Stoa Apologetics Preparation for Monument Members

Season 22 Monument Release #11



Directions: Work through the source material in this download to help you understand this week’s selection of apologetics prompts. This release addresses approximately 5% of the total number of prompts you will need to be prepared for in your next tournament, so keep up the studying from week to week to ensure your knowledge in Apologetics. This week’s prompts are:

**Category 6: Christianity Compared (Part 1)**

1. Compare and contrast the Muslim view of God with the Christian view of God.
2. Compare and contrast the Hindu view of the nature of man with the Christian view of the nature of man.
3. Respond to the statement by Buddha: “No one saves us but ourselves. No one can and no one may. We ourselves must walk the path.” Translation of Dhammapada. No. 165. Karma: A Story of Buddhist Ethics. Chicago: Carus Publishing Co. 1984
4. Is karma a biblical concept?
5. Respond to the criticism that Christianity is narrow-minded and dangerous.
6. Are Jehovah’s Witnesses Christians?
7. Are Mormons Christians?

For a list of all the prompts for the year and all other downloads for NCFCA apologetics, visit your download page at <https://club.monumentmembers.com/stoa-apologetics/download-category/stoa-apologetics>.

Muslim vs. Christian View *by Joshua Johnson*

Compare and contrast the Muslim view of God with the Christian view of God.

Bible Verses

Numbers 23:19

Deuteronomy 32:4

Psalm 33:5; 51; 86:15; 109:21; 136:1-2

Isaiah 30:18

Lamentations 3:22-24

Micah 7:18

John 3:16-17

Romans 3:23-26; 1:20

Ephesians 1:7-8

Titus 3:3-8

Hebrews 6:16-18

1 John 4:7-8

Quotations

“The mercy of God. Another aspect of the love of God is His mercy or tender compassion. It is the love of God toward those who are in misery or distress…it contemplates man as one who is bearing the consequences of sin, and…is exercised only in harmony with the strictest justice of God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ…” –Louis Berkhof

“Only the Christian faith presents God’s grace as unconditional…If you’re not stunned by the thought of grace, then you aren’t grasping what grace offers you, or what it cost Jesus.” –Randy Alcorn

“For the Muslim, Allah is the only true God. There is no such blasphemous thing as the “Trinity.” Jesus Christ is a prophet of Allah; he is not the Son of God or God himself (Surah 4:171). The Muslim God is unapproachable by sinful man. He is so perfect and holy He can only communicate with mankind through a progression of angels and prophets. The Muslim God is a god of judgment, not grace; a god of wrath rather than love. The Muslim’s desire is to submit to the point where he can hold back the judging arm of Allah and, perhaps, through the capricious whim of Allah, inherent eternal life in an earthly paradise of gluttony and sexual gratification. Muslims have no concept of God as a loving and compassionate Father.” –Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*

“By Allah! I would not feel safe from the deception of Allah, even if I had one foot in paradise.” –Abu Bakr (Mohammad’s father-in-law), spoken while weeping.

“…Allah countered their schemes by schemes of His own. Allah is the best of schemers.” –Surah 3:54 (from the Qur’an)

“And those before them had plotted, but to Allah belongs the plan entirely. He knows what every soul earns, and the disbelievers will know for whom is the final home.” –Surah 13:42 (from the Qur’an)

“It is not [befitting] for Allah to take a son; exalted is He! When He decrees an affair, He only says to it, “Be,” and it is.” –Surah 19:35 (from the Qur’an)

“He whom Allah guides is he who is rightly guided, but whom he leads astray, those are the losers.” –Surah 7:178 (from the Qur’an)

Recommendations

*The Kingdom of the Cults* by Walter Martin

*Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammad?* by Timothy George

<http://www.answering-islam.org/authors/cornelius/makr.html>

<http://www.gotquestions.org/same-God.html>

<http://www.blogos.org/theologyapologetics/muslim-worship.php>

<http://www.ibnzura.com/answer.php?lang=en&id=71002&q=Is_Allah_a_deceiver_for_Muslims>

This is probably your *best* and *most credible* resource when addressing this topic. Yes, you will have to purchase a DVD, but it is a two hour long video by a former Muslim named Shahram Hadian who thoroughly addresses the topic of Chrislam. It is well worth your time and money! He clearly reveals the fundamental differences between Yahweh and Allah, as well as Christianity and Islam. Here’s the link: <http://www.tilproject.com/chrislam-exposed>

Commentary

Yahweh is not Allah. When you examine the heart of Christianity and Islam, the contrasts between God and Allah become increasingly more distinct. Unfortunately, many people you meet have bought the culture lie that they are one and the same. Therefore, this question could not be more important because not only do unbelievers need to hear the distinctions, but so do Christians.

With a topic this large, it is important to examine the key distinctions between the two worldviews and provide points of relevance, or why the distinctions are important. Therefore, I would recommend focusing on some of the larger issues concerning Yahweh and Allah. Examine the Scripture verses and recommended sources to determine what to speak on. Here are a few key distinctions to keep in mind when answering this topic.

According to Scripture, Yahweh is the One and only true God (Exodus 34:14). There are no other gods besides the LORD. Muslims would also affirm that Allah is the one and only true god. However, according to history, Allah is one of 360 gods/idols from the Qurayash tribe that Mohammad selected to be the primary god of the Muslims: the moon god (hence the crescent moon on the Islamic flags). Although Muslims will argue that Allah is still the only true god, history reveals that Allah came from a pile of 360 idols. Plus, the name “Allah” is pagan because moon worship goes back nearly 2500 years. Yahweh and Allah are clearly not the same.

Additionally, Yahweh is a God of love (1 John 4:7-8). God does not *try* to love people; rather, He is the very definition of what it means to love. It is part of His very nature. However, Allah is never once mentioned as a god of love in the Qur’an. He is mentioned as the chief god of deceivers (3:54), but never once as a god of love. How saddening, because Muslims have no real concept of true love since their understanding of God is not love.

Furthermore, Yahweh never lies (Numbers 23:19). The word of the LORD is trustworthy, and He will never go back on His promises and commands. Allah, however, can and does lie (Surah 7:178).

Blessings as you begin to address this important topic!

Hindu vs. Christian Nature *by Zack Seals*

Compare and contrast the Hindu view of the nature of man with the Christian view of the nature of man.

Bible Verses

Hebrews 9:27-28 (Men shall not taste death more then once)

Luke 23:43 (The thief on the cross was promised presence in heaven rather than another life)

Ecclesiastes 9:6 (Once dead your place in this world has ended)

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 (The same body that has perished will be raised)

Quotations

“Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these kings; nor in the future shall any of us cease to be. As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from childhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change.” – Bhagavad Gita, Hindu scriptures, 2:12-13

“Worn-out garments are shed by the body; Worn-out bodies are shed by the dweller within the body. New bodies are donned by the dweller, like garments.” – Bhagavad Gita, Hindu scriptures, 2:22

“According to the Vedas, the scriptures of the Hindus, the highest Divinity or God is called Brahman. This is actually another name for God. Brahman is said to be present everywhere, pure, conscious, immortal bliss and knowledge absolute. It is said that the human soul is also of the same nature. According to one school of Hindu philosophy, man and Brahman in their real nature are one. According to another school of Vedanta, individual soul is a part of Brahman, like a limb in a body or a branch of a tree. According to the third school, individual soul is separate from Brahman but related to it, and of same nature. We do not need to go into these philosophical details. The main point is that the soul of man is pure, immortal, conscious, full of bliss and knowledge. These characteristics are covered due to mental impurities like attachment and aversion, fear, hatred, anger, lust, etc. As one removes these, one gets more and more joy, more and more knowledge.”[[1]](#footnote-1) – Swami Brahmeshananda, Senior Monk

Recommendations

*Jesus Among Other Gods* by Ravi Zacharias

*Kingdom of the Cults* by Walter Martin, Chapter 14

Commentary

Surprisingly, this question can be addressed with a number of approaches. The Hindu’s view of man is intimately tied with their view of all of reality as well as the divine more specifically. You can approach it from the view of reincarnation, the view of karma, the view of pantheism, etc. Much of what can be said on this question has been addressed previously[[2]](#footnote-2), so here it is recommended to go to the resources provided as well as the verses above.

Quite simply, reincarnation can be defined as “the rebirth of a soul in a new body”.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The biblical view of the nature of the resurrection is clearly at odds with the Hindu’s view as stated in the Bhagavad Gita, but can it even work on its own system?

Peter Kreeft[[4]](#footnote-4), a well-known apologist and philosopher, thinks not and is helpful here. In his *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, he writes “Why are our souls imprisoned in bodies? Is it the just punishment for evils we committed in past reincarnations? But why were those past reincarnations necessary? For the same reason. But the beginning of the process that justly imprisoned our souls in bodies in the first place-this must have antedated the series of bodies. How could we have committed evil in the state of perfect, pure, heavenly spirituality? Further, if we sinned in that paradise, it is not paradisiacal after all. Yet that is the state that reincarnation is supposed to lead us back to after all our embodied yearnings are over.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

Robin Collins, a noted philosopher, has written that this view of Hinduism from the teachings of Ramanuja leads to an additional insurmountable problem of evil. He writes, “The amount of evil that needs to be explained is infinitely larger than that faced by Western versions of theism, since, according to Ramanuja, each soul has committed an infinite number of evil acts and endured an infinite period of suffering. Unfortunately, as Julius Lipner points out, neither Ramanuja, nor any other orthodox Hindu theologian, ever attempted to address this particular problem of evil since they took the eternality of the world and souls as an “unquestioned datum for life and thought”[[6]](#footnote-6)

It can be seen then that there are really numerous difficulties with this view of man’s soul in a state of eternal reincarnation. Conversely, the doctrine of man’s resurrection in Christian teaching is free from logical difficulties and can be consistently held by the believer in God’s Word.

Christian vs. Buddhist Destiny *by Caleb Pena*

Respond to the statement by Buddha: “No one saves us but ourselves. No one can and no one may. We ourselves must walk the path.” Translation of Dhammapada. No. 165. Karma: A Story of Buddhist Ethics. Chicago: Carus Publishing Co. 1984

Bible Verses

Genesis 11

Genesis 50:19-20

Isaiah 46:10

Psalm 49:13

Proverbs 21:30

John 3:36; 10:10

Revelation 20:11-21:8

Recommendations

*Images of Jesus: How Jesus Is Perceived and Portrayed in Non-European Cultures* by Anton Wessels

*Kingdom of the Cults* by Walter Martin, Chapter 9

Commentary

NOTE: This prompt was originally states as “Compare and contrast the Christian view of man’s destiny with that of Buddhism.”

In the Buddhist conception of destiny (Karma), there is no all-powerful agent who designs and plans our future. Instead, where a man or woman ends up depends entirely on his actions in this life and his or her previous lives. Our paths are determined, but by ourselves not God. Side-stepping the age-old Free Will debate, orthodox Christianity maintains that God is sovereign over all creation and any attempt to thwart his will is doomed to fail.

One helpful (although hard to get your hands on) resource is the Anton Wessels’s work listed above. The author offers useful insight into how followers of eastern religions understand Christ and his atoning work. Any attempt at evangelizing outside of the United States requires us to see the world outside of the context of the American cultural milieu. Passages in Scripture talking about fate/predestination conjure up very different pictures in the minds of westerners than they do with easterners. Another important work discussing this: *Silence* by the Japanese novelist Shusaku Endo.

Karma

Is karma a biblical concept?

## Bible Verses

Matthew 3:8-10, 7:17-19, 26:52

Romans 2:6-11

2 Corinthians 5:10

Galatians 6:7-8

Ephesians 2:8-9

(more in commentary)

## Quotations

“To a culture that believes they ‘go to heaven’ based on whether or not they are morally pure, or that they understand some theological ideas, or that they are very spiritual, Jesus is completely unnecessary.” –Donald Miller

“The more hopeless is the situation, the more hopeful must be the man.” –G. K. Chesterton

“There have been many who, to the manifest danger of eternal ruin, have abused the doctrine of Salvation by Grace; and vainly trusted in Christ for pardon and acceptance, when by their vicious lives they have plainly proved the groundlessness of their pretensions. The tree is to be known by its fruits; and there is too much reason to fear that there is no principle of faith, when it does not decidedly evince itself by the fruits of holiness.” –William Wilberforce

“Well there’s a difference, you know
‘tween having faith and playing make believe
One will make you grow the other one just make you sleep
Talk about it
But I really think you oughtta take a leap off of the ship
Before you claim to walk on water
Faith without works is like a song you can’t sing
It’s about as useless as a screen door on a submarine.” –Rich Mullins

## Recommendations

“Karma and Sin Contrasted” by Jeremy Butler, Christian Apologetics Research Ministry (CARM), <http://carm.org/karma-and-sin>

“What are the beliefs of Hinduism?” by Ryan Turner, Christian Apologetics Research Ministry (CARM), <http://carm.org/hinduism-beliefs>

<http://www.christianapologeticsalliance.com/2013/03/31/evaluating-buddhism-1-introduction-to-buddhism/>

## Commentary

At first glance it would seem we would answer yes to this topic. God teaches clearly a sense of consequences for every action. That is made clear in Deuteronomic theology as well as the often quoted verse of Galatians 6:7-8. However, such an answer would actually be incorrect as it misses the true definition of karma and greatest contrast between the gospel and Hindu/Buddhist belief—hope.

This question is complicated to answer, so let’s start with a simple definition of karma: “the force created by a person’s actions that is believed in Hinduism and Buddhism to determine what that person’s next life will be like” (Merriam-Webster). Because Hinduism and Buddhism offer neither a belief in God or a chance of salvation, Christianity’s approach to consequences is quite different. The doctrine of original sin teaches that all have sinned, and in our righteousness we are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), so no amount of good works will assist us in the afterlife.

This may sound hopeless, except that there is redemption for sinners. A key emphasis here, then, is how hopeful Christianity is compared to religious beliefs that subscribe to karma. We are loved and have a hope of salvation, and Paul spoke about how hope does not disappoint in Romans 5:1-5. Karma, because it denies the existence of grace and salvation, places all the work on humans but gives very little promise as to how each action will be rewarded.

It would be interesting for a student to try this challenge: write your speech in such a way that you appear to be defending karma for the first minute or so, then point out what a bleak outlook it is, and then spend the rest of the speech laying out how powerful grace and hope is as an alternative. End the speech with a sober warning to the audience about faith without works being dead (James 1:22-27), thus reversing the expectations of the judges twice. Mentioning all three things – the depravity of karma, the hope of grace, and the sober danger of faith without works – addresses this question most fully.

Narrow-minded and Dangerous *by Maggie Topper*

Respond to the criticism that Christianity is narrow-minded and dangerous.

Verses

[Luke 9:23; 11:23, 28](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+9%3A23%3B+11%3A23%2C+28++&version=NIV)

[Matthew 7:13-14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+7%3A13-14&version=NIV)

[1 Peter 3:15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+3%3A15&version=NIV)

[John 8:24; 14:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+8%3A24%3B+14%3A6&version=NIV)

[Acts 4:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+4%3A12&version=NIV)

Quotations

“In our age of ‘tolerance,’ moral relativism is touted as the supreme virtue. Those who favor one faith system over another or—even worse—claim a knowledge of absolute truth are considered narrow-minded, unenlightened, or even bigoted.” - Michael Houdmann

“Jesus is not one of many ways to approach God, nor is He the best of several ways; He is the only way.” - A.W. Tozer

“If Christ had not gone to the cross and suffered in our stead, the just for the unjust, there would not have been a spark of hope for us. There would have been a mighty gulf between ourselves and God, which no man ever could have passed.” - J.C. Ryle

“Who else but Christ can rescue you and bring you into the forgiven family of God? He is the exclusive way to God. He is a narrow way, but a sufficient one.” -Jim Eliff

“When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” - Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Recommendations

*Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*Is Jesus the Only Way?* By Philip Graham Ryken

Jesus: The Only Way To God by John Piper

<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/faith/becoming-a-christian/is-christ-the-only-way/is-christ-the-only-way>

<http://www.josh.org/resources/study-research/answers-to-skeptics-questions/why-is-jesus-the-only-way-to-god/>

<http://www.monergism.com/jesus-only>

<http://www.gotquestions.org/absolute-truth.html>

Commentary:

NOTE: This commentary originally answered the question, “How many ways are there to heaven?”

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines *narrow-mindedness* as “not willing to accept opinions, beliefs, or behaviors that are unusual or different from your own.” *Accept* is defined as “to give admittance or approval to.” By these commonly understood definitions of narrow-mindedness and acceptance, the Christian’s belief that there is only one way to heaven could be callednarrow-minded. Christianity is not willing to give admittance to other beliefs on the way to heaven. It says that Jesus Christ is the *only* way. Of course, this does not and should not mean that Christians ought to automatically silence or exclude anyone who believes something different. We must show respect and love to all people, regardless of what religious belief system they adhere to. Every human being is made in the image of God. We can and should listen to and engage in conversation with people of differing beliefs. Preparing for that is a big reason why we study apologetics in the first place! Believing the Bible, however, does necessitate that we believe there is only one way to heaven. We would first have to deny the infallibility of Scripture before we could deny that Jesus is the only way to heaven. The Bible denies the claims that there are “many roads to God” both implicitly and explicitly. Implicitly through the broad picture of salvation laid out in the Word, and explicitly through specific Bible verses.

The message of the Bible implicitly shows us that there can only be one way to God. The idea that there could be more than one way to heaven does not make logical sense if you believe that Jesus died to provide salvation to mankind. If you believe the Word of God when it says that the God of the universe sent His only and beloved Son to be crucified and bear the wrath of God for the sins of the world, it just doesn’t make sense to believe that God would also make salvation possible through other means. Why would God become man and die for our sins if He would also allow mankind to solve their problems by their own means and devisings? It would render Christ’s sacrifice on the cross pointless, because humanity wouldn’t really *need* Him. His atoning sacrifice would just be one of many possible ways for man to pick from. If you believe Jesus is *a* way to heaven, you must logically believe He is the only way.

Staying on the path of logical persuasion, let’s look at other teachings on the “way to heaven”. If you look and study, you’ll see that no other means of ‘salvation’ prescribed by any other religion is manifestly consistent with the demands God lays out in Scripture. Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Mormonism, and Jehovah’s Witnesses tell us we can reach heaven if we follow their prescribed code of works. The Bible tells us that every human being is utterly sinful and God requires complete holiness to enter heaven. Hinduism teaches that we can reach a version of heaven when we become one with the gods. The Bible tells us that there is only one God. All of these religions must deny the teachings of Scripture to be logically consistent, and Christianity must deny the teachings of these religions to be logically consistent. Almost all religions claim an absolute truth of some sort. To try to blend religions and allow for more than one to be true is to be intellectually dishonest. The Bible lays out clear demands for who can get into heaven, and makes clear that man cannot do it Himself. Jesus alone qualifies to be our Savior. He is the only man that ever existed who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, God in flesh, completely holy, and rose again proving His power over death itself.

There is more than just logic to prove this idea, though. Jesus Christ Himself explicitly rules out the possibility that there are any other ways to heaven but Himself. He even says that the road to life is narrow! He says that He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Him(John 14:6). Jesus makes narrow claims, and He absolutely does not leave any other options open to us. If we are to trust the Bible and trust Christ, then we must believe there is only one way to heaven. Yes, it is a “narrow-minded” belief in that it does not permit any other prescription to heaven to hold total truth. Christ makes an absolute truth statement when he says that He is THE way. Whenever an absolute truth statement is made, there will inevitably be “losing sides” that cannot fit with that absolute truth. Any teaching that does not teach Christ as the only way to God is one of those “losing sides” by necessity of what Jesus says.

Jesus not only makes narrow claims, but urges us to follow in a narrow path. Christianity’s exclusive claims to salvation are echoed in her command to exclusive devotion. When answering this question, you want to impress on the unbeliever the seriousness of following Jesus, what you’ve committed your life to. If Jesus truly is the only way to be right with God, then death in pursuit of following Him is the only road to true and lasting life. Dietrich Bonhoeffer makes this vividly clear in his book *Cost of Discipleship.* Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German theologian who knew what it meant to follow Jesus in the narrow way. In the 1930s, he was a leader in the church of men who were opposed to the Nazi regime. He escaped to America when war was imminent, but realized that to have any credibility in the German church he must suffer with her and so he returned to Germany. Soon thereafter Dietrich Bonhoeffer was put in a concentration camp. He was executed by order of a top-German official only weeks before Allied soldiers liberated the camp. While Bonhoeffer paid the highest earthly price for following Christ (his life), he had the assurance of a beautiful eternity awaiting him in heaven.

As you prepare to answer this question, I hope that you will consider how your own life bears witness to the narrowness of Christianity, and the narrow path you must walk in this world. As Christians, we must follow the path that our blessed Redeemer walked in. That path ultimately led to death, and ours will, too. That death, however, leads us to something far greater—eternity in the blissful presence of the Lord. It may be narrow-minded to believe there is only one way to heaven, but that doesn’t mean it isn’t true. There is only one way to heaven, and while we are on this earth, we must proclaim that way to the world.

Jehovah’s Witnesses *by Zack Seals*

Are Jehovah’s Witnesses Christian?

Bible Verses

*To show Jesus = Jehovah (Use the New World Translation):*

John 12:40-42 quotes Is. 6:1-2 (John is referring the reader to the “glory” that Isaiah saw. Whose glory was this in Is. 6? YHWH’s glory. Whose was it in John 12? Jesus’ glory.**)**

Hebrews 1:10 to Psalm 102:25-27(Verse 8 of Hebrews 1 is clearly referring to the Son so verse 10 must be as well. Consider where it comes from in Psalm 102:25-27. There the passage is clearly about Jehovah God!)

Psalm 110:1 and Psalm 110:5 (The first verse is important because JW’s love to use it to prove that “Jehovah” and “my Lord” are two different people. YHWH is used in the first part and only Adonai in the second. What’s important here though is the relation between the two. In verse 1 the Lord is at the right hand of Jehovah. Therefore. Jehovah is at the left hand of the Son. Which means that the Son sits at the right hand of the Father. In verse 5, however, it clearly says that the one at the right hand is Jehovah! Compare the two.)

*Other important verses:*
Proverbs 30:4; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Corinthians 11:2-4; Colossians 1:15-20; 2:9; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 1:1-4; 1 John 2:18-27; 5:20

Quotations

“Thus the Bible is an organizational book and belongs to the Christian congregation as an organization, not to individuals, regardless of how sincerely they may believe that they can interpret the Bible,” (Watchtower, Oct. 1, 1967, p. 587)

“From time to time, there have arisen from among the ranks of Jehovah’s people those, who, like the original Satan, have adopted an independent, faultfinding attitude...They say that it is sufficient to read the Bible exclusively, either alone or in small groups at home. But, strangely, through such ‘Bible reading,’ they have reverted right back to the apostate doctrines that commentaries by Christendom’s clergy were teaching 100 years ago...” (Watchtower, Aug. 15, 1981)

Recommendations

“Behold I Stand at the Door and Knock” by Michael Licona (can be accessed for free online)

Always Be Ready (ABR), http://www.alwaysbeready.com/jehovahs-witnesses

Christian Apologetics Research Ministry (CARM), http://carm.org/jehovahs-witnesses

Apologetics Press.org “Jehovah’s Witnesses” http://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?topic=79

Commentary

This is a particularly difficult question due to its seemingly deliberate broad scope. While it may be tempting to approach this topic comprehensively and state, at least at a surface level, as many differences as possible it would be far more fruitful to go “deeper” on fewer issues. Take, for example, Jehovah’s Witnesses (hereafter JW) eschatological views. It would take you far more than six minutes simply to *state* the differences it takes with “traditional” Christianity and that’s before you even have time to state the Christian view! Remember, apologetics is about *defending* the faith and that should involve more than a mere encyclopedic knowledge of what another view holds to. You should walk away from this speech not only knowing what they believe, but how to respond to it from a Christian perspective.

That said, my recommendation is that you cover at least three of the most important variances between JW’s and Christians: The nature of God, the nature of Jesus, and the nature of the soul.

The first and primary difference that has to be brought to attention is their clear rejection of any form of Trinitarianism. Their reasoning for this is rather straightforward. Multiple times the Bible says that “God” (or Jehovah as they translate the Hebrew word YHWH) is “one” (Mark 12:29, Zechariah 14:9), and there is none like Him (Exodus 8:10, Isaiah 43:10, Psalm 18:31). It will also be pointed out that Jesus Himself said in Matthew 4:10 “It is written: It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service.”[[7]](#footnote-7) Therefore, to say that God is somehow three as well is biblically false. Additionally though, it will be said that the very concept of the Trinity is so confusing if not logically contradictory that it can’t possibly be true. Here, two important considerations are necessary. A proper definition of how the doctrine of the Trinity has traditionally been defined (by carefully distinguishing between persons and being) will clear up the logical contradiction. Unfortunately, their main arguments against this core tenet of traditional Christianity are based off of misunderstandings of what we mean when we talk about the Trinity. An appropriate study of the historical definition of the Trinity should cover their logical arguments against it quite simply. How to respond to their biblical arguments though will take bible verses of your own and that takes us to their view of Jesus.

Of course, it has to be addressed as well that Christians and JW’s are working off of totally different scriptures. Yes, their doctrine of divine inspiration is largely the same, but the New World Translation takes vast liberties when it comes to translating verses that speak on Jesus as “Jehovah” as well as a number of other doctrines. What you will find then is it isn’t as simple as quoting a view of the classic proof texts which show the deity of Christ (such as John 1:1) because you’re working off of two different texts. While a lengthy discussion on why their translation is wrong may be fruitful over the course of a long conversation it is hardly viable for a six minute speech. The best way to respond to their views then is to show your judge how JW’s are ultimately inconsistent in asserting that Jesus isn’t the same as God through their own translation! Three passages have been provided above where you can point out how the NWT itself demonstrates that Jesus is Jehovah and if this is indeed the case then their view falls. Another interesting statement on their views of Jesus is that He was the same as Michael the archangel[[8]](#footnote-8). Once again, the reader is directed to Hebrews 1:5-13. Even a cursory view of these verses will show that the very argument the author is trying to make is Jesus’s superiority over the angels rather than being one of them!

Finally then, it’s important to recognize their view on the soul. They say that the soul and the body are one and the same. It does not live separately from the body and the soul ceases to exist after death[[9]](#footnote-9). Here it is recommended to review and study the Christian doctrine of Hell and how eternal punishment is derived from the Bible.

Question: Mormons *by John Bush*

Are Mormons Christians?

Bible Verses

Isaiah 43:10

John 1:1

John 4:24

Matthew 16:18

Ephesians 2:8-9

Quotations

“...the fall of Adam is seen in Mormonism as a good thing! Adam had to sin...[so] we could have bodies and prove our worthiness to become gods. Since their god is not that holy and sin is not that bad, real grace is not needed only a grace described like this in the Book of Mormon: ‘If ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you.” - D. Jason Wallace

“Let’s put it simply. Islam is closer to Christianity than Mormonism is. If that causes you to stumble, then you are clearly struggling to recognize substance versus verbiage. Mormonism uses our language, our terminology, but it fills those words with utterly foreign meanings.” - Dr. James White

“God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible,—I say, if you were to see him today, *you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man...We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea,* and take away the veil, so that you may see.” - Joseph Smith (italics added)

Recommendations

Justin Taylor, *FAQ on the Difference between Mormonism and Christianity* http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justintaylor/2010/08/30/an-faq-on-the-difference-between-mormonism-and-biblical-christianity/

Pastor Jeff Durbin, *Presuppositional Apologetics and Mormonism* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nf7ddysgVsM&feature=youtu.be

Commentary

The Bible presents a world populated by two basic kinds of people. Not men and women, rich and poor, intelligent and ignorant, powerful and weak, but sons of God and children of wrath (Ephesians 2:1-7). Jesus divides the world into those with Him and against Him (Matthew 12:30). Every person in creation is either covenantally in Christ or in Adam (Romans 5). The most basic fact about a person is not their national or ethnic group, the color of their skin, or even whether they are a “good” individual to the rest of humanity. The most basic fact about a person is whether they are in rebellion or faith-union with Jesus Christ, God Almighty.

In the broader American culture, many would question why this subject is even worth discussing. Our culture reduces faith to a purely private question, impolite to address in public discourse. As Christians, we cannot accept this. Jesus Christ is the only person who possess the words of eternal life, as transmitted in His gospel (John 6:68; Romans 1:16). After His ascension, Jesus has given His church this same message, endowed with His very own authority (Matthew 28:18-20). We must know if we are speaking with a Christian because we must know whether they need to be encouraged in their faith, or called to repent and believe in the good news of the Christ’s death and resurrection for the salvation of sinners.

We are commanded to share Christ’s message with graciousness, respect, and love (Colossians 4:6; 1 Peter 3:15). While the audience for your speech are professing Christians, remember that your task is to speak as if the audience is unsympathetic. The most natural unsympathetic group to address would be a Mormon who claims to be a Christian. Engaging with a hypothetical Mormon allows you to not only address whether the Church of Latter-Day Saints is a faithful church of Christ, but also transition into faithfully presenting that gospel. I don’t want to present you with an outline of how to address this subject, but I would encourage you to remember that ultimately we cannot change the hearts of other people with our purity, love, or intellect, as important as those things are. Your fantastic speaking skills (or lack thereof!) cannot save or damn a soul (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). Only God can change hearts, and He promises to do that through the work of His gospel (Romans 1:16; Isaiah 55:11; Ephesians 2:8-9). This question should of course be approached with intellectual rigor, genuine love, and careful preparation. But unless you approach it in humble, prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit, these elements are worthless.

Mormonism is a religion founded by a man named Joseph Smith in the 19th century. Smith claimed to be a prophet of God and receive visions from the Almighty. Joseph Smith taught that the church had fallen entirely into apostasy a few years after the ascension of Christ to glory. According to Joseph Smith, an angel gave him golden plates, which he then interpreted and published as the *Book of Mormon.* This, along with further alleged revelation, formed the doctrinal basis of the movement which would become the LDS church. A trail of scandal, schism, and stigma drove Joseph Smith’s successor, Brigham Young, and the growing Mormon church into Utah, where they established a community that has persisted to the modern day. From that base, Mormonism has sent missionaries to dozens of countries around the world, with some success.

Recent years have seen concerted attempts by LDS leaders and missionaries to mainstream Mormonism as just another (more accurate and faithful) Christian denomination. Even many Mormons themselves are not told much of what Joseph Smith taught. These efforts are misleading because Mormonism differs from Biblical and historical Christianity on almost every major theological and philosophical point. Biblical teaching diverges from Mormonism on basic questions pertaining to God, man, creation, and salvation. This article will compare the Mormon and Biblical perspectives on these questions. The speaker must decide how to combine this information with the Biblical perspective on evangelism and apologetics in order to faithfully communicate with an unsympathetic audience.

Let’s begin with the nature and character of God. Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck writes in his *Reformed Dogmatics* that, “The knowledge of God is the central, core dogma, the exclusive content of theology. From the start of its labors dogmatic theology is shrouded in mystery; it stands before God the incomprehensible One. This knowledge leads to adoration and worship; to know God is to live. Knowing God is possible for us because God is personal, exalted above the earth and yet in fellowship with human beings on earth.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

For the Christian, there is nothing more essential than the doctrine of God. To truly live, we must know the God of Scripture, the only God. Christian theology embraces both the mystery of God’s exaltation above creation and His personal presence in it. Mormonism breaks this tension in favor of a god who is just like us. In the third quote posted in the beginning of this article, Joseph Smith claims that God did not exist from all eternity, but had a beginning in time. The Scriptures, however, says that God “inhabits eternity” (Isaiah 57:15), is from “everlasting to everlasting” (Psalm 41:13), and the “everlasting God.” Most conclusively, Isaiah prophecies of God, “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.” (44:6) Mormonism denies God’s eternal nature, one of the most basic facts of who He is. It is impossible to know God and life through Him but deny His eternal character.

As Bavinck said, the knowledge of God is the “exclusive content of theology.” We cannot think rightly of anything else if we do not understand God rightly. Because it has a warped view of God, Mormonism also distorts what it means to be human. While Christianity teaches that mankind was created to be God’s representatives and image bearers, eternally worshipping and communing with the one God, Mormonism believes something very different. Lorenzo Snow summarized Mormon doctrine in this way, “As man now is, God once was; as God is now man may be.”[[11]](#footnote-11) Mormonism teaches that God the Father was once a man like us. Joseph Smith even taught that if we could see God the Father, He would look like an ordinary human being. God Himself, on Mormon testimony, had a god before Him, and even that god’s father had a god. This regress continues infinitely, on many views. The LDS teaches that if a man is exceptionally faithful he will receive his own planet and be god to it, just like our god received earth. The belief that man will be “like God” is a lie that traces its way back to the very beginning of sin in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:5).

Christian theology historically has taught that God created the universe *ex nihilo*, or out of nothing. This is not the teaching of the Mormon church.[[12]](#footnote-12) Rather, they believe (and point to ambiguities in the Hebrew of Genesis 1 to support) that God merely reorganized eternal matter into orderly forms. The Scriptures more broadly, however, prove that such a reading of Genesis 1 is not tenable, and it falls outside the historic teaching of the Christian church (John 1:3; Hebrews 11:3; Rev. 4:11).[[13]](#footnote-13) This is important because the Mormon view of creation relegates God to a sort of organizer or craftsman—not a creator. In this view, God is no longer seen as the source and fount of all reality, but must work within the confines of equally ultimate matter. God, the true God, is “most free, most absolute” and His breath brings forth all things.[[14]](#footnote-14) This basic truth is fundamental to Christian theology and right knowledge of God.

The last area of Mormon theology we will address is their distortion of the gospel. The apostle Paul clearly teaches that anyone departing from the true gospel is out of communion with God (Galatians 1:8-9). The true gospel is that God Himself (Matthew 1:23), in the person of Jesus Christ, came down from heaven (John 3:13), assumed a true human nature (Galatians 4:4; John 1:1,14; Colossians 1:19), lived, died, and rose from the dead to deliver His people from their sins (Ephesians 1:7, Romans 4:25; Matthew 1:21) and redeem them unto Himself (Titus 2:14; Acts 20:28). This is manifestly not the gospel of Mormonism. While they may claim some of the same language, they divest the words of their orthodox meaning. When they talk about God, they do not mean the eternal and absolute trinity Christians worship. When they talk about Jesus Christ, they do not understand Him to be of one substance with the Father, but spirit-child of the Father, like us. While faithful Christianity teaches that Christ has truly acquired salvation for His people and offers it by His grace to be received in faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), Mormonism teaches that “We are saved by grace, after all we can do.” (2 Nephi 25:23) This gospel is not truly good news, and it cannot save.

1. “Nature of Man.” Nature of Man. N.p., n.d. Web. 24 Dec. 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See my articles on Vivekananda’s quote as well as “What is the essential nature of man?” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “Reincarnation.” *Merriam-Webster*. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 24 Dec. 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. It needs to be stated here that the author recognizes that Kreeft is a Catholic apologist and therefore does not endorse all of his views. Rather it is specifically recommended to review his insights on this particular subject. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Kreeft, Peter J., and Ronald Tacelli. *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*. Crowborough: Monarch, 1994. Print. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Collins, Robin. “Eastern Religions.” *Reason for the Hope within*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999. N. pag. Print. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *What Does the Bible Really Teach?.* Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 2005. Print. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. “Who Is Michael the Archangel?” *JW.ORG*. N.p., n.d. Web. 23 Dec. 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *“Let God Be True”...* [Brooklyn]: Watch Tower Bible &Tract Society, 1952. Print. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Bavinck, H., Bolt, J., & Vriend, J. (2004). *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation* (Vol. 2, p. 27). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow,* ed. Clyde J. Williams [1984], 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See Bruce R. McConkie (June 1982). [“Christ and the Creation”](http://www.lds.org/ensign/1982/06/christ-and-the-creation?lang=eng). Ensign. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See William Lane Craig’s article “[*Creatio ex nihilo*: A Critique of the Mormon Doctrine of Creation](http://www.reasonablefaith.org/creatio-ex-nihilo-a-critique-of-the-mormon-doctrine-of-creation#ixzz3m7bsAIw2)“ for an in-depth look at this question. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Westminster Confession of Faith *“Of God, and of the Holy Trinity”* (WCF, II.I) http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf\_with\_proofs/ [↑](#footnote-ref-14)