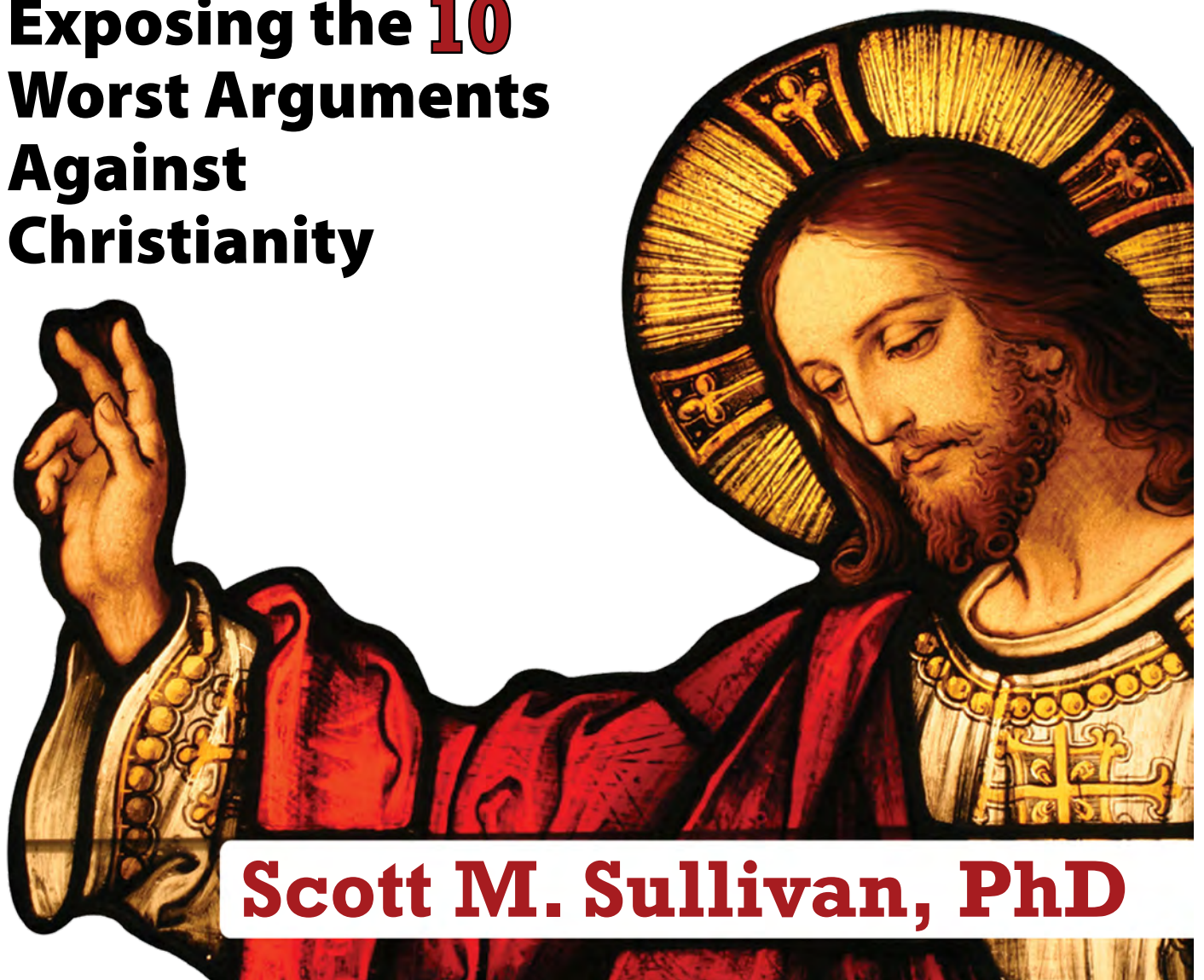


HOW TO ANSWER A **Jesus Critic**

**Exposing the 10
Worst Arguments
Against
Christianity**



Scott M. Sullivan, PhD

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect....

1 Peter 3:15

HOW TO ANSWER A JESUS CRITIC: EXPOSING THE TEN WORST ARGUMENTS AGAINST CHRISTIANITY

By Scott M. Sullivan, PhD

There is no doubt about it; Jesus is just as much of a controversial figure today as He was in ancient times. Go out and mention His name publicly and you will very likely draw expressions of both love and outright hatred. As Christians, we have a duty to share the Gospel with unbelievers, and in doing this, you will very likely run into what we might call a “Jesus Critic,” that is, someone who offers objections to Christianity. *These objections will be reasons or arguments attempting to persuade us that Christianity is false.* Such arguments will come in various forms, but the one thing they all have in common is that they reflect a skeptical attitude towards what the New Testament says Jesus taught.

The purpose of this booklet is to expose some of these arguments. Indeed, here we will look at ten of the *worst*, or *weakest*, arguments people use to dismiss Christianity. Unfortunately, not only are these the ten worst arguments against Christianity, but they are also the most common arguments made against Christianity. This is the big problem today: *the most common reasons for rejecting Christ are also the WORST reasons for rejecting Christ.*

These arguments were chosen based on my experience of having been reading and working in this area for nearly seventeen years. As a Christian myself, I have personally encountered these arguments on numerous occasions. It is important for every Christian to know how to respond to these common arguments for two reasons. First, so that you can satisfy yourself that your Christian belief is not misplaced because of bad arguments like these. Second, so that you can charitably show others why these arguments fail. By learning “how to answer a Jesus critic,” you can both strengthen your own faith and help someone else come to the Christian faith by removing any “intellectual obstacles” that might be in their way.

This booklet is just a beginning in the art of Christian *apologetics*. The word “apologetics” doesn’t mean saying you are sorry. It is based on a Biblical term that means offering reasons in support of your position. Therefore, “Christian apologetics” is the art of offering rational grounds and evidence in support of a Christian worldview. If you would like to learn more about this art of Christian apologetics, visit www.ScottMSullivan.com for additional resources. Our largest resource in this area is the **Christ 101 apologetics course**. This course is a complete, full-blown, video-based program covering all of the main areas involved in defending the Christian faith. This course covers such things like how there can be a true religion, what faith really is and why it works with reason, why we have good reasons for

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thinking that the Gospels are historically accurate, and why there are good reasons to think that Jesus was the divine being He claimed to be.

For now, here is a summary of the *ten worst objections to Christianity* and how you can respond to them.

OBJECTION #1

“Christians are a bunch of hypocrites.”

Response:

So why is it fair to judge the Christian religion based upon the behavior of people who do not do what it says? A religion should be judged on what it professes, not on the failings of those who do not live in accord with its teachings.

First of all, it is certainly true that there *are* a lot of Christian hypocrites. Christians are sinners just like everybody else. But that’s not necessarily a bad thing because these sinners are at least looking for help. So it’s a good thing that these sinners are in church! Where else could they go to learn how to stop sinning and become a better person?

Jesus never claimed to have all perfect followers. In fact, one of his own apostles, Judas, was the first Christian hypocrite. **So yes, there are a lot of bad people who are Christians, but nothing of interest follows from this. Surely it is not fair to judge a religion based upon those who do not follow what it teaches.** Jesus preached against hypocrisy. In fact, he despised it! So why is it fair to judge the Christian religion based upon the behavior of people who do not do what it says? A religion should be judged on what it professes, not on the failings of those who do not live in accord with its teachings.

Secondly, this objection forgets that there are also a lot of great examples of people who truly lived out the Christian life. St. Francis of Assisi, Mother Teresa, and thousands upon thousands of others who really did live out the Gospel as Jesus preached. Christians have been instrumental in the establishment of hospitals, the establishment of the rule of law, numerous charities, taking care of the poor, along with many other movements that have helped millions. **These holy and kind people are the ones who are really doing what Jesus taught. Don’t you think it is more fair to judge Christianity based upon their example?**

Thirdly and most importantly, however, is that this objection really misses the point. Just because there are bad people in Christianity doesn’t mean it’s false. If Jesus was who He claimed to be, if He really was the divine Son of God with a salvific message for all people, then Christianity is true, regardless of whether or not there are bad people who call themselves Christians.

So while we can all agree that many Christians are failures, this says nothing about whether or not Jesus really was the divine being He claimed to be. In other words, one should not conclude that **just because there are bad Christians, Christianity is false.**

OBJECTION #2

“God doesn’t care which religion you believe.”

Response:

First of all, how do you know what God cares about? Has he told you? He didn’t tell me. Where did you get this idea?

Secondly, *it is impossible that all religions can be true, since they make contradictory claims.* So if one religion is true, then it follows that any other religion which contradicts the true one must be false. **God being all-wise and loving, prefers that you believe truth over error.** So if there is a true religion, clearly that is the one that God wants you to believe.

Finally, **the God of the Bible certainly cares about which religion you believe.** In the Old Testament the Jewish people were constantly warned not to worship the gods of the pagans. Moreover, Jesus thinks it matters what religion you believe and said so on numerous occasions. For example, in Mark 16:15-16 Jesus said, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. **Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.**” So Jesus certainly thinks it matters what you believe.

So if there is a true religion, and especially if Christianity is true, then it definitely *does* matter which religion you believe.

God being all-wise and loving, prefers that you believe truth over error. So if there is a true religion, clearly that is the one that God wants you to believe.

OBJECTION #3

“Christians always think they are right and everyone else is wrong.”

Response:

What’s wrong with thinking that you are right? Don’t the people who offer this objection think they are right and all Christians are wrong? Doesn’t everyone, whether they are an atheist, Muslim, agnostic or whatever, think they are right and everyone else is wrong? If people didn’t think they were right about their views, they wouldn’t hold them!

There is certainly nothing wrong with thinking that you are right when you have good reasons for what you believe. That is what Christians claim about their position.

OBJECTION #4

“I don’t care what Christians believe, I just don’t think they should try to evangelize others.”

Response:

This objection doesn’t make any sense. Christians believe that it is very important to help others come to know Christ and follow his teachings. They believe that getting others to follow Christ is the most loving and helpful thing one can do for another and for this reason, they are compelled to share their faith with others. **So, if you don’t care what Christians believe, then you cannot consistently condemn them for trying to evangelize others, because that very desire to evangelize comes from what they believe!**

If Christianity is true, then surely there is nothing wrong with helping others come to know this truth. If Christianity is true, then helping others to see this fact is the most loving thing one can do for them. So the issue is not really about evangelism, but whether or not Christianity is true.

OBJECTION #5

“I hate how Christians try to impose their views on others politically.”

Response:

To clarify, this isn’t really a view about religion; rather you are expressing a political view about participatory government in which the population is allowed to vote and have a voice on how the country should be run. As for our system here in the United States, we live in a type of democracy. You have your views and others have theirs and every qualifying person gets their say. Christians vote on what they think is best for the country just like everyone else. The system works by majority rule. **So Christians aren’t “imposing” their view on others by voting any more than any other group “imposes” their view by voting. Everyone gets a voice and the majority voice wins.** That’s how our political system works. If you don’t like that, then you don’t have a problem with Christianity, you have a problem with the political philosophy of the United States.

If Christianity is true, then helping others to see this fact is the most loving thing one can do for them. So the issue is not really about evangelism, but whether or not Christianity is true.

OBJECTION #6

“Christians irritate me because they are always warning people about Hell.”

Response:

If we think something really bad might happen to someone, what’s wrong with warning them about it? Jesus warned people about Hell all the time and Christians are just following what Jesus taught.

In fact, if Jesus is God, then He knows what He is talking about when He says Hell is real, and so there really is a danger that people can go there for eternity. So the more fundamental question hinges upon whether or not Jesus was who He claimed to be. *If Jesus was a divine being, then whatever He said was true and there is a Hell. And if there is a Hell, there is absolutely nothing wrong with warning others about it.*

In fact, if Jesus is God, then He knows what He is talking about when He says Hell is real and so there really is a danger that people can go there for eternity. The more fundamental question hinges upon whether or not Jesus was who He claimed to be.

OBJECTION #7

“There is no evidence that Jesus ever existed.”

Response:

If that were true, then there’s no evidence that anyone else from ancient history ever existed either, since the evidence for Jesus is far greater than nearly all other figures from ancient history.

You should know that this objection expresses a very weird and radical view — well deserving of the name “crackpot” or “crank.” In fact, it is so off-the-wall that it is usually counterproductive to even argue against it, since by arguing against it one runs the risk of giving the objection more credibility than it deserves. But because this view is so widely touted by teenagers and the common “skeptic on the street” we can address it more here.

The truth is we have more evidence for Jesus than we have for anybody else in His time period. When we use the same historical standards as we do in other areas of ancient history, the historical evidence that Jesus existed is overwhelming. Virtually every professional historian regards the existence of Jesus as historically certain. There are numerous reasons for this, which we will only summarize here:

The Christian has every good reason to comfortably rest within the academic mainstream that Jesus really existed. Those who deny this intellectually marginalize themselves to the crackpot realm.

- 1. Ancient Christian sources say Jesus was a historical person:** Jesus is mentioned as a historical person in the New Testament epistles and the Gospels. Moreover, He is also mentioned in numerous Christian sources outside of the New Testament. *To reject all of these sources just because they are Christian and “biased” commits the fallacy of special pleading.* All an alleged “bias” here means is that they really cared about the issue, not that they were lying about it. Just because someone cares about something and thus might be said to be “biased” does not mean they cannot be accurate sources of information. Just like Jews can be reliable historical sources about the Holocaust, so too Christians can be reliable sources about Jesus.
- 2. Numerous non-Christian sources say Jesus was a historical person:** For example, *the ancient Jewish historian Josephus says Jesus was a historical person*, and he also mentions other New Testament figures as well, like John the Baptist, King Herod, Pilate, and others. Other ancient writers also mention Jesus and treat Him as a historical person. They didn’t think Jesus was a mythical figure, so why should we?
- 3. The historical Jesus is the best explanation for the rise of Christianity:** *If Jesus never existed; we would be without any explanation for the explosive origins of Christianity.* Why would there ever be a Christian religion that grew so rapidly if Jesus never existed? Why would the apostles risk their lives in promoting a man who never existed?
- 4. If Jesus never existed, why didn’t the early Jewish enemies of Christianity point this out?** *If Jesus never really existed, why didn’t any of the ancient rabbis (who hated Jesus and Christianity and wanted to stomp it out) ever use this argument?* Not one ancient rabbinical writing ever makes the argument that “Jesus never existed.” On the contrary, they all use the events of his life against him, saying he was a born out of wedlock, worked tricks with evil magic, taught heresy and led fellow Jews astray, and was justifiably executed. This means, at the very least, that Jesus’ worst enemies confirmed his existence!

Finally, here is a selection of quotes to show that there is no scholarly dispute about the existence of Jesus:

- 1. “Today nearly all historians, whether Christians or not, accept that Jesus existed.”** Graham Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus* (Oxford University Press, 1989) 145.
- 2. “That he was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be, since both Josephus and Tacitus...agree with the Christian accounts on at least that basic fact.”** John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (HarperOne 1995). p. 145.

3. **“Biblical scholars and classical historians now regard it [theories of the nonexistence of Jesus] as effectively refuted.”** Robert E. Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence* (Eerdmans Publishing, 2000) p. 16.
4. **[the theories of non-existence of Jesus are] “a thoroughly dead thesis.”** James D. G. Dunn, “Paul’s understanding of the death of Jesus” in *Sacrifice and Redemption* ed. S. W. Sykes (Cambridge University Press: 2007) 35-36.
5. **“Combining the evidence of Thallus, Pliny, Tacitus, and Suetonius one can accumulate enough data to refute the fanciful notion that Jesus never existed without even appealing to the testimony of Jewish or Christian sources.”** Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1987) p. 197

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OBJECTION #8

“I’m a follower of science. Christian belief is unscientific.”

Response:

What scientific discovery has ever disproved any Christian teaching? Evolution doesn’t contradict Christian doctrine; in fact, Saint Augustine thought that God could have created using an evolutionary type process.

There is nothing in science that disproves any Christian doctrine. Many famous scientists from the past and today have been and are Christians.

Sometimes it is said that believing in miracles is unscientific, but this is mistaken. The reason why is because science studies natural laws and the ways the physical universe operates barring any outside intervention by a divine agent. If God exists and is the author of these natural laws, God can intervene on occasion and provide an exception to the ordinary operations of nature to show that He is acting. This exceptional action no more undermines science than the exceptional presidential pardon undermines the legal system.

Sometimes people say “only science can give us knowledge” but this is self-refuting since there is no scientific experiment that can prove that statement. Therefore, we should reject that idea.

There is nothing in science that disproves any Christian doctrine. Many famous scientists from the past and today have been and are Christians.

Now a lot of times people mistake science for “naturalism” (the view that God does not exist and all that exists is just the natural, physical world). To be sure, the philosophy of naturalism conflicts with Christianity, however naturalism is not science and quite frankly there are no good arguments for naturalism anyway. So there simply is no good reason to think that Christianity is in conflict with science. **There is no war between science and religion. It’s a myth.**

OBJECTION #9

“People just believe in God as a crutch to handle life.”

Response:

This may be true for some Christians, but reaching for a crutch is not limited to religious people. In fact, people of all belief systems use some help or another to help them get through life — alcohol, Prozac, a stoic philosophy, or whatever.

The important question is not whether or not some people use Christianity as a crutch, but whether or not Christianity is *true*. If Jesus rose from the dead, then the Christian religion is true, regardless of how many people use it for a “crutch.” The *truth* of Christianity, then, is the more fundamental question.

OBJECTION #10

“Believing in Jesus is as silly as believing in Santa Claus or Zeus.”

Response:

This is a clear example of the straw man fallacy. The straw man fallacy occurs when one ignores a person’s actual position by misrepresenting it in order to make it easy to refute. But such misrepresentations do nothing to refute one’s true position. The reason why comparing Christian faith to belief in Santa Claus or Zeus commits the straw man fallacy is because the classic Christian position holds that there are good reasons for believing that Jesus was a divine being. *Jesus’ character, His fulfilment of messianic prophecy, and His resurrection from the dead verify His claim that He was God. To pretend that all Christians believe on “blind faith,” as if Jesus were some sort of a Santa Claus for grownups, is a straw man misrepresentation.*

In order to sincerely address Christianity, one needs to address the true claim and not some weak or false caricature of it. There are good reasons for believing

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in the divinity of Jesus while there are absolutely no good reasons to think that a god like Zeus exists. So the two cases are simply not parallel..

Ready To Learn More?

[Check out the Christ 101: The Complete Politically Incorrect Guide To Defending The Christian Faith Using Reason and Evidence.](#) A comprehensive program, **Christ 101** is a complete “all in one package” course in Christian apologetics. This is an in-depth, step-by-step and extensive program, broken down into a series of easy-to-follow lessons, along with helpful commentary from some of the most distinguished and respected scholars in these areas.

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Christ 101 has been carefully created and taught by philosopher and homeschooling father **Scott M. Sullivan, PhD**, and includes contributions from:

- Peter Kreeft, PhD
- Scott Hahn, PhD
- Gary Habermas, PhD
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- John Bergsma, PhD, and more

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