

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Faith Examined with Professor Clark Bates

(November 17, 2023)

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, if you are a supporter of this program and/or CrossExamined.org, if you're a supporter, either financially or prayerfully, you and I just received a big honor. And this honor has been a secret for about four years. It was revealed on Saturday, November 4, at the end of the Unshaken conference, that Alisa Childers and Natasha Crain and I were conducting near Nashville, Tennessee. The conference had just about ended. We had just finished our final Q&A session. And I was sitting on stage with Natasha, and Alisa, and our moderator. Her name was Joy. It was about to end.

We were about to get up and leave and Joy said, please remain seated. We have a short video that we all want you to watch. And we don't want you to miss it. It was a video by my guest today, Professor Clark Bates. He is a New Testament scholar at Forge Theological Seminary. And he's about to get his PhD at the University of Birmingham in the UK where he is coming to us right now. And he revealed this honor, that is not just an honor to me, but it's an honor to you as well as a supporter.

It's kind of hard for me to talk about this. Because the proverb says, just let somebody else praise you, not your own lips. So, I'm going to bring Clark on. Clark was the mastermind behind this honor. Clark, first of all, thanks for what you've done. And also, thank you for being on the program today. Maybe you could just kind of summarize what we said in that video. And then we can get into the book that you helped edit and you wrote a chapter in. So, Clark, go ahead, sir.

CLARK:

Thank you, Frank. And again, thank you for everything you've done. That's kind of the whole point behind this is to kind of pay tribute to you. And what happened at Unshaken was we presented this book. And I've got a copy here so people can see it. It's called 'Faith Examined.' The subtitle is 'New Arguments for Persistent Questions, Essays in Honor of Dr. Frank Turek.' And like Frank said, about four years ago is when this started. It was about 2019.

And I got a hold of Alisa Childers and a few other apologists that had all attended Frank's CrossExamined Instructor's Academy, which you've heard him talk about, the CIA Academy. It's been going on for quite a few years, with the idea that we should do something for Frank, for all the things that he's done for us, for just the Church in general, for the kingdom of God, something that reflects the importance that he has had in our lives and that shows people a little bit more about him. And so, we started collaborating on this book; everybody I talked to had jumped on the chance. I can't even say that more emphatically. They jumped on the chance to do this, to contribute a chapter in their particular specialty.

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And we set out getting a book deal, finding a publisher, and all these things. That started about 2019. Of course, then COVID hit. A lot of things got put on pause, but we still kept working on it. And finally, I'm happy to say that we came to fruition now. And it's just really, it's a culmination of a lot of work, but a lot of labor of love at the same time. And we wanted it to reflect not just the strengths of the CIA and what it does, but also kind of in a way reflect how Frank reaches different groups of people. And I'm really happy with the way it turned out. In some ways I can say it's turned out better than I thought it would, only insofar as the chapters are fantastic, and they're diverse.

We've got so many different people that contributed, you know, different cultural backgrounds, different genders, different theological perspectives. But we all share in these two things. We share in the love of the Gospel, and we share our love for Frank and what he's done. And he's fed into everybody who contributed to this book. And this was our chance to feed back into you, and to share with everybody else how we feel about you. And I think as you see the book, obviously everybody's given a little bit of a tribute in their first footnote to you as well.

FRANK:

I'm so honored by it. And I've been told long ago, look, everyone has different gifts that they can contribute to the body. If somebody compliments you on the gift you've been using, all you do is say thank you. So, thank you. But I also do want to point out that CIA, the CrossExamined Instructor Academy, I'm actually only a small part of CIA as all of you know who have been there. I just had the idea when we started CrossExamined. I just wanted to try and get the top apologist together to train people on how to better present the evidence for Christianity in a winsome and effective way.

And so, the first person I called, of course, was my friend, Greg Koukl, because of his great work in 'Tactics.' And that was even before his book came out. I just knew that he was good in teaching 'Tactics' from like a PDF and a DVD series. And then of course, Brett Kunkle. And people over the years have joined the teaching team. In fact, two of them were on stage that night, Alisa Childers and Natasha Crain. They both went through CIA themselves. And then we of course had J. Warner Wallace teach. We've had Bobby Conway. We've had the great Jorge Gil who helps produce this program. In fact, he's on with us right now. He wrote the introduction in this book. He's an instructor there.

We've had, who else? I'm drawing a mind blank right now. Of course, the great Richard Howe. We recently had Allen Parr. We've had all sorts of great instructors, John Ferrer, we had Hillary Morgan Ferrer this year. I'm just a small part of the instructor team. CIA wouldn't be much if it was just me. And so, this honor goes to them as well. It also goes to all the supporters listening to us right now, because CIA would not exist and neither would this podcast, neither would the TV show, neither would everything you see on social media. None of that, none of the courses would exist unless you supported us both financially and prayerfully.

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So, this honor goes to all of our supporters, all of our colleagues, everybody that has a part in making CrossExamined what it is. So, friends, if you've ever given to CrossExamined, you have helped launched the ministries of people who have written in this book. Not only Clark, but here's some of the people. Sean McDowell wrote the foreword. He's also a CrossExamined Instructor, William Soo Hoo, Phil Fernandez, Alex McElroy, Eric Hernandez, Timothy Stratton, Alisa Childers, Eric Chabot, Clark Bates, Melissa Dougherty, and Natasha Crain. They all did.

And of course, Jorge also wrote an introduction. They all had a part in this book because they all benefited from CIA, which means they benefited from the work that all those colleagues have done, and also all the support that you the listener have given us. So, Clark, how did you come up with this idea? Why did you even decide to do it? I mean, it's kind of out of left field, you know?

CLARK:

A little bit. So, it's interesting. Two streams of thought came together at one time. And as I said, it was around 2019 when this kind of came to me. Hopefully, it's okay to mention this. But this was shortly after Mike Adams passed away and you delivered a very personal CrossExamined podcast on that moment. And at the time, I was living in Phoenix. I had the habit of listening to that while I went grocery shopping. Because I have a large family, it took me, you know, anywhere from an hour to do it. So, it was a good time to do that. And as I was listening to it, I was reflecting on the fact that this was one of the rare moments where people got to hear sort of your heart in certain things.

And you're passionate about apologetics. But when it comes to your personal feelings and things like that, that's not something people get to see. And in some ways, they miss out on a really beautiful part of your ministry and your personality, if I can say that. And I thought about that. It started to reflect for me. And it was at the same time I was part of a festschrift in the seminary. For those that don't know, it's just a German word, which is a special writing for an academician, to honor them. And so, I wanted to do something like that for Frank, that reflected his personality and what he does.

FRANK:

Well, thanks so much, Clark. We're actually going to get into the contents of this book. Because there are arguments made in this book that I don't make. They're better than the ones I've made. So, we're going to talk about them right after the break. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. Back in two minutes.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network with 180 stations or so across the country. This is also a podcast called I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. So, if you've missed an episode or you want to hear the midweek podcast, which is not broadcast on AFR, you've got to go wherever you get podcasts and look for I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist.

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Today we're talking to Professor Clark Bates, who really spearheaded a brand-new book called 'Faith Examined.' And it's got some great chapters in it, all from graduates of the CrossExamined Instructor Academy, people that you've heard of like Alisa Childers, Natasha Crain, and Melissa Dougherty, and others. And we're going to talk a lot about the content here during the program. I'm so blessed to be honored by this book. And by extension, you're honored by it as well if you're a supporter of this ministry. But Clark, you mentioned kind of a fancy German word that I know it's called a festschrift. How do you actually say that properly?

CLARK:

Yeah, just Festschrift. It's celebratory writing.

FRANK:

I was part of one for Dr. Geisler many years ago, and also one for Gary Habermas. And usually, you write those when the guy's about to die. Hopefully, I'm not that close. I'll be 62 here in a couple of weeks, but you just never know. So, it came together. You had the idea and other people jumped in on it. How did you decide who would be a part of it and the topics?

CLARK:

This is a great question. CIA has been around for a long time. I've been a part of it two separate times. And then of course, several other people have gone back for more multiple occasions. The first prerequisite I had in mind was they had to have been a member of CIA at some point. But the other one was that they had to have gone from CIA, to either full-time apologetic ministry, or into an academic ministry of some type in which they were still working with apologetic material, and those sorts of things.

And of course, there's a few people that stand out, some I didn't know personally at all. Some were in the same CIA classes that I attended. And some I knew had gone to CIA after me. And some had gone before me. I wanted to make sure it didn't just reflect when I was there, but tried to reflect multiple different years and different eras of CIA. So, of course, Phil Fernandez is one of the early attendees of CIA.

FRANK:

The great Phil Fernandez. Phil and I are from New Jersey and that's the way he talks. And he goes, I know you're here just to hear my angelic voice. [Laughter] He's great.

CLARK:

He's fantastic. He was a big part of this, wanting to have him there. And of course, Alisa and I, we actually met at CIA. It was both of our first times there. I had not met Natasha, but she was familiar with Natasha. She had definitely come before us as well. And then several others were, again, friends and acquaintances. But then others were people I had seen. I continued to follow what CrossExamined does. I'm part of the CIA Facebook group. And so, I can see who's come in and who's been added to the roster, so to speak.

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And so, I started reaching out. And I actually had to cut the limit. I had to make a limit of how many people I could bring into this. And so, we settled with where we were at, with just 11 total contributors, Jorge included. And it kind of just came together. And it was nice, because I knew that each of these people had something that was specific to them. They had a specialty. So, we weren't all going to be saying the same things or repeating maybe old arguments that everybody had already heard.

I wanted it to be new voices, because CIA, Frank, you and the people there have really raised up the next generation of apologists. And to varying degrees, they are known or unknown. And so, I wanted to give voices to people who maybe weren't known. And let people who were known also have their say as to what they do and what they want to express to you. So, it was sort of a multi-level requirement. But it did all come together in just exactly the way I think it should have.

FRANK:

Well, you've got some amazing chapters in here. One is by William Soo Hoo, who actually is someone who's very skilled in the area of abiogenesis, the origin of life. I mean, he's almost like James Tour when you read his book.

CLARK:

He's amazing. Yeah, he's incredible.

FRANK:

And what he writes, I haven't completely completed this whole chapter yet. But when you read, you just look at some of his calculations. You walk away going, there is no way there's a naturalistic explanation for this, at least not one that we can detect at this point.

CLARK:

Just so everybody knows, the illustrations in there, he drew those.

FRANK:

Yeah, he drew these illustrations.

CLARK:

The illustrations are entirely his. William was an incredible contributor. I can't sing his praises enough. He's a brilliant scientist and has this artistic ability as well. So, it's a fantastic chapter.

FRANK:

The book is called 'Faith Examined' and it's edited by Clark Bates. He's my guest today. It's 'New Arguments for Persistent Questions, Essays in Honor of Dr. Frank Turek.' Thank you so much, but also everyone who participated in running CIA and all the donors that we have. Because CIA does not pay for itself, ladies and gentlemen. We put ministry money into that so

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we can train people to do what they're doing now. And all the people in this book are now involved in full-time ministry.

And when you read this chapter from William Soo Hoo, you're going to go wow, this guy knows what he's talking about. Then you have a chapter in here from Phil Fernandez. We already mentioned him. He does great work in the cosmological argument that you'll see when you read this book. Also, Alex McElroy. He's one of the early CIA graduates, and he talks about 'A Life Well-Lived: Sustaining Value in a Battle of Worldviews.' What can you tell us about that chapter?

CLARK:

This was so great to do. Alex has been a friend for a while, since CIA. I've helped worked with him on his Proof for Truth conference. He works with youth in Chicago. He's been just tireless working with young people, young men, especially in Chicago, and trying to give them meaning and value. And he's really a great example of how apologetics can be done in a ministry, devotional-oriented way, and apply it to life. So, for Alex, it's not just technical details and information. It is things that help you have a motivation for life. And he does this with young people. And he tries to give them value, and show them where the value comes from so they can find a future for themselves.

And he just really does a wonderful job of weaving in together some basic, it's almost like an introduction to logic. This chapter gives you all sorts of details about different logical theories, different faulty premises, faulty presuppositions, and walks you through how sustaining a value in your life really has to come from God. And there's no way around that. You can artificially create value, but it's artificial and you know it is. So, he starts to talk about really tapping into what this true value is and where it comes from.

And it opens up our section on philosophy. And it's a great way to do it, because everything that he talks about, unintentionally, this was not planned. But everything he talks about sort of gets brought up again, in Eric Hernandez's chapter, in Tim Stratton's chapter in various ways. And so, if you read Alex's, you know enough at the basic level, that by the time you get to Eric and Tim, you're already on the way to understanding the people they're talking about, and some of the concepts they bring in.

FRANK:

Yeah, the sections of 'Faith Examined', the new book, there are four basic sections. The first is science. The second is philosophy. The third is the Bible, and the fourth is the Church. And so, you're going to get a wide range of chapters, on a wide range of subjects, that will help you not only encourage you in your own faith, but give you tools to help other people learn the truth of Christianity. Then you have a chapter, an essay, if you will, from Eric Hernandez. And the title of that is 'I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be a Physicalist: A Case for the Soul.' What does he cover in there?

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CLARK:

Yeah, if anybody's familiar with Eric's work, he works with the Texas Baptist Association. He's their sort of Director of Apologetics there. And you know, his wheelhouse is the soul, and arguing for the existence of the soul. He's been debating atheists on the existence of the soul for years now. And that's his entire premise. He wants to put naturalism against metaphysicalism and wants to show just the premise that we are nothing more than our body, our brain is all there is. There is no mind behind it. There's no soul inside.

He wants to show how that cannot be sustained with what we know about life, about ourselves, and even just philosophically. And there's some science in there too. But it's primarily from a philosophical angle. It's really good arguments from an area that a lot of people probably haven't spent a lot of time thinking about. So, it can really equip believers, other apologists, on how to discuss the existence of the soul, what it says in the Bible, what it says in philosophy, and how it stands up against the idea of sort of just physicalism or naturalism as is.

FRANK:

Yeah, this is one of the biggest faults, intellectual faults, in atheism and materialism today. And that is, if you deny that you have a soul, if you deny that you have a mind, if you think you're just a molecular machine, a moist robot, as we've talked about many times on this program, you have no warrant to know anything, including the idea that you are just a blob of tissue. You couldn't even know atheism were true. It's a self-defeating ideology that prevents you from reasoning. But since we can reason, we ought to argue from this effect, the ability we have to reason back to a cause.

And the cause isn't just molecules bumping into one another. The cause must be some sort of mind, that our minds are patterned after. As Philip Johnson famously said, the best explanation is that our mind is patterned after the great mind, the mind known as God. And that's what Eric points out in this chapter in 'Faith Examined.' You're right, Clark, I don't see people thinking about this enough. I mean, C.S. Lewis talked about it quite a bit in, was that 'The Problem of Pain?'

CLARK:

It could have been 'Abolition of Man.' I'm not sure.

FRANK:

It's one of his main books where he talks about the problem of materialism, which is what this is. If materialism is true, there's no way of knowing it's true because every thought you have is the result of just physics. So, why should you even think it's true? But since we can know certain things are true, we ought to reason back to the cause of why we can know certain things are true. It's not just molecules bumping into one another. And then a great chapter here by Timothy Stratton, who's also on the CrossExamined Apologetics Team. You'll see some of his videos on our YouTube channel, has to do with apologetics and Molinism, 'The Apologetic Appeal of Molinism, Even for Non-Molinists.'

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CLARK:

Everyone that knows Tim or has listened to him talk knows that he's the evangelist of Molinism. So, this is his bread and butter. He got his PhD in it and he's going to spread the Gospel of Molinism as far and as wide as he can. And so, he's really in this realm. He wants to show that, ultimately, that apologists need to have many different tools in their tool belt, you know? And they need to be able to approach different skeptics that are coming from different positions. There's no one-size fits all apologetic approach in my mind. And having more tools to respond to questions is always going to be helpful. And this is one of Tim's tools. He wants you to know that you don't have to necessarily agree with it, but it is a good argument if you apply it well.

FRANK:

Yeah, it deals with predestination, free will, Calvinism, all that. And that's what that chapter does. We've got a lot more coming up from the new book 'Faith Examined', which you can get at Amazon. 'Faith Examined' edited by Clark R. Bates. He's my guest today all the way from the UK. We're back in just two minutes.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, ladies and gentlemen. Frank Turek with you. My guest is Clark Bates. Before I get back to Clark, let me mention to you that we've got our 'Digging up the Bible' archaeology series that we're going to be livestreaming on YouTube and our website. It's going to be Monday nights. I think the next one is the Monday after Thanksgiving, if I'm not mistaken. It'll start at 7:30 Eastern Time, if you want to be a part of it. It will only be on YouTube for a short time after that.

Yeah, the next one is November 27. Then right after that, we have December 4, that will be livestreamed. And in between, I'll be (Lord willing) at Calvary Chapel Tucson, December 2-3 for I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. Hope you can join me if you're anywhere near Tucson. And then later in December, I'll be out with my friend Charlie Kirk and many other speakers at AmericaFest. That's in Phoenix, Arizona. Go to TPUSA.com. You can learn more about that.

Today I'm talking to Clark Bates who has put together a wonderful book that, thankfully, has better arguments than even I've come up with. It's called 'Faith Examined.' And before the break Clark, one of the chapters was by Dr. Timothy Stratton on Molinism. We didn't have time to really describe what Molinism is. What is Molinism?

CLARK:

Molinism is essentially an alternative approach to salvation theory, what we might call soteriology. It's an alternative to Calvinism or more Reformed theology approaches and deals with what is often termed as God's middle knowledge, or essentially the ability for God to know things that are what might call counterfactuals. Things that could have happened in any given scenario. And so, from that wheelhouse, Tim is arguing about salvation. He's arguing about God's knowledge and he's pointing out that there are ways to understand God's foreknowledge,

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God's middle knowledge, and ultimately his sovereignty over life. Anybody who's done apologetics knows this will come up when you deal with any sort of skeptical approach. They're going to want to know about freewill. They're going to want to know about God's sovereignty or determination. And this is one tool in which you can respond to that question.

FRANK:

So, Tim does great work in that. He has Free Thinking Ministries. About the time you guys were talking about putting together this book in 2019, he and I did some work on some college campuses in Nebraska. And so, he actually spoke with me at one of those events. So, Tim does some great work out there. Then you have a great chapter, which I did have a chance to read, by my colleague, Alisa Childers, 'The Jesus Hermeneutic: Historical Method or Modern Heresy?' What does she do in this chapter?

CLARK:

Well, a lot of people have gotten to know Alisa over the last few years, which has been great to know that she really is specializing in progressive Christianity as we see it kind of rising, particularly in the United States. And one of the people that she has to engage with quite a bit in her writing, and in her speaking, is a man named Richard Rohr. And this Jesus hermeneutic is a methodology that Rohr promotes. And it really ultimately works against what we find Jesus say in Scripture, but Rohr's a very convincing Christian thinker.

And he's more of a spiritualist in his faith and the way he describes things. It's very appealing to a lot of modern people, more of a New-Age theology, which is a very appealing thing to a lot of the world right now. And Alisa, essentially, just takes his words. She doesn't put words in his mouth. She takes his words from his writing, his arguments, uses the same Scriptures that he applies in his book, and shows you how what he's doing with the Bible is actually twisting the words of Jesus outside of the way Jesus intended them.

And so, her argument is that whether this is even a hermeneutic at all, is the Jesus hermeneutic really a good hermeneutic, or a hermeneutic that Jesus would have used? And so, it's an excellent way to kind of dive into Scripture to see how Jesus thought of Scripture, what he thought of the Old Testament, and how to respond to people that really are infatuated with Richard Rohr. And I will say, if you deal in any level of Progressive Christianity, you will engage with Richard Rohr. He is everywhere.

FRANK:

Yeah, as Alisa points out, Richard Rohr tries to say that Jesus kind of refutes or Jesus doesn't agree with some of the hard teachings of the Old Testament. When in fact, Alisa points out, no, He does. In fact, let me just read this one little section. She says this in the chapter. Again, the book is called 'Faith Examined.' And she says, Jesus affirmed that the Scriptures were historically reliable. He continually referred to Old Testament characters as actual people who lived in real times and places throughout history.

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He spoke of Abel, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Daniel, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, and Zachariah as all being these real people that lived in Old Testament times. In fact, she says, He compared the history of the story of Jonah with the historicity of His own resurrection in an historical event that the Apostle Paul claimed could support or discredit all of Christianity based on its veracity. That's, of course, in 1 Corinthians 15. If Jesus hasn't risen from the dead, your faith is in vain. And Jesus actually compares His resurrection to Jonah in the heart of the great fish.

So yeah, despite what Richard Rohr says, Alisa Childers has it right. You can learn more about it in the book, 'Faith Examined.' And then Eric Chabot, my friend who is the Ratio Christi director there at The Ohio State University, where we go at least once a year. I was just there recently. His chapter is about, 'Does the Resurrection of Jesus Prove He is the Jewish Messiah?' What's a nugget or two we can take away from this chapter?

CLARK:

This was great. I really like this because this is a discussion that very few people have, and Eric is uniquely situated to have it because he deals a lot with reaching out to Jewish people and Jewish believers.

FRANK:

He's a Messianic Jew himself.

CLARK:

Yes, exactly. And so, he is a perfect person to have this. And we don't really think about this often. We just take for granted that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. And he brings up the point, something that he has to deal with all the time is that as far as your modern Jewish believers think, the resurrection isn't in the prophecies of the Messiah. So, how could he be the Messiah if that's not one of the prophecies? And so, Eric does a wonderful job of analyzing this and showing you how there has been multiple different messianic possibilities in the history of the Jewish people, how there is Scripture to support the resurrection of Jesus as being a messianic prophecy. It maybe not as clear as some of the other ones.

But the way he weaves together the different discussions on what happens on the third day, the importance of the third day in messianic history, and how that applies to Jesus is really well done. And I think it'll bring a lot of people up to speed on an area that I doubt they've ever really thought about or read. And this is a great, great beginning for them, for anybody who's not seen this. And if you have seen it and if you're familiar with it, he's got some great resources for you to keep digging into, other Jewish resources. Hebrew scholars that he is citing in this book would be great resources for you to read up on as well. As I always encourage people, if you read a chapter you like, find the footnotes. Go find the books that they're citing. Go read those books too. Just follow the rabbit trail and get more knowledge as you go.

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FRANK:

Now you've got a chapter I want to come back to. I want to jump ahead. So, last segment, we'll deal with your chapter. Regarding the Church, Melissa Dougherty has a chapter called 'The Spiritual Sin of Pervading Christianity.' What's she covering in there, Clark?

CLARK:

For those who aren't familiar with Melissa, she has a YouTube channel that she has been growing. And she has an interesting story, an interesting testimony. She was a New-Age believer many years ago and sort of came out of that. And she has a lot of experience in dealing with people in the New-Age department. And so, the spiritual sin, we left it kind of a cryptic title. 'The Spiritual Sin Pervading Christianity' that she's dealing with ultimately comes down to this need for an emotional encounter with Jesus, or an emotional experience with God. What we're not arguing (and she's very good about pointing this out) that having emotions in church or loving God with your feelings and your emotions is wrong.

Of course, Jesus wants you to do that. You're to love the Lord your God with all your heart, you know? This is one of those things that you are to do. What she's pushing back against is the idea that without that, without that continual emotional experience, that sort of spiritual high, that you're somehow falling away from the faith or that you don't have that relationship with God. And really what she deals with is the damage that that sort of trajectory can send you on, almost like you're seeking after a spiritual drug. And I've seen it firsthand myself actually, as she has in this book.

And it really is a thing the Church needs to be aware of. They need to be cautioned against and really hold it in the balance. We need to walk this Christian life with that tension of our emotions and our mind, loving God with all our heart and loving God with all our mind, and not trying to sacrifice one for the other. But learning how to walk with those in balance with each other because Christ is the fulfillment of both those things. And so, she's helping us to try to keep an even keel, if you will.

FRANK:

Yeah, most of our viewers and listeners know who Melissa is. She's been on the program several times. She's also a CAT member, CrossExamined Apologetics Team. So, she's got a lot of videos on our YouTube channel. And she was the one that really invited us to do the last CIA out there in Albuquerque, at the great Skip Heitzig's church. And I mentioned Skip on this program before. His book, 'The Bible from 30,000 Feet' is a great book. I'm going through it myself now. We had him on the show just a couple of months ago about that. Then you have the equally great Natasha Crain writing, 'Raising Kids with Confident Faith in a Secular Culture.' She's really good at this. What did she cover in here, Clark?

CLARK:

Well, yeah. And obviously everyone knows Natasha's wheelhouse is sort of apologetics and parenting at the same time. Just like Alex works with making apologetics real for young people

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to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

and how you can use this in real life, Natasha does the same thing for parents. And she does that by trying to show them the importance of not only being able to defend your faith, but raising your kids in this world, being able to defend your faith, and doing it in a way that's loving, but also a way that's going to grow them.

She gives us resources that you can go to, not just her own, not just her own books and her own website that she has. But she gives other resources that you can go to that will help plan sort of a structure for your children, to help them slowly learn more and more confidence in their faith and give them room to doubt. You know, we hear all about kids, and young people, and even older people that have deconverted because they had all these questions, and no one ever let them ask questions or have doubts.

And Natasha really is encouraging us as parents, and I'm a parent as well, to allow our children to have those doubts with us and to be equipped to walk them through those and to answer those. And so, this chapter is a great way to bring the book home so that everybody can really reflect on how do I act as an apologist, even in my own house? Not just on the stage or not just out at the university, but even in my own home? What can I do and how do I do that? So, I thought, it's just a really great way to sum it up in a way that Alex brings us into in the beginning, Natasha brings us back to it at the end.

FRANK:

Yeah, parents. Your kids are either going to be disciplined by the iPhone or by you. Well, we know they're getting disciplined by the iPhone. You better be really deliberate, to make sure that they're not being pulled too far away from Christianity based on that. This book, this chapter in 'Faith Examined,' edited by my guest today, Clark Bates, by Natasha Crain will help you, all the other great chapters as well. When we come back, we're going to talk about the reliability of the Bible, because that's what Clark talks about in his chapter in the book. So, don't go anywhere. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network.

'Faith Examined: New Arguments for Persistent Questions, Essays in Honor of Frank Turek', but also you as a supporter of this ministry. Because the people that have written in this book wouldn't have gotten to where they are today, unless you had donated to CrossExamined, either financially or prayerfully. Everyone who has contributed in this book is a graduate of the CrossExamined Instructor Academy, CIA, of which I'm just a part. And you helped fund that, and continue to help fund that, including this entire ministry. And Clark Bates, my guest today, is a professor who really put all this together. And we've gone through the individual chapters and I'm saving his chapter for last. Here is the chapter the title, 'What Do You Mean by Reliable? Navigating the Question Behind the Question.' What is the question behind the question, Clark?

CLARK:

The question behind the question really is, can I trust the Bible? You know, when it comes down to it, when someone asks you about the reliability of the Old Testament, or the reliability of the

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New Testament, whether they mean historically or with the text itself, what they're really asking you is, can this book be a guide for my life? Is it trustworthy? And we can easily get really bogged down in all these historical details. You know, we want to talk about archaeological discoveries, which are fantastic. We want to talk about the reliability of the text, which it is. But we forget about the actual person asking the question, and what they're really wanting to know. And so, all of those arguments are very helpful. And I put some of those into the chapter to help people understand that.

But they're helpful, only in my opinion, as a means to get to the heart of the question, which is, this book is the only trustworthy guide for your life. That what it contains, the story it contains, and the person it speaks about, Jesus is the reliable one. And so, as long as we keep that as the focus, and we remember to continually go back to that, that (in my view) is the best way to use reliability arguments, is to always be pointing back to why they're asking you. Now, of course, other people might not, they might be just angry. But really, you know, you do want to keep that heart for them as a person in these conversations.

FRANK:

You also point out that, you quote Peter Williams who's out there at Tyndale House in Cambridge, and you write this. You're quoting him, but this sentiment is true. He said, were it not for the many miraculous reports in the Gospels, most historians would be very happy to treat their accounts as generally historically reliable. This itself is no small thing. And now it's your writing. What often holds them back from the story of Jesus is their presupposed naturalism, not the actual reliability of the Bible. Unpack that for us.

CLARK:

Dr. Williams is just an incredible scholar. Anybody that's ever met him or listened to him talk, he's uniquely gifted in what he does and defending the Bible. And he and I agree on this. And the real objection isn't so much about whether or not the Gospel writers existed, whether Mark wrote Mark, or John wrote John. It's the idea that there could be a God who is sovereign, a God who expects something of us. There's the idea that there could be an eternal punishment, that there's such a thing as sin. All these metaphysical realities. It's a rejection of those more than it is anything else.

And so, one of the things that Dr. Williams points out and I echo in the book is that if it didn't say anything about a resurrection, if it didn't say anything about miraculous healings, nobody would challenge the Bible's historical reliability at all. They would accept it as a historically reliable book. Even Bart Ehrman says it's historically reliable. He does not disagree with that. That's not where most people have the objection. The only reason they bring up those challenges is because of the spiritual question that's actually being communicated. They don't want that to be true.

FRANK:

Ehrman wouldn't agree on the resurrection.

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CLARK:

No, but if you look at what his book on, 'Did Jesus Exist', he explicitly says that the historical details in the Gospel narratives are accurate. He doesn't question that.

FRANK:

Well, let me point out something else you say here, too, about these historical details. We go through it in *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*. You go through some of those details here in the chapter in the book 'Faith Examined.' But then you write this. And I want you to really unpack this because I think this is a very interesting point you're making.

You're saying these authors, meaning the New Testament authors, would have to have demanded of themselves an attention to detail of historical matters down to the minutiae of every aspect in their stories, only to invent miraculous healings, and a physical resurrection that no Jewish writer prior had anticipated. They would have been the literary groundbreakers of their respective centuries and cultures. This hardly seems to be the most parsimonious of explanations, even with the miraculous occurrences. Yeah, unpack that further for us. What are you talking about?

CLARK:

This, of course, is dealing with New Testament, specifically the Gospel authors too. When you look at just the minute details of the Gospels, the fact that they know all about the geography, the fact that they know all about the name and culture, the fact they know about the religious culture, the government, the botany, everything.

FRANK:

The topography, all of it. Yeah.

CLARK:

It's unbelievable. And it means that they either had to have been there at that time, or they had to have known someone who was there at that time. And we have four Gospel authors, two of which claim to have been there at that time, two of which claimed to have known somebody who was there at that time. And so, it just screams at you from the Gospels that this is an authentic account. This is authentic witness. This kind of detail is fairly rare when it comes to writings in ancient literature. It's especially rare in a fictional narrative. So, it defies the idea that this is fiction. And we talked about Lewis earlier. He was famous for saying he knows fiction, and the Gospels are certainly not fiction.

So, they were demanding of themselves a level of detail that wasn't necessary. They didn't have to do that. If they were making up a narrative or inventing a story, none of this would be required. People would have accepted it with a lot less detail. So, they're actually requiring of themselves something more than anybody else. And then why would they do all that only to invent the other things, the bigger things, the miraculous healings, and ideas that the Jewish

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culture didn't think of? These were brand-new, the idea that a singular Messiah was going to die, rise from the dead, and provide salvation, not just to Israel, but to the nations. This was not something that was being written about. You know, Eric talks about how the Old Testament foreshadows that. But a lot of the Jewish discussions at the time were not about this. They weren't thinking in this way. So, these authors are either the most brilliant authors of this timeframe, coming up with ideas, spiritual ideas, that no one had ever thought of before. Which I don't think anybody who's skeptical of the Gospels is going to credit them with that level of intelligence.

But they would either have to be that, or they would have to be reporting exactly what they saw and what had happened. And I mentioned this parsimonious account, and I was watching a debate a while back when I wrote this chapter. And this was the skeptic's argument, he was only interested in what makes the most sense. What's the most common denominator that would make the most sense? And when you look at the details in the Gospels, when you look at all these things, what makes the most sense is not that they're genius authors. They may be, but it's not that they had the best writing ability of any first century author to exist prior to them.

It's that they were accounting something true, and they're just relaying what happened. That's the most parsimonious. And so, when we look at that sort of objection, like oh, I think the resurrection or the miraculous, it's too complicated. It's most likely invented. Not if you actually take the time with the Gospels. If you take the time with the Gospels and you see how much detail is actually there, the insertion of all the miraculous events makes it much more complicated. It's not easy at all.

FRANK:

In fact, you write this. This is from the book 'Faith Examined,' edited by my guest Clark Bates. And this is your chapter, Clark. You write, if Jesus is who He claimed to be in the Gospels, both the narrative of Israel in the Hebrew Bible and the spread of Christianity after his death make sense. If He is not, nothing makes sense, right? Nothing does. If He hasn't risen from the dead, nothing makes sense. So, the resurrection, a lot of people go, oh, I can't believe in the resurrection. Miracles don't happen. Ladies and gentlemen, you're living in a miracle. This universe exploded into being out of nothing. If Genesis 1:1 is true, every other verse in the Bible is at least possible. And Phil Fernandez, in this book, points out that Genesis 1:1 does appear to be true.

So, if the greatest miracle has occurred, then lesser miracles are indeed possible. And by the way, miracles have to be rare if they're going to get our attention. If people were resurrected from the dead all the time, the resurrection of Jesus would be nothing to us, right? I mean, if you go to somebody, and you go, Jesus rose from the dead to prove he was God, the guy goes, so what? Uncle Leroy just rose from the dead two weeks ago. You know, you'd go, okay. [Laughter] Yeah, it's got to be a rare event.

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Well, Clark, I can't thank you enough for the foresight you had and the honor you bestowed not only on me, but our entire ministry and all the people that have contributed to CIA, and all the donors who continually contribute to this ministry by pulling together this book. Again, friends, the book is called 'Faith Examined: New Arguments for Persistent Questions, Essays in Honor of Dr. Frank Turek' and you, ladies and gentlemen, because this ministry wouldn't exist without you. And I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing without you. So, Clark, wonderful work. There's great stuff in this book, friends. It's well beyond anything I've written. And so, it's just adding to your arsenal of arguments for Christianity. Clark, where can people learn more about you if they want to learn what you're doing?

CLARK:

I'm currently in the UK working on my PhD. So, most of what I do anymore is just, you might see me on Facebook, or on Twitter, or X, whatever it goes by now. If you just look up my name, Clark Bates, it should come up at some point. I used to run an apologetics ministry called ExeJesus. Now, I had to put that sort of to bed during the PhD because it requires so much of my time. But if you go on Facebook, and you type in that word ExeJesus, I believe the backlog still has a Facebook page. And you can go there, and you can click on some of the old articles, and then some apologetics material there. But you can follow me there. And you can always contact me by private message if you have questions or want some better explanations that maybe you read about in the book or other things.

FRANK:

Great. Well, we're so encouraged by what you've done and the fact that you're in full-time ministry as well as all the people in this book are. So, thank you again, Clark. Really appreciate it, brother. All right, that's Clark Bates ladies and gentlemen. Again, the book is called 'Faith Examined.' Check the book out. You're going to enjoy it. I am. And Lord willing, we will see you here next week. God bless.

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