

“Being a Confident Christian in a Culture of Competitors”

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Introduction

A. “Christian worldview”: “A way of life that perceives and engages everything with a love for God and a set of basic beliefs and values that are adequately informed and influenced by God’s revelation.”

1. What does it mean and what does it entail?
2. Why commit to it (and not something else)?

B. Lesson overview

1. Competing worldviews (basic beliefs and values)
2. Christian apologetics
 - a. The biblical goals and guidelines
 - b. Types of apologetics
 - (1) Negative: Responding to specific claims that Christianity is false or severely problematic (i.e., Christianity is not false).
 - (2) Positive: Trying to show that Christianity is true.
 - (3) Neutralizing: Trying to show that competing worldviews are false or severely problematic.
3. Neutralizing apologetics applied.
4. Negative apologetics (e.g. responding to the problem of evil).
5. Positive apologetics.

I. Prominent Competing Worldviews

A. The Christian Theism (*theos* = Greek for “God”)

1. Acrostic summary
 - a. **C** _____ CREATOR
 - b. **S** _____ CREATOR SAVING
 - c. **I** _____ CREATOR INCARNATE
2. God and Nature
 - a. God is _____ TRANSCENDENT
 - b. God is _____ IMMANENT
3. Divine revelation
 - a. **N** _____ NATURAL (Ps 19; Rom 1:18-25)
 - b. **S** _____ SPECIAL (1 Pet 1:10-13; 2 Pet 1:16-21; 2 Tim 3:14-17).
4. Object illustration: _____ CROSS

B. Deism (*deus* = Latin for “God”)

1. Acrostic summary
 - a. **C** _____ CREATOR
 - b. **A** _____ ABSENT GOD
 - c. **N** _____ NATURAL REVELATION ONLY
 - d. **T** _____ TRANSCENDENT ONLY
2. Object illustration: _____ GRANDFATHER CLOCK
3. Implications
 - a. God is NOT _____
 - b. NO _____ MIRACLES
4. Cultural connections:
 - a. Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin
 - b. Most American teens: “moral therapeutic deists” (Christian Smith, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, 2005, 2009).

C. New Age Pantheism (“pan” = all; “theism” = God)

1. Acrostic summary
 - a. T _____ TECHNIQUES
 - b. E _____ EVERYTHING IS GOD
 - c. A _____ ALTERED CONSCIOUSNESS
 - d. R _____ REINCARNATION
2. Object illustration: _____ YIN YANG
3. Cultural connections:
 - a. Hinduism (“atman” is true identity); Taoism; some forms of Buddhism (e.g. Richard Gere, Steven Segal, Phil Jackson).
 - b. New Age (e.g. Shirley Maclaine).
 - c. Animism; Wicca.
 - d. Scientology (“thetan” is true identity): John Travolta, Tom Cruise).
 - e. Deepak Chopra; Eckhart Tolle; *Lion King*; Yoda in *Star Wars*; Oprah.
4. Biblical connections: The serpent (Gen 3:5 “... you will be like God ...”); Stoic philosophy (Acts 17:16-33).

D. Islam

1. Acrostic summary
 - a. M _____ MUHAMMAD
 - b. A _____ ALLAH ALONE
 - c. S _____ SUBMISSION
 - d. K _____ KORAN
2. Implications
 - a. Jesus is NOT _____ GOD.
 - b. Jesus was NOT _____ CRUCIFIED.
 - c. The Bible is _____ CORRUPTED.

E. Secular Humanism (optimistic Naturalism or Atheism)

1. Acrostic summary
 - a. S _____ SCIENCE
 - b. N _____ NATURE ONLY
 - c. O _____ OPTIMISTIC
 - d. R _____ REASON
 - e. E _____ EVOLUTION
2. Cultural connections:
 - a. Charles Darwin; Carl Sagan; Richard Dawkins; Michael Shermer; Bill Maher.
 - b. Epicurean philosophers (Acts 17); Spock from *Star Trek*; *The Titanic*; *Mission Impossible*; *CSI* TV series; *Numb3rs*; Bob the Builder, “Can we fix it? Yes we can.”
3. Biblical connections: Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9); Rich man (Luke 12:15-23)

F. Nihilism (*nihil* = Latin for “nothing”)

1. Acrostic summary
 - a. N _____ really matters. NOTHING
 - b. A _____ ABSURDITY of Life (“I don’t care”; “I give up”)
 - c. P _____ PESSIMISTIC outlook.
2. Object illustration: _____ TOILET
3. Cultural connections: “Murder by Number”; “Final Destination”; “Bohemian Rhapsody”; Douglas Adams’ *Hitch Hiker* “trilogy”; John Cage; “Seinfeld”; Kurt Cobain, Samuel Beckett.
4. Biblical connections: Romans 1:28-31 (“God gave them over to a depraved mind”); Eccl 2:10-11 (“... all was vanity and striving after wind”)

G. Atheistic Existentialism

1. Acrostic summary
 - a. F _____ FEELINGS
 - b. A _____ ABSURDITY OF LIFE

- c. **D** _____ **DEFINE YOURSELF TODAY**
2. Object illustration: Mr. _____ **POTATO HEAD**
3. Cultural connections: Friedrich Nietzsche; John Paul Sartre; Albert Camus; Ferris Bueller; a lot of high school and college youth!; the character “Jack” in the movie *Titanic*; *Groundhog Day*; *Dead Poets’ Society* (*carpe deum*); Hugh Hefner.
4. Biblical connections: Phil 3:17-21 (“... their god is their stomach ... their mind is set on earthly things”); 1 Pet 4:1-5 (“... having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties ..., they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead”).

H. Postmodernism

1. Acrostic summary
 - a. **F** _____ **FRAGMENTATION**
 - b. **U** _____ **UNCERTAINTY**
 - c. **R** _____ **RELATIVISM**
2. Objective illustration: A _____ **REMOTE CONTROL**
3. Cultural connections: Madonna; Britney Spears; *Star Trek: The Next Generation*; *The Truman Show*; *The Matrix*; *Lost*; *Inception*; Reality TV shows; Internet surfing.
4. Biblical connections: Deut 12:8 (“You are not to do as we do here today, everyone doing as they see fit” – NIV); 2 Tim 3:7-9 (“always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth”)

II. Goals and Guidelines for Apologetics.

- A. **Be ready to defend** and **correct** (1 Peter 3:15; Jude 3; Titus 1:9; 2 Tim 2:25).
- B. **Be strong** in the **truth** (Jn 8:31-32; 14:6; Rom 1:18-24; 1 Tim 2:4; 2 Tim 2:1-19; Eph 6:10-20).
- C. **Be sensitive.** It’s as important how we say something as what we say (1 Pet 3:15; 2 Tim 2:24-25; Jude 22).

III. Types of Apologetics.

A. Negative Apologetics: Replying to specific criticisms to show that Christianity is **NOT FALSE**.

1. E.g. The disciples of Jesus were accused of stealing Jesus’ body (Matt 28:11-15).
2. E.g. Festus accuses Paul of being insane (Acts 26:22-32).
3. E.g. The claim that Christians “all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar [the state]” (Acts 17:5-8).
4. E.g. The problem of evil.

B. Positive Apologetics: Attempting to show that Christianity is true.

1. Evidences in **nature** (Ps 19:1-6; Rom 1:18-32).
2. **Miracles** (1 Kings 18; Ex 10:1-2; Jn 20:30-31; Acts 2:22-24; 1 Cor 15:1-20).
 - a. Jn 20:30-31 “... these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”
 - b. Acts 2:22-24 “... Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him”
3. Fulfilled **prophecy** (Lk 24:25-27; Acts 17:2-3; 26:22-23; Deut 18:18-22; Is 7:14; Micah 5:2; Zach 9:9; Is 53; Ps 22:1-8; 16:10).
4. The nature and reliability of **scripture**.
 - a. 2 Tim 3:14-17 “... all Scripture is inspired by God”
 - b. 2 Pet 1:20-21 “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”
 - c. Jn 10:34-36 “... and the Scripture cannot be broken.”
5. **Personal experience**.
 - a. Jn 9:25-30 “... One thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see.”
 - b. Paul’s testimonies to the Jews (Acts 22), to Felix (Acts 24:10-23) and to Agrippa (Acts 26).
6. **Social benefits of the Christian way** (Titus 3:8; Gal 6:9-10; 1 Tim 5:8).

C. Neutralizing Apologetics: Attempting to show **other worldviews false or very problematic**.

1. 2 Cor 10:5 “We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God”
2. Rom 1:21 “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”
3. Titus 1:9-11 “... able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”

IV. Neutralizing Apologetics: Some Applications

A. General strategy.

1. Analyze the worldview’s logical implications.

2. Compare the worldview's position and its implications with the **claims** and **behavior** of its advocates.
 3. Ask probing QUESTIONS to expose perplexing problems. (Note Mk 11:27-33).
- B. Applying the General Strategy to **New Age Pantheism**.
1. Consider the worldview content and its logical implications.
 - a. Everything is ultimate "ONE" (Monism).
 - b. The physical world is "illusory."
 - c. Language and logic are deceptive and must be transcended.
 2. **Claims** and **behavior** of Pantheists and New Agers.
 - a. Follow the "right" duties (including moral duties) as prescribed by *dharma*, the principle of order in the universe.
 - b. Eliminate all desire (Buddhism) by following the 8-fold path (Buddhism) or "fulfill one's duties in the right way to fulfill one's desires" (Hinduism).
 - c. Improve the human condition (e.g. peace, well-being).
 3. **Key responses**
 - a. "Right" duties, paths, and techniques presuppose a fundamental distinction to what is NOT "right." If everything is "ONE," how can this distinction be justified?
 - b. If everything is "ONE," then "evil" itself cannot be justified or explained.
 - c. The use of language and logic cannot be avoided.
 - d. The progress of science reveals the "reality" of nature and capacity of our reason and our physical senses to have knowledge of it.
 - e. It seeks "oneness" with the universe, but it creates a giant gap between the physical ("outer") world of the senses and the "internal" world of one's experience. It produces a fragmented existence.
- C. Applying the General Strategy to **Naturalistic Worldviews**.
1. The naturalistic worldview and its logical implications.
 - a. Everything is explainable in terms of purely physical, impersonal, and non-directed causes.
 - b. Implications for meaning, ethics, etc.
 2. **Claims & behavior** of many Secular Humanists (vs. worldview implications).
 - a. Humans have freedom, value, and uniqueness.
 - b. Reason and science give truth.
 - c. Loving, giving, gracious, etc.
 - d. Condemn unjust, even immoral, actions (e.g. racism, slavery, rape, child abuse).
 3. The naturalistic worldview is **INCONSISTENT** with the actual claims and behavior of non-theists.

V. Key Considerations for Why Christianity is Better.

A. Cosmology.

1. A dilemma for Naturalists (non-theists).
 - a. If the universe is eternal, then science should say it's eternal. But ...
 - b. If it's not eternal, then how did it originate? Was it "self-caused"?
2. The universe _____ **BEGAN**. (>> gradual and resistant acceptance of a "big bang")
3. The universe began _____ **JUST RIGHT** to allow human life.
 - a. The "Anthropic Principle": Physical constants and the ratios among them are incredibly precise.
 - b. Examples:
 - (1) Expansion rate of universe
 - (2) Strength of gravity
 - c. Responses by scientists, including many skeptics and atheists.
 - (1) Fred Hoyle (1915-2001; atheist/agnostic):

"A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect as monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question."

- (a) Estimated the chances of life originating on earth: 1 in $10^{40,000}$ power!
 - (b) Number of estimated atoms in the visible universe: 10^{80} power.
 - (c) "Panspermia Hypothesis": Life came to earth from elsewhere in the universe.
- (2) Antony Flew (1923-2010), famous atheist rejected his atheism at age 81 and became a Theist.

"I now believe that the universe was brought into existence by an infinite Intelligence. I believe that this universe's intricate laws manifest what scientists have called the Mind of God" (*There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, p. 88).

4. Biblical connections (Is 45:18; Ps 19:1-2; Rom 1:20). [See my sermon podcast on Ps 19 at <http://legacy.lincolnchristian.edu/GeneralInformation/Podcasts/Seminary.FA10.2010-11-10rknopp.mp4>]

B. Biology.

1. The **origin of life (or “information”)** problem. (Especially see Stephen Meyer, *Signature in the Cell*)
2. The **diversity of life** and the problems with Darwinian evolution.
 - a. The **evidence** problem (see Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*).
 - (1) The fossil problem (acknowledged by Darwin).
 - (2) Prevalent but problematic evidences for macro-evolution (see Wells, *The Icons of Evolution*).
 - b. The **time** problem and the “Cambrian Explosion.”
 - c. The **mechanism** problem.
 - d. The **paradigm** problem: Naturalistic evolution has competing, and incompatible, theories.

C. Theology.

1. God is transcendent, immanent, good, loving, full of grace and truth (Jn 1:17).
2. Contrast the Christian God with the lack of any God (atheism), the lack of a personal God (pantheism, animism), and the lack of an intimate, incarnate God (Islam).

D. Christology.

1. Christ's **words** (Jn 14:6; 11:25-26)
2. Christ's **works** (Lk 5:24; Jn 11:43-44).
3. Christ's **resurrection** (Matt 28:1-6; Lk 24:1-9; Jn 20:1-8; Acts 2:22-24; 1 Cor 15:1-20).
4. Christ's **post-resurrection appearances**: Over 40 days, different settings, on at least 10 occasions.

E. Anthropology.

1. The **“self”**: A unique, individual identity and awareness is not reducible to, or explainable by, mere matter.
2. Human **freedom**.
3. Human **meaning and value**. (Gen 1:26-27; 4:9-10; Matt 6:26)
4. Meaningful **relationships** (e.g. family; church)
 - a. Founded by Christ (Mt 16:16-18).
 - b. Unified by the Spirit (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:11-13; Eph 4:4-7).
 - c. Called to edify one another (Rom 15:2; 1 Cor 10:23-24; 1 Cor 14:12,26; Eph 4:29).
5. **Social concern and justice** (Titus 3:8; Gal 6:9-10; Matt 6:1-3; Jm 2:1-9; 1 Tim 5:8)
6. The Christian worldview offers encouragement through **personal adversity**, consolation for **inevitable mortality**, and justifiable hope for **eternity**.
7. **Other worldviews**.
 - a. Some: There is no “self.”
 - b. Freedom is an illusion.
 - c. No ultimate basis for human meaning or value.
 - (1) E.g. The Nihilists rightly recognize that, without God, this is the case.
 - (2) E.g. If karma and reincarnation were applied consistently, we should attribute current human value to works done in a previous life. Why would someone born severely maimed be “worth” helping? Why should we be motivated to help them if they are where they deserve to be?

F. Philosophy.

1. Epistemology.
 - a. A capacity to “know,” “rule,” and “subdue” (Gen 1:26-28).
 - b. Other worldviews cannot justify our capacity to know.
 - (1) E.g. Non-theistic worldviews cannot justify the very use of human reason to give us “truth.”
 - (2) E.g. Pantheistic worldviews emphasize the deceptive character of reason and our physical senses.
2. Ethics.
 - a. An adequate morality must ultimately be based in a transcendent and good Being.
 - b. Other worldviews cannot adequately justify our ethical needs or deepest intuitions.

G. History.

1. God's redemptive activity (e.g. revelations, miracles).
2. Predictive prophecy (see section III.B.3 above).
3. Continuity of God's story. (Especially contrast with Islam and the Koran)
 - a. Hebrew scriptures: Adam > Abraham > Moses > Israel > Jesus > Church.
 - b. Jesus: 2nd Adam (Rom 5:13-15; 1 Cor 15:44-46); Abraham's “seed” (Gal 3:16-17); a prophet like Moses (Acts 7:37; Heb 3:1-3); a new covenant (Heb 8:7-13).

H. Scripture.

1. **Adequate** for God's purposes (Jn 20:30-31; 2 Tim 3:16-17).
2. **Reliable**.
 - a. Claims of eyewitnesses (1 Jn 1:1-4; 2 Pet 1:16).
 - b. Archaeological confirmations.

c. Textual support for the Old and New Testament books.

Ancient Manuscript Information and Comparisons¹

AUTHOR	BOOK	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPIES	TIME GAP	# of COPIES
Homer	Iliad	900 B.C.	c. 400 B.C.	c. 500 yrs.	643
Herodotus	History	480-425 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,350 yrs.	8
Thucydides	History	460-400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,380 yrs.	8
Plato		400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,300 yrs.	7
Caesar	Gallic Wars	100-44 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,000 yrs.	10
Livy	History of Rome	59 B.C. - A.D. 17	4th. cent. (partial); mostly 10 th century	c. 400 yrs. c. 1,000 yrs.	1 partial; 19 copies
Tacitus	Annals	A.D. 100	A.D. 1100	c. 1,000 yrs.	20
Pliny Secundus	Natural History	A.D. 61-113	c. A.D. 850	c. 750 yrs.	7
New Testament		A.D. 50-95	c. 114 (fragment) c. 200 (books) c. 250 (most of N.T.) c. 325 (complete N.T.)	+ 50 yrs. 100 yrs. 150 yrs. 225 yrs.	Over 5,600

Earliest New Testament Events and Books²

Historical Event (approx. date)	New Testament book or Reference
AD 30 Jesus crucified & resurrected.	
AD 30 Jesus' ascension: 40 days later.	
AD 30 Pentecost: 50 days later (Acts 2).	
AD 34 Saul's conversion (Acts 9)	
AD 37-40 Paul's 1 st visit to Jerusalem and visited with James, brother of Jesus (Gal 1:17-20).	
AD 41 Paul & Barnabas in Antioch for one year (Acts 11:25-26).	
AD 44 James, brother of John, executed by Herod Agrippa I [reign AD 41-44] (Acts 12:1-3).	
AD 44-46 Paul's 1 st missionary journey (Acts 13:4-52; 14:1-26).	
AD 48-49 Council at Jerusalem with Paul, Titus, James, Peter et al. (Acts 15; Gal. 2:1-10).	
AD 49-52 Paul's 2 nd missionary journey (Acts 15:36 – 18:22) [Inscription discovered in 1905 in Delphi refers to "Junius Gallio," proconsul in Achaia. The inscription is dated to AD 51 or 52. Esp. note Acts 18:12-16.]	AD 50 Paul writes 1 <i>THESSALONIANS</i> from Corinth. AD 51 Paul writes 2 <i>THESSALONIANS</i> from Corinth.
AD 53-57 Paul's 3 rd missionary journey (Acts 18:23 – 21:16)	AD 53 Paul writes <i>GALATIANS</i> from Antioch. AD 56 Paul writes 1 <i>CORINTHIANS</i> . AD 57 Paul writes 2 <i>CORINTHIANS</i> . AD 57 Paul writes <i>ROMANS</i> .
AD 58 Paul travels to Jerusalem and is arrested (Acts 21-23).	
AD 58-60 Paul appeals his case to Rome (Acts 24-26).	
AD 60-61 Paul journeys to Rome (Acts 27:1-14).	
AD 63-67 Paul set free from prison	AD 60-70 Gospel of Mark
AD 67-68 Paul arrested and is executed in Rome.	AD 65-70 Gospel of Luke AD 65-70 Luke writes book of <i>ACTS</i> . AD 65-80 Gospel of Matthew AD 95 Gospel of John

¹ Specific information on biblical materials is drawn from *The New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics* and Lee Strobel's *The Case for the Real Jesus*.

² This table reveals that, while the synoptic Gospels (i.e., Matthew, Mark, Luke) were written in their current forms some 30-50 years after Jesus, the earliest New Testament documents are Paul's, which fall within 20 years of Jesus' death and resurrection. Paul's earliest interactions with the Jewish-Christian Church (e.g. Peter, James, Acts) attested to in Acts and in Paul's own writings (e.g. Galatians) fall within 10 years of Jesus' death and resurrection. These writings support an essential agreement between Paul and the other apostles in their message—a message that was publically proclaimed within two months of Jesus' death and resurrection (see Acts 1-2).