tells him he will find happiness in rest; the other, a desire to drown out with excitement and distraction his misery at having fallen.

### The Philosopher’s Quest for Happiness

Mankind’s forms of philosophy have failed to answer man’s condition. The Stoics have rightly illustrated the vanity of entertainment and distraction. They encourage men to look within to find happiness and peace, but it is not there. They are rejected because they cannot take away the misery that only noise and busyness drown out.

The Epicureans espouse indulging in sensual indulgence to find happiness. But man can never truly be happy so long as he depends on something external from him. If it is external, then he can lose it and therefore will always fear the loss of the object of his happiness.

The truth leads us once again to another paradox: true peace and happiness lie only in God through Jesus Christ, who is both outside and within us. This path lies in humility, whereas the others seek truth through exalting man’s greatness either as a god within or a god without.

### The Quest for the Sovereign Good

***“One says sovereign good consists in virtue, another in sensual pleasure, another in following nature, another in truth ... Another argues that it lies in complete ignorance, another in laziness.”***

So we see that there is no agreement among the philosophers of this world about where man can find the highest good. If reason were true to itself, it must admit that it has not found the answer by reason. Instead, it boldly proclaims that it will succeed if given more time. Mankind wears himself out seeking the highest good, though his search is met only with misery, disappointment, and death.

Such a search is good, however, for it frustrates man and may lead him to consider the claims of Christ his Redeemer. Without this discovery man can never know good. And without the knowledge of true good, man will find good for himself in anything.

**Since he has lost his true good, man is capable of seeing it in any object, even to his own destruction, although it is so different from what God ordained for him.**

## Part 2

*The Human Initiative of Reasoning*

## Introduction: On the Contradictory Nature of Man

Since we see that reason alone cannot lead to truth and that we are dependent on instinct and faith, then it is reasonable that religion may hold the answer to man's condition. In order for a religion to be worth considering, however, it must convincingly answer the questions about the nature of man. It must demonstrate how man can only find his true happiness in God and yet be so opposed to Him.

No religion or philosophy but Christianity convincingly answers this challenge. Islam offers nothing to cure the sensuality of our nature or lead us to true good. Philosophers have already been shown to provide no insight into where man can find his greatest good. They are so blind that they do not even recognize the wretchedness of man.

Only Christianity offers both Adam and Christ, the source of our wretchedness and the pinnacle of our greatness. Not only that, it explains the existence of both natures and offers the cure.

Man's pride blinds him, however. He either believes so much in his own greatness as to reject his need for a redeemer, or in his own wretchedness to the point that he is unwilling to acknowledge the power of God to save him. It is only through the humble acknowledgment of his sinfulness and the daring belief in God's ability to redeem him that man can find true peace and happiness. It pleases God to reveal Himself to those who humbly seek Him, while withholding Himself from those who through pride and unbelief reject His grace.

It is because of this condition of man that God grants *"enough light for those who desire only to see, and darkness for those of a contrary disposition."*

Therefore, we should pity the condition of sinners because of their unhappiness. However, we should refute and challenge those who boast of their unbelief. Acknowledge the hidden nature of the proofs of our faith then, for the truth of Christianity is evident to those who seek with humility but is hidden from those who will not. There are many who claim to have made a thorough search for the truth when in fact they have only sought to prove their own disbelief.

Man must deal with his own eternity and mortality. He desires to think about neither, failing to consider that his happiness in both depends on the truth of the gospel. It is indeed a wicked man who does not wish that the answer to all man's misery lay in Jesus Christ. If the claim of Christ is false, then man cannot find happiness or peace in this world and, at best, has no hope of life in the next. At worst, he faces the wrath of a holy God who will call him to account for his sin. If the claim of Christ is true, then man can regain his greatness through humility, and he has hope of life after death. These truths hinge on establishing two truths: mankind is fallen, wicked, and sinful; and Jesus Christ came to save mankind from his sin.

## Reasoning Can Begin Again by Recognizing What It Can Never Know

Human reason fails to discover truth because it presumes it can do so on its own. Reason can begin to be useful in the quest for truth when it recognizes what it can never know. We can know the nature of an infinite God in the same way we can know the nature of an infinite number. We can never know the exact number of an infinite number because another number can always be added to it. But we can grasp the truth of an infinite number nonetheless. This does not invalidate an infinite number, though reason must admit it can never be known.

In the same way, Christianity does not profess the ability to give reasons for its belief, because the object of its belief is beyond proof. This does not prove it is unreasonable, however. Either God exists or He does not. We have no choice but to wager on one choice or the other. The skeptic blames the Christian for putting faith in God, but reason disagrees.

To be reasonable, man must consider what he stands to gain or lose by his choice. The man who chooses that God does not exist stands to gain nothing if he is right and lose everything in this life and the next if he is wrong. The man who chooses that God exists stands to gain peace and happiness in this life and hope of eternal joy in the next if he is right. If he is wrong, he gets no worse than the skeptic who guesses right.

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## Part 2: The Human Initiative of Reasoning

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### Submission: The Correct Use of Reason

Therefore, man is challenged because he must know when to use reason and when he must not. Reason cannot be relied upon for every decision, for man would require proof of an infinite number of things before he performed any action. Conversely, mankind cannot exclude reason from all of life~this too is excessive and unhealthy. Thus, the only reasonable thing to do is to at times omit reason. ***“Indeed, faith tells us what the senses cannot, but it is not contrary to their findings. It simply transcends, without contradicting them.”***

Man’s reason is challenged by many things that lie beyond it. Miracles are one challenge to man’s reason. Another is the nature of infinity as well as nothingness. The reality of the physical universe should overwhelm man, both at the vastness of the infinite space surrounding him and the finiteness of the smallest physical particles. Man searches in both directions and cannot find the boundaries, as if he is suspended between the infinite and nothingness. His thoughts about this should convince him of God’s omnipotence.

Man is bound by his senses, which cannot perceive extremes. He is deafened by too much noise, blinded by too much light, confused by thoughts too long or too short, bored by too much pleasure, aggravated by too much kindness, and numbed by too much heat or cold.

**So let us realize our limitations. We are something and we are not everything... Such is our true condition, making us incapable of certain knowledge or of absolute ignorance.**

Because man is both material and spiritual, he is unable to grasp simple things. His perception is colored by his dual nature, and his reasoning is incapable of complete understanding, least of all himself: ***“Man is to himself the greatest wonder in nature, for he cannot conceive what body is, still less what mind is, and least of all how a body can be united with a soul. This is his supreme difficulty, and yet it is his very being.”*** Thus man is best served by acknowledging that there is much he cannot know and so acknowledge that reason cannot lead him into complete truth.

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## Part 3

# The Divine Initiative

### The Transition from Human Knowledge to Knowing God

The only proof of the living God is Jesus Christ. God can only be known through Him and without Him we cannot relate to God. The proofs of Jesus Christ are the prophecies He fulfilled in His coming, life, and death. He consisted of two natures, human and divine, by which He redeemed mankind by saving men from sin and bringing them to God. Everything points to Christ and everything is understood only in light of Him.

There is now a God that man may know through Christ and a nature within man that makes him unworthy of God. That is why it is impossible to know Christ without understanding our wretchedness and God’s goodness. It is also why God cannot be proved beyond a shadow of all doubt.

**“What can be seen on earth indicates neither the total absence of God nor His manifest presence, but rather the presence of a hidden God.”**

God is hidden because of blindness caused by man’s corruption. By hiding Himself, His wisdom is displayed in that He is found only by those who seek Him.

### The Corruption of Human Nature

In relation to man’s knowledge of God, man cannot discover anything for himself because of his corruption. His pursuits are wicked, selfish, and shortsighted. He is only confused by nature and by the little God reveals about Himself through it. But through Christ, and in the Scriptures, whose purpose is to reveal and proclaim Him, man may come to know God.

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## Part 3: The Divine Initiative

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### The Falsity of Other Religions

Any religion which claims to be true must lead man to his true, or good, nature. Christianity teaches that through Adam our original nature was lost, our communion with God broken, and our natures corrupted. It also teaches that through Christ our original nature may be regained, our communion with God restored, and our natures healed.

However, man must guard against the pride of denying his corruption or the despair and laziness from recognizing his inability to overcome it. Christianity is the only religion that balances these two tendencies in tension with one another. ***“Thus the Christian faith causes those whom it justifies to fear, and consoles those it condemns, so that fear and hope are both balanced.*”**

**“Jesus Christ is a God we can approach without pride, and before whom we can humble ourselves without despair.”**

Above all this, Jesus Christ has qualities other religious figures like Mohammed do not: ***“Jesus Christ was foretold, Mohammed was not. Mohammed slew, but Jesus caused His followers to be slain. Mohammed forbade reading, but the apostles commanded it.”***

### What Makes True Religion Attractive?

Christianity is superior to Judaism in that it promises redemption to Jews and Gentiles. Christ died for all mankind. Deny this, and man will exempt himself from the hope of salvation and give himself over to despair. It cannot be said that He is Lord of all, for not all place their faith in Him; but He is the Redeemer of all.

### Fundamentals of the Faith and Answers to Objections

Some may object that other religions have truth as well. But other religions fail to match the claims of Christianity. The Mohammed of Islam was not prophesied and did not perform the miracles of Christ. And the sacred books of Judaism must be considered separate from Judaism itself.

It may also be said that man is too corrupt to have a relationship with God.

**“Man is unworthy of God, yet he is not incapable of being made worthy. It is unworthy of God to unite Himself to wretched man, yet it is not unworthy of God to lift man up out of his wretchedness.”**

We observe that everything around man teaches him his corruption. But everything does not reveal God, for He is hidden. In this God demonstrates His wisdom:

***“If there was no obscurity, man would not sense his own corrupt state. If there were no light, man could have no hope for a cure.”***

So God has hidden Himself, but He can be found by those willing to seek Him. In His partial hiding, ***“there is always enough light to illuminate the elect and enough obscurity to humble them. There is enough obscurity to blind the reprobate and enough light to condemn them and deprive them of any excuse.”***

In these truths we see the paradox of truth, the wisdom of God, and the corruption of man.

### Figurative Meanings of Old Testament Law

When we approach the Old Testament to understand its meaning, we must explain the apparent contradictions in what it says. Much is stated in the Old Testament regarding the law, the sacrifices, and the kingdom of God, but these are not present realities. Or, consider Ezekiel 20, which teaches ***“we shall and shall not live according to the commandments of God.”***

Because the Word of God is true, anything that is not literally true must be figuratively true. Jesus Christ is the key to unlocking these mysteries.

Consider the sacrifices. Did they remove the guilt of sin? Or consider the descendants of Abraham. Are they guaranteed friendship with God? Finally, consider the Promised Land. Was it a place of rest? The answer to these questions is no. So these truths are figurative rather than literal, and they are explained in Jesus Christ.

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## Part 3: The Divine Initiative

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Why would God hide these truths with symbols? In part, for the same reasons He hides Himself. Doing so gives enough light to those who seek Him, but enough obscurity to blind the wicked.

It also guaranteed the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies, for Scripture foretold that the Messiah would be both accepted and rejected. So those seeking the literal fulfillment of a kingdom and the rule over the Gentiles were blinded by their own greed and lust for power, but the humble were drawn to the humility of the revealed Messiah. The former rejected, condemned, and crucified Him. The latter accepted and glorified Him. Both fulfilled prophecy.

### Rabbinical Writings

The doctrine of the depravity of man is vital to the message of the gospel. It is also obvious even apart from the Christian faith. The Jewish religious leaders, for example, teach this doctrine, highlighting both the power and the weakness of man. They explain the power of the spirit of man to rule him as well as his weakness in resisting sin.

Likewise, they teach about two Messiahs, using Ecclesiastes 9:14-15, Psalm 78:39, Psalm 103:16, and Psalm 16:10. The one Messiah is strong and mighty, a perfect man. The other is weak and wise, also a perfect man. Christ alone was both.

### Perpetuity or Lasting Principles of the Christian Faith

Among all forms of religion, even Christianity and Judaism, there are two types of worshippers: those who worship carnally and those who worship spiritually. This is true both in Christianity and in Judaism. However, the carnal worship of the Jews, in which they interpreted God's promises to focus on physical blessing and earthly rule, led to the preservation of the Scriptures.

When we consider the sacred law of Judaism, we find it to be admirable and rigorous. They have preserved it dutifully and have not allowed themselves the freedom of altering it. They faithfully condemn mankind in his rebellion. They trust in the promises of future greatness for the descendants of Abraham. They believe the wrath of God is coming in judgment against the wickedness of mankind.

The Jews believe man has fallen, that he needs to repent, and that he has hope of a Messiah. Each generation of this most ancient faith from Adam onward witnessed the steadfastness of these truths. And throughout time, they've preserved the promises of God, and as a people, they have been preserved by God Himself.

This history, common to Jew and Christian, bears with it the history of truth itself.

### Proof of Moses

Man tends to mistrust history of events he himself has not experienced. History itself is obscured by the multiplication of generations, not necessarily because many years have passed. This is another reason the history given us by Moses is remarkable: though it covers many years, it does not cover many generations.

**“Shem, who saw  
Lamech, who saw  
Adam, also saw Jacob,  
who saw those who saw  
Moses. [With such  
continuity] that is why  
the stories of the flood  
and creation are true.”**

God provided Moses to record the history of the world from the Creation to the giving of the Law. Despite the fact that many generations passed and it would have been easy for this information to be obscured, God saw to it that Moses would keep records and provide this authentic record.

### Proof of Jesus Christ

***“The Old Testament focus is on expectation while the focus of the New is on realization. But Jesus is at the center of them both.”*** This is why Jesus Christ stands alone in history. His birth is foretold in the Old Testament. His miraculous works and fulfillment of those prophecies are recorded in the New Testament. His nature, purpose, death, and resurrection stand alone in their ability to explain how man may return to God.

The New Testament treats Christ in unexpected ways, a fact which highlights its uniqueness. Luke tells the story of two martyrs: One is Stephen, whose death at the hands of the Jews and the Romans is heroic; his description of Christ's death is not so heroic. Christ is shown as capable of fear, yet immovable in resolution. ***“But when they show Him so distressed, it is when He afflicts Himself. But when men afflict Him, He is absolutely steadfast.”*** One does not expect the heroic Messiah to behave this way, yet His nature and purpose fit it perfectly.

Consider also the behavior of the apostles. It is hardly believable they were impostors, for as unedu-

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## Part 3: The Divine Initiative

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cated men without financial means, they take on all the powers of religion and government. And this just days after having abandoned their teacher! Man must consider what the apostles risked; many even forfeited their lives to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Another paradox is the obscurity and lowliness of Christ's coming. Christians should not be ashamed of the lowly nature of Christ's coming. Though He came as a king, He did not come in great glory or splendor. To do so would have been counter to His purposes, for He meant to reveal Himself only to those with eyes to see.

So Christ came in obscurity and humility to be scorned by the worldly and wicked, but worshipped and exalted by the humble of heart.

### Prophecies of Scripture

One thing that must not be said when considering the prophecies regarding Christ is that they were not fulfilled by chance. Christ as the fulfillment of prophecy is the strongest proof that He is who He said He was.

Over the course of 1,600 years, prophecies regarding the Messiah were given and recorded. Then, over a period of 400 years the Jewish people were scattered all over the world bringing a record of these prophecies with them. God, having prepared the world for the revelation of His Son, sent Him at the fullness of time.

**“One can only stand in awe of a man who clearly foretells things that come to pass, and who declares his intention of both illuminating and blinding, and who mixes in obscurity with clear things that come to pass.”**

If only a single author had predicted all that came to pass in the Scriptures regarding Christ, it would be amazing enough. But from the first prophecy around 4,000 years before Christ, a whole succession of men was inspired by God to predict the same event. This should impress the mind of man.

Further, the blindness of man was predicted. The hardening of the Jewish heart, the time of His coming, the world powers, the destruction of Jerusalem, the ministry of John the Baptist—all these events with many others were predicted and fulfilled in relation to Christ's coming.

These truths strengthen the Christian faith and should overwhelm us with hope, joy, and dependence upon our Redeemer and Savior.

### Particular Figures of Prophecy

There are other prophecies which point to the unique nature and divine origin of Scripture. One sees the perfect development of all the circumstances of Messiah's coming. Jacob blessed Judah and foretold of the coming ruler from his line, a ruler whose kingdom would never end. When Jacob assigned portions of land promised but not yet possessed, he blessed the younger of Joseph's sons. Though this was against the customs of the time, Joseph's younger son indeed increased according to the word of Jacob.

Moses gave the law to Israel, assigned the land as if the Israelites already possessed it, and predicted their victories in the Promised Land, as well as their faithlessness to God and their punishment.

And in some figures, like Joseph, we see the type of Christ. He was loved by his father above all others, he was sold into slavery by his brothers, and he became the savior of both his family and the entire world. Such prophecy is more than coincidence.

### Christian Morality

**“Reflect on the wretchedness of man without God. The happiness of man with God ... None is so happy as a true Christian, none so reasonable, so virtuous, or so lovable.”**

It is the call of the Christian life to rejoice in God and not in creatures. To truly devote oneself to love of God and hatred of self is to begin the Christian life. The love one has for oneself should be like the love a member of a body feels for itself. It must yield its will to the interests of the body, acknowledging that apart from the body it is lifeless. It knows it has no life in itself, and no purpose apart from the body to which it belongs.

**“But in loving the body it loves itself, because it has no being except in the body, for the purpose of the body and through the body. ‘But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit’ ”**  
**I Corinthians 6:17.**

Such a life leads to healthy proportions of both abasement and holiness. The Christian knows that in Christ he is not so abased as to be unable to do right, yet not so holy as to be unable to be wicked. The death of Christ reveals to him the depth of his sinfulness because of the cost to free him from guilt. Man turns his longing to his heavenly home, trusts in his Savior, abandons his pride, and embraces hope.

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## Conclusion

Belief in Christ is reasonable because both the obscurity and clarity of the prophecies can be understood in the light of God's wisdom. The evidence of prophecy, the miracles, the excellence of Christian morality, the history of the Jewish people, and the explanation of man's condition are all reasonable proofs for the validity of the Christian faith. But the wickedness of man's heart prevents him from seeing the truth.

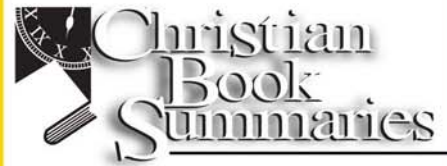
**“Therefore the only things that keep us from accepting the evidence must be lust and wickedness of heart. There is therefore enough evidence to condemn and yet not enough to convince, so that it is obvious that those who follow it are prompted to do so by grace and not reason. Those who evade its message are induced to do so by lust and not by reason.”**

Faith must be understood as something separate from reason. Worldly religions offer reason as their means of faith. But faith is a gift of God and exists apart from reason. It allows man to say “I believe” rather than “I know.”

But the Christian must not stop with simply believing. He must develop the habits of his faith, for habit is more persuasive than proofs. **“Whoever proved that it will dawn tomorrow, and that we shall die? And yet what is more widely accepted?”**

Our belief must be motivated by more than conviction. We are both machine and mind. The mind works slowly, but the habits within us work on instinct. Therefore, we must combine our habits with our beliefs.

**“There are three ways to belief: reason, habit, revelation. The Christian faith, which alone has reason, does not admit as her true children those who reject revelation. It is not that it excludes reason and habit, quite the contrary, but the mind must be habitually open to proofs and must humble itself to bow to revelation as the only true and salutary influence.”**



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**The author:** Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) earned recognition as a renowned mathematician, physicist, and a man after God's heart. He is credited with inventing an early calculator, amazingly advanced for its time. A genius from a young age, Blaise Pascal composed a treatise on the communication of sounds at the age of twelve, and at the age of sixteen he composed a treatise on conic sections. In 1650, when in the midst of these researches, Blaise Pascal suddenly abandoned his favorite pursuits to study religion to “contemplate the greatness and the misery of man.”

Pascal's classic defense of Christianity—*Pensées*—persuaded many a skeptic in his time. Today, editor James Houston has organized Pascal's meditations into a logical progression of thought that contemporary readers can enjoy in *Mind on Fire*. Described as a “masterpiece of theological scholarship,” *Mind on Fire* also includes selections from *Pascal's Letters to a Provincial*, a description of his conversion in his own words.

**Summarized by:** Kevin Tighe, a graduate of Lee University of Cleveland Tennessee, is a freelance writer from Troy, Ohio. He lives there with his wife, Becky, and their four preschoolers.