

Answering Christianity's Critics

By Bill Watkins

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I. The Current Situation

(Read *Ideas Have Consequences*, by Richard Weaver; *Modern Times and Intellectuals*, by Paul Johnson; *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life*, by Jacques Barzun)

A. Post-modernism

(Read *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*, by Edward E. Veith; *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity against the Challenges of Postmodernism*, by Douglas Groothuis)

B. "Relativism" vs. the new absolutes

(Read *The New Absolutes*, by William D. Watkins; *The Closing of the American Mind*, by Allan Bloom; *Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air*, by Francis J. Beckwith and Gregory Kousser)

C. The new "tolerance"

(Read *The New Absolutes*, by William D. Watkins; *When Tolerance Is No Virtue*, by S. D. Gaede)

D. Political correctness

(Read *Are You Politically Correct? Debating America's Cultural Standards*, eds. Francis J. Beckwith and Michael E. Bauman; *The Language Police: How Pressure Groups Restrict What Students Learn*, by Diane Ravitch)

E. Scientism and philosophical naturalism

(Read *Christianity and the Nature of Science*, by J. P. Moreland; *Reason in the Balance: The Case against Naturalism in Science, Law and Education*, by Phillip E. Johnson)

F. Decline of reason

(Read *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, by Neil Postman; *Fear of Knowledge: Against Relativism and Constructivism*, by Paul Boghossian)

G. Decline of morality

(Read *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong*, by William Kilpatrick; *The Abolition of Man*, by C. S. Lewis; *The Demoralization of Society: From Victorian Virtues to Modern Values*, by Gertrude Himmelfarb; *Degenerate Moderns: Modernity as Rationalized Sexual Misbehavior*, by E. Michael Jones)

H. Decline of marriage and the family

(Read *Family and Civilization*, by Carle C. Zimmerman; *What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense*, by Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P. George; *Truth Overruled: The Future of Marriage and Religious Freedom*, by Ryan T. Anderson)

I. The turn to Eastern beliefs and practices

(Read *The Making of the New Spirituality: The Eclipse of the Western Religious Tradition*, by James A. Herrick)

J. Competing worldviews

(Read *Worlds Apart: A Handbook on Worldviews*, by Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins)

K. Competing religions

(Read *Neighboring Faiths: A Christian Introduction to World Religions*, by Winfried Corduan; *The Kingdom of the Cults*, by Walter R. Martin; *While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam Is Destroying the West from Within*, by Bruce Bawer)

L. Emerging statism

(Read *The Politics of Envy: Statism as Theology*, by Doug Bandow; *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles*, by Thomas Sowell; *The Road to Serfdom*, by F. A. Hayek)

M. Anti-Christian ignorance and bigotry

II. Answering Christianity's Critics: Some Biblical Considerations

A. We are to defend the Christian faith ...

1. By answering its critics' arguments against Christianity (going on the defense) – 1 Pet. 3:15
2. By refuting its critics' own views (going on the offense) – Acts 17:1-4; 2 Cor. 10:5; Titus 1:9-11; Jude 3-4

B. Jesus' example (the four Gospels, esp. encounters with the Jewish religious leaders and scholars)

C. Matthew's example (Gospel of Matthew)

D. Luke's example (Gospel of Luke; Acts)

E. John's example (Gospel of John, esp. 20:30-31)

F. Paul's example (Acts; Galatians; Romans)

G. The writer of Hebrews

III. How Christian Writers Can Effectively Answer Christianity's Critics

A. To understand the critics, you need to understand our times and how we got here.

B. Build bridges of commonality wherever possible.

C. Probe the issues more deeply and more thoroughly than the critics do.

D. Use sources the critics respect, even if begrudgingly.

E. Fairly and accurately restate what the critics believe and why.

F. Expose and refute the errors of the critics, including self-defeating claims.

G. Use the betrayal of behavior.

H. Focus on fundamentals, not peripherals.

I. Provide sound reasons, ample evidence, and insightful illustrations to support your case.

J. Use the Bible accurately and judiciously.

K. Do not overstate your case.

L. Answer with courage and persistence.

IV. Christian Defenders to Emulate

A. Some significant Christian writers from the past

Irenaeus	Fyodor Dostoyevsky
Athanasius	Thomas Reid
Augustine	Charles Dickens
Anselm	Soren Kierkegaard
Thomas Aquinas	B. B. Warfield
Blaise Pascal	William G. T. Shedd
John Locke	Frederick Douglass

B. Some significant Christian writers from the 20th and 21st centuries

G. K. Chesterton	N. T. Wright
Dorothy Day	Charles B. Thaxton
J. Gresham Machen	Frederica Mathewes-Green
Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn	William Lane Craig
Dorothy L. Sayers	Francis Beckwith
D. Elton Trueblood	Norman L. Geisler
Reinhold Niebuhr	William A. Dembski
Etienne Gilson	Os Guinness
E. L. Mascall	Peter Kreeft
Frederick Copleston	Gilbert Meilaender
Christopher Dawson	Nancy Pearcey
C. S. Lewis	David F. Wells
Jacques Ellul	Paul Johnson
Francis Schaeffer	Elizabeth Fox-Genovese
Bernard Ramm	George Weigel
Walter R. Martin	Rodney Stark
Martin Luther King Jr.	Winfried Corduan
John Paul II	Douglas Groothuis
Richard John Neuhaus	D. A. Carson
Charles Colson	Ronald H. Nash
Phillip E. Johnson	Richard Swinburne
Mona Charen	Mark A. Noll
William Bennett	Alvin Plantinga
Gertrude Himmelfarb	Ravi Zacharias
Dinesh D'Souza	Charles M. Taylor
Gary R. Habermas	Dallas Willard
Nigel M. Cameron	