

WORLD
RELIGIONS
AND
CULTS

Counterfeits of Christianity

VOLUME 1

General Editors

BODIE HODGE &
ROGER PATTERSON

First printing: August 2015

Copyright © 2015 by Answers in Genesis. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations in articles and reviews. For information write:

Master Books®, P.O. Box 726, Green Forest, AR 72638

Master Books® is a division of the New Leaf Publishing Group, Inc.

ISBN: 978-0-89051-903-5

Library of Congress Number: 2015910670

Cover by Left Coast Design, Portland, Oregon

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE® (NASB), copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scriptures taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture taken from the New King James Version (NKJV), copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Koran citations taken from the Holy Qur'an translated by Yusuf Ali. Copyright 1989 by the Amana Corporation.

Image credits:

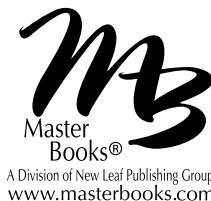
Flickr: 224; Shutterstock: 8, 37, 46, 63, 96, 124, 130, 131, 154, 164, 167, 229, 290, 332; Wikimedia Commons: 12, 43, 71, 73, 76, 79, 81, 114, 121, 142, 181, 192, 193, 206, 216, 234, 235, 236, 257, 266, 284, 285, 291, 296, 299, 302, 304, 308, 338, 347, 353, 359, 368, 384, 392, 397; Wikipedia: 372

Please consider requesting a copy of this volume be purchased by your local library system.

Printed in the United States of America

Please visit our website for other great titles: www.masterbooks.com

For information regarding author interviews,
please contact the publicity department at (870) 438-5288



Acknowledgments

Our appreciation to the following for their contributions to this book: Dr. Terry Mortenson, Dr. Corey Abney, Steve Fazekas, Ken Ham, Roger Patter-son, Bodie Hodge, Troy Lacey, Frost Smith, Lori Jaworski, Linda Moore, Pastor Gary Vaterlaus, Dr. Georgia Purdom, David Wright, Pastor Brian Edwards, Dr. Tom Triggs, Brandie Lucas, Michael Houdman (and the Got Questions team), Dr. Royce Short, Steve Golden, and Mark Vowels (PhD candidate).

Contents

Preface.....	7
Introduction: God vs. Man — World Religions and Cults	11
1. Defending the Faith: Approaching World Religions.....	23
2. What Is Biblical Christianity, and Why Is It Different?	35
3. A Brief Introduction of Christianity	71
4. How Is Roman Catholicism Different?	75
5. How Is Eastern Orthodoxy Different?	113
6. Counterfeits of Christianity: The Overview	141
7. Islam	163
8. Jehovah's Witnesses.....	191
9. Judaism	213
10. Mormonism	233
11. The Baha'i Faith.....	279
12. Deism.....	289
13. Satanism.....	313
14. Freemasonry	329
15. Zoroastrianism	351
16. Worldwide Church of the Creator (The Creativity Movement)	365
17. Moonies/The Unification Church.....	383
Appendix 1: The Triune God.....	405
Appendix 2: Is Jesus the Creator God? A Look at John 1:1–3.....	409

Preface

Bodie Hodge

Why is there a need for another book on world religions? The answer is simple. While there are many great resources that dive into various religions, I wanted to have a book series that did not shy away from origins accounts. Also, I had a desire to have a book series that offers a critique from a presuppositional apologetics perspective. Like other resources, we still wanted to explain the differences between various religions as to why they believe and practice certain things. I also wanted a book series that did not ignore the many secular religions, with their sects and cults, like secular humanism, atheism, and agnosticism. This book series is unique in those respects.

I hope this book series will be a welcome addition as a supplement for study when trying to understand world religions and why they fall short of God's standard. This book and those that will follow dive into various popular world religions, lesser-known religions, and also cults and philosophical systems.

"What is the difference?" you might ask. Sometimes it is quite nebulous. A cult is a religion, after all, and so is based in a philosophical system! They all subscribe to a worldview and govern how people live their lives, as well as attempting to explain the origins of life and what happens after death. They tend to have codes to live by, and many hold to a system of works to achieve some ultimate goal.

Typically, a *world religion* is a belief system that attempts to explain some aspect of reality and often how the physical and spiritual world operates; and yet it is independent of another world religion (though they often

have different sects, cults, or denominations). But for all practical purposes, this is usually how a world religion is defined.

For example, Buddhism, secular humanism, and biblical Christianity are entirely different religions that do not share a common historical foundation. Each of these religions has variations within its constituents —

Buddhism has Mahayana and Theravada forms, biblical Christianity has Lutheran, Baptist, Presbyterian, etc., and secular humanism has atheism, agnosticism, and the like.

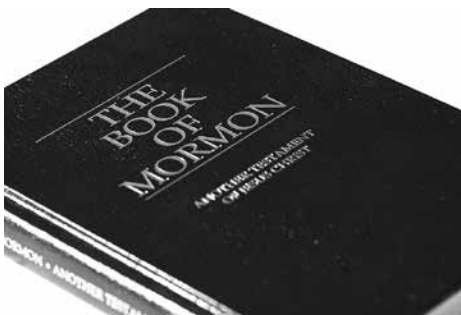
A *cult* is typically defined as a religious offshoot of a major world religion that no longer holds to the core tenets of that world religion. They would no longer be seen as orthodox by the majority of that religion's practitioners and are often seen as distant from them. For example, there are several cults of Christianity where there has been such a great deviation on core doctrines that they would no longer be considered orthodox. Usually this is due to one person's teachings that initially led people away from those core tenets.

Let's use Christianity as an example. There are cults like Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs), and some even include Islam as a cult of Christianity. Each affirms that the Bible is true, *to a certain degree*, but due to charismatic leaders like Joseph Smith (Mormons), Charles Taze Russell (JWs), or Muhammad (Islam/Muslims), their basic teachings have moved

far away from the Bible's core doctrines. In each of these variations, the Bible has been demoted (or reinterpreted) in light of the new leader's views on the subject. These self-proclaimed prophets have produced "new revelations" such as *The Book of Mormon* (Mormonism), *Studies in the Scriptures* (JWs), and the Koran (Muslims).



Buddhist statue in Japan



The Book of Mormon

Instead of one God that is three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; making Christ God and Creator) as the Bible teaches, Mormonism says there are three gods (and many more, too) and you too can become a god within this universe. Jehovah's Witnesses and Muslims deny the three persons of the Godhead and say Jesus is a creature. So you can see how (on this one foundational point) their core tenets are radically different from biblical Christianity.

Many people overlook *philosophical systems* as religious, but they should be considered religions that frame the worldview of those who hold to the philosophy. This is why stoicism, Epicureanism, relativism, empiricism, hedonism, and naturalism are discussed in this series. These religious philosophical systems are all around us, but rarely do we treat them as such.

Naturally, we cannot examine every world religion, cult, sect, or system, so we have selected quite a few from different genres, which we will critique. At this stage, we are intending to cover over 50 religious views for this book series.

I hope that through these books, many will be equipped to not only understand the errors within these religious views, but also point the followers to the only hope of salvation — Jesus Christ. Jesus said,

And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself (John 12:32; NKJV).

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life (John 6:47; NKJV).

Introduction

God vs. Man – World Religions and Cults

Ken Ham and Bodie Hodge

Introduction to the Series

There are two religions in the world — God’s and “not God’s.” Or another way of putting it: *God’s Word* and *Man’s Word*. Really, other than Christianity, there is only one other religion that comes in many forms — a religion built on man’s fallible ideas. In fact, this battle between two religions began in Genesis 3 with the temptation. Really, Eve was tempted to doubt and not believe God’s Word, and instead trust in her own word (*man’s word*) when the tempter stated:

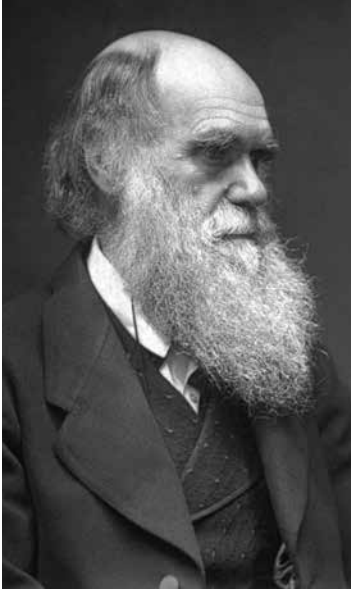
“Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1).¹

I hope you understand this basic concept, as it is very important. So important that it must be stated again to get us started: there are two religions in the world — God’s and “not God’s.”

God only has one religion, and it is His true religion by virtue of it coming from a God who is the truth (John 14:6). All other religions do not come from God; so by default, where do they come from? They come from

1. Scripture in this chapter is from the New American Standard Bible.

12 – World Religions and Cults



Charles Darwin, circa 1874

man. All other forms of religion outside of God's religion are a religion of man (Psalm 118:8; Isaiah 2:22).

God created man (Genesis 1:27), yet in today's modern secularized culture, man is trying to elevate himself to be above God to say that man created God! Charles Darwin popularized this in modern form in his book *The Descent of Man* in the 1871. He said:

The same high mental faculties which first led man to believe in unseen spiritual agencies, then in fetishism, polytheism, and ultimately in monotheism, would infallibly lead him, as long as his reasoning powers remained poorly developed, to various strange superstitions and customs.²

But this is nothing new. Man's opinions have been used since the beginning when Adam and Eve elevated their own thoughts to be greater than God's Word and ate the forbidden fruit. This sin against a holy and perfect God demanded punishment, and the punishment for sin was death (Genesis 2:17). So man was thrust into a sin-cursed world where sin and death reigned and the need for a Savior was necessary to conquer sin and death (Genesis 3:15).

All false religions are based on man's opinions as they inadvertently, or sometimes intentionally, elevate man's autonomous³ reason to be greater than God and the 66 books of His Word. It is true that Satan and demonic spirits could have their involvement, but either way a religion would still require the involvement of men and can rightly be called a *religion of man*.

2. Darwin, Charles, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, chapter III ("Mental Powers of Man and the Lower Animals"), 1871, as printed in the *Great Books of the Western World*, Vol. 49, Robert Hutchins, ed. (Chicago, IL: 1952), p. 303.

3. Autonomous reason is reason apart from God or "leaving God out of it" rather than taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Humanism, the religion of man in its broadest form, would encompass all religions that oppose God and His Word. When a religion elevates a book, books, or extra teachings to be Scripture, then they are taking man's opinions and elevating them to supersede or be equal to God's Word. When a religion deletes a book or books or otherwise subtracts teachings from Scripture, then they are taking man's opinions and elevating them to supersede or be equal to God's Word. Dr. Werner Gitt writes,

We consider the phenomenon of the multitude of religions from the perspective of man's creative nature. Where man finds a gap, he invents something. He creates something. He fills the "hole" with either intellectual or material matter. Most people trust in inventions to solve problems. . . . But even religions are man-made inventions . . . born out of human creativity to fill gaps where knowledge of the Creator and His character are missing.⁴

In other words, some take man's ideas and use that to delete parts of God's Word, some completely reject all of God's Word as the truth, and others take man's ideas and elevate them to be equal or, in most cases, above God and His Word.

That is why it is so distressing to find (from research conducted by America's Research Group for Answers in Genesis in 2014) that of those aged 20–29 who currently attend church regularly, 20 percent believe there are other books (other than the Bible) that are inspired by God, and an additional 10 percent that don't know if there are.⁵

Man's religion, that is humanism in its broadest sense, is opposed to the truth of God's Word at its most fundamental level. Yet many religions that elevate man's ideas to that ultimate level often teach that they *are* in accord with God and His Word in one way or another; but we must be discerning and compare these beliefs to the 66 books of God's Word. Only by standing on the authority of God's Word, the 66 books of the Bible, will we be able to ascertain when man's ideas and religious philosophies are being elevated to be greater than God's revealed religion.

4. Werner Gitt, *What about the Other Religions?* translated by Royal Truman, (Bielefeld, Germany: Christliche Literatur-Verbreitung e.V., 1995), p. 12.

5. Britt Beemer, "Answers in Genesis Survey & Market Research Findings," Volume I & II (America's Research Group, Summerville, South Carolina), September 2014.

14 — World Religions and Cults

Forms of Man's Religion

There are a lot of forms of humanism (man's religions). But in a generic form, any time man's ideas are put on par with God's Word or elevated above God's Word, then that would encompass humanistic elements — the religion of man. Some religions honor man's ideas to such a degree that they completely reject God's Word. Some pay lip service to God's Word, but then change it to conform to their man-made religious system (by rewriting it, reinterpreting it, or otherwise attacking the Bible).

Some religions mimic God's Word but do not respect God's Word as coming from God. Only those who stand on God's Word as the absolute authority — inerrant, infallible, inspired, and sufficient in every way — will be in a position to see God's true religion from God's perspective. God will never be wrong in what He records in His Word, but man can and will be wrong as he seeks to stand in God's place.

Fallible mankind can never measure up to a perfect and infallible God and His Word. So all religions that have an element of man's ideas that have been elevated to be equal or to supersede God's Word are false. Sometimes these elements of human autonomy are deceptively clever, but one must discern if it comes from God or from man by comparing it to what God says in His Word. False religions may have elements of truth, but they have borrowed that truth from God and His Word, whether they realize it or not.

Even people who claim they are not religious are humanistic and base their religion on man's ideas — thus they are religious. Atheists claim they don't have a religion. However, they are religious, as they hold a worldview that is based on certain beliefs. Their religion is one of faith with the prominent tenet of naturalism — they believe the whole universe, including life, arose by natural processes. This belief is based on a faith — a blind faith, but a faith nonetheless. This is because they have already allowed their own human beliefs to sit in authority over God's Word and rejected it by suppression in their hearts (Romans 1:18–20). They are indeed religious, and do not let them deceive you into believing they are not.

When Bill Nye debated with Ken Ham in February 2014, he claimed the universe came into being by natural processes. He rejected that he has a religion (while inconsistently claiming to be agnostic and humanistic), but he cannot escape the fact he does have a religion — a faith that natural processes involving properties inherent in matter, produced the universe, including

earth and all the life that inhabits it. Former radical Muslim turned Christian apologist Daniel Shayesteh confirms this when he writes,

Willingly or unwillingly, every person in the world is affected by their beliefs. . . . Religious values are present everywhere we go; they are present in the lives of everybody with whom we have contact.⁶

There are two religions in the world — God’s and “not God’s.” Man’s religion (“not God’s”) is manifested in many ways that are being elevated to a position of being equal to or greater than God and His Word. But man’s religions are purely based on man’s arbitrary opinion that carries no weight when compared to the ultimate authority on the subject of religion — the triune God. Thus, they are refuted! Let God be true and every man a liar as we dive into the subject of world religions, cults, and philosophical systems, all of which are religious worldviews.

Preliminary Comments

Grouping of religions

There are several ways to group man’s religions:

1. Polytheistic, monotheistic, pantheistic, and atheistic
2. Personal god(s), impersonal god(s), or no god(s)
3. Based on various alleged holy books
4. Spiritual, dualistic, or materialistic
5. Counterfeits of Christianity, mystical religions, and moralistic
6. Objective religion and subjective religion
7. Etc.

Although any of these classifications work, we’ve opted to select the breakdown that is similar to what philosopher and pastor Dr. Greg Bahnsen did when lumping religions into a philosophical framework. Our breakdown encompasses:

- Counterfeits of Christianity
- Mystical religions
- Moralistic religions
- Materialistic religions

6. Daniel Shayesteh, *Christ Above All* (Sydney, Australia: Talesh Books, 2010), p. 4.

16 – World Religions and Cults

We include a chapter that encompasses how religions can be broken down by the listing in #4 above (spiritual, dualistic, and materialistic) that will appear in a later volume but have opted to place materialistic religions as their own category within the framework of the listing in #5 (counterfeits of Christianity, mystical religions, moralistic; now including materialistic).

With this arrangement, and due to the nature of certain religious views, we sometimes had to make a judgment call on where to place them. In some cases, a religion has variations where some practitioners are materialistic where other forms are theistic (Satanism or Buddhism). In several cases, a religion could have been placed into more than one category, so we ask forgiveness if you feel a religion should have been placed under a different heading.

Due to the nature of our historical review of biblical Christianity (Protestantism or reformer-based Christianity brought on by the Reformation) and introductory material, we've opted to place Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy prior to the counterfeits of Christianity section, even though some argue they could have been placed *under* this subheading (e.g., for those who hold to views like Mary being co-redemptrix [i.e., co-redeemer]). Again, it was a judgment call. But we do want people to read our thought-provoking and kind, yet bold, assessments of these deviations from biblical Christianity.

Refutations of Religions

There are several ways to refute false religions. The first and simplest is to point out where these religions are being *arbitrary* by appealing to fallible man as a being superior to God (arbitrariness). In many cases, their very foundation is simply arbitrary. Thus, they are refuted as logically untenable (proven false). Keep in mind that the opinion of man, whether Joseph Smith, Muhammad, Buddha, etc., regardless of who they are, carries no weight when an argument is arbitrary.

One might ask about the Bible's authors: are they arbitrary too? If an opinion came from Peter or Moses, it would carry no weight of its own accord. The fact that those books carry absolute weight in a debate is not due to their persons, but instead it is due to the weight of their co-author, the Holy Spirit, who is God, and not arbitrary in any way. Remember, all Scripture is "God breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:20–21).

Other forms of refutation can be done using *inconsistencies*, including logical fallacies. Pointing out where these religions are inconsistent with the truth of God's Word or inconsistent within their own religion can accomplish this type of refutation. For example, in an atheistic worldview, which is a materialistic religion by its very nature, immaterial things like logic, truth, reason, morality, and knowledge cannot exist. Hence, atheism is inconsistent within its own story when they try to use logic or say truth exists — they are refuted by their own self-contradictory inconsistencies.

Another way to refute a world religion or cult is to show where such has to borrow from God's Word to make sense of things like knowledge, clothing, reality, a week, and so on (this is called *preconditions of intelligibility* in philosophy). In other words, their own religion cannot make sense of their actions or beliefs, so we can point that out and show where they have actually borrowed from a biblical doctrine as a foundation for their own religion. It would be like asking what must be true for something to be possible. Allow us to explain this concept with a couple of examples.

First, let's say there is someone with a secular humanistic worldview. They believe that we are just evolved animals that came from the slime billions of years ago and that there is no God who sets what is right and wrong. And yet, these same people wear clothes. What must be true for people to believe it is right to wear clothes? Not the secular worldview, which should teach the opposite, as people are just animals. But instead, a biblical worldview where clothing came as a result of sin and shame in Genesis 3 gives a foundational reason for wearing clothing. The secularist is borrowing from the biblical worldview based on the Bible to make sense of clothing, and they don't even realize it.

Another example could be when an atheist says they hold to a particular "holiday." A holiday is a holy day and is predicated on God, who is holy, to make a day "holy." In the atheistic religion, there is no God and there is no holiness because there is no objective standard of right and wrong. So a holy day or holiday is actually meaningless in their religious worldview. But their actions betray their religion, demonstrating that they are actually borrowing from the Bible, whether the atheist realizes it or not.

So one way to refute a false religion is to show where their religion doesn't make sense of things and show where they must borrow from God and His Word to make sense of things. The presence for morality is another

18 — World Religions and Cults

area where this lack of a foundation is evident and can be used to demonstrate how various worldviews borrow from the Bible while denying God is the standard of truth.

Another way to refute a false religion is to show where their religion leads (i.e., when it goes to *absurdity*). Many fail to realize that the religion they claim to adhere to when applied to other things becomes absurd. For example, in the atheistic religion there is no purpose, and many atheists are happy to promote this idea. But they fail to realize that by promoting the idea that there is no purpose, they are revealing that they *do* believe purpose exists!

Or when a follower of New Age mysticism says that whatever is true for you is true for you, but not for them, then they live in a way that presumes that everyone would agree that $2+2=4$! When one points out where their religion leads, it shows the absurdity of their religious position and philosophy. They expect their banker to function in a way that is consistent with their understanding of truth, but then want truth to be relative in other areas — a fundamental absurdity.

To recap, some of the best ways to refute a false religion is by exposing:

- Arbitrariness
- Inconsistencies (with the Bible or within their own religion)
- Where they borrow ideas that are actually predicated on the Bible being true but not their own religion
- When their religion leads to absurdities

Because the Bible is true, we have a basis for using these tools to refute false worldviews. God is not arbitrary, being the ultimate authority (Isaiah 40:28; Romans 1:20). God cannot deny Himself, and His character is perfectly consistent (2 Timothy 2:13). This is why contradictions cannot exist within His Word or His nature, and why the law of noncontradiction does exist.

Building on this, we can use this law of logic to reveal people's inconsistencies and absurdities. God's Word is the basis for doctrine, and other religions often borrow from God and His Word (who is the source of all knowledge; e.g., Psalm 147:5; Colossians 2:3). In the character of the God who created this universe, the Christian has a logical foundation to stand on as he argues against false religious philosophies and claims, pointing others to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Creator and Savior.

Focus: Origins and Foundational Beliefs

There are many world religions books, articles, websites, courses, and so on. Why one more? The answer is our focus. We wanted a world religions series that viewed religions for what they are — either God's or man's. Furthermore, we wanted to emphasize the area of origins (cosmological and biological), which is an ideal place to spot man's arbitrary opinions and inconsistencies in a religion.

To get to the root of it, a false religion must borrow from God's Word for origins, or they must make up an arbitrary worldview to try to assemble a foundation for their religion. But a religion stands or falls on its foundation — its view of origins. So, unlike many other resources, many of which contain excellent information, we wanted to focus on origins and expose false thinking in their worldviews.

Diverse Authors — Yes, Indeed!

Authors for the respective chapters are from various theological walks. In fact, you will no doubt detect varied styles among the authors. We intend this to reduce monotony while reading. As you look through the author list, you might be wondering how this was possible. In fact, looking back on it, we too tried to figure out how we obtained such a diverse group of brilliant scholars, apologists, professors, pastors, Christian leaders, and a state congressman to work together on such a project! But it makes sense.

Yes, these authors would disagree with each other on a host of topics within their denominational or theological views like Calvinism vs. Arminianism, various eschatological positions, modes of baptism, covenant theology versus dispensational theology, and the like. These are indeed important issues, and we want to encourage everyone to know what they believe on these subjects and to do so *biblically*. Even though our authors try to avoid these denominational doctrine debates in a publication like this, there may be times where an author skirts along this line and may slightly cross into denominational issues unintentionally. For this, we ask forgiveness as well.

Denominational doctrines (secondary doctrines) are discussions that Christians have, by and large, while they are standing on the authority of the Bible. Though we save these doctrinal debates for other venues with each other to develop iron-sharpening-iron skills, we stand together when defending primary doctrines like the authority of the Bible against all other

20 — World Religions and Cults

religions. Yes, there may be exceptions on particular arguments, however, when it comes to the issue of world religions and man's ideas being used to attack the authority of the Word of God, these Christians stand together to defend the authority of the Bible from the very first verse. And for this we praise the Lord and may He receive the glory.

Purpose of This Book Series: The Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Authority of His Word

The reason for this book series is first and foremost the promotion of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ and His Word, the 66 books of the Bible, have come under attack in this day and age. And with the multitude of religions that emanate from man, many get caught up in the popular notion that biblical Christianity is just one of many from which to choose.

However, biblical Christianity is not one of the many man-made religions to pick from a list like one would pick their favorite side dish from a menu. Instead, God's true religion revealed by Him in the Bible is the truth, and all other religions are deviants based on man's false ideas that have been elevated to challenge God's Word as the truth. So the second reason for this series is to challenge the false idea that there are many individual, compartmentalized religions.

There are only two — God's and man's — as we have already explained. When people realize that there are two religions, the true one and the false one (with many variations within these false religions), it becomes easier to see the so-called multitudes of religions for what they are. They are merely variants of the false ideas of man trying to take your attention away from the true religion — God's. Biblical Christianity that teaches the triune God is the Creator of all things and that Jesus Christ is the only Savior for all of humanity is the only true religion. There are not many paths that lead to God, but Jesus alone is the door (John 10:7–19, 14:6–7).

We pray this book series will open your eyes to the false aspects of man's religions and reveal where man's ideas have been used to supersede God's Word. In doing so, our hope is that you, the reader, will be able to see the truth of God's Word through the Holy Spirit by opening you up to see the gospel found only in the work of God through Jesus Christ our Lord and His work on the Cross for our sin. Let us share the good news that has brought us salvation with all those who are following man-made religions to the praise of the glory of God's grace.

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18–20).

Chapter 1

Defending the Faith: Approaching World Religions

Dr. Kenneth Gentry

Biblical Christianity is a philosophy of life (worldview) surrounded by many opposing philosophies (worldviews). In this book we are promoting biblical Christianity over competing worldviews.

God calls upon Christians to “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense [Gk., *apologia*] to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15; NKJV). As we obey Him, we must defend the faith in such a way that it “sanctifies the Lord” in our hearts. This requires that we defend the faith from a position of faith. Simply put, the way that we argue for the faith must be compatible with the faith for which we argue.

In defending the faith we are engaging in what is called “apologetics.” The English word “apologetics” is a compound of two Greek words *apo* (“from”) and *logos* (“word”). Basically, an apologetic is a word from someone in his or her defense. It was originally a judicial term used in a court setting whereby someone defended himself from accusations.

The verb form of the word (*apologeomai*) occurs ten times in the New Testament (Luke 12:11, 21:14; Acts 19:33, 24:10, 25:8, 26:1, 26:2, 26:24; Romans 2:15; 2 Corinthians 12:19). The noun (*apologia*) appears eight times (Acts 22:1, 25:16; 1 Corinthians 9:3; 2 Corinthians 7:11; Philemon 1:7,

24 – World Religions and Cults

1:16; 2 Timothy 4:16; 1 Peter 3:15). Several of these appearances involve an actual court defense (e.g., Luke 12:11, 21:14; Acts 19:33, 24:10, 25:8, 25:16; etc.).

Gradually, apologetics evolved over time to become a branch of Christian theology that engages in a reasoned defense of the Christian faith. It sets forth the rational basis upon which the faith rests, and through that it challenges all forms of non-biblical truth claims. It challenges unbelieving thought with the confidence of “come, let us reason together” (Isaiah 1:18).

Unfortunately, too many defenses of the Christian faith today cede the method of approach to the unbeliever by arguing on his terms. This generally ends up “proving” at best only the *possibility* that a *god* exists — not the *certainty* that the *God of Scripture* exists. But we should argue from a “presuppositional” perspective that builds on the sure foundation of that which we believe. That is, we must believe that God’s Word is the absolute authority in all areas of life and thought. This method of apologetics is called “presuppositionalism.”

But what is presuppositionalism? And how does it effectively challenge all forms of unbelieving (non-biblical) thought? Answering these questions is the task of this chapter. To understand the presuppositional apologetic method, we must begin by considering the role of presuppositions in thought.

The Role of Presuppositions in Thought

As we begin to engage presuppositionalism, we must understand the following.

The Uniformity of Nature and Thought

We exist in what is known as a “*universe*.” The word “universe” is composed of two Latin parts: “uni” (from *unus*, meaning “one,” as in “unit”) and “verse” (from *vertere*, meaning “turn”). It speaks of all created things as collective whole. This word indicates that we live in a *single* unified and orderly system that is composed of many diverse parts. These parts function coordinately together as a whole, singular, rational system.

We do not live in a “*multiverse*.” A multiverse state of affairs would be a disunified, totally fragmented, and random assortment of disconnected and unconnectable facts. These unconnectable facts would be meaninglessly scattered about in chaotic disarray and ultimate disorder.

The concept of a “*universe*” is vitally important to science, for the very possibility of scientific investigation is totally dependent upon the fact of a “*universe*” — an orderly, rational coherent, unified system. If reality were haphazard and disorderly, there would be no basic scientific and mathematical laws that govern and control all the various physical phenomena of reality. And if this were so, there could be no unity at all in either reality itself, in experience, or in thought.

In such a multiverse, each and every single fact would necessarily stand alone, utterly disconnected from other facts, not forming a system as a whole. Consequently, nothing could be organized and related in the mind because no fact would be related to any other fact. Thus, science, logic, and experience are absolutely dependent upon uniformity as a principle of the natural world.

Uniformity and Faith

But now the question arises: how do we know assuredly that the universe is in fact uniform? Has man investigated every single aspect of the universe from each one of its smallest atomic particles to the farthest corners of its galaxies — and all that exists in between — so that he can speak authoritatively? Does man have totally exhaustive knowledge about every particle of matter, every movement in space, and every moment of time? How does man know uniformity governs the world and the universe?

Furthermore, how can we know that uniformity will continue tomorrow so that we can conjecture about future events? And since man claims to have an experience of external things, how do we know our experience is accurate and actually conforms to reality as it is? That is, how do we know that our senses are basically accurate and our memory is essentially reliable?

Such questions are not commonly asked, even though they are vitally important. The point of these questions is to demonstrate an important truth: we must realize that any and every attempt to prove uniformity in nature necessarily requires *circular reasoning*. To prove uniformity one must assume or presuppose uniformity.

If I set out to argue the uniformity of the universe because I can predict cause and effect, am I not presupposing the uniformity and validity of my experience? How can I be sure that my experience of cause and effect is an accurate reflection of what really happens? Furthermore, am I not

26 — World Religions and Cults

presupposing the trustworthy, uniform coherence of my own rationality — a rationality that requires uniformity?

The issue boils down to this: since man cannot know everything he must *assume* or *presuppose* uniformity and then think and act on this very basic assumption. Consequently, the principle of uniformity is not a scientific law but an act of faith that undergirds scientific law. Thus, adherence to the principle of uniformity — though basic to science — is an intrinsically religious commitment.

Presuppositions in Thought

Scientists follow a basic pattern in discovering true scientific laws. First, they observe a particular phenomenon. Then on the basis of their observations they construct a working hypothesis. Next, they perform experiments implementing this hypothesis. This is followed in turn by attempting to verify the experiments performed. Then a verified hypothesis is accepted as a theory. Finally, a well-established theory is recognized as a scientific law that governs in a given set of circumstances.

Thus, the basic pattern of scientific activity is:

1. observation
2. hypothesis
3. experimentation
4. verification
5. theory
6. law

Christians agree wholeheartedly with the validity of this scientific methodology. We accept the notion of a uniform universe that allows for such, for “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis. 1:1; NASB).

Physicist Thomas Kuhn, in his epochal 1962 work titled *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, notes that scientists *must* work from certain preconceived ideas, certain presupposed concepts about things in order to begin formulating their theories and performing their experiments.¹

That presuppositions are always silently at work is evident in that when dealing with a particular problem, scientists select only a few basic facts to

1. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

consider while rejecting or overlooking numerous others. They perform certain types of experiments while neglecting others. And *they do this in keeping with their presuppositions*. One of the most basic presuppositions held by scientists is the one we are considering: the universe is in fact one orderly, logical, coherent, predictable system. Were this not assumed, then science could not even get off the ground.

But, as a matter of fact, there are *numerous* presuppositions that *all* rational people hold that play a vital role in all human thought and behavior. The various presuppositions we hold govern the way we think and act, all the way down to how we select and employ specific facts from the countless number presented to us each moment. Basic presuppositions are the foundation blocks upon which we build our understanding of the world about us. Presuppositions are the very basis for what is known as our “world-and-life” view (or “worldview”).

A worldview is the very framework through which we understand the world and our relation to it. Everyone has a particular way of looking at the world that serves to organize ideas about the world in his mind. This worldview must be founded on basic presupposed ideas that we hold to be truth. We begin with certain presuppositions and build from there in our learning, communicating, behaving, planning, and so forth. Because of this, we must recognize the impossibility of neutrality.

The Impossibility of Neutrality

Everyone holds to presuppositions. No one operates — or even *can* operate — in a vacuum. We simply do not think or behave “out of the blue.” It is impossible to think and live as if we were aliens having just arrived to this world from a radically different universe, totally devoid of all knowledge of this world, absolutely objective and utterly impartial to ideas about truth. People behave in terms of a basic worldview that implements their conceptions regarding truth.

Consequently, neutrality in thought is impossible. Each person — the philosopher and scientist alike — has his own bias. This bias has predetermined the *facts* on the basis of his presuppositions. Yet almost invariably, scientists claim to be presenting neutral, unbiased, impartial, and objective facts in their research. But man is not and cannot be truly objective and impartial. *All thinking must begin somewhere!*

28 — World Religions and Cults

All thinking must have some fundamental, logically-primitive starting point or presupposition. At the very least, we must presuppose the reality of the external world, the rationality of mental activity, the compatibility between external reality and the mind, and the uniformity of nature, that is, the law of cause and effect. As noted previously, a certain *faith* is necessary in the selection and organization of the several facts chosen from the innumerable set of facts flowing toward us in every moment of experience.

Clearly, *presuppositions are necessarily self-authenticating or self-evidencing*. Facts are inseparable from their interpretation. Facts *cannot* stand alone. They must be understood in terms of some broad, unified whole or system. They must be organized in our rational minds in terms of their general relationships to other facts and principles.

This leads us then to our most basic questions: Which system of thought can give meaning to the facts of the universe? Which worldview can provide an adequate foundation for reality? Why is the world in which we live conducive to rational thought and behavior? What is the basis for an orderly universe?

Worldviews in Collision

When we contrast Christian thought with non-Christian thought we must realize that we are *not* contrasting two series of isolated facts. We are not comparing two systems of truth that share a basically similar outlook and that have only occasional differences between them at specific turns. *We are contrasting two whole, complete, and antithetical systems of thought.*

Each particular item of evidence presented in support of the one system will be evaluated by the other system in terms of the latter's own entire implicit *system* with all of its basic assumptions. Each fact or piece of data presented either to the Christian or the non-Christian will be weighed, categorized, organized, and judged as to its possibility and significance in terms of the all-pervasive worldview held.

Consequently, it is essential that we see the debate between the Christian and the non-Christian as between two complete worldviews — between two ultimate commitments and presuppositions that are contrary to one another. Two complete philosophies of reality are in collision. Appealing to various *scientific evidences* will be arbitrated *in terms of* the two mutually exclusive and diametrically opposed, presupposed truths held by the systems.

Thus, the debate between the Christian and the non-Christian *must eventually work its way down to the question of one's ultimate authority*. Every series of argument must end somewhere; one's conclusions could never be demonstrated if they were dependent upon an infinite series of arguments and justifications. So all debates must terminate at *some point* — at some premise held as unquestionable. This is one's foundational starting point, one's ultimate authority or *presupposition*.

The question that surfaces at this point is this: which system of truth provides the foundational preconditions essential for observation, reason, experience, and meaningful discourse? Thus, which *faith* system should be chosen: the Christian or the non-Christian?

The Christian System and Presuppositions

What is the Christian's starting point? What is his most basic presupposition upon which he builds his entire worldview? Where do we begin our argument?

Christian thought holds as its most basic, fundamental, all-pervasive, and necessary starting point or presupposition, the being of God who has revealed Himself in Scripture. Thus, our presupposition is God and His Word. The Scripture, being His own infallible Word (2 Timothy 3:16), reveals to us the nature of the God in whom we trust.

God is self-sufficient, needing absolutely nothing outside of Himself (Exodus 3:14; John 5:26). All else in the universe is utterly dependent upon Him (Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3). God is the all-powerful Creator of the entire universe (Genesis 1:1; Exodus 20:11; Nehemiah 9:6). God is personal, thus giving meaning to the vast universe (Acts 17:28). And God has clearly and authoritatively revealed Himself in Scripture (2 Peter 1:20–21), so we may build upon His Word as truth (Psalm 119:160; John 17:17).

The entire Christian system of thought is founded solidly upon this God — the all-ordering God of Scripture (Psalm 33:9; Isaiah 46:10). We presuppose God for what He is. If God exists and demands our belief in Scripture, we cannot challenge or test Him in any area (Deuteronomy 6:16; Matthew 4:7). We recognize the independence of God and the utter dependence of man and the universe.

Because of this, we do not have to exhaustively know everything in order to be sure of anything. God knows all things and has revealed to us in

His Word the truth of uniformity (Genesis 8:22; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3) and all other truths we need in order to reason and to function in His world.

The Non-Christian System and Presuppositions

Against this presupposed system, what does the non-Christian presuppose as ultimate truth? What does the secularist have to offer as its ultimate authority?

The non-Christian must ultimately explain the universe *not* on the basis of the all-organizing, self-sufficient, all-wise, personal God as his starting point. In rejecting God and His Word, the default position for all other worldviews must be established on the ideas of man to one degree or another. Perhaps one of the most popular worldviews of man today is secularism, also known as humanism. It holds that reality is ultimately rooted in the nebulous, chaotic, and impersonal world. Due to its widespread and influential presence in our culture, this popular religious view will be compared and contrasted to the Christian worldview in the remainder of this chapter.

The secularist asserts that the universe was produced by a combination of impersonal chance plus an enormous span of time. Thus, in this worldview the ultimate starting point and the all-conditioning environment of the universe is time plus chance.

Because the unbeliever's worldview is based upon time plus chance, *rational* science is rooted in the *irrationality* of chance. The scientist cannot speak of design or purpose in the universe because there is no Designer or purpose. There can be no goal or purpose in a random system.

On this view, secular science *must* by the very nature of its non-Christian commitment assume facts to be bits of irrationalism strewn about awaiting rationalization by man. Thus, modern secular science is schizophrenic. On the one hand, everything has its source in random, ungoverned chance. On the other hand, evolution assumes all is not random, but uniform. It holds that all is ungoverned, yet, nevertheless, is moving in an upward direction from disorder to order, from simplicity to complexity.

In this regard, Christian apologist Dr. Cornelius Van Til has noted: "On his own assumption his own rationality is a product of chance. . . . The rationality and purpose that he may be searching for are still bound by products

of chance.²² To prove a rational universe by chance, man must believe the rational is the product of, and is dependent upon, the irrational.

Not only is all of reality founded on chance, but this leaves man to be the final criterion of truth. Man — sinful, fallible, finite man — becomes ultimate in the non-Christian system.

Presuppositions Make a Difference

Now let us consider four important areas of philosophy that govern our outlook.

Reality

When asked to give the basis and starting point for the orderly universe and all external reality, the Christian points to the self-contained, ever-present, all-powerful, all-wise, infinitely rational God of Scripture.

When the non-Christian secularist is asked to give the basis and starting point for the orderly universe and external reality, he points literally to . . . *nothing*. All has risen from nothing by the irrational mechanism of chance.

When asked if something can miraculously pop into being from nothing in an instant, the non-Christian vigorously responds in the negative. Instant miracles are out of the question. But when asked if something can come out of nothing *if given several billion years*, the non-Christian confidently responds in the affirmative. As Dr. Van Til has noted, the non-Christian overlooks the fact that if one zero equals zero, then a billion zeros can equal only zero.

Thus, the Christian has a *more than adequate reason* for the universe, whereas the non-Christian has *no reason whatsoever*.

Knowledge

The Christian establishes his theory of knowledge on the all-ordering, all-knowing God of Scripture. God has instantaneous, true, and exhaustive knowledge of everything, and He has revealed to man in the Bible comprehensive principles that are clear and give a sure foundation for knowledge. Such a foundation ensures that what man does know (although he cannot know all things), he can know truly. Knowledge does work because man's mind as created by God is receptive to external reality and is given validity by

2. Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Philipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1972), p. 102.

32 — World Religions and Cults

God Himself. We are, after all, made in the image of the logical, all-knowing God of truth (Genesis 1:26–27, 9:6)!

On the other hand, the non-Christian must establish his theory of knowledge on the same foundation upon which he establishes reality: nebulous chaos and irrational chance. If followed consistently, the non-Christian theory of knowledge would utterly destroy all knowledge, causing it to drown in the turbulent ocean of irrationalism. *There is no reason for reason in the non-Christian system.* The concepts of probability, possibility, order, rationality, and so forth, are impossible in a chance and purposeless system.

Thus, the Christian has a sure foundation for knowledge, whereas the non-Christian has none.

Morality

When we consider the issue of moral law, the standard for judging right and wrong, again the question must be settled in terms of one's foundational system.

For the Christian, morality is founded upon the all-good, all-knowing, everywhere present, all-powerful, personal, and eternal God of Scripture. His will, which is rooted in His being and nature, is man's standard of right. Since God is all good (Psalm 119:137; Mark 10:18) and all-knowing (Psalm 139; Proverbs 15:3), moral principles revealed in Scripture are always *relevant* to our situation. Since God is eternal (Psalm 90:2, 102:12), His moral commands are always *binding* upon men.

For the non-Christian there is no sure base for ethics. Since reality is founded on nothing and knowledge is rooted in irrationalism, morality can be nothing other than pure, impersonal irrelevance. In such a system as presupposed by non-Christian thought, there are no — *indeed, there can be no* — ultimate, abiding moral principles. Everything is caught up in the impersonal flux of a random universe. Random change is ultimate in such a system. And because of this, ethics is reduced to pure relativism. Non-Christian thought can offer no justification for any moral behavior whatsoever.

Purpose

To the question of whether or not there is *any* significance and meaning to the universe and to life, the Christian confidently responds in the affirmative. There is meaning in the world because it was purposely and purposefully

created by and for the personal, loving, all-ordering, eternal God of Scripture (Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 33:6–9).

In our system of thought, man came about as the direct and purposeful creation of the loving God who has revealed Himself in the Bible (Genesis 2:7). Furthermore, man was assigned a specific and far-reaching duty by God on the very day he was created (Genesis 1:26–29). Man and *his task* must be understood *in terms* of the eternal God and His plan, rather than in terms of himself and an environment of chance and change.

Non-Christian secularist thought destroys the meaning and significance of man by positing that he is nothing more than a chance fluke, an accidental collection of molecules arising out of the slime and primordial ooze. Man is a frail speck of dust caught up in a gigantic, impersonal, multi-billion-year-old universe. That, and nothing more.

The famous 20th-century atheist Bertrand Russell put it well when he wrote:

The world is purposeless, void of meaning. Man is the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system. Only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair can the soul's habitation be safely built. From evolution no ultimately optimistic philosophy can be validly inferred.³

Conclusion

To the question concerning which system is the most adequate for explaining external reality, the possibility of knowledge, a relevant and binding ethic, and the significance of man, the answer should be obvious: only the worldview presupposing the truth claims of the Bible is sufficient for the task.

Actually, the defense of Christianity is simple: we argue *the impossibility of the contrary*. Ironically, those who assault the Christian system must actually *assume* the Christian system to do so. That is, they must assume a rational world for which only Christianity can account. In fact, atheism assumes theism. If the God of Scripture did not exist, there would be no man in any real world to argue — there would be no possibility of rationality by which an argument could be forged, and there would be no purpose in debate!

3. Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic* (New York: Doubleday, 1917), p. 45–46.

34 — World Religions and Cults

Charles Darwin stated this problem in his personal letter to W. Graham on July 3, 1881:

But then with me the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man's mind, which has always been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would any one trust in the convictions of a monkey's mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?⁴

Paul spoke powerfully when he declared in Romans 3:4, “Let God be true but every man a liar” (KJV).

The God of Scripture, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the ultimate and necessary foundation for a rational, coherent worldview. Every other system is built upon a lie — the fallible ideas of sinful and rebellious man. The Christian system begins with: “In the beginning God. . . .” And from that foundational reality, all the rest of a rational worldview falls into place.

4. Francis Darwin, ed., *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin* (New York: Basic, 1959), 1:285.