

Write the Truth

How Christian Writers Can Engage Our Cultural Crisis

By Bill Watkins

I. The Condition of American Culture

A. Overall

1. Post-Christian
2. Secular
3. Pagan
4. Divided

B. Examples

1. Confusion about truth
2. Science and facts
3. Group obsession
4. The racial divide
5. Gender matters
6. Sexual orientation
7. Life worthy of life
8. Language abuse
9. Politicization of the public “dialogue”

- 10. Government on high
- 11. Controlled power centers
- 12. The God problem
- 13. The Judeo-Christian religion
- 14. Bible ignorance
- 15. The human Jesus
- 16. The growing antagonism toward Christians, Christianity, Jews, Judaism, and religious liberty

II. Why the Hostility against Us?

- A. We have beliefs about _____ realities
- B. We have _____ behaviors
- C. Consider . . .

Issues	American culture . . .	Historic Christianity . . .
Truth	Believes <u>truth</u> is relative & perspectival, while asserting many truth claims as absolute & non-perspectival	Contends all <u>truth</u> is absolute & non-perspectival (all truth is ultimately God’s truth), though how truth is applied can vary ¹
Science	Convinced that <u>science</u> is the only source of empirical fact	Provides the foundation that makes <u>science</u> possible while still seeing it as a fallible human pursuit ²

¹ Truth is absolute (Psa. 100:5; 111:7–8; 119:160; 146:6) and grounded in the God who cannot lie (Prov. 8:7–9; Isa. 65:16; Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18). See also Vernon C. Grounds, “The Truth about Truth,” in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38:2 (June 1995), 219–29, and Norman L. Geisler, “Truth, Nature of,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Baker Books, 1999), 741–45.

Issues	American culture . . .	Historic Christianity . . .
Group Identity	Obsessed with <u>group identity</u>	Believers are defined by their Family identity with the church’s Head, Jesus Christ; the self is intrinsically valuable, morally & spiritually corrupt, & yet redeemable & transformable ³
Race	Defines us & divides us by <u>race</u>	Only one race—the human race; humanity should not be divided against itself; all humans are equal in Christ & as divine image-bearers ⁴
Gender	Believes that <u>gender</u> is elastic & humanly assigned	Divinely established as male & female ⁵
Sexual Orientation	Believes that <u>sexual orientation</u> is genetically permanent	<u>Human sexuality</u> adversely affected by the Fall; only heterosexual orientation is a moral good ⁶
Life	Believes that only wanted <u>life</u> is worthy of life; supports abortion, infanticide, & euthanasia	All human life is worthy of life, for all human beings are God’s image-bearers so have intrinsic worth from the womb onward; opposes abortion, infanticide, & euthanasia ⁷
Government	Moving toward statism & socialism; looks to <u>government</u> intervention to solve almost all human problems & needs; the state is the highest authority	God is the highest authority; human <u>government</u> divinely established to uphold the good & punish evil; looks to proper government intervention as a means of fulfilling its divine purpose ⁸
Judeo-Christianity	Perceives <u>the Judeo-Christian religion</u> & those who embrace it as hateful, hostile, racist, divisive, dangerous, & ignorant	Christians love good; hate evil; know & proclaim the truth; seek the truth in all spheres of human endeavor; avoid & refute error; do good to all peoples; engage the culture; expect persecution ⁹

² See Nancy R. Pearcey and Charles B. Thaxton, *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994).

³ On the church as family/household, see Eph. 2:19–22; 1 Tim. 3:15; Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Knox Press, 2004). On the human individual as divine image-bearer so intrinsically valuable even while still fallen, see Gen.1:27; 9:6; Jam. 3:8–9. On humans as redeemable and transformable, see Rom., Gal., and Eph.

⁴ See Gen. 1:27; Mal. 2:10; Acts 17:26; Gal. 3:28; H. D. McDonald, *The Christian View of Man* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1981); Ray S. Anderson, *On Being Human: Essays in Theological Anthropology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1982); G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, Studies in Dogmatics series (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1962).

⁵ Gen. 1:27.

⁶ See Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues and Options*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), chs. 15–16.

⁷ See Gen.1:27; 9:6; Keith A. Fournier and William D. Watkins, *In Defense of Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1996); Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, chs. 9–10.

⁸ Consider Jesus’s ministry among the people and his interactions with the religious and political leaders (the Gospels), and the disciples’ ministry among the people and their interactions with the religious and political leaders (esp. Acts). See also Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Cor. 2:6–8; 6:1–8; Rev. 13–18; Oscar Cullman, *The State in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1963).

⁹ Psa. 97:10; 119:128; Prov. 8:12–13; Amos 5:14–15; Luke 6:27–36; John 15:18–20; Rom. 12:9–13:10.

Issues	American culture . . .	Historic Christianity . . .
God, Bible, Jesus	Judeo-Christian concept of <u>God</u> is unworthy of belief; the <u>Bible</u> is a mixture of history & myth; <u>Jesus</u> may be historical but he was not divine	The Judeo-Christian <u>God</u> exists & is worthy of belief & obedience; the <u>Bible</u> is God’s Word, is true in all it affirms, & is historical & futuristic; <u>Jesus</u> is God-incarnate, the second Person of the Trinity, the most important historical figure, & will come again to judge, reign, & renew ¹⁰

D. In short, our beliefs and behaviors . . .

1. Challenge and offend the authorities of self, group, and state

2. Cooperate with the convicting work of the Holy Spirit: “when he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment” (John 16:8)

III. Hostility Comes with Christ

- A. Our identity with Christ will generate some _____ toward us (John 15:18–20).

- B. Jesus was offensive to many people and groups.
 1. Matthew 11:6
 2. Matthew 13:57
 3. Romans 9:33

- C. Jesus was slandered (Matthew 11:19).

- D. Before Jesus’s final week, there had been seven instances of official plotting against him, two efforts to arrest him, and three assassination attempts. Jesus entered Jerusalem knowing he was

¹⁰ On God, see J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973); Peter Kreeft, *The God Who Loves You* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1988); Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2003). On the Bible, see Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986); John W. Wenham, *Christ and the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: 1972). On Jesus, see Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ: A Journalist’s Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998); Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland, eds., *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995); Gary R. Habermas, *The Verdict of History* (Eastbourne: Monarch, 1988); John Stott, *The Incomparable Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

in mortal danger (Mark 3:1–6; Luke 4:23–30; 13:31–33; John 7:1, 25–27, 40–52; 8:58–59; 11:45–57; 12:9–11).

IV. The Condition of the American Church

A. Overall . . .

1. Biblically _____
2. Theologically _____
3. Apologetically _____
4. Afraid
5. More influenced than influencer

B. What does this indicate about the church’s readiness to confront American culture with Christ and his claims?

V. How Can Christian Writers Respond to the Cultural Crisis?

A. Be truth-bearers

1. Know the truth (John 1:14, 17; 8:31–32; 14:6).
2. Be changed by the truth (Rom. 12:1–2; Col. 3:10).
3. Mature in the truth (1 Cor. 14:20; Eph. 4:11–13, 21; Heb. 5:11–6:2).
4. Develop a Christian mind (2 Cor. 10:5b).
5. Present the truth (Eph. 4:15; 2 Tim. 2:15).

6. Defend the truth (1 Pet. 3:15).
7. Discern truth from error (1 John 4:1–6).
8. Avoid contradictions (1 Tim. 6:20–21).
9. Refute error (2 Cor. 10:5a; Titus 1:9; Galatians; Hebrews; Matt. 12:22–29).

B. Be truth-bearers in the church

1. Discipleship

2. Evangelism

3. All of this involves writing to _____, _____, and _____.

C. Be truth-bearers in the wider culture

1. To all unbelief, _____.

2. To misunderstanding, _____ our beliefs and behaviors.

3. To misinformation, _____ our beliefs and behaviors.

4. To language abuse, refuse to _____ to it. Instead _____ the language and use it correctly to _____ it.

5. To hypocrisy, implicit and explicit, expose it with the _____ .

6. In place of peripherals, focus on _____ beliefs and behaviors.

7. To divisiveness, build bridges of _____ wherever possible.

8. To attempts to silence us, _____ even more by _____ and _____ false views and poor arguments. But do so fairly and accurately.

9. To attempts to push us out of the public square, _____ our ground.

10. Through all of this, _____ and remain _____ .

11. And remember . . .

a. 2 Corinthians 10:5

b. 1 Peter 3:15

c. Acts 4:19–20

d. John 3:16

D. How can we do this work in our writing?

A Short Resources Guide on Issues and Faith

Worldviews and Truth

Worlds Apart: A Handbook on Worldviews, by Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins

Systematic Theology, vol. 1, by Norman L. Geisler

All Truth Is God’s Truth, by Arthur F. Holmes

The New Absolutes, by William D. Watkins

Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air, by Francis J. Beckwith and Gregory Koukl

Fear of Knowledge: Against Relativism and Constructivism, by Paul Boghossian

Science and Scientism

Dictionary of Christianity and Science, edited by Paul Copan, Tremper Longman III, Christopher L. Reese, and Michael G. Strauss

Christianity and the Nature of Science: A Philosophical Investigation, by J. P. Moreland

The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy, by Nancy R. Pearcey and Charles B. Thaxton

The Christian View of Science and Scripture, by Bernard Ramm

Science and Its Limits: The Natural Sciences in Christian Perspective, by Del Ratzsch

God and the Astronomers, by Robert Jastrow

Intelligent Design: The Bridge between Science and Theology, by William A. Dembski

The Design Revolution: Answering the Toughest Questions about Intelligent Design, by William A. Dembski

Scientism and Secularism, by J. P. Moreland

Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism, by Alvin Plantinga

Reason in the Balance: The Case against Naturalism in Science, Law and Education, by Phillip E. Johnson

Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution, by Michael J. Behe

Darwin Devolves: The New Science about DNA That Challenges Evolution, by Michael J. Behe

Evolution: A Theory in Crisis, by Michael Denton

Evolution: Still a Theory in Crisis, by Michael Denton

Uncommon Dissent: Intellectuals Who Find Darwinism Unconvincing, by William A. Dembski, ed.

The Creation Hypothesis: Scientific Evidence for an Intelligent Designer, edited by J. P. Moreland

Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique, edited by J. P. Moreland, Stephen C. Meyer, Christopher Shaw, Ann K. Gauger, and Wayne Grudem

Apologetics

Christian Apologetics, 2nd ed., by Norman L. Geisler

Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics, 3rd ed., by William Lane Craig

Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity, by J. P. Moreland

To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview, edited by Francis J. Beckwith, William Lane Craig, and J. P. Moreland

Handbook of Christian Apologetics: Hundreds of Answers to Crucial Questions, by Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli

The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity, by Lee Strobel

Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith, by Douglas Groothuis

Truth Decay: Defending Christianity against the Challenges of Postmodernism, by Douglas Groothuis

Engaging Unbelief: A Captivating Strategy from Augustine and Aquinas, by Curtis Chang

Christian Doctrine and Ethics

Mere Christianity, by C. S. Lewis

Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Orthodox Church, by Timothy Ware

Documents of the Christian Church, edited by Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder

The Teachings of the Church Fathers, edited by John R. Willis

Systematic Theology, 4 vols., by Norman L. Geisler

Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics, 4th ed., by Scott B. Rae

Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues and Options, 2nd ed., by Norman L. Geisler

The Human Body Shop: The Engineering and Marketing of Life, by Andrew Kimbrell

Embryo: A Defense of Human Life, by Robert P. George and Christopher Tollefsen

Defending Life: A Moral and Legal Case against Abortion Choice, by Francis J. Beckwith

The Bible

A General Introduction to the Bible, by Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix

Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties, by Gleason L. Archer

When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties, by Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe

A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, revised ed., Gleason L. Archer

New Testament Introduction, 4th ed., by Donald Guthrie

Discipleship and Evangelism

The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship, by Dallas Willard

The Example of Jesus, by Michael Griffiths

The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?, by Harry Blamires

Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul, by J. P. Moreland

The Gospel and the Mind: Recovering and Shaping the Intellectual Life, by Bradley G. Green

The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind, by Mark A. Noll

The God Conversation: Using Stories and Illustrations to Explain Your Faith, by J. P. Moreland and Tim Muelhoff

Conversational Evangelism: Connecting with People to Share Jesus, by David Geisler and Norman Geisler

Christianity and Culture

The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation, by Rod Dreher

Christ and Culture, by H. Richard Niebuhr

Christ and Culture Revisited, by D. A. Carson
The Body: Being Light in Darkness, by Charles Colson with Ellen Santilli Vaughn
Evangelicals and Catholics: Toward a Common Mission, edited by Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus
A House Divided? Evangelicals and Catholics Together—A Winning Alliance for the 21st Century, by Keith A. Fournier with William D. Watkins
The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America, by Richard John Neuhaus
Taking Rites Seriously: Law, Politics, and the Reasonableness of Faith, by Francis J. Beckwith
Pagans and Christians in the City: Culture Wars from the Tiber to the Potomac, by Steven D. Smith
It's Dangerous to Believe: Religious Freedom and Its Enemies, by Mary Eberstadt
Is Religion Dangerous?, by Keith Ward

Government

The State in the New Testament, by Oscar Cullmann
Church and State in Early Christianity, by Hugo Rahner
Protestant Concepts of Church and State, by Thomas G. Sanders
We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition, by John Courtney Murray
The Myth of American Individualism: The Protestant Origins of American Political Thought, by Barry Alan Shain
The Politics of Envy: Statism as Theology, by Doug Bandow
The Road to Serfdom, by F. A. Hayek
Modern Fascism, by Gene Edward Veith
Animal Farm, by George Orwell
The God That Failed, by Richard H. Crossman, ed.
The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression, by Stephane Courtois et al

Human Nature & Gender, Sexual Orientation & Activity

In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis, by Henri Blocher
Christian Perspectives on Being Human: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Integration, by J. P. Moreland and David M. Cioocchi, eds.
The Importance of Being Human: Some Aspects of the Christian Doctrine of Man, by E. L. Mascall
Soma in Biblical Theology, by Robert H. Gundry
Taking Sex Differences Seriously, by Steven E. Rhoads
When Harry Became Sally, by Ryan T. Anderson
Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Love and Sexuality, by Nancy R. Pearcey
Truth Overruled: The Future of Marriage and Religious Freedom, by Ryan T. Anderson
What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense, by Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P. George

Identity & Race

Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before, by Jean M. Twenge
The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society, by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.
The Mismeasure of Man, by S. J. Gould
The End of Racism, by Dinesh D'Souza
Shattering the Myth of Race: Genetic Realities and Biblical Truths, by Dave Unander
 Blexit.com
 Candace Owens, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCL0u5uz7KZ9q-pe-VC8TY-w/featured>
Race and Culture: A World View, by Thomas Sowell
Wrong on Race: The Democratic Party's Buried Past, by Bruce Bartlett
Reconstruction, 1863–1877: America's Unfinished Revolution, by Eric Foner
From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany, by Richard Weikart