

A Study in Christian Apologetics – What We Believe & Why

Lesson Ten: Difficulty of NOT Being Christian

Cogito, Ergo Credo: I Think, Therefore I Believe!

Lesson Ten: The Difficulty of NOT Being Christian

If what we believe dictates how we live, wouldn't we want to make sure we have a valid belief system?

Shouldn't we be open minded enough to admit we're wrong if our non-Christian belief system proves to be invalid?

Shouldn't a valid belief system be one of the most important things we can pursue?

We All Believe Something

Some boast that they simply 'have no belief' that guides them. But is there such a thing as a 'neutral' belief system? Let's think about that for a minute. To do so, we should consider how we might live under such a belief system.

If it is 'unlivable', then clearly it is not rational. That is, if we cannot actually do, or carry out what we profess to believe, then it is not worthy of our belief. For instance, some people believe that they should not tell another how to

What's wrong with the statement "I never thought about it that way!"
...or...
"I just don't think about it at all..."??

live. But clearly, this is an 'unlivable' system - every day we must work out mutual agreements, usually in the form of laws. Is it ok for the government to give laws, as long as they are mutually beneficial? Who decides which law to enact, and how? Everything from despotism to anarchy could reign in this type of a system – it just depends on who is the strongest. Do we really want to live in a world in which the people in power may decide that one race or

another is not worthy of life, and should be killed? This is exactly what happens if there are no values that are 'absolute', meaning that something is right or wrong regardless of what people think about it. To exist in a sane world, TRUTH must exist, whether I know it or not; whether I wish to believe it or not.

Some people feel that what they want to believe is a matter of personal choice. This is certainly a Christian principle (despite some modern misunderstandings), since we are not coerced in our beliefs. But again, if one chooses not to believe in an 'absolute truth' (meaning that nothing is true whether we want it to be or not) it is still an intellectually vacant belief, even if it is popular.

Since something guides our everyday decisions, shouldn't we pursue this thought, and make sure that our system of belief (and consequently our life) is coherent?

"The basic function of religion in culture is to supply people with truth and meaning."

Clarke Pinnock, Four Views of Salvation in a Pluralistic World, pg 115.

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An Example of Incoherent Thinking

Quite some time ago both the Archbishop of Canterbury and Jane Fonda were on a talk show. The Archbishop was discussing aspects of the faith, to which Fonda was incredulous. Finally, in an answer to her queries into the reasons for worship and Lordship of Christ, the Archbishop remarked "Well, He is the Son of God you know." Fonda replied "He might be for you, but he isn't for me." The Archbishop displayed the ignorance of her comment with a brief reply, "He either is or He isn't."

Irrationality of Non-Theism

Ravi Zacharias describes the "feel good" worldview, which he calls "**The Atheist's Creed**". It relates clearly the inconsistencies and lack of thought that goes into this worldview:

We believe in Marx, Freud, and Darwin. We believe that everything is OK, as long as you don't hurt anyone, to the best of your definition of hurt, and of knowledge. We believe in sex before, during and after marriage; we believe in the therapy of sin. We believe that adultery is fun; we believe that sodomy is ok; we believe that taboo's are taboo. We believe that everything is getting better despite evidence to the contrary. The evidence must be investigated and you can prove anything with evidence. We believe there is something in horoscopes, UFO's and bent spoons. Jesus was a good man just like Buddha, Muhammad and ourselves. We believe he was a good moral teacher although we think his good morals were really bad. We believe that all religions are basically the same. They all believe in love and goodness, they only differ in matters of creation, sin, heaven, hell, God, and salvation.

We believe that after death comes nothing because when you ask the dead they say nothing. If death is not the end then there is heaven for all except maybe Hitler, Stalin, and Khan. We believe in Masters and Johnson, what is selected is average, and what is average is normal and what is normal is good. We believe in total disarmament, we believe there are direct links between warfare and bloodshed, and that the Americans should beat their guns into tractors and the Russians will be sure to follow. We believe that man is essentially good; it is only his behavior that lets him down. This is the fault of society, society is the fault of conditions, and conditions are the fault of society. If man does what is right for him, then reality will adapt accordingly. The universe will re-adjust, history will alter. We believe there is no absolute truth except that there is no absolute truth. We believe in the rejection of creeds and the flowering of individual thought.

Zacharias then describes the inevitable outcome of this line of thinking:

If chance is the father of all flesh, then disaster is his rainbow in the sky. When in a state of emergency the sniper kills the child, the youth go looting, or bomb blasts rock the school, it is nothing more than the sound of man worshiping his maker.

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The Tactic of Fallen Man

Until recently, our laws, customs, and social mores were built upon a strong Christian foundation (such as the Ten Commandments and the various treatises of Christ – such as ‘Love thy neighbor as thyself’), which provided our culture and our children a nurturing incubator with which to develop a healthy sense of ‘right and wrong’ and to maintain order. When children grow up in this type of environment, they receive indirectly the personal and societal benefits of virtue and ethics, which result in a mature and restrained society, in which we may compete honestly for the good of society and for God’s Kingdom.

But the drive of man vis-à-vis his fallen nature (to be self-sufficient and self-defining) is inevitable, strong – and timeless. The strategy is clear in hindsight: if man can eliminate the supernatural, then everything else comes up for grabs. If we can eliminate objectivity, we’ll shake ourselves loose of any independent advisor (or accuser) and more importantly any standards of right and wrong. Therefore mankind’s ability to do as he wants depends upon the elimination of both the objective and the supernatural. And this is easily accomplished because we cannot ‘see’ ethics. If our real endeavor, per our fallen nature, is to accomplish our own desires and create our own ethic, then we have a chink in our collective armor that is readily accepted by a self-defining populace.

A simple study of human history demonstrates this degeneration. We see the evidence in its early form in the story of the fall of Adam, where he and Eve were tempted to be ‘like God’, replacing God’s rightful position as Sovereign over all creation with man’s selfish desires and definitions of right and wrong. We see the same effect in Epicurus’ pursuit of existential meaning and truth in Benjamin Wiker’s classic book Moral Darwinism. And in classical philosophy/history, we see the same battle for purpose and the conjoining ethics in Plato, as he pursues intellectual and spiritual meaning and truth (aka Logos) and battles the humanistic forces of Delphi.

There Are Only Two Choices for Hope and for Meaning...

Christianity

- Objective Truth
- Evidence that is testable
- Hope in this life
- Hope for afterlife
- Purpose and meaning
- Coherent and livable worldview
- Christ
- Grace

ALL Others

- Subjectivism
- Accidental
- Nothing beyond current life
- Fear / Coercion
- For man’s purposes
- Evidence that is suspect

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Christian Theism: The Only Rational Choice

To clarify, let's consider what a person must believe if they DON'T believe Christianity. For example, if you don't believe Christian Theism, apart from apparently man-made religions, you MUST believe the following:

-You must believe that your capacities for logical thinking and rational decision making emerged from randomness. If this is so, then how can we KNOW that our logical facilities are reliable? Indeed, there is NO scientific evidence for this 'evolution' of thought.

-Speaking of science: Many people accept that the scientific method is the only reliable basis for believing something to be true. But indeed, how do we know this assertion to be true? Surely science cannot prove it! That would be a circular argument - using science to prove science is the source of truth. Hence, we cannot know FOR SURE that science is the ONLY way to prove truth. Clearly we could miss something, if we rely only on science. Besides, by definition science can only answer questions relating to NATURE, not the SUPERNATURAL.

-You must believe that something can come from nothing. In fact, you must believe that EVERYTHING came from nothing! You must believe this, despite the fact that there is absolutely NO evidence of anything that comes from nothing.

-You must believe, despite the EVERYDAY evidence that everything has a cause, that 'everything' we see in front of us inevitably had no cause at its beginning. Clearly, another example of an un-provable belief. (The interesting theories that 'scientists' come up with to counter these problems are quite amusing. For instance, the most popular belief at this time is that the universe has always existed, or that there are an infinite number of universes. This simply proves that mankind will believe almost anything, despite the evidences to the contrary, in order not to believe in a God!)

If these seem to be too philosophical, consider this one: You must believe that mankind, and everything in the world, evolved from 'air'. This is known as 'molecules to man evolution'. And despite what is conventionally accepted about 'macro-evolution' (there is no dispute over 'micro-evolution'), there is absolutely NO evidence for it!

Thinking Points

Two Minute Drill: What was it that led you to Christ?

Develop an apologetic based upon the existence of morals/virtues.

What about 'real life' brings people to Christ? What should we be looking for in the process of evangelism?

What happens when people have no hope?

Explain the concept of 'borrowed capital'.

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Lesson Summary

Everyone believes something

Not thinking about what one believes is irresponsible

Once a society loses an objective base, anything goes

It is difficult to ‘think rationally’ and NOT be Christian

Next Lesson: Evangelism

Resources:

[Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from its Cultural Captivity](#); Nancy Pearcey;
Crossway Books; 2004

[The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind](#); Mark Noll; William Eerdmans Publishing; 1995

[Moral Darwinism](#); Benjamin Wiker; Intervarsity Press; 2001

[What On Earth Are We Doing?](#); John Fischer; Vine Books; 1997