

# The Basics of Christianity

## Do Logic and Religion Mix?

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

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#### INTRODUCTION:

There are times when following your heart is the way to go, and times when using your head is a necessity. The trick is to know which body part to use based upon the situation. Art and music, for example, are only two of many wonderful experiences that belong to the domain of the human heart. They do not require logic to appreciate them. They are simply to be soaked in and enjoyed. In contrast, sales pitches, theories, accusations, and suggestions are examples of things that do require rational thinking to determine a resolution or a proper course of action.

So, how about religion? Does it fall under the domain of the mind or the heart? The first question to consider is "Are you talking about religion in general or Christianity?" When it comes to religion in general, it does require a "blind leap" of faith because the religions of the world are written by man and they are full of contradictions and unfulfilled prophecies.

Religion is a set of specifications offered as "truth" or "the way" to live our lives. It is left to the intellect to scrutinize the validity of religious assertions and determine a verdict.

This leads us to the next question of whether reason/logic can be used in matters of religion. Some say this is not possible, but—why not? The truth is, logic is vital when examining spiritual claims because it helps us understand why some claims should be excluded and others embraced. Logic is absolutely critical in dismantling pluralism (which says that all truth claims, even those that oppose each other, are equal and valid).

For example, Islam and Judaism claim that Jesus is not God, whereas Christianity claims He is. One of the core laws of logic is the law of non-contradiction, which says something cannot be both "A" and "non-A" at the same time. Applying this law to the claims of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity means that one claim is right and the other is wrong. Jesus cannot be both God and not God. Used properly, logic is a potent weapon against pluralism because it clearly demonstrates that contrary truth claims cannot both be true. This understanding topples the whole "true for you but not for me" mindset.

Logic also dispels the whole "all roads lead to the top of the mountain" analogy that pluralists use. Logic shows that each belief system has its own set of signs that point to radically different locations in the end. Logic shows that the proper illustration of a search for spiritual truth is more like a maze—one path makes it through to truth, while all others arrive at dead ends. All faiths may have some surface similarities, but they differ in major ways in their core doctrines.

The conclusion is that you not only **can** use reason and logic in matters of religion, but you **must** use reason. Any religion that is not absolutely true has no value. What parts

can be believed and what parts must be avoided. That being the case, pluralism (the belief that all truth claims are equally true and valid) is ruled out because it is illogical and contradictory to believe that diametrically opposing truth claims can both be right.

The Bible makes it clear that God wants us to look for truth, because He knows the search leads to Him. God actually **requires** us to make an honest attempt to know what is true.

## All Stand and Read Scripture

### **1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (NASB95)**

<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup> After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; <sup>7</sup> then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; <sup>8</sup> and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

## Prayer

### **BODY:**

#### **I. Absolute Truth Does Exist.**

Postmodernism claims that absolute truth does not exist especially in religion. But I would suggest that it is in religion that absolute truth is most important.

If objective and absolute truth does not exist, then everything becomes a matter of personal interpretation. To the postmodern thinker, the author of a book does not possess the correct interpretation of his own work; it is the reader who actually determines what the book means – a process called deconstruction. And given that there are multiple readers and only one author, there are naturally multiple valid interpretations.

Such a chaotic situation makes it impossible to make meaningful or lasting distinctions between interpretations because there is no standard that can be used. This especially applies to matters of faith and religion. **Attempting to make proper and meaningful distinctions in the area of religion is no more meaningful than arguing that chocolate tastes better than vanilla.** Postmodernism says that it is impossible to objectively decide between competing truth claims.

If absolute truth does not exist, and if there is no way to make meaningful, right/wrong distinctions between different faiths and religions, then the natural conclusion is that all beliefs must be considered equally valid. The proper term for this philosophy is called "pluralism." With pluralism, no religion has the right to pronounce itself true and the other competing faiths false, or even inferior.

There is no doubt that the number of different religions in the world makes it a challenge to know which one is correct. The challenge of different answers to a particular issue is not unique though to the topic of religion. For example, you can sit 100 math students down, give them a complex problem to solve, and it is likely that some will get the answer wrong. But does this mean that a correct answer does not exist? Not at all. Those who get the answer wrong simply need to be shown their error and know the techniques necessary to arrive at the correct answer.

Even in the most ancient of times, long before the telescope and microscope were invented, the greatness of God was evident both in the vastness and in the tiny intricacies of nature. Men could look at the stars and discover the fixed order of their orbits. They could observe a small seed reproduce itself into a giant tree, exactly like the one from which it came. They could see the marvelous cycles of the season, and the rain, and the snow. They witnessed the marvel of human birth and the glory of the sunrise and the sunset.

Except to a mind willfully closed to the obvious, it is inconceivable that such power, intricacy, and harmony could have developed by any means but that of a Master Designer who rules the universe.

## **ILLUSTRATION.**

It would be infinitely more reasonable to think that the separate pieces of a watch could be shaken in a bag and eventually become a dependable timepiece than to think that the world could have evolved into its present state by pure chance.

Just as it is not arrogant for a math teacher to insist that  $2+2=4$  or for a locksmith to insist that only one key will fit a locked door, it is not arrogant for the Christian to stand against postmodernist thinking and insist that Christianity is true and anything opposed to it is false. Absolute truth does exist, and consequences do exist for being wrong. While pluralism may be desirable in matters of food preferences, it is not helpful in matters of truth.

Absolute truth is defined as that which matches reality. Some say there is no such thing as absolute truth, but taking such a position becomes self-defeating. **For example, the relativist will say, "All truth is relative," yet one must ask: is that statement absolutely true? If so, then absolute truth exists; if not, then why consider it?** Postmodernism affirms no truth, yet it affirms at least one absolute truth: postmodernism is true. In the end, absolute truth becomes undeniable.

Further, absolute truth is naturally narrow and excludes its opposite. **Two plus two equals four, with no other answer being possible.** This point becomes critical as different belief systems and worldviews are compared. If one belief system has components that are proven true, then any competing belief system with contrary claims **must** be false. Also, we must keep in mind that absolute truth is not impacted by sincerity and desire. No matter how sincerely someone embraces a lie, it is still a lie. And no desire in the world can make something true that is false.

**Absolute truth does exist.** This being the case, agnosticism, postmodernism, pluralism, relativism, and skepticism are all false positions.

## **II. The Historical Facts of Christ Reveal God.**

I know this is not a normal argument for the existence of God. But, let's consider how we can use **logic** to prove that God exists by looking at the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

The historical person Jesus of Nazareth was by all accounts a remarkable individual. Jesus came on the scene with an unprecedented sense of divine authority, the authority to stand and speak in God's place. He claimed that in himself the Kingdom of God had come, and as visible demonstrations of this fact he carried out a ministry of healing and miracles.

But the supreme **confirmation** of his claim was his resurrection from the dead. Now a lot of people would think that the resurrection of Jesus is something you just believe in by faith. Maybe even a blind faith.

But, there are three **facts** I would like for you to consider:

1. On the Sunday after his crucifixion, Jesus' tomb was found empty by a group of his women followers.
2. On separate occasions in the next forty days, different individuals and groups saw appearances of Jesus alive after his death.
3. The original disciples suddenly came to believe in the resurrection of Jesus despite the fact that they didn't expect it.

Attempts to explain away these three great facts—like “The disciples stole the body” or “Jesus wasn’t really dead”—makes no sense when you consider the fact that the disciples would have no reason to dedicate their lives to a lie and even be willing to die for their faith. Nor would the Jews and Gentiles have committed their lives to Christianity if these things did not happen. They were there when Jesus died on the cross, was buried, and rose from the dead. If they had not experienced it they would have just laughed it off.

The simple fact is that there just is no plausible, naturalistic explanation of these three facts; and therefore, it seems to me, the Christian is justified in believing that the best explanation of the evidence is that **Jesus rose from the dead and was who he claimed to be**. But that **necessitates** that the God revealed by Jesus of Nazareth exists. And thus we have a good inductive argument for the existence of God based on the resurrection of Jesus.

The Bible makes it clear that God wants us to look for truth, because He knows the search leads to Him. God actually **requires** us to make an honest attempt to know what is true.

### **2 Timothy 2:15-17a (NASB95)**

***15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. 16 But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene.***

### **III. Do Faith in God and Science Contradict?**

Science is defined as “the observation, identification, description, experimental investigation, and theoretical explanation of phenomena.” Science is a method that mankind can use to gain a greater understanding of the natural universe. It is a search for knowledge through observation. Advances in science demonstrate the reach of human logic and imagination. However, a Christian’s belief in science should never be like our belief in God. A Christian can have faith in God and respect for science, as long as we remember which is perfect and which is not.

Our belief in God is a belief of faith. We have faith in His Son for salvation, faith in His Word for instruction, and faith in His Holy Spirit for guidance. Our faith in God should be absolute, since when we put our faith in God, we depend on a perfect all-knowing and ever-present Creator. Our belief in science should be intellectual and nothing more. We can count on science to do many great things, but we can also count on science to make incorrect theories. The problem with science is that it has been wrong throughout history

about many things **and** because it cannot answer spiritual questions. A quick Google search can show you many things that science has gotten wrong over time. Such as a flat earth and how the earth was the center of the universe. These were beliefs that science was once certain about but through time was proven wrong. New data is always coming out and proving old answers wrong. So it became obvious that science was not the answer. It was ever changing.

If we put faith in science, we depend on imperfect, sinful, limited, mortal men but God is never wrong. Thus there is no reason for a Christian to fear good science. Learning more about the way God constructed our universe helps all of mankind appreciate the wonder of creation. Expanding our knowledge helps us to combat disease, ignorance, and misunderstanding. However, there is danger when scientists hold their faith in human logic above faith in our Creator. These persons are no different from anyone devoted to a religion; they have chosen faith in man and will find facts to defend that faith.

Still, the most rational scientists, even those who refuse to believe in God, admit to a lack of completeness in our understanding of the universe. They will admit that neither God nor the Bible can be proved or disproved by science, just as many of their favorite theories ultimately cannot be proved or disproved. Science is meant to be a truly neutral discipline, seeking only the truth, not furtherance of an agenda.

Much of science supports the existence and work of God.

### **Psalm 19:1 (NASB95)**

**19 The heavens are telling of the glory of God;  
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.**

As modern science discovers more about the universe, we find more evidence of creation. The amazing complexity and replication of DNA, the intricate and interlocking laws of physics, and the absolute harmony of conditions and chemistry here on earth all serve to support the message of the Bible. A Christian should embrace science that seeks the truth, but reject the “priests of science” who put human knowledge above God.

Logic is the science of deriving truth through the analysis of facts. Logic takes given presuppositions, analyzes relationships, compares them with other known factors, and arrives at a conclusion that identifies a previously unknown fact. **Logic is math with ideas instead of numbers.** It is a way of identifying the relationships between ideas.

Logic appears to be one of the natural laws God put into place at the creation of the universe. Then, God created mankind with a mind and the ability to reason. Being a creation of God, logic is a good thing which, when used properly, can point us toward God. Unfortunately, it is easy to use logic incorrectly.

The science of logic deals with the relational formula of ideas. Like numbers in math, ideas can be plugged into formulas that show their relationships with other ideas. It is beneficial to understand the basics of these formulas. Modern arguments are often saturated with emotion, which can stymie conversation and preclude a useful resolution. Passion can impede the path to truth. Often, truth is hidden by what is known as "fallacy". Fallacy is based on false logic and erroneous reasoning.

Unfortunately, many debaters inadvertently fall into fallacy because they **do not start at the beginning**. That is, they allow a pre-conceived, unproved notion to stand in for a fact.

Evolutionists start with naturalistic evolution as the basis for their arguments because they do not accept the possibility of miracles. Many religions reject that Jesus is the God-man because they start with Gnosticism (the physical is evil; the spiritual is good). Secularists who insist that religion is an instinctive response to the fear of death start with the assumption that God does not exist.

## **CONCLUSION:**

When it comes to our witness to the world, the truth is, most people are generally **not** going to be significantly influenced by logic to believe something contrary to their convictions. Usually, sentiment trumps logic. And, although neither Jesus nor the apostles were strangers to logic, it was not their primary tool.

### **1 Peter 3:15 (NASB95)**

<sup>15</sup> but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the **hope** that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

When Peter says to be "**ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you**" he did not mean to start with the Romans 1 argument for the existence of God through our observance of nature. He meant to be ready with the story of our own relationship with God and the hope that has come from it. Someone who bases his beliefs on emotion will not be able to deny what he observes in the Christian life. Logic is a powerful tool. But equally convincing are the truths that can be verified by observation or experience rather than theory or pure logic.

### **Matthew 5:14-16 (NASB95)**

<sup>14</sup> "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; <sup>15</sup> nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. <sup>16</sup> Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

We are "the light of the world"; the darkness may not like the light, but it cannot deny its existence.

### **Titus 2:7-8 (NASB95)**

<sup>7</sup> in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, *with* purity in doctrine, dignified, <sup>8</sup> sound *in* speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.

**He Is Lord!**