

Learning the Columbo Tactic (2)

1. What do we mean by the term “burden of proof?”
The burden of proof is the _____ someone has to _____ his own view.
2. What is the burden of proof rule?
The person who _____ bears the burden.
3. What is the second key question of the Columbo tactic?
“How did you _____?”
4. The second Columbo question graciously assumes that the nonbeliever has actually _____ - that he has _____ for his view and has not just _____.
5. What is the “professor’s ploy?” (Note: the person doesn’t have to be a professor.)
Switching the _____ back onto the person who hasn’t _____.
6. What is an easy way to stay out of the hot seat when someone is coming on strong?
Shift from _____ mode to _____ mode.
Say, “Carefully explain you _____ and your _____ for it, then let me _____.”

I saw this response to a question about whether Jesus was controlled by the Devil or did Mary and Jesus lie. What claims are being made and how would you respond, using the two Columbo questions? Answers are on the reverse, but don’t look until you’ve tried to find them yourself. No cheating!!

I’m not a rabbi, but I’m Jewish and have studied religion pretty intensely.

I believe there was a historical Jesus. I don’t believe he was divine, because deities are mythical, not real. I don’t believe he was influenced by the devil, because the devil is mythical, not real. I don’t believe he was a liar. I think he taught certain lessons and attracted a following, as did other teachers of his time. I think those lessons focused on the essential message of the Torah, that of lovingkindness.

I believe a cult developed about him after his death for a variety of reasons, some more creditable than others.

I believe the historical Jesus would be utterly horrified by his deification and many of the dogmas and actions adopted in his name.

Claims made in this paragraph:

1. Jesus was historical. (How did you come to that conclusion?)
2. There is no God. (What do you mean by that? How did you come...?)
3. Jesus's message focused on lovingkindness. (How did you come...?)
4. Jesus was not a liar. (How did you come...?)
5. Christianity is a cult that developed after his death. (How did you come...?)
6. Jesus would be horrified by his deification. (What makes you think that?)

I would address 1 and 3 first. Even if he cites non-biblical references to Jesus, he MUST include the gospels. And it is only from the gospels he could conclude that Jesus's primary message was lovingkindness. (It wasn't but I would let that slide for the moment. This is a variation of "He was a great teacher.") He has now admitted that the gospels are historically relevant and that the teachings of Jesus in the gospels are accurate. Then I would point to the claims of Jesus to be deity. This is what Koukl calls "sibling rivalry." The objector cannot reasonably claim that the teachings of Jesus about lovingkindness, found only in the gospels, are true, but his claims to be God, also found only in the gospels are not true. The objector's statements cannot both be true at the same time. He will say the claims of deity were added later. Don't let him get away with such nonsense. That leads to claim 4. Either Jesus was a liar or a lunatic, since the objector claims there is no God. But if Jesus did claim to be God, that wipes out objection number 6. All of this can be done by asking questions.