

# **The Apologetic Argument for Christianity<sup>3</sup>**

This outline is not only the logic behind the apologetic case for Christianity; it is essential order in which the case must be presented. IF the premises are true, then so are the conclusions. It will also serve as our general course structure.

- 1. Truth- absolute and Knowable**
- 2. God exists**
  - a. problem of evil**
  - b. problem of hell**
- 3. Miracles are possible—acts of God to prove His message**
- 4. The New Testament is Historically Reliable**
- 5. The N. T. says that Jesus claimed to be God (Deity)**
- 6. Jesus' claim to be God was miraculously confirmed by:**
  - a. Fulfillment of prophecy**
  - b. Sinless and miraculous life**
  - c. His prediction and accomplishment of His Resurrection from death.**
- 7. Therefore, Jesus is God! (answers who is God?)**
- 8. Whatever Jesus (who is God) teaches is True!**
- 9. Jesus taught the Bible is the Word of God! (John 17.10)**
- 10. Therefore, the Bible is the Word of God!**

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<sup>3</sup> Unpublished class notes by Joe Holden (spring 2004) Apologetic Evangelism whom he credits to Unpublished class notes, Norman L. Geisler, "Introduction to Apologetics,." SEC, 1996. See Geisler, Christian Apologetics (Grand Rapids, 1976).

# The Apologetic Task<sup>4</sup>

The Christian's "apologetic task" is to establish Christianity as true to the unbeliever. In order for this to be accomplished, there are certain issues which need to be addressed in logical order. For example, it makes no sense to make truth statements and talk about reality as the Bible does without first establishing that truth is real, and that it can be known, and that a real world actually exists in the first place. This order is known as the "apologetic task" which consists of three chronological steps:

**1) Establishing the Philosophical Foundations, 2) Establishing the Existence of God, and 3) Establishing the Truthfulness of Christianity.** This order of demonstrating Christianity as true will also be our general course outline.

**STEP 3: Evidential Apologetics**  
**Establishing the Truth of Christianity**  
(Evidential Apologetics)

1. The Historical Reliability of the New Testament
2. The Person of Christ
3. The Resurrection of Christ

**STEP 2: Theistic Apologetics**  
**Establishing the Existence of God**

1. The Existence of God
  - a. Cosmological, Teleological, and Moral arguments
  - b. Theistic attributes: Eternality, Intelligence, Goodness
2. An Examination and Evaluation of Alternative Worldviews
3. The Possibility of Miracles
4. The Problem of Evil
5. The Doctrine of Hell

**STEP 1: Philosophical Apologetics**  
**Establishing the Philosophical Foundations**

1. Can something be Known?
2. What is truth?
3. Can everything be false?
4. Can opposites both be true at the same time and in the same sense?
5. Does something exist?
6. Can something come to be that is not caused?
7. Can nothing produce something?

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<sup>4</sup> Joe Holden (2025) Apologetic Evangelism Unpublished Class notes

# Truth is Absolute and Knowable<sup>5</sup>

## Step 1: Philosophical Apologetics

### Introduction

The implications are staggering, for if there is no absolute truth, Jesus is in error for claiming that “your word is truth” (Jn 17.17). The importance of the issue of truth cannot be stressed too highly, for if there is no absolute truth, Christianity is nothing more than one’s opinion about God.

Therefore, attention will be directed to:

1. **Barriers to Truth**
2. **Theories of Truth**
3. **The Negative Test for Truth**
4. **Objections to truth**

### I. **Barriers to Truth (can truth be known?)**

#### A. **Agnosticism** (Plotinus, c. AD 250, and Immanuel Kant, d. 1804)

According to the hard form of Agnosticism, one cannot know anything about ultimate reality (truth). There are no absolute truth statements about reality. Therefore, knowledge of God is impossible.

Problems with Agnosticism:

1. Agnosticism is self-destructive.
2. If agnosticism cannot know reality it has no business making absolute statements about reality.
3. Every negative affirmation about reality presupposes a positive prior knowledge about reality.

#### B. **Skepticism** (David Hume, d 1776)

According to hard skepticism, one should doubt everything and suspend judgment about reality. It is the philosophy of uncertainty.

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<sup>555</sup> The following information is derived from Joseph Holden Class notes in which he notes is derived from Geisler, Norman L. and Ron Brooks. *When Skeptics Ask* (1990). Geisler, Norman L. *Christian Apologetics* (1976) Kreeft, Peter and Ronald K. Tacelli *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (1994). *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (1995)

Problems with Skepticism:

1. Skepticism is self-destructive.
2. Skepticism (can't know for sure, therefore, remain skeptical) implies agnosticism, but as we have seen agnosticism is defeating.
3. Skepticism essentially says, "I am certain you cannot be certain about the truth claims concerning reality." Is this a truth claim about reality that claims certainty? Yes.

### C. Relativism (Heraclitus, c. 500BC and Immanuel Kant d. 1804)

According to relativism, all truth is relative or subjective, it is not absolute. Truth a matter of one's own perspective.

Problems with relativism:

1. It is impossible to deny absolute truth.
2. If truth is relative, what is it relative too?
3. Relativists fail to consider the context of truth statements.
4. Ask the relativist if his view of truth is just his perspective, or is it true for all people, at all times, and in all places that truth is relative.

### D. Religious Pluralism

The view that all religions are true. Those who deny this are considered intolerant, exclusivist, and narrow minded.

Problems with pluralism:

1. Religious pluralism cannot be true because the various systems make mutually exclusive truth claims (both cannot be right).
2. Religious pluralist wrongfully charge Christians with intolerance due to their confusing of *what* one holds (truth) with *how* one holds (attitude) it. If holding an exclusive religious truth makes one intolerant, then the exclusive truth held by the pluralist makes him equally intolerant.
3. The religious pluralist holds an equally exclusive position, namely, everything contrary to pluralism is false.
4. The religious pluralist concept that Christians are narrow minded stems from their misunderstanding of the nature of truth. Truth, by definition, is narrow. 2+2 is always 4, every other number on into infinity is false.

## Theories of Truth (What is Truth?)\*<sup>6</sup>

### I. The coherence theory

According to the coherence theory, a statement is true only if it is *consistent* or *coheres* with the statements in the system.

Statements are true only to the extent that it fits into the system.

Problems with this theory:

1. Just because a statement is consistent and coheres with the rest of a given system does not make that statement true. For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses have an internally consistent doctrine of Christ that coheres with other statements in that system; however, this does not make their system true.

2. If two mutually exclusive coherent systems existed, one cannot discover which is true.

3. A statement may be consistent within a system but not applicable to the real world. For example, the statement "Santa Clause lives in the North Pole" may cohere within a system that advocates Santa Clause but does not reflect the facts of reality, namely, that Santa Clause does not live at the North Pole.

4. At best, coherence theory is a negative test for truth, not a definition of truth. That is to say, if something coheres it could possibly be true. That is to say, if something coheres it could possibly be true, but if it does not cohere to what we already know to be true, it cannot possibly be true. Truth must at least cohere with other true statements.

5. The coherence theory makes the system the test for truth. The test must come from outside the system (e.g. reality). The coherence theory is like building a house in mid-air with no foundation, nothing outside itself to support it.

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph Holden Apologetic Evangelism Fall 2004 CCBC class notes.

## II. The Pragmatic theory

According to the pragmatic theory something is true if it *works*. Truth is that which is *expedient* and brings the best *results*.

Problems with this theory:

1. It confuses what truth *does* with what truth *is*.
2. Some say truth and falsehood are not categories that can be applied to function. Is a car true or false because it does not work?
3. Will the judge allow you to take the witness stand and tell whatever “works, whatever is expedient, whatever brings the best results”? No.
4. Opposite things bring different results to different people. Some bank robberies work and some do not, are bank robberies true or false? Truth cannot contradict itself.

## III. The Intentionalist theory

According to this theory, truth is found in good intentions, not in affirmations. Something is true if we intend it to be true, and false if intended to be false.

Problems with this theory:

1. Truth is not contained in what one intends to say, but what one does say. For example, if I intended to say “get off the elevator at the seventh floor,” but said “get off at the floor” and you get lost, my directions were false no matter what I intended to say. Truth is not contained in what you don’t say (intentions), it is in what you do say (affirmations).
2. The Old Testament considered certain unintentional acts wrong and erroneous which demanded sacrifice (Lev 4.2-10, 27)

3. If the intentionalist view of truth is correct, there cannot ever be a sincere nurse that intended to put eye drops in the baby's eyes but put acid instead? What about the well intentioned Mormon or Jehovah's Witness? Does their well intentions make there doctrine true? No. Would the judge let a motorist off with no penalty after unintentionally killing a pedestrian? Manslaughter.

#### **IV. The Correspondence theory**

According to the correspondence theory, a statement is true if it corresponds to reality as it exists. Truth is telling it like it is and not telling it like it is false. This is biblical theory of truth.

Strengths of this theory:

Biblical Data:

1. Joseph (Gen 42.16)
2. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5.1-4)
3. Gen 2.17-Gen 3.4-Did God really say you shall surely die?
4. Exodus 20.16 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor,"
5. Nebuchadnezzar wanted to know the facts as they corresponded to his real dream (Dan 2.9)
6. Correspondence view of truth possess something outside itself as a positive test, namely reality. Reality can be the ground which all truth claims whether, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Mormon, or Atheist are tested.
7. Other passages are Acts 24.8, 11; 1 Kings 22:16-22; Prov 14.25

Philosophical implications without correspondence theory:

1. If statements do not have to correspond to the facts, *lies and truth-telling are impossible*. Every statement would be true (even contradictory ones) (e.g. murder witness).

2. There could be *no truth or falsity*. The correspondence theory implies that there is a difference between things as they exist and statements about those things. Without this distinction there is no testing of statements outside themselves. No one could be certain of truth or falsehood.

3. Factual communication would break down without correspondence theory. Facts by definition correspond to the way things really are (reality). This is how someone distinguishes the factual from non-factual information.

**Definition of Truth:** *Truth is that which corresponds to reality as it exists.* Truth is contained and conveyed in the following forms:

1. Statements/Affirmations/Propositions whether written or spoken that corresponds to reality.

2. Jesus as a person (John14.6)

3. The Word of God (John17.17)

## V. The Negative Test for Truth

Now that we know what truth is, it will be helpful to apply certain principles in order to discover what is not truth. In other words, these principles will reveal what statements cannot possibly be true. Study of this section will help equip the Christian apologist by exposing him to certain laws of rational argumentation that are universally applicable no matter what religious, cultural or philosophical backgrounds one might be identified with. They also serve as the basis for absolute truth and also for undeniable premises by which Christians can prove the existence of God.

**The Laws of Logic** (which says no two opposite statements can be true at the same time and in the same sense).

The laws of logic are also called “first principles” due to their foundational nature. They are:

1. The Law of Non-Contradiction (A cannot be both A and non-A at the same time and in the same sense)
2. The Law of Identity (A is A)
3. The Law of Excluded Middle (A is either A or non-A)
4. The Law of Rational Inference (If A is in B, and B is in C, then A is in C)

C  
B                    =A is in C  
A

### **The Nature of these Laws**

**They are:**

1. Undeniable (to deny them would be to affirm them)
2. Laws that flow from God’s nature (Jn 1.1; Heb 6.18; Tit 1.2; Jas 1.13)
3. Self-evident to all (i.e. cannot get behind, under, or beyond them)
4. Like ethical laws which are prescriptive (what you ought to do), not like the laws of nature which are descriptive.
5. A negative test for truth (i.e. what cannot possibly be true)

## The importance of Knowing These Laws

1. Knowledge of these laws help in the detection of logical contradictions when dealing with others (Eg. Panentheist says God is an “Infinite finite.” The statement “All truth is relative” is an absolute relative statement which is contradictory.)
2. Knowledge of these laws aid in establishing common ground with all religions when witnessing (i.e. All religious statements are subjected to them).
3. No Absolute truth statements could be made without these laws.
4. Knowing these laws will help one discover and establish certain undeniable premises that can be used for establishing the existence of God.

## IV Some Anticipated Objections <sup>7</sup>

### A. Absolute truth is too narrow

1. Truth is narrow by definition ( $2+2=4$  only, not 5, 6, 7, 8 on into infinity)
2. If Christianity is true, then all non-Christianity is false (check law of non-contradiction). If atheism is true, theism is false. Both views are equally narrow. If one of these systems is true then all opposites must be false.
3. The one making the statement “absolute truth is too narrow” is giving an absolute truth which implies its opposite is false. Wouldn't this be equally narrow? Yes

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<sup>7</sup> Objections based in Geisler, Norman L. “*Is Truth Absolute?*” in *Cornerstone*, Vol. 23 no 105, Jan 1995, and Geisler, Norman L., and Ronald M. Brooks, *Come Let Us Reason: An introduction to Logical Thinking*.

## **B. Those that hold to absolute truth are exclusive and intolerant**

1. If holding absolute truth makes someone intolerant, then the one making this absolute truth claim is equally intolerant. For they believe their view is absolutely true at the exclusion of those who hold an opposite position.
2. This claim confuses *what* (absolute truth) one holds and *how* (manner or attitude) he holds it.
3. The one making this truth claim hold an equally exclusive position, namely, all-exclusive and tolerant positions are true. Further, this statement favors pluralism and relativism which are exclusive beliefs. There are no true pluralists, only professing ones, for even pluralism is an exclusive position (i.e. all non-pluralism is false).
4. Someone does not tolerate that which he agrees with. Tolerance implies a real disagreement based in absolute truth claims.

## **C. All religions have equal truths**

1. No, all religions are not equally true because different religions make mutually exclusive truth claims.
2. If all religions are true, and a religion disagrees with the above statement (Christianity), is the statement false? By the statements own standard is cancels itself.

## **D. All truth is culturally relative**

1. If this statement were true, it would apply to *all* cultures and therefore be an absolute truth. Thus leaving open the possibility of other absolute truths.
2. It is self-defeating because it is an absolute truth claim that says truth is relative. Just ask “Is that the absolute truth, that truth is culturally relative?” “Do you get that truth from your culture or from somewhere else?”

3. If truth is culturally relative, how do we adjudicate conflicts between cultures (WWII Nazi Trials).

#### **E. What is true for one person is not true for another**

1. This statement is self-defeating because it asserts an absolute truth claim for all people.
2. What is true for one person in one place is true for all people in all places. For example, if it true that it is cold at the South Pole, it is true in Arizona, California, Texas, Japan, and for the rest of the world that it is cold at the South Pole.

#### **F. If truth doesn't change there can be no new truth.**

1. Yes, there can be new truth that comes into existence. For example, there statement "today is December 25, 2058" is not true today but will be true on that date.
2. Further, truth can be "new" in the sense of our coming to discover it, (e.g. Newton and the laws of gravity). This sense of the word "new" is not dealing with truth coming into existence; rather it speaks of new discovery of "old" truths.

#### **G. There are no absolutes**

1. This statement is self-defeating.
2. Absolutes are undeniable. In the very act of denying them, one would affirm them at the same time.

#### **H. People are not logical, why bother using logic?**

Often, people are not moral either, should we close down all the churches and police stations? No. People may not be logical or even moral at times but they *ought* to.

We should be logical even if others are not!

## **I. Logic doesn't apply to religious truth**

You just did! This statement is self-defeating because it is a logical truth claim that is applied to the area of religious truth.

## **J. The use of logic puts logic before God**

1. No it doesn't. Our use of logic is prior to God in the knowing process (epistemologically) but not prior to him in being from logic (cf. Jn. 1:1). God is the basis of all reality and without Him nothing could exist.

2. We must *first* use our logic to discover whether God exists. However, once this question has been settled, we become aware that God existed prior to our use of logic. Hence, reason takes its proper place under God ontologically (in being or existence).

Further, the use of maps illustrates this point. I need a map *before* I can get to Florida, but Florida must *exist prior* to the map. It is the same with logic, we use logic to come to know God, but exist before we can come to know Him (cf. Heb 11.6).

## **K. Using logic makes God subject to our logic**

1. No. Man did not invent logic, he discovered it. Logic flows from God. Not God from logic.
2. It is not God that we examine using logic; it is our *statements about* god that are analyzed with logic in order to see if those statements are believable.
3. Logic has been given to use by God, otherwise there could be no *true or false* statements about God.
4. Since logic flows from God's rational nature (Jn 1:1), we are not judging statements about Him by a standard outside God.

## **L. Truth cannot be known God because finite human language can't talk about an infinite God**

1. First, the statement is self-defeating because it makes a knowledge truth claims using finite language to talk

about God. In other words, this statement is a truth statement about God and language in finite words!

2. Second, it fails to understand the “doctrine of analogy” with deference to language. This doctrine answers the question as to how humans with finite language can talk meaningfully about an *infinite* God, though not all theses are correct:

Terms (words) can be either:

a. equivocal = totally different meaning

b. analogical = similar meaning

c. univocal = same meaning

**Which do we Choose?** *Univocal definitions*

**However, there is a further problem:** How can finite meaning be appropriately *applied* to God?

**Answer:** The terms used of God must be *defined* in the same way (univocal) but must be *applied* or *predicated* of God in a similar (analogous) way. In other words, one must take the finitude out of language when *applying* it to God. So when God is called “good”, He is “good” in an infinite (perfected) way, while man is “good” in a finite way.

Another way to say it is that the *mode* or *context* of the word is changed but not its meaning. Therefore, Finite language can be used to talk, about an infinite God without being left in agnosticism.<sup>8</sup>

## Conclusion

Truth may be tested in many and diverse ways but understood in only one way. If there is only one reality to which all statements must correspond, then truth should extend to all, regardless of time or place. Besides, if one cannot discover truth in its simple form, how will they ever discover the truth incarnate, Jesus Christ (John 14:6)?

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<sup>8</sup>From Class Notes Apologetic Evangelism, Joseph Holden Fall 2004... See Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologicae: A Concise Translation*, ed. By Timothy Mc Dermott and Geisler, Norman L., and Paul D. Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy*.