

## Year-Round Mentoring for Apologetics Leaders

***with Dr. Andy Bannister, Ph.D.***



Dr. Andy Bannister is the Director of the [Solas Centre for Public Christianity](#), speaking and teaching regularly throughout the UK, Europe, Canada, the USA, and the wider world. From universities to churches, business forums to TV and radio, he regularly addresses audiences of both Christians and those of all faiths and none on issues relating to faith, culture, politics and society.

Andy holds a PhD in Islamic studies and has taught extensively at universities across Canada, the USA, the UK and further afield on both Islam and philosophy. He is also an Adjunct Research Fellow at the Arthur Jeffery Centre for the Study of Islam at Melbourne School of Theology and is also Adjunct Faculty at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto.

He is the author of several books including *An Oral Formulaic Study of the Qur'an* (2014); *The Atheist Who Didn't Exist (or: The Dreadful Consequences of Really Bad Arguments)* (2015); and *Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God?* (2021). He is also a co-presenter of [Pod of the Gaps](#), a popular podcast that combines theology, culture and humour, and aims to help Christians explore the challenges (and opportunities!) of living in the 21st century.

When not travelling, speaking, or writing, Andy is a keen hiker, mountain climber and photographer. He is married to Astrid and they have two children, Caitriona and Christopher, and live in Dundee in Scotland.

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**GOAL:** To provide Christian evangelists and apologists with the proper content, encouragement, relationships, and breakthrough training that would enable their ministries to grow qualitatively and exponentially.

**PLAN:** This year-round mentoring group includes:

- a three-hour Online Seminar;
- four two-hour webinars with webinar assignments;
- a two-day online “retreat” on 19 and 20 January 2023;
- an online Pre-Forum Conference at the 2023 Forum on Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> May from 13:00 to 16:00 UK time.

**PARTICIPANTS:** Ten to twelve Christian evangelists/apologists who are passionate about persuasively engaging their culture with the gospel, and willing to commit to becoming part of a learning community.

**QUALIFICATIONS:** All participants will be actively involved in evangelism and apologetics, and each will be a spiritually mature Christian.

**COMMITMENTS:** In addition to submitting an application, in order to be accepted as a participant, you must commit to:

1. Thoroughly review a selection of pre-assigned materials before and after each webinar. These assignments will consist of reading selections of books or academic articles, including the list of books and articles indicated for each webinar.
2. Have a proper internet connection and a device equipped with both microphone and video capability.
3. Attend **all** sessions, including a three-hour Pre-Forum Online Seminar on Thursday 19 May 2022; four two-hour webinars with webinar assignments; a two-day online “retreat” on 19 and 20 January 2023; and a Pre-Forum Online Seminar on 19 May 2023.
4. Secure a copy of the needed books for assignments.
5. In order to be accepted to next years' European Leadership Forum all Year-Round Mentoring participants will need to nominate two other leaders for the following year Year-Round Mentoring which includes personally contacting and recruiting them by email.

**2023 Online “Retreat”:** All Apologetics participants will meet with Andy for a two-day virtual/online retreat, from 13:00 – 16:00 (UK time) on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> January 2023 (i.e. six hours in total).

## Webinar Sessions

The current apologetics mentoring plan includes the following four two-hour webinars.

### Webinar One: Comparative Worldviews

Thursday, 29th September 2022, 14:00-16:00 UK time

- I. The first 15 minutes will be devoted to answering questions about the assignments.
- II. Reading, Listening, and Writing Assignments
  - A. Read Andy Bannister's book *Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God?* (paying esp. attention to chapter 3).
  - B. Read one of the following:
    - Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* - chapter 2.
    - Ellis Potter, *Three Theories of Everything* - read as much of this very short little book as you can manage.
  - C. Listen to the lecture “Worldviews - How do you see the world and why?” by Os Guinness at [https://youtu.be/w6M9ls\\_BwWE](https://youtu.be/w6M9ls_BwWE).
  - D. Watch the lecture by Nancy Pearcey, “Test Everything: Five Principles for Answering Any Worldview” at <https://youtu.be/UR11Kmk0GSA>.
  - E. Write a 400-word paragraph on each of the four questions below (i.e. 1,600 words in total). This is due 2 weeks before the webinar and should be submitted to [andy@solas-cpc.org](mailto:andy@solas-cpc.org).
    - i. *How is the concept of a "worldview" helpful for engaging with how our friends, neighbours and colleagues think about life?*

- ii. *What are some key questions you might ask a friend to help explore their worldview?*
- iii. *How might you respond to somebody who said: "I don't have a worldview, I don't believe anything, I'm an atheist"?*
- iv. *What are some of the key differences between the Islamic and Christian worldviews?*

### **Webinar Two: Practical Conversational Apologetics**

Thursday, 24th November 2022, 14:00-16:00 UK time

- I. The first 15 minutes will be devoted to answering questions about the assignments.
- II. Requirements
  - a. Read Randy Newman *Questioning Evangelism* (paying especially careful attention to chapters 1-3).
  - b. Read Rebecca Manley Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker and Into the World: Evangelism as a Way of Life* - chapters 8 through 12.
  - c. Listen to four different Solas PEP Talk podcasts (<https://www.solas-cpc.org/category/podcast/pep-talk/>) - lots of food for thought there on evangelism from a wide variety of perspectives.
- III. Assignments
  - F. Write a 400-word paragraph on each of the four questions below (i.e. 1,600 words in total). This is due 2 weeks before the webinar and should be submitted to [andy@solas-cpc.org](mailto:andy@solas-cpc.org).
    - i. *Why do you think many Christians are afraid or nervous about evangelism (especially at work or school/university?)*
    - ii. *When you have tried to share your faith with friends, what's gone well? What has gone less well? What have you learnt?*
    - iii. *Why do you think questions and conversations are such a powerful evangelistic tool?*
    - iv. *What's the role of prayer and of the Holy Spirit in all of this? How can we avoid making "asking good questions" just another clever evangelistic formula?*

### **Webinar Three: Has Science Buried God?**

Thursday, 23rd February 2023, 14:00-16:00 UK time

- I. The first 15 minutes will be devoted to answering questions about the assignments.
  - a. Assignments
    - i. Read David Hutchings and Tom McLeish, *Let There Be Science: Why God Loves Science and Science Needs God* – especially pay attention to chapters 1 and 2.
    - ii. Read John Lennox, *Can Science Explain Everything?* – especially noting chapters 1 through 4.

- iii. Read Sarah Bodbyl Roels' essay, "Are science and Christianity at war?" at <https://biologos.org/common-questions/are-science-and-christianity-at-war/>.
- b. Write a 400-word paragraph on each of the four questions below (i.e. 1,600 words in total). This is due 2 weeks before the webinar and should be submitted to [andy@solas-cpc.org](mailto:andy@solas-cpc.org).
  - i. *How might you respond and try to begin a conversation with a friend who says "We don't need God, science can explain everything?"*
  - ii. *"Science answers the how questions; religion answers the why questions." Is this a helpful way to help our friends think about science and faith?*
  - iii. *There's sometimes a tendency for Christians to only think about science in terms of The Evolution Question-with sadly Christians sometimes at times dividing along lines according to theological position (Young Earth, Old Earth, I Don't Know How Old Earth But I Know You're Wrong, and so on). Why is this and how we make sure we don't let internal Christian theological disagreements get in the way of sharing our faith with those outside the church?*
  - iv. *How might we get a conversation from questions about God and science to an opportunity to talk about Jesus? What are some of the connecting points along the way?*

#### **Webinar Four: Answering the Problem of Evil**

Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2023, 14:00-16:00 UK time

- I. The first 15 minutes will be devoted to answering questions about the assignments.
- II. Assignments
  - a. Read Sharon Dirckx, *Why? Looking at God, Evil and Personal Suffering* – pay careful attention to especially the introduction and chapters 1-2.
  - b. Read Os Guinness, *Unspeakable: Facing Up to Evil in an Age of Genocide and Terror* – especially chapters 10-12.
  - c. Read Arthur Leff's famous essay on the problems that atheists have in even speaking of "good" and "evil" at <http://bit.ly/leff>.
  - d. Watch 'Living with Cancer', an interview with Dominic Smart at <https://www.solas-cpc.org/living-with-cancer/>.
  - e. Write a 400-word paragraph on each of the four questions below (i.e. 1,600 words in total). This is due 2 weeks before the webinar and should be submitted to [andy@solas-cpc.org](mailto:andy@solas-cpc.org).
    - i. Questions about evil, pain and suffering can be very personal, not just philosophical. *If a friend asks you about Christianity and the problem of evil, how might you navigate the conversation both pastorally and apologetically?*
    - ii. Some have suggested that the more important question is not so much "Why evil?" as "How can we live faithfully with suffering, pain and evil?" *Do you agree or disagree?*
    - iii. *If suffering and evil are such a "strike" against God, why do you think it is that questions about it are far more common in the west, than in parts of the world where people's experience of suffering and injustice are far more common?*

iv. *If a friend asks "Where is God in X" and speaks of an example of suffering, pain or injustice, how might you begin with their question but naturally weave Jesus and the gospel into the conversation?*

## How to Apply

To apply:

1. Fill out an online application [here](#). Please be sure to fill out every field.
2. Once we receive your application form and reference, your application will be considered complete. We will review completed applications and let you know if you are accepted into the program within four to six weeks.

*If you have questions, contact us at [initiatives@euroleadership.org](mailto:initiatives@euroleadership.org).*

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