

Answering Christianity's Critics

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I. Our Biblical Mandate concerning Truth and Error

- A. Know the truth (John 1:14, 17; 8:31-32; 14:6).
- B. Be changed by the truth (Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:10).
- C. Mature in the truth (1 Cor. 14:20; Eph. 4:11-13, 21; Heb. 5:11-6:2).
- D. Develop a Christian mind (2 Cor. 10:5b).
- E. Present the truth (Eph. 4:15; 2 Tim. 2:15).
- F. Defend the truth (1 Pet. 3:15).
- G. Discern truth from error (1 John 4:1-6).
- H. Avoid contradictions (1 Tim. 6:20-21).
- I. Refute error (2 Cor. 10:5a; Titus 1:9; Galatians; Hebrews; Matt. 12:22-29).

II. Truth vs. Error in Our Culture Today: Some Sample Issues

ISSUES	AMERICAN CULTURE	HISTORIC CHRISTIANITY
Christians	Views them as hateful, ignorant, bigoted; strives to push them out of the public square	Love good; hate evil; know & proclaim the truth; avoid & refute error; do good to all peoples; engage the culture; expect persecution ¹
Major Worldview Assumptions	Assumed as true: naturalism & scientism along with truth as relative (perspectival)	Assumed as true: supernaturalism, revelation, absolutism, & the ultimate compatibility between faith, reason, and experience
Human Nature	Chance product of naturalistic evolution; a social construction; malleable	Designed creation of God; divine image-bearer; fallen & redeemable ²

¹ Psa. 97:10; 119:128; Prov. 8:13; Amos 5:14-15; Luke 6:27-36; John 15:18-20; Rom. 12:9, 14, 17, 21; 13:10.

² Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7, 20-25; 3:1-21; 9:1-17; John 3:1-21; Rom. 1-8.

ISSUES	AMERICAN CULTURE	HISTORIC CHRISTIANITY
Human Gender	Elastic & subjectively assigned	Divinely established as male & female ³
Sexual Orientation	Waivers between it as genetically determined & subjectively changeable	Adversely affected by the Fall; only heterosexual orientation a moral good ⁴
Sexual Activity	Every kind that's consensual is good	Only loving heterosexual sex in marriage is good ⁵
Identity	Obsessed with group identity (tribes) while exalting self	Defined by Family identity with its Head, Jesus Christ; the self is intrinsically valuable, morally corrupt, and yet redeemable ⁶
Race	Defines us and divides us by race; conflicted over racial differences while asserting racial equality	Only one race—the human race; humanity should not be divided against itself; all humans equal in Christ & as divine image-bearers ⁷
Government	Moving toward statism & socialism; the state is the highest authority	God is the highest authority; the state divinely established to uphold the good & punish evil ⁸

III. How We Can Answer Our Critics

- A. 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. Fairly and accurately restate what the critics believe and why.
- E. Expose and refute the errors of the critics, including their self-defeating claims.

³ Gen. 1:27.

⁴ See Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues and Options*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), chs. 15-16.

⁵ See Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, chs. 15-16.

⁶ Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians; cf. Gen. 1:27; 9:6; Jam. 3:8-9.

⁷ Gen. 1:27; Mal. 2:10; Acts 17:26; Gal. 3:28.

⁸ Consider Jesus' ministry among the people and his interactions with the religious and political leaders (the Gospels), and the disciples' ministry among the people and their interactions with the religious and political leaders (esp. Acts). See also Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Cor. 2:6-8; 6:1-8; Rev. 13-18.

- F. Use the betrayal of behavior.
- G. Focus on fundamentals, not peripherals, and on assumptions, not just stated beliefs and arguments.

IV. Brief Bibliography on the Issues

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Is Religion Dangerous?, by Keith Ward
The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation, by Rod Dreher
Christ and Culture, by H. Richard Niebuhr
Christ and Culture Revisited, by D. A. Carson
The Body: Being Light in Darkness, by Charles Colson with Ellen Santilli Vaughn
The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship, by Dallas Willard
The Example of Jesus, by Michael Griffiths
The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?, by Harry Blamires
Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul, by J. P. Moreland

B. Major Worldview Assumptions

The New Absolutes, by William D. Watkins
Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air, by Francis J. Beckwith and Gregory Koukl
Fear of Knowledge: Against Relativism and Constructivism, by Paul Boghossian
Scientism and Secularism, by J. P. Moreland
Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism, by Alvin Plantinga
Reason in the Balance: The Case against Naturalism in Science, Law and Education, by Phillip E. Johnson
Darwin Devolves: The New Science about DNA That Challenges Evolution, by Michael J. Behe
Uncommon Dissent: Intellectuals Who Find Darwinism Unconvincing, by William A. Dembski, ed.
Systematic Theology, vol. 1, by Norman L. Geisler

C. Human Nature & Gender, Sexual Orientation & Activity

When Harry Became Sally, by Ryan T. Anderson
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Soma in Biblical Theology, by Robert H. Gundry
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The Importance of Being Human: Some Aspects of the Christian Doctrine of Man, by E. L. Mascall
Taking Sex Differences Seriously, by Steven E. Rhoads

Truth Overruled: The Future of Marriage and Religious Freedom, by Ryan T. Anderson
What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense, by Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P. George

D. Identity & Race

In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis, by Henri Blocher
Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before, by Jean M. Twenge
The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society, by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.
The Mismeasure of Man, by S. J. Gould
The End of Racism, by Dinesh D'Souza
Shattering the Myth of Race: Genetic Realities and Biblical Truths, by Dave Unander
Blexit.com
Candace Owens, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCL0u5uz7KZ9q-pe-VC8TY-w/featured>
Race and Culture: A World View, by Thomas Sowell
Wrong on Race: The Democratic Party's Buried Past, by Bruce Bartlett
Reconstruction, 1863–1877: America's Unfinished Revolution, by Eric Foner
From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany, by Richard Weikart

E. Government

The Politics of Envy: Statism as Theology, by Doug Bandow
The Road to Serfdom, by F. A. Hayek
Modern Fascism, by Gene Edward Veith
Animal Farm, by George Orwell
The God That Failed, by Richard H. Crossman, ed.
The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression, by Stephane Courtois et al
The State in the New Testament, by Oscar Cullmann
Protestant Concepts of Church and State, by Thomas G. Sanders
We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition, by John Courtney Murray
The Myth of American Individualism: The Protestant Origins of American Political Thought, by Barry Alan Shain