

I invite you to read this book with an open mind. If you think the evidence AGAINST Christianity is overwhelming, read on and discover that it is the evidence FOR Christianity that is overwhelming.

Kerby Anderson

National Director of Probe Ministries International, Host of *Point of View* Radio Show, Author, and Vice President of International Society of Christian Apologetics (2011)

Pat Zukeran understands the pluralistic, postmodern environment that is so frequently encountered today. If you are looking for answers to the same tough questions raised by skeptics as well as those in other religious traditions, check out this book. It gets right to the point in down to earth language that provides a firm foundation for those who want answers.

Gary R. Habermas

Distinguished Research Professor
Liberty University & Theological Seminary

It is with great enthusiasm that I recommend this much-needed and relevant book by Dr. Pat Zukeran. Brimming with powerful evidence and sound reasoning, Zukeran skillfully lays out the case for the truth of Christianity.

Dr. Ron Rhodes, ThD

President, Reasoning from the Scriptures Ministries
Adjunct Professor, Dallas Theological Seminary, Veritas Evangelical Seminary

Patrick Zukeran possesses a keen mind and a compassionate heart toward the peoples of the world who need a sensible presentation of the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ramesh Richard, PhD, ThD

President, RREACH International

Professor, Dallas Theological Seminary

Patrick Zukeran has made apologetics an inviting, practical, and personal presentation right from the introduction. His book is concise and easy to read. Yet there is enough substance to satisfy the academically oriented person who needs reliable supporting evidence.

Sam Tonomura

Executive Director Emeritus, Japanese Evangelical Missionary Society

I believe everyone should read this book. It will give the believers a strong basis on what they believe, and it is excellent for seekers who are trying to understand who they are, what they are doing here, and where they are going.

Fred Tow

Pastor, Houston Chinese Church

UNLESS I SEE ...
IS THERE ENOUGH
EVIDENCE TO BELIEVE?

PATRICK ZUKERAN



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This book is dedicated to the following men:

Dr. Norman Geisler: The man God used to strengthen my faith, motivate me to learn, and later in life, exhort me to persevere; a great defender of Truth; an inspiring teacher and gracious leader.

Dr. Robert Choun: The master teacher who taught me how to teach, how to inspire students and remains a model of grace in my life.

Dr. James Tan and Mike Foster: Men who have served the Lord faithfully in the Philippines demonstrating the power of God-given vision, never-ending passion, and always with the blessed touch of grace.

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FOREWARD

BY

NORMAN GEISLER, PHD

Never has there been a greater time than now for a book like this. Christianity is based on belief in a theistic God who created the world, who can do miracles, and who is the source of absolute truth and morality. All of these are rejected by our culture. So, we are proclaiming that the Word of God affirms Jesus is the Son of God who was raised from the dead by an act of God, and that this is the absolute truth about God to a world in which nearly half of its inhabitants do not believe in a theistic God. Yet there cannot be a Word of God if there is no God who can speak. Nor can there be acts of God if there is no God who can so act. Further, Jesus cannot be the Son of God if there is no God who can have a Son. What is more, Christianity certainly cannot be the absolute truth of God unless there is an absolute Mind who knows and reveals absolute truth.

In short, we cannot do evangelism in a non-theistic world without first doing pre-evangelism. They cannot start their evangelistic presentation with the Gospel when unbelievers in the culture do not even believe in the preconditions of the Gospel. Establishing the truth of these presuppositions is called apologetics. So, the need for apologetics has never been greater. This book helps fill this need. It covers the waterfront of these pre-evangelistic needs in a clear, concise, and comprehensive way. It has intellectual depth, but is written in a readable fashion.

Not only is there a need outside the church for apologetics books like this, the need has never been greater inside the church. Statistics show that some three quarters of our young people leave the church in their twenties and that the vast majority of them do not return. And a recent study revealed that the basic reason for their departure was doubts about the Bible.¹ These doubts begin in earnest in junior high school and are largely completed before they go to college. This bleeding must stop if the evangelical church is to survive. It cries out for the need to do apologetics within the church and among our young people.

Dr. Zukeran's book is particularly suited to help meet this need both inside and outside the church. Coming from a background in Buddhism and with a thorough training in apologetics, he has produced a credible, usable, and readable work that will help pastors, teachers, parents, and young people to understand and defend the faith in a faithless world. It not only is instructive on what we believe, but why we believe it. It effectively proclaims the changeless truth of the Christian faith in these changing times. Every young person and adult in the church needs this message.

Dr. Norman Geisler
Professor of Apologetics
www.VeritasSeminary.com

¹ Josh McDowell, *The Last Christian Generation* (Holiday, FL: Green Key Books, 2006), 13.

INTRODUCTION

A solitary figure sat alone in the restaurant gazing at the sea. As the morning sun glared off the water, he watched the fishermen scurry to and from their boats, some carrying fish, and others following with nets slung over their shoulders. There was a lot to think about. One associate had committed suicide, and the leader to whom he had entrusted his life and future lay rotting in a nearby grave. Was it all a mirage? Was it just an emotional experience that drew the heart of this young man away from his family and dreams to follow a new hope? What had he done, and how would he now put his life back together?

He took one last sip, placed his cup on the wooden table, paid for his meal, and departed the tiny inn. As he stepped out into the street, the sun rested directly above his head. It was noon. As his eyes adjusted to the sunlight, he heard three men calling his name. “Thomas! Thomas!” they shouted running toward him. With excitement in their voices and joy beaming out of their eyes, they bounded to him. “No, not them!” he thought. He did not want to have anything to do with these men ever again.

“We have seen the risen Lord!” they cried with childlike exuberance. Peter grabbed a firm hold of Thomas’ left arm, placed his other hand on his shoulder, and looked directly into Thomas’ eyes. “Thomas, it’s true! He’s alive! Jesus has risen from the dead just like He said He would. Indeed He is the Son of God! He is the Messiah whom we

have been waiting for! He spoke with us, and I even touched him with these hands!” Peter held them up for Thomas to see. Peter’s stare and tone of voice were very convincing, yet that was Peter. He was always the persuasive one. Thomas gazed into Peter’s excited eyes and then turned. “No,” he said taking a few steps away from the men. “As much as I would love to believe, I cannot. You men go on. I’ve got things to do.”

I cannot get caught up in the emotion, Thomas thought to himself. *I will not devote my entire life and sacrifice my family and future again for something without convincing evidence.* Thomas slowly trudged down the street. His closest friend, John, shouted, “Thomas, wait!” Thomas turned around and saw his friend scurrying toward him. “Thomas, what will it take for you to believe?” John asked.

Thomas looked into the sincere, caring eyes of his best friend. He took a deep breath and then said, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe” (John 20:25). John knew his friend. Thomas was always the honest one. Of course it would be difficult for Thomas to believe in a man rising from the dead. John understood Thomas’ response.

“Thomas, come with us. Hear the others. They have seen him too,” John pleaded.

“All your talking and stories won’t convince me, John. I need more! I am not going to just take your word for it. Show me the evidence!” Thomas replied angrily.

John put his right hand on Thomas’ shoulder, and with the love of a concerned brother, he gently urged his friend, “Come with us one last time. I know how you feel, Thomas. I felt the same way when the women told me. When I saw his empty grave, I did not know what to make of it. But, Thomas, we have seen the risen Lord! Jesus is alive! He is the savior of the world! Come, just this final time, and listen to what we have to say.”

It was not his words that coaxed Thomas into agreeing. It was the love and kindred spirit of his friend that made him reluctantly consent. “Alright,” he said, “But this is the final time I will meet with you.” Grudgingly, Thomas joined the other three and began walking

with them to the house. *Could it be true?* Thomas thought to himself. *Could Jesus really be alive?* He paused, and then made this resolve in his heart: *Unless I see, I will not believe!*

Another Thomas

It was my first visit to a tiny church in Hawaii. Although I found the service nominally interesting, I was losing the battle to remain awake and began to drift into another world. I had been up till the late hours of the morning the previous night with friends reliving great moments in our sports careers and laughing over foolish antics we thought were so daring and bold. Now at the 10:00 a.m. service, I struggled to keep my eyes open. Finally losing the fight after the third hymn, I napped peacefully in the pew. Then something aroused me from my slumber. As I rubbed my eyes and gathered my senses, I realized the pastor was standing behind a table upon which rested bread and grape juice. This would be my first encounter with the Christian sacrament of “Communion.”

The pastor explained this tradition to us. It was to commemorate the final supper Jesus had with his disciples before his sacrificial death on the cross that was to pay the price for the sins of the world. Then the pastor quoted two verses that changed my life forever. I can still hear the voice of that elderly man quote Matthew 11:28: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”. I sat up in my chair, intrigued by what I had just heard. God wants to be a part of my life? The One who created the universe wants a personal relationship with me? In fact, He cares so much that He wants to carry the burdens of my life and give me rest?

As a high school student, I was dealing with adolescent insecurities, relational difficulties, poor grades, and an uncertain future. No one was interested in my struggles or the inner turmoil I was experiencing. Everyone had their own life to deal with, and no one had time to care about anyone else, much less a teenage boy many had already given up on. But the words of Matthew 11:28 caught my attention. I had been moving more toward atheism in my teen years. I felt even if there were a God, He certainly was not interested in the affairs of men, much less my insignificant life. I had never heard the Gospel

message that He was deeply interested in my life, my deepest struggles, and that He wanted to give peace that I had never experienced in my tumultuous, adolescent years.

Then the pastor read the second verse. “Jesus said, ‘And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age’ ” (Matthew 28:20). My interest continued to grow. Not only was the God of the universe interested in me, He promised never to abandon me even in my worst moments. These words expressed a commitment greater than any I knew. The most significant promise we make in a lifetime is a marriage vow. Yet in a marriage vow, the final words are, “Till death do us part.” God stated that not even death would separate us from Him. I was amazed that the God of the universe would desire to make such a commitment with one so undeserving like me. These two verses caught my attention, and I began to reflect on what I had heard.

The pastor gave the invitation, “If you would like to have a relationship with God and receive Christ as your Lord and Savior and have the assurance of eternal life with Him, repeat this prayer.” The pastor led us in a prayer to receive Christ. I remember sitting in my pew and saying to God alone, “God, if this is real, if these promises are true, and you are the kind of God described in the Bible, I want to know you.” It was then I trusted Christ and became a child of God.

I did not grow up in church, but I attended an Episcopal school. I had learned some of the Bible stories, but never understood what Christianity was all about: a personal relationship with the God of the universe who has a deep interest in my life and has made a commitment to an eternal relationship. I reported this exciting news to my school priest that following Monday. With very little emotion, he acknowledged my story, and then told me not to take the Bible so seriously. He pointed out that there are many errors in the Bible, many of the stories are not accurate, and some are even fiction. His response was quite shocking to me. Suddenly, I began to question my newborn faith. Desiring to learn the Bible, I enrolled in my high school Bible class. The textbooks assumed that miracles were not possible, and instead, there were naturalistic explanations for the miracle accounts of the Bible. As I read the textbooks and listened to the class lectures,

the Bible seemed to be filled with historical and chronological errors and stories borrowed from pagan mythology.

The evidence presented in these texts from history and archaeology appeared to be overwhelming. For example, Moses' crossing of the Red Sea really occurred at the Sea of Reeds. Some areas of this sea are only three feet deep. Any group of people could have easily made this crossing. Daniel was not written in sixth century BC as the book claims, but written much later in the second century BC because it contains Greek and Aramaic, languages unknown to a Jewish writer of Daniel's time. Therefore, the book is not historical in nature; it simply was given that appearance to encourage the Jewish people who were suffering under Roman persecution.

When it came to the New Testament, I discovered that the Gospels were written generations after the life of Christ. As time goes by, eyewitnesses depart from the scene, which allows for exaggerations and misinformation to creep into the accounts as they were passed on orally from one group to the next. Therefore, many of the accounts of Jesus were fiction or exaggerations that grew over the generations until the Gospels were finally written.

A natural conclusion that followed was that the resurrection was a legend. The disciples sincerely desired the words of Jesus to be true. The hope of the heavenly kingdom and the words of eternal life had to continue in order for the movement to grow. As His followers gathered, they felt His warm presence in a real way and went forth to preach a "risen" Jesus to a world that needed hope, even if their story was convoluted and contrived. Since many were in foreign lands, there was no way the converts could confirm or deny the message. Many took it by faith. It did not matter if Jesus' body was really in the grave; the disciples were sincere and their message of hope changed the world.

All that I was learning in Bible class was casting serious doubts on the credibility of the Christian faith. It seemed that Christianity was another nice religious story, but one with no historical basis. I searched for answers, but no one seemed to have any. My faith began to wane. Perhaps new faith was just another emotional experience? I refused to dedicate my life to a religion that said, "You just have to

take a leap of faith.” If Jesus did not rise from the dead, He was not the Son of God, and Christianity could not be true. Like Thomas, I needed to see the nail prints in Jesus’ hands and feel His side. Was there good reason and evidence for faith in Christ? I said to myself, *Unless I see, I will not believe.*

After months of questioning, I sat at a restaurant with Ed, a friend from church. I shared with him all that I had learned in class, and that I had found no answers to these facts against Christianity. He looked at my discouraged countenance and said, “I do not have the answers, but this book may be able to help you.” He gave me a book of Christian apologetics. I had never heard of the term *apologetics*. I came to learn it meant “a defense,” and Christian apologetics was the defense of the Christian faith. I read it thoroughly. To my surprise, I discovered that Christianity was a rational and reasonable faith. There were indeed compelling reasons and evidence to support the foundations of the Christian faith. I found the material fascinating, and when I was finished, I proceeded to read another book and another. My quest for the truth had begun.

For those who are saying, “Unless I see, I cannot believe,” I hope this journey will reveal the “nail prints in the hands” and the “pierced side” of Jesus, God’s Son. I do not claim to have all the answers. In fact, there are times I wrestle with doubts. However, I believe there is enough evidence to make Christianity a more than reasonable choice.

CHAPTER 1

See the World through the Major Worldviews

At the foundation of all beliefs, world religions, and philosophies are worldviews. What is a worldview? A worldview is a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true partially true or entirely false), which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic makeup of our world.¹

Every person holds to a worldview. Our worldview undergirds the way we interpret the world around us and guides us in the daily decisions that we make. It influences how we think about reality, morality, humanity, sexuality, epistemology (knowledge), cosmology, sociology, and theology. All areas of how we interpret the world and our experiences are filtered through our worldview. A person's worldview is intensely practical. Charles Colson states, "It is simply the sum total of our beliefs about the world, the 'big picture' that directs our daily decisions and actions."²

A worldview is like a pair of glasses we each wear, and through these glasses, we view and interpret the world around us. It is important that we are wearing the correct lenses; if you have ever put on a wrong pair of glasses, you know how distorted the world around you appears. If you continue to wear the wrong pair, it will be increasingly difficult

¹ James Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 17.

² Sire, 18.

to maneuver around your environment. In the same way, it is critical that each person has the correct worldview. The wrong worldview will eventually lead to the wrong conclusions about reality and life.

It is for this reason that the search for truth begins with understanding worldviews. Interpreting the evidence from the wrong perspective will lead you to false conclusions. There are various worldviews, each one claiming to be true.

First Principles

There are some basic premises we must first begin with. These are called First Principles. First Principles are the foundation of knowledge. These are the premises with which we begin, for without them it is not possible to know anything. These are laws that do not need proofs because they are self-evident. Every person knows and applies these principles even if they do not know their formal titles.³

The First Principles begin with the premise that something exists. This universe exists, and we as conscious beings exist. Second is the Law of Noncontradiction, which states that contradictory claims cannot be true at the same time in the same way.⁴ For example, the statements “God exists” and “God does not exist” cannot both be true at the same time and in the same way. If one of these statements is true, the other one must be false. The third is the Law of the Excluded Middle, which states that something either is or is not.⁵ For example, either I am Pat Zukeran, or I am not Pat Zukeran. There is no other alternative. Finally, all worldviews require faith. This will be demonstrated in the sections to follow.

Some beliefs require a greater step of faith than others. For example, most people believe the universe has a beginning, and this first cause is called the “Big Bang.” Can we be 100 percent certain that the universe began with the Big Bang? No, because none of us were there at this event. However, from the evidence, we can be reasonably sure or at least sure beyond a reasonable doubt. So the question we

³ Norman Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway Books, 2004), 62.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

must ask ourselves is, “Is there good evidence to support my belief?” In other words, am I taking a step in the direction of the evidence?

These are the First Principles that guide us in discovering and discerning truth from error. These are the premises we accept, for they are self-evident truths and without them, it is not possible to know anything.

Identifying a Worldview

How do we identify another person’s worldview? A person’s worldview can be identified by the way he or she answers some fundamental questions. Philosopher James Sire lists seven basic questions every worldview must address, for they are the basic questions every human being must answer in their lifetime.⁶

The first question is, “What is the nature of God?” This is the primary question that most quickly distinguishes a worldview. Does a God exist? Is the material cosmos all that exists? If God does exist, how does one describe God? Are there many gods? Often, one’s worldview is revealed in the answer to this question.

The second question is, “What is the nature of reality?” This is a question of metaphysics, which addresses the nature of the world around us. Is the external world an illusion? Is the world chaotic, or is it orderly and intelligently designed? Are God and the universe eternal and dependent on one another? Did God create the universe, and can He intervene in time and space? If God can intervene, are miracles possible?

The third question is, “How do you explain human nature?” This question addresses anthropology. In the movie *Contact*, actress Jodie Foster travels through a worm hole and meets an alien being who appears in the form of her deceased father. He states that his civilization has been studying the human race and finds that humans are a very curious species, capable of fulfilling both wonderful dreams and also horrific nightmares. How do we explain this paradox of human nature? Are we evolved animals? Are we gods in embryo form? Have we been created in the image of God but fallen in sin? The answer

⁶ Ron Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1992), 55.

to this question plays a key role in the fields of psychology, sociology, and medicine.

The fourth question is, “How do you know that you know?” This question addresses epistemology, the study of knowledge and the question “How is knowledge attained?” Is it attained primarily through the senses? Is scientific knowledge the best method of attaining knowledge? Is it the only method? Can we know truth, or is truth relative? Much of modern philosophy concentrates on epistemology.

The fifth question is, “What happens to a person at death?” Is there life beyond the grave, or does a person cease to exist? Can we know if there is life beyond the grave? Although this is a question about death, our beliefs regarding death undoubtedly affect the way we live today.

The sixth question is, “How do you determine right and wrong?” This question addresses the area of ethics. Is there an absolute moral law code by which all people are to abide? Some believe that right and wrong are determined by the situation, and thus, right and wrong change depending on the situation in which one finds oneself. Others believe that right and wrong are relative and determined by the individual. A serious question arises when two cultures with different beliefs clash. How do we then determine right and wrong to resolve the conflict? A good example occurred on September 11, 2001 when radical Islamic terrorists hijacked two airline planes and used them to crash into the twin towers of the World Trade Center. The question arose as to how we determine a just response. America felt this was an act of war while the Taliban believed they were fulfilling Allah’s will. Who is right in this situation? Our understanding of ethics is of crucial importance.

The seventh question is, “What is the meaning of history?” Is human history moving in a linear fashion toward some meaningful purpose? Some believe that human history has no ultimate purpose; it revolves in a never-ending circular cycle. If human history has a purpose, what is my role in this story? If human history has no ultimate purpose, we are forced to face the logical conclusion that our lives have no ultimate purpose.

These seven questions are the basic questions each worldview must answer. Every human being seeks answers to these basic questions in

their lifetime. If one's worldview cannot answer any of these questions, it should be considered an incomplete worldview.

These questions are a great place to start when beginning a relationship with someone of a differing belief system. Too often, Christians want to preach their message; however, that can often alienate the individual, for no one enjoys being preached at. Instead, it is often more profitable to learn about another person's beliefs by asking questions about their worldview. In many of my discussions, some individuals simply accepted their beliefs and had never been challenged to examine and explain the reasons behind that which they believe. Through these questions, opportunities to point out inconsistencies or contradictions arise. Then opportunities to share reasons for faith in Christ will also arise. Instead of a combative debate, asking these questions, listening, and sharing reasons for your faith in Christ can lead to great discussions which cultivates the friendship.

Three Major Worldviews

There are three major worldviews that form the foundation upon which ideas, philosophical systems, and the world religions are built: theism, naturalism, and pantheism.

Theism

The basic tenet of theism is the belief in a personal God who created the universe out of nothing. Theistic religions include Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Theism teaches that God created the universe but is not dependent on the universe. He is transcendent, but He is also immanent. In other words, He rules over the universe, but He is not totally distant. He is involved in sustaining the universe, is actively involved in history, and can be known by His creatures. He can intervene in time and space, thus miracles are possible.

Theism teaches that man is created in the image of God. This means that man possesses, in a limited finite way, some of the attributes of God, such as love, intelligence, emotion, and a will. However, despite being created in the image of God, man is a fallen and sinful being. This explains the paradox we find: man is indeed able to fulfill great dreams but is also able to carry out horrific nightmares.

Knowledge is attained through reason, experience, and divine revelation. Theists believe that there is life beyond the grave. Theists believe that man is composed of the physical body and also an immaterial soul that survives the death of the body. At death, every person will receive his or her judgment and eternal destiny. Morality is determined by our conscience, a moral law code imbedded in our hearts by God in whose image we are made and based upon God's law as revealed in His inspired revelation.

Theists believe that history is moving in a linear fashion. There is a purpose for our existence, and God is guiding the course of history to His ultimate goal.

Naturalism

The second worldview is naturalism. Naturalism teaches that the material universe is all that exists. Richard Dawkins writes, "An atheist in this sense of philosophical naturalist is somebody who believes there is nothing beyond the natural, physical world, no supernatural creative intelligence lurking behind the observable universe, no soul that outlasts the body and no miracles ..."⁷

Naturalists do not believe in the existence of a divine being or creator God. The universe is a cosmic accident, and there was no ultimate purpose for its conception. The universe operates according to the laws of nature; therefore, miracles are not possible. Naturalists teach several views of human nature. Most believe that man is an evolved animal. He is a material being, and there is no immaterial soul or consciousness that continues to exist beyond the death of the body.

For naturalists, knowledge comes through reason and experience. It is through our ability to reason, the five senses, science, and our experience that we attain knowledge. Since there is no God, there can be no divine revelation. There are several ways that the notion of right and wrong are determined within the framework of this view. Some naturalists believe that right and wrong are determined by the ones who are in power; in other words, might makes right. Another view is that right and wrong are determined by what produces the best

⁷ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), 35.

results for the greatest number, an ethic called utilitarianism. Others teach that right and wrong are determined by the situation. Each situation is different; therefore, right and wrong change according to the situation. Postmodern naturalists teach that there is no absolute right or wrong; they are instead relative and determined by each individual. Ultimately, naturalists will have a relative ethical system.

Naturalists believe there is no ultimate goal of history. One day the universe will die. As the universe continues to expand, it will lose energy, reach a state of final entropy, and come to an end. Like the universe, mankind will one day cease to exist. Therefore, in naturalism, history ultimately continues its aimless course, but ultimately all will end in extinction.

Pantheism

The third worldview is pantheism. *Pan* means all; *theism* means God. Pantheists believe God is an impersonal force made up of all things in the universe. In other words, God is the universe, and the universe is God. Pantheism is the foundation of many of the Eastern religions (i.e., Hinduism, many schools of Buddhism, Taoism), the New Age, and many animistic religions. Since God is one with the universe, the universe and God are eternal and dependent upon one another.

Since everything is a part of God, man is essentially divine. In Hinduism, there is a saying, “Atman is Brahman.” Atman, or the immaterial essence of man, is identical with Brahman, the absolute, the impersonal force that pervades the universe.⁸

Knowledge is attained through enlightenment. Enlightenment is accomplished by attaining a “higher” level of consciousness, which is achieved in various ways. One of the most popular methods is through meditation, which, in many Eastern forms, involves emptying the mind and attaining a sense of unity with the divine, or the all-pervading force of the universe.

Pantheists adhere to the doctrine of reincarnation. After death, an individual will return in another form. Whether they return in a higher or lower form depends on the quality of the life they lived. This is

⁸ Stephen Schumacher & Gert Woerner, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion*, (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1994), 22.

the law of *karma*. The amount of good or bad karma one attains in this life determines the quality of life in the next reincarnation. It is hoped that one will continue to attain higher forms until the individual breaks out of the cycle of reincarnation and attains oneness with the divine. Just as a drop of rainwater journeys down the mountains, into the rivers, and then to the ocean, so the soul must find its way to union with the divine. Pantheists view history in a never-ending circular cycle that will continue to endlessly repeat itself.

These three worldviews are the foundation of the various philosophies and religions in the world today. Theism is the foundation for the world religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Naturalism is the foundation for the philosophies of Darwinism, Freudian psychology, Marxist Socialism, and even some of the world religions, such as some forms of Buddhism. Pantheism is the foundation of the Eastern religions, such as Hinduism, Taoism, and the New Age.

Tests of a Worldview

As one studies the major worldviews, it should become apparent that all three cannot be true at the same time for the reason that they hold contradictory positions. A basic law of logic is the *Law of Noncontradiction*, which states that opposites cannot be true at the same time and in the same sense.⁹ This is a foundational premise of logic that is universally applied in all cultures. This law forms the foundation of rational thought.

It is a logical impossibility to believe, as the theist does, that God exists while simultaneously believing, as the naturalist does, that God does not exist, and conclude that both statements are true. If one is true, the other opposing view must be false. Likewise, it is also a logical impossibility to believe, as theists believe, the proposition that God is a personal being who created the universe and also adhere, as pantheists do, to the belief that God is a non-personal being who is interdependent with the universe. Again, both propositions cannot be true at the same time in the same way. How do we determine which

⁹ Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 742.

worldview is true? There are indeed several ways to test a worldview to determine whether its tenets are true or in error.

Test of Correspondence

The first test is the *test of correspondence*. Truth is defined as that which corresponds with reality. There is a reality, and truth accurately describes and expresses it. Truth is telling it like it is. The propositions of a worldview or a religion should accurately describe and correspond with reality.

Pantheism teaches that the material world is an illusion. Does this correspond with reality? Darwinian Evolutionists, most of whom are naturalists, believe that living organisms all evolved from a single-celled organism. Does this conclusion correspond with the fossil evidence? Theists believe that an intelligent creator designed the universe. Does the evidence in nature reveal design? Propositions of a worldview should accurately describe the world and correspond with reality. Therefore, there should be evidence from the world around us that supports the tenets of a particular worldview.

Test of Consistency

The second test is the *test of consistency*. All the parts of a belief system should hold together in a logically consistent manner. Contradiction within a system is a sign of error.¹⁰ For example, postmodern relativism is built on a naturalist worldview. Relativists teach that truth is relative; there are no absolute truths, only opinions of individuals or cultures. However, to say there are no absolute truths *is* an absolute truth. The relativist ends up acknowledging the premise he denies. This is a self-defeating statement because it is a contradiction.

Test of Comprehensiveness

The third test is the *test of comprehensiveness*. A worldview should be wide-ranging in scope and explain the world around us. It should explain much of the relevant data. What is discovered to be true in a variety of areas, such as history, our experiences, logic, the sciences, etc.,

¹⁰ Nash, 55.

should complement or support the worldview to which one adheres. If the data contradicts our worldview, we should reexamine our beliefs.

Pantheists teach that since the universe is divine, the universe is eternal. However, the scientific evidence does not support this tenet but rather goes against it. The scientific evidence indicates the universe has a definite beginning, which scientists refer to as the Big Bang. If the universe has a beginning, it cannot be eternal. This fact also presents a problem for the naturalist. The law of causality states that whatever has a beginning must have a cause. If the universe has a beginning, it must have a cause greater than it. Naturalists have yet to answer this dilemma. It goes against logic and science to say something came from nothing. The fields of science, especially astrophysics, physics, and cosmology do not support the premise of pantheism and naturalism. However, the data upholds the teachings of Christian theism, which states that “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

One’s worldview or religion should explain the data from various areas. A worldview or religious system that cannot accommodate or chooses to ignore the facts from various areas should be reexamined.

The Test of Practice

The fourth test is the *test of practice*. Is a person able to consistently, albeit not perfectly, live out what he or she believes in the real world? For example, Buddhism teaches that suffering in this world is caused by desire. The goal of the Buddhist then is to eliminate all desire. Once desire is eliminated, one may attain enlightenment, and upon death, enter the state of Nirvana. However, is it possible to consistently live out a life absent of any desire? Isn’t the aspiration to escape suffering a desire in and of itself?

The postmodern relativists teach that absolute truth does not exist. Since truth is relative, there are no moral absolutes. The individual determines right and wrong, and no one has the right to apply their standards on others. However, it is not possible to live out this premise consistently. If a relativist finds himself a victim of racial discrimination, he will quickly demand justice for this offense. However, this is not possible if there are no moral absolutes that apply to all people. In demanding fair treatment, the relativist is appealing to an absolute

moral standard that applies to all individuals. One should be able to consistently live out the teachings of their belief system.

These four tests should be applied when examining a religion or philosophy. In pausing to reflect on these tests, you may realize you naturally use these four criteria when examining a belief system or teaching you encounter. For example, I remember listening to a pantheist on television teaching that once an individual attains oneness with the divine, they will not get sick or age. Immediately, I began to ask the questions, “Is this true to reality? Have I seen anyone defy sickness and aging? What about the laws of nature? Is this consistent with what we know in medical research? Does this teacher actually live out what he is teaching? Does he really expect to live eternally?” He must then not have a will or any plans of retiring or passing on his organization to his followers. We often, without realizing it, apply these tests in our daily life once we are aware of them.

I believe that Christianity is the only religion that passes these tests. The teachings of Christianity correspond to reality, and Christianity is comprehensive in its scope, is internally consistent, and can be lived out consistently. I believe that once you examine the evidence, you will see that Christianity is the only reasonable choice.

Our Starting Point

The purpose of apologetics is to transform lives for Christ by convincing minds and changing hearts. In order to persuade an individual to the truth of the Gospel, we need to begin at the right place, and that starting point is one’s worldview. Before we can proceed to present a defense of the deity of Christ, we must first establish the premise that we live in a theistic universe.

If we do not establish the worldview of theism, the evidence we present will not be properly received. For example, if we present the case for the miracle of the resurrection without establishing the worldview of theism first, the naturalist will respond stating that miracles are not possible, and that there must be a naturalistic explanation for such miracle accounts that science will one day explain. A pantheist

will respond by stating that Jesus is one of many avatars who have appeared, and that Jesus' miracles are typical of previous avatars.

However, if we establish the premise that God exists, and thus, we live in a theistic universe, the worldviews of naturalism and pantheism cannot be true. As a result, the religions and ideologies built on these worldviews will also ultimately be false. Also if God exists, there can be acts of God, and God can and does use miracles to confirm His message and His messengers. If God exists, there can be a Son of God and a Word of God, both of which should be affirmed by acts of God. Once we establish the premise that we live in a theistic universe, we establish the proper context to present our case for Christianity.