

FIGURE IT OUT

APOLOGETICS

BOOK 6 - ABSOLUTE TRUTH
vs. RELATIVISM

Dr. David Newton

HARBOR VIEW PUBLISHING HOUSE
SANTA BARBARA ⌘ CALIFORNIA

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Harbor View Publishing House does independent research and literary commentary production. The name comes from the central overview one has looking over the safe haven within the port, even as the waves and swells of the open ocean lie just beyond the breakwater jetty. Harbor View is committed to examining Biblical topics using a detailed framework of analysis with direct contemporary application.

*"Be perpetually ready to make
an 'apologia' [a legal defense or
reasoned argument] to everyone
who asks you to give a 'logos' [word]
for the hope that is within you, yet do
this with gentleness and reverence"*

1st Peter 3:15

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the summer of 2023 I taught a 12-week series on Apologetics at Calvary Chapel Santa Barbara. Turning my notes into a book resulted in over 450 pages. Would potential readers readily take on a book of that size? Thanks to everyone who gave me feedback that it would be much preferred to have a series of 12 paperback books – one covering each of the 12 Apologetics topics. People could easily find the topic they have interest in, and the entire series could then fit on a desk or bookshelf as a ready reference about foundational Apologetics issues.

Thanks to Bret Shellebarger who first approached me about teaching a series on Christian Worldview, which then turned into the Apologetics study. Thanks to senior pastor Tommy Schneider for his encouragement to go deep on each topic, and then inviting me to do the first teaching at the Calvary Wednesday midweek service. Thanks also to the 120+ who signed up online for the summer series and faithfully attended Monday evenings - and for all those challenging Q+A sessions after each topic.

Big thanks to Jef Richardson for videorecording and editing the Monday night teachings, and to Kevin Hurtado and Sam Shellebarger who filled in and covered for Jef when he was unable to attend. Readers can view the 12 video-teachings that correspond to the 12 Apologetics books at my *YouTube* channel **Figure It Out** @NewWaveDave1977.

Special thanks again to Jenny Yarbrough for another great job designing book covers for this Figure It Out series – just like your graphics work on my other FIO books and at the **NewtonFIO.com** website. Thanks also to all those who did proof-reading – providing edits and comments. And many thanks always to my family for love, prayers, and support.

FOREWORD

We cannot teach, much less defend, what we do not know. Apologetics is for every Christian because it addresses the questions a typical skeptic uses to challenge the claims of Christianity. While speaking around the nation at secondary schools, churches, and college/university campuses one concern is obvious: Biblical literacy is rare, as increasing numbers of people are choosing to follow the ways of the world. Many who grew up in Christian environments do not know what they believe or why they even believe it. At a time when God's Word and name are challenged and ridiculed [even in places founded upon Judeo-Christian values], many well-meaning believers struggle with how to articulate and defend their beliefs. For this reason, Dave Newton's book series on Apologetics is both timely and important. These excellent resources are packed with wisdom from Newton's decades of teaching the Bible and defending the faith. Each short book is well-researched, easy to follow, and provides logical, reasoned answers to one of the twelve most common objections to Christianity. Dr. Newton's use of compelling statistics, analogies, and examples prove why Christianity is true and has withstood the test of time. Whether you are new to the faith, a mature Christian, or still trying to answer life's biggest questions, this Apologetics series will further equip you to defend your faith with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. I have no doubt you will return to this resource time and again to find great information to explain a reason for the hope within you.

When someone claims there is no objective truth, simply ask, "Is that statement *objectively* true?" If one believes there is no objective truth, they make that very statement a definitive truth because it is an *absolute* premise. At a time when Relativism allows opinions to be increasingly

posited as true, factual standards, it has never been more important to understand the difference between objective Absolute Truth and one's subjective preferences. Objective truth is *always* true - regardless of any subjective opinion. Denying absolute truth does not make it false or cease to exist. For example, denying that fire is hot will not prevent one from getting burned when touching a flame. Likewise, one can deny that gravity exists, but throwing a ball in the air or jumping off a cliff *always* results in the ball [and the person] being brought back down to Earth. In this thought provoking sixth volume in Dr. Newton's Apologetics series, he explains how the world operates by *absolute truths* designed by the Creator and clearly stated in the Bible. He also describes why choosing not to believe something does not, and cannot, negate its inherent truthfulness. In addition to providing four clever dialogues between the relativist Skeptic and the Christian who stands on *absolute* Biblical truth, Newton also explores the implications for believing the inspired axioms [principles] within the Bible as logical proof that it is an authoritative, rational, credible, and reliable source of *absolute* truth for life.



Dr. Todd von Helms - Raleigh, North Carolina
 Presidential Scholar for Christianity and Culture at Dallas Baptist University.
 Senior Fellow at Montreat College and Southeastern Seminary. Todd has
 degrees from: University of Texas, Duke University, and Southern Methodist
 University. He is the author of the best-selling book, **Before You Leave: For
 College, Career, and Eternity** [2021]. His latest book [2024] is **Prayerful:
 How the Scriptures, History, and Experience Can Shape Our Prayers.**

INTRODUCTION *to* APOLOGETICS

What exactly is Apologetics? A great starting place is in Acts chapter 17 where Saul is on the Areopagus [Mars Hill] just below the Acropolis in Athens, Greece. There he had a dialogue with skeptical Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. I have been up on that rock outcropping many times over the years and always love to read Acts 17:16-34 out loud, which is also engraved right there on a large stone placard. It is Paul's teaching about the *Unknown God* and his defense of the Christian faith within the pantheism of that First Century Athenian culture. Apologetics comes from the Greek word ***apologia*** [ἀπολογία] meaning "a verbal defense, a reasoned argument". Peter used this [1st Peter 3:15] when encouraging his readers to ALWAYS be ready to give an ***apologia*** about the Logos, regarding the hope within you, to anyone who would ask.

The 12 booklets in this FIO Apologetics series each examine one topic in the context of the questions a typical skeptic asks about the Christian faith, and how to reply with a well-prepared, thoughtful, rational, logical, reasonable response – information to equip you for such conversations. The primary focus is to provide my readers with content that is easy to remember and easy to explain. However, there are three caveats. First, everything in these booklets faces significant challenges, concerns, and oftentimes outright ridicule, because no matter what position you have there will always be those who oppose it. Challenges will come from outside Christian circles and Christian thinkers, but [sad to say] they also come from within Christian circles and Christian thinkers. I can guarantee that all I present in these 12 volumes will have philosophers, theologians,

pastors, and scholars who will all thoroughly disagree with my position. Second, rarely if ever does a great Apologetics response convince the skeptic to change a position. But reasonable-logical-rational-thoughtful responses can help remove the stereotypical way that people often think about conservative Christians - that we are unreasonable, illogical, irrational, close-minded, not very thoughtful. And third, the Bible will not be my primary source of defense because skeptics will say, "I don't believe the Bible, what else have you got?" I will utilize Scripture as I go deeper into each topic and cover solid evidence that align with facts.

My position throughout this entire 12-volume series begins from the premise there are just two competing worldviews. Book-1 introduces the **Naturalist Worldview** opposite the **Biblical Christian Worldview**. The former is inherently atheistic [there is no God and everything happens by random accidental iterations over long periods of time]. The latter is inherently theistic [there is a God who designed and created everything]. There is also a **Theistic Evolutionary Worldview** that tries to blend the prevailing scientific paradigm with the Biblical account of God's creation. These underlying worldviews directly impact how one views the origin of the universe and life on Earth [the topics of Book-2 and Book-3]. It also affects one's *a priori* position on the origin of the Bible and whether it is true [covered in Book-4 and Book-5]. In fact, one's underlying worldview is foundational to the matter of whether any absolute truth exists and if the Bible is a source for such truth. But the evidence presented for each Apologetics topic can be persuasive to even the most ardent atheist.

Providing sound, logical, and thoughtful *apologia* of the Christian faith reminds me of my work as an expert witness in legal cases, where I have been hired by various law firms to provide testimony for either a plaintiff's or defendant's legal case about negative economic impacts, business

valuations, financial loss from breach of contract, failure to perform, or outright fraud. My summary report lays out the logic of all the supporting evidence and rationales related to the issue that bitterly divides the two parties – to bring an unbiased and objective *verbal defense, a reasoned argument* - based on the evidence reviewed. That is my *apologia*. There are usually several other “expert witnesses” hired by the opposing legal counsel who submit perspectives that directly contradict my professional opinion. My “expert witness” approach is the same for this series on Christian Apologetics – to provide perspectives and evidence for anyone responding to the skeptics who challenge the credibility of Christianity.

The 12-volume series covers the most common questions asked about Christian faith – and how best to respond with confidence using rational, logical thought-processes with reliable common-sense evidence. Each book tracks the on-going dialogue between a skeptic of Christianity and a well-informed, well-equipped believer who is able to confidently reply with a defense backed by sound logic and verifiable evidence. Each booklet concludes with a bibliography of Additional Resources where readers can find more information on each Apologetics topic. As you can imagine, it is virtually impossible to cover every topic or question that can be raised. But this series examines the twelve most popular issues you are likely to encounter and provides solid answers for the skeptics. May this series become a trusted resource you go back to time and again regarding the foundational rationales for the hope within you, with the page-edges frayed and folded over from regular use as you dig in and learn to master the underlying Apologetics of your own Christian faith.

- Dr. Dave Newton
May 2024
Santa Barbara, California

BOOK 6

ABSOLUTE TRUTH vs. RELATIVISM

There are no eternal facts, as there are no absolute truths.

- **Friedrich Nietzsche, German Philosopher**

The only absolute truth is there are no absolute truths.

- **Paul Karl Feyerabend, Austrian Philosopher**

The logical conclusion of relativism is absurdity, and that undermines its own premises.

- **Eric Metaxas, Host of Socrates in the City**

"There are no absolute truths" cannot be a true statement or it would then be an absolute.

- **Socratic Society**

What is truth?

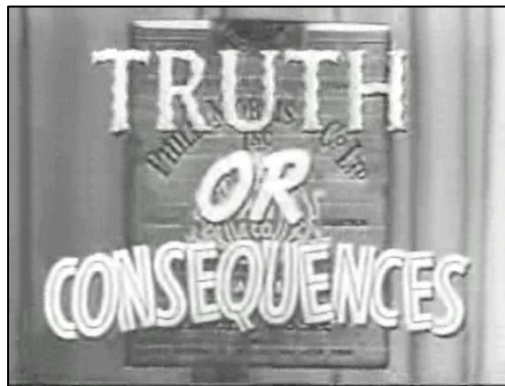
- **Pontius Pilate, Governor of Syrian Province**

One of the most hotly debated questions remains, "Is there such a thing as Absolute Truth?" This is Book 6 in my Apologetics series and segues directly from the two prior volumes that addressed the merits of the Bible. If there is a Designer-Creator of the entire universe who wanted to communicate specifically to mankind through the text within the Bible,

then such a resource could also provide mankind with a basis for truth regarding all matters of life and the physical world. Such truths would then be **axioms** that *do not change over time*. This is in contrast to the Naturalist Worldview that states there is no God and certainly no such absolute truth, believing that as mankind becomes more enlightened through ever-developing societies and advances in scientific research, knowledge also continues to evolve. This allows people to think about things differently and adjust perspectives on how to live. Once again, the Christian Biblical Worldview and the Naturalist position are diametrically opposite with regard to defining truth. An “absolute” truth is inherently immutable – it is ALWAYS true. Relativism proposes there are some topics and situations that eventually get accepted by everyone and these *become truth* in due time. However, over the course of years, decades, centuries – and across different cultures around the globe, the definition of truth is fluid and always changing, morphing, and being updated.

Truth in Pop Culture

When I was a little boy back in the 1960s there was a popular television gameshow called *Truth or Consequences*, where players had to quickly



come up with a “correct” answer to a trivia question. If contestants could not answer the “true” response, then there were required consequences

such as performing a silly or challenging stunt in front of the audience. Another 1960s gameshow was *To Tell The Truth* where three people were questioned by a celebrity panel trying to figure out which person was the notable individual announced at the start of the show. It was funny to hear the imposters answer questions and observe their body language as they tried to fool the panel, who then had to guess which of the three was telling the truth, after which the announcer would famously



say, "Would the real [fill in the name] please stand up". It was always very fun to see who the actual person was and how well the other two tricked the panel with their untruthful answers. The logo graphics for the show included a raised arm like a courtroom pledge, but with the fingers crossed, which is a universal symbol for getting away with telling a lie. The very popular 1990s television drama *The X-Files* ran for nine seasons and eventually launched a widely successful Hollywood feature film of the same name [1998]. The premise of the franchise was that government has always known the Earth has been visited by alien civilizations from outer space but has kept this "truth" from all its citizens while secretly interacting and making policy with these creatures from other worlds. Two FBI agents were always trying to follow up on strange and seemingly

unexplained phenomena that had to have some sort of extraterrestrial connection or purpose. The famous moniker for the show and movie was the recurring theme [below] that there was an undisclosed absolute truth.

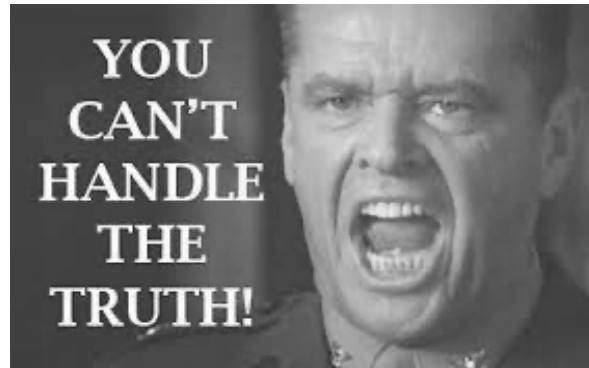


I remember Tony Hadley's 1980s UK band Spandau Ballet. They had a number-1 song titled "True" and performed it at Live Aid in 1985. The lyrics recount "*I want the truth to be known*" and then closed with a long repeat of "*This much is true*" - but this was entirely in a *Relative* context.



And of course, when talking about "truth" it is impossible to draw from pop culture without including Jack Nicholson's iconic character, Marine Colonel Nathan Jessup, in the 1992 blockbuster film *A Few Good Men*,

as he testifies on the witness stand under the intense questioning of the Navy's JAG attorney Dan Kaffee [Tom Cruise] who turns up the pressure and rhetoric that gets Jessup really animated as he looks him right in the



eye and demands, "I want the truth" – to which Nicholson's character screams back at him, "You can't handle the truth". That classic dialogue back and forth was a combination of Jessup's *relativistic* perspective of the issue vs. Kaffee's unwavering commitment to find the *absolute* truth.

Three Options

To set the stage for this debate between Absolute Truth vs. Relativism, there are arguably only three viable positions. The Naturalist Worldview believes that everything in the world came about by random, accidental chance over billions of years without any purpose, design, or intention. As such, there is literally *no such thing* as absolute truth. At various times and locations around the planet there are shifts in societal mores and cultural norms that impact beliefs and behavior, but truth is at best just a **relative** construct dependent upon situations, the sciences, and time. A second position is based on a form of religious-philosophical-intuitive perspectives that come from mankind's ideas about the meaning of life. Some of these change across time, cultures, and locations – while others remain in place for decades [even centuries] since their origination from

the founding author-speaker-teacher. The primary issue here is whether the teachings/principles come from a confirmed, reliable source of truth. The third position is the Christian Worldview whose foundation is the Bible as a confirmed, credible, reliable source of *absolute* truth.

Who Decides Truth?

Absolute Truth is inherently [by definition] ALWAYS *the same* - timeless, regardless of persons, situations, cultures, parameters, location, opinion, date, and history. There may of course be adjustments in culture, society, and how people think of things, as well as philosophical underpinnings regarding various issues, but the truth is still the truth - even as time shifts people's perspectives and approaches. Perhaps you had an *Introduction to Philosophy* class. I remember my professor presented an interesting example of "truth" in the context of sculptures at the Louvre or paintings at Musée d'Orsay, by asking the class, "Is there such a thing as universally 'beautiful' works of art?" Is not this decision subject to each person's own preferences? Are the Greek statues *Nike of Samothrace* and *Venus de Milo* inherently beautiful works or just based on the eye of the beholder? Are Claude Monet's Impressionist paintings *Woman with a Parasol* and *Water Lillie* intrinsically agreed upon as beautiful [ALWAYS true]? Or are these works entirely subject to tastes and perceptions of the individual observer? This gives rise to an oft-quoted term "relative truth". However, I am firmly of the position there is actually no such thing as *Relative Truth* because that is, by definition, an oxymoron. If something is "relative" it is inherently subject to something else, and is not a stand-alone truth. You can have relative opinion, relative perspective, relative context, but not relative truth. The term "relative" introduces a conjoined condition - something subjective based on circumstances that can change over time or across different people. Therefore, it is not truth. It is really more about

popular opinion or *personal preference*. As such, this book will deal with "Relativism" and not attach inherent, timeless "truth" to that term.

Contemporary relativism essentially says Absolute Truth does not exist. This is the foundation to being a *Relativist*. When someone asks about a 'beautiful' painting at the Guggenheim Museum or refers to a really 'ugly' painting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, that is by definition a relativistic inquiry. This is a clear example of how everyone has a differing opinion about what constitutes beauty or ugliness in artwork. This opens wide the door for what is called "Situational Ethics". Such behavior is based upon the current situation or unique context regarding a decision. As such, there is no recognition of any universal truth because societal morality shifts and changes over the course of years, decades, centuries, and millennia. However, as opinions fluctuate over time, "truth" cannot be relative to personal meaning or preference. The 'beauty' of those paintings cannot be absolutely true because interpreting artwork is a personal preference. These individual "tastes" in art, music, décor, food, literature, fashion, and travel destinations can all be viewed as inherently subjective because they vary from person to person. That is the definition of relativism. The opposing position argues there are many things that constitute absolute truth in this world – things that are true irrespective of what someone thinks, believes, or personal preferences. Consider the example of how scientific theories develop over time to try and explain observable phenomenon. A theory not yet disproved could very well be recognized as "truth" but is actually intrinsically false. Truth might be subject to the current state of the global scientific community regarding the issue and current state of research, hypotheses, data, and empirical findings. Scientific instruments used for measuring theories are checked, tested, and substantiated over time - but at some point they could be

[and often are] *disproven*. Then they are no longer considered “true”. In fact, it means they were never *absolutely* true. Consider the following examples of how relativism functions and often morphs over time.

Scientific Truth

The natural sciences [biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, physiology, mathematics, medicine] have achieved prominence in our contemporary culture as the developers and caretakers of what constitutes “truth” in this world. The scientific method of direct observation and modeling variables to describe recurring processes [Natural Law] is considered by many to be the ultimate originator of truth in the physical universe. Yet, scientific ‘*discoveries*’ have changed over relatively short periods of time and continuously render prior truths to be obsolete, based upon more recent reviews of the current data. Consider a few examples of this. For the majority of my life, Pluto was the ninth planet in our solar system. We all understood that to be a scientific truth. Then on August 24, 2006 the decision was made that Pluto is NOT a planet – because it did not have the requisite *updated* characteristics to be so designated as a planet alongside what are now defined as the “true” eight planets: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune. In 1667, Johann Becher, then 40 years later in 1703, Georg Ernst Stahl, both championed a scientific truth that *phlogiston* was an element present in certain materials that enabled combustion [fire]. This cutting-edge new paradigm explained what caused materials to burn. But seven decades later in 1774 Joseph Priestly identified oxygen as the requisite element for combustion. In 1650, the widely accepted truth about Earth was that it is 4,000 years old. However, 138 years later in 1788, Charles Hutton said the Earth was “infinitely old”. Seventy-five years later, Lord Kelvin said the Earth was 98 million years old. But just 25 years after that, in 1887, he changed his position and said the Earth is “*much younger*” –

only between 20 million and 40 million years. [It is always intriguing to notice within the scientific community the casual manner by which such ridiculously wide ranges of variance are proposed and then accepted as factual "truth".] Not even 30 years later, in 1919, the "truth" about our planet was that it was now 1.6 billion years old, while Edwin Hubble said the universe was 2 billion years old. But wait, the top geologists of that day, using rock sediments for aging, said the Earth was 3 billion years old. HOW could it be possible that in 1919 Earth was considered to be older than the universe? Think about that. About 100 years ago [only ten decades] these were considered "truth" about the universe and planet Earth. Then, 35 years later, in 1952, Walter Baede said Hubble's Constant 'had to be much lower' making the Earth 6 billion years old. Just six years later in 1958, Alan Sandage further reduced the Hubble Constant and declared the universe is between 15 billion and 20 billion years of age. But again, consider the ramifications and ambiguity of a five billion year variation [33% of the low-end estimate and 25% of the high-end]. Today, just 65 years later, NASA's website says the age of the universe is now agreed to be 13.8 billion years – with a very small plus or minus variation "due to sophisticated new instruments and advances in understanding Hubble's Constant". But wait again! A 2018 story in *Forbes magazine* headlined, "Surprise! The Hubble Constant Changes Over Time". The following year [2019] the UK's *Guardian* ran this headline, "The Hubble Constant: A Mystery That Keeps Getting Bigger". Then in May 2021, *Universe Today* published "Is the Hubble Constant Not . . . Constant?" noting astronomers now allow for the Hubble Constant to paradoxically evolve over time. Now, a 2024 *Big-Think* report on the Hubble Constant posits: "The universe is expanding and Hubble tells us how fast, but how can it be a constant if the expansion is accelerating?" Quite convenient that this scientific "constant" continues to accelerate as the years go by.

I thought the definition of a constant was that it remained . . . constant. These are just a few examples from the natural sciences of relativism [supposed truths] that actually shift over the years, entirely *relative* to new research data, enlightened perspectives, and adjusted hypotheses.

Truth Defined

The Merriam Webster Dictionary says: *Truth is the body of real things, events, and facts.* The thesaurus lists “actuality” and “fact” as having the same meaning as truth - but also says: “a judgment, proposition, or idea that is true **or accepted as true**”. That moves into the realm of relativism, introducing the concepts of ‘consensus opinion’ and ‘personal judgment’ as being equivalent to truth. The third level definition slides even further away from absolutes: “*Sincerity in action, character, and utterance*”. This is very problematic because it says that if you are sincere in what you believe, that equates to truth? But is it not plausible to sincerely believe in something that is inherently NOT true? Percival Lowell and Giovanni Schiaparelli [in 1877] sincerely **believed** that highly intelligent life built what they deduced were extensive networks of canals on the surface of Mars. Of course, that was eventually debunked as not being true at all. Dictionary.com says: “*Truth is the quality of being genuine, actual, factual*”. The Cambridge Dictionary defines it this way: “*Truth is the quality of being true*”. What? That is pure [and poor] circular reasoning. It is like saying ‘strength is the quality of being strong’ [without ever clearly defining what it actually means to be strong]. Encyclopedia Britannica defines it elaborately as: “*Truth is the property of sentences, assertions, beliefs, thoughts, or propositions that, when said in ordinary discourse, agrees with the facts*”. This once again directly links “truth” with fact. Perhaps a summary of all these definitions is: “Truth” must be intrinsically *absolute* [it has to be], because in every situation it must directly reflect undeniable facts. That is literally what makes it truth.

Consider this additional example found in the Bible. Exodus chapter 20 states a principle that persons should only speak the truth. It is presented as a core mandate for how to interact with others: *do not lie* [always tell the truth]. To ALWAYS speak the truth is then, by definition, an *absolute*. It is not based on the relative merits of personal preferences or societal opinions from that time period [around 1447 BC]. It is a stated universal definition that is meant to apply to everyone, everywhere, across all time. It is very interesting [and troubling] that when a person is summoned to appear in court to give testimony in a legal case, our advanced justice system requires the person to openly swear a public oath prior to giving



a legally binding testimony. If everybody ALWAYS spoke only truth [an absolute principle], then there would be no need to swear a public oath. Instead, a person would enter the courtroom, sit down, and begin giving testimony [without the oath] because it would be clearly and inherently understood that only truth is being spoken. However, we understand human nature and the propensity to NOT tell the truth [that begins at a very early age]. For a variety of reasons, people may have an incentive to either not tell the whole truth [omission], or outright lie by fabricating an entirely false narrative [commission]. There is even a third option, to say, "I do not remember" [even when a person does very well recall].

And of course, here in the United States, a person can invoke the Fifth Amendment to our nation's Constitution so as to not be compelled to speak the truth if it will prove to be self-incriminating. The pledged courtroom oath seeks a public guarantee to speak only the truth. And yet the crime of perjury had to be specified for those who knowingly lie while under that oath. In order to try and further enhance the personal oath to only speak truth, many courts also required witnesses to place their left hand on the Bible while pledging to give entirely truthful testimony. Today, many courtrooms across the country and around the world have removed the Bible from the legal-testimony oath, so now a person simply holds up a right hand while pledging to "Tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth". Sometimes that oath ends with "So help me God", while in many places invoking God into a pledge of truthful testimony is no longer used. Considering the huge number of court cases worldwide and all the ramifications of different testimony from witnesses, there is still no definitive way to know for certain how many people actually speak the "whole truth" in the courtroom.

On July 4, 1776 our founding fathers formally declared independence from England within the proceedings of the Continental Congress. They included this famous caveat as a premise for their revolutionary position:

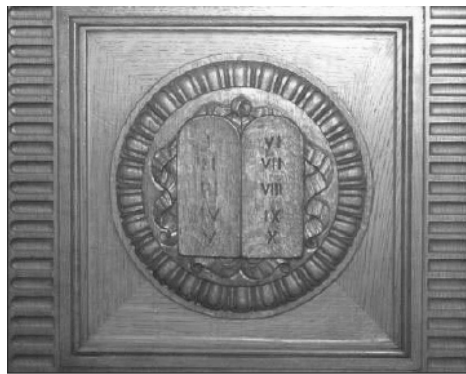


"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness". This is very much presented as Absolute Truth – because it stands alone on its own merit of being **self-evident**. Their declaration to King George stood on this very foundational position. Today's skeptic typically responds that "self-evident" is not synonymous with an absolute truth – that these men were simply acting on their own personal preferences and joint opinion. But the historical record clearly demonstrates that the founders of our great nation trusted Virginia Representative Thomas Jefferson with crafting the original narrative to state the case for independence of the American colonies. His wording then drew heavily on well-documented *absolute* truths found in the Bible, including personal freedom [liberty], dignity inherent within every person, a basis for justice among people, and governance based on absolutes within the 'Rule of Law'. In fact, Jefferson, while writing in another original work from 1804, said about the Bible: *"A more beautiful or precious morsel of ethics I have never seen, it is a document in proof that I am a real Christian, that is to say, a disciple of the doctrine of Jesus"*. This is but one example of how the Bible can demonstrate evidence as being a source for *absolute* truth.

Related to this is the core issue of *absolute* truth within the realm of a nation's Rule of Law. It is so interesting to visit the United States Supreme Court at One First Street in Washington, D.C. When you approach the front steps that face west looking toward the U.S. Capitol building, carved above the main doors are Confucius on the left, with the famous Greek statesman Solon to the right, and they are both looking to the center where Moses sits between them holding the Ten Commandments on what appear to be the two stone tablets from God [top of next page].



These same two tablets of the Ten Commandments are also carved into the large doors where people enter the courtroom [below left]. Similar



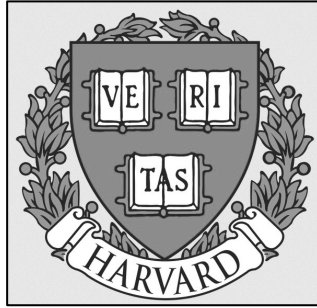
tablets with Roman numerals I to X are engraved on the door jambs that support the bronze gates in the courtroom [above right]. These provide more evidence the Bible is a widely recognized source for absolute truth in America's founding. How sad that liberal-atheistic revisionist historians claim these are not the Ten Commandments but the [ten] Bill of Rights.

On top of the next page is the official seal of Harvard University at its founding in 1636 with three opened Bibles and each showing some of the letters in the Latin word for truth: "Veritas" [VE-RI-TAS] – like the

French vérité and the Spanish verdad. The college was founded for the primary purpose of training/educating new clergy, because in the early



17th Century, more than 17,000 Puritans lived in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and there was a shortage of Biblically educated men to serve as pastors in churches for this fast-growing British colony. The founders wanted these young scholars to focus on one thing in their formal collegiate studies at Cambridge: "Truth". All of the instruction in that day was in Latin, which students had to learn in their teenage years before entering Harvard. In 1643, just seven years from its founding, a small book was published – *The New England First Fruits* – with this provocative mission for Harvard: "to advance Learning and perpetuate it to Posterity, dreading to leave an illiterate Ministry to the Churches, when our present Ministers shall lie in the Dust" [Ministry is not a typo, but the original wording used]. Harvard was to train young men to pursue truth [Veritas] so they would be prepared to step into the on-going need for qualified, educated next-generation pastors at the time when the current well-trained, seasoned pastors will have died and been buried. Fast forward to the present day 21st Century Harvard seal shown on the top of the next page. It is very interesting that it still has the three opened books spelling out the Latin VE-RI-TAS for "truth". But they are no longer considered open Bibles, but scholarly books of science, philosophy, arts,



language, culture - their sources of knowledge. Consider how Relativism has overtaken *absolute* truth in this quote from today's Harvard mission: *"Students get exposure to **new ideas, new ways** of understanding, and **new ways of knowing**, and embark on a journey of intellectual transformation through a **diverse living environment**, where students live with people who are studying different topics, who come from different walks of life, and have **evolving identities**".* It reflects politically correct humanistic Relativism [with clear reference to evolving gender-identity]. This wording reminds me of what I heard conservative writer David Horowitz say at the 2011 Restoration Weekend regarding non-substantive curricula at today's colleges and universities: *"Parents, don't let your sons or daughters major in anything that ends in the word 'Studies'."* New ideas and ways of knowing, packaged with intellectual transformation and diversity of evolving identities, together epitomize how Relativism combined with revisionist history can thoroughly erode and replace longstanding, foundational, and *absolute* truth.

Four Truth Dialogues

There are arguably four basic dialogues between the Christian Apologist and the Skeptic regarding truth. These follow a logical, rational process that highlights the subtle [and not so subtle] differences between these two polar opposite positions, as the former defends something that is

inherently *absolute* [not situational] vs. a position that is clearly *relative* to ever-changing context, situations, preferences, and opinions.

Dialogue No. 1 - No Absolute Truth

The first dialogue is about behavior when out in public and assesses how each position defines this situation. Consider the opening statement: "Spitting on people when walking down the street is **WRONG**". The Skeptic replies, "Says who?" to which the reply is, "Everyone **KNOWS** you don't do that". Someone who denies any *absolute* truth in favor of relativism typically replies, "Okay, that's fine for you, but don't impose your beliefs on me". The logical reply is, "Are you saying, '*There is no such thing as absolute truth when it comes to this kind of behavior*'?" And the skeptic says, "That's exactly what I'm saying – there is never any absolute truth". But wait! Look very closely at the skeptic's last comment. It states there is **NO such thing** as absolute truth. But this statement is by definition "*absolute*", because it presents an axiom [whether inferred or explicit] that **NOTHING** can be absolute. This first dialogue goes in favor of Absolute Truth, because the Relativist employed an assumption that is intrinsically an *absolute* while openly arguing there is no such thing as an absolute. It is illogical, irrational, and impossible for a Relativist to state a "rule" because that disproves the underlying meaning of what it is to be a Relativist. A person cannot have it both ways. Either there **ARE** clearly logical, rational things which are always true, or there are not. In either case both positions use inherently *absolute* statements.

Dialogue No. 2 - No Basis For Truth

The second dialogue introduces this statement, "My actions are based upon my belief in God and the precepts in the Bible". The skeptic grants that and says, "Of course you are free to believe whatever works for you, because in the end, there are many positions for any given issue". On the surface this statement is politically correct, with a strong advocacy

for respecting others and “inclusiveness”. It is a very popular position within contemporary society. The best response to this is, “Okay, I am free to do whatever I like, but what if my actions hurt other people?” The skeptic will typically reply, “Agreed, people are free to believe and act however they want **as long as it does not cause harm to anyone**”. But qualifying that stance with this caveat once again brings in an underlying absolute principle - ‘doesn’t hurt others’. Doing no harm to other people is inherently an *absolute* posture. As with the previous dialogue, a person cannot have it both ways. Either a person is free to believe in a stand-alone position [because there is no absolute truth to modify that] or the personal belief ends up being contingent upon a universal principle to ‘*not cause harm to others*’. Once such a contingency is proposed, it stands as a logical rationale that will ALWAYS be true [absolutely]. The skeptic will often invoke that “not harming anyone” is actually a societal norm and is not an absolute truth. But even that explanation is illogical because it establishes a pre-existing condition recognizing the position of the broader society at-large that must be met *before* believing [doing] whatever one chooses and disproves this attempt at a relative position.

Dialogue No. 3 - Agnostic About Truth

The third dialogue deals with the issue, “It is impossible to ever really know what is true”. Being agnostic about truth makes good sense from a Naturalist worldview because there is no purpose or intention to the physical world. All we see around us is merely a function of statistical probabilities and random chance over long periods of time. There is no design and certainly no underlying reason for anything in the physical world. As such, there is no way anyone could ever know what is true and what is false because there is no basis for such. Life is simply an accident so there cannot be higher-order cognitive rationales or values to guide people’s actions. Everything people do and say comes down to natural

selection and personal opinions for each situation. For example, a person says, "The BEST food in the entire world is in Paris at La Petite Chaise, it serves such amazing French cuisine". The other person responds with, "No way, the BEST food in the entire world is the moussaka with lamb at To-Kafeneion on the Plaka in Athens". Truth for one person is entirely different than for another based entirely on one's personal perceptions, experiences, tastes, and preferences in assessing this situation. Dialogue could go on for multiple rounds of comparing the likes of one person to the likes of the other. The argument is that no one is able to *absolutely* define what constitutes GREAT cuisine because there is no universal axiom [standard] for such. There is no way to KNOW for certain based upon an objective, outside source for truth. These two persons cannot BOTH be right in their positions, therefore by definition, there is no absolute truth regarding cuisine. Could third-party rating resources like Yelp, TripAdvisor, Greeka.com, or *Food & Wine* magazine establish the absolute, universal truth for the BEST food in the world? Not really. The question still comes down to whether the organization is a recognized authority on the subject, to the extent that the rendering is entirely objective and without any opinion, prejudice, or bias. Because these sources only show "expert critique" or "majority opinion" representing thousands of personal preferences, they do not qualify as a final authority about what *absolutely* constitutes the BEST food in all of the world.

Consider the legal speed limit of 65 miles per hour on the freeways here in California. That is clearly the authority, the standard, the objective law. However, the California Highway Patrol [CHP] data consistently reports that "flow-of-traffic" averages 72mph. If a driver was pulled over because the radar clearly shows 70mph, there are two ways that can go. First, the driver could admit going faster than the absolute legal standard and is

guilty of speeding. Second, the driver could make the case of actually going slower than average traffic-flow so, technically, it was not really speeding. This second form of logic is a purely *relative* line of reasoning comparing a sample of other drivers' speeds, in the same vicinity and at that same time. All three criteria are relative measures. If one chooses to not abide by the legal absolute speed limit, even if traveling at a speed slower than other vehicles, the relativist argues in court that there was no speeding [or intent]. Whereas the absolute position is "I'm guilty".

Dialogue No. 4 - Choose to Not Believe

This fourth dialogue *always* involves the underlying question of whether there is any evidence that God exists - the foundational issue regarding one's Worldview [see Book-1 in the series]. The prior Dialogue No. 3 gets to the issue of a reliable source for *absolute* truth. Could the Bible be that basis to define timeless, universal truth [see Book-4 and Book-5 in this series regarding the credibility of the Bible]? Certainly, the existence of God introduces additional support for the Bible being an objective resource about God's absolute truths. But the skeptic who outright rejects God and/or the Bible in the dialogue will no doubt stick to the narrative of the atheistic Naturalist Worldview, that there is no purpose or intent to life in this temporal, physical world, so there cannot be any Absolute Truth in this random, accidental, purposeless environment. However, when a person **chooses not to believe** in God and/or the credibility of the Bible, such volitional positions cannot negate any evidence to support the truth that God DOES exist, and the Bible IS a reliable resource of absolute truth. This was addressed by the Pharisee Saul when he wrote to the Romans [1:18-20] that those who act ungodly "suppress His truth" - *knowledge of God* - because that is clearly evident within ALL people, in their conscience as they "see" and "understand" God's unique attributes and His power on display in the natural order.

As such, **people have no excuse** for not believing God exists because the evidence is literally everywhere. It is as if God is rhetorically asking, “Where do they think all of this came from?” The physical world exhibits design and purpose, yet people make a deliberate choice to exchange this obvious, *absolute* “Truth” about God for a lie [there is no God]. They then choose to worship what God created [the natural world] instead of the God who created it all. Consider the example of me holding each of my four children when they were born, and now holding my eleven grandchildren in the hospital soon after each was born. In each case, the conception from nine months prior resulted in an incredibly designed, fully functional human - very clear evidence about which I can make no excuse. The skeptic can make the conscious decision to *not believe* that God exists. But THAT choice does not cancel the reality of God – in the same way that denying any *absolute* truth cannot render it false. In fact, it is actually a very pronounced “*absolute*” to stand firm on the premise that there is no God. That becomes an underlying axiom [a truth] that affects how everything is processed about the natural world. As such, it limits the possibility that there can be any meaning to living in this world. The conscious decision to NOT believe in God is the skeptic’s absolute truth. So, while Christians are challenged to prove that God exists, always remember there is NO way anyone can prove that God does not exist. It is all about Worldview and one’s approach to the evidence in the natural world being the undeniable witness of a Creator-God. In fact, when the relativist invokes “*there is no God*” – that statement is by definition an absolute truth within that set of beliefs. One can choose to not believe in gravity, but it is a scientific axiom within God’s natural order. The decision jump off a 450-foot-tall bridge without any bungy-cords does not change the *absolute* truth about how gravity will clearly affect such a challenging leap of faith. Denial of absolute truth does not negate it.

What About Ethics?

Another key topic in the debate between Absolute Truth vs. Relativism is Ethics – *moral principles that guide behavior* [Oxford Dictionary]. This definition includes an *absolute*, namely “principles that guide behavior”. Ethics asks: “Is there one correct way to think or act that is always true?” Once again, a definition that includes an *absolute* [ONE CORRECT way]. Contemporary ethics seem to abandon any inherent *absolute* principles. For example, ethics traditionally was about decisions and actions that were universally correct - typically called the “Right Choice”. But today ethics is more about the BEST way to think or act in a certain context. Notice that subtle difference. The former is about an *absolute* standard, while the latter is referred to as Situational Ethics. This has the exact same problems as “Relative Truth”. If the situation [setting, timing, context, outcomes, personnel] must first be factored into the decision, then the universal principle for behavior has been voided. Spike Lee’s 1989 film, *Do the Right Thing*, is a good look at comparing an inherently absolute “Right” way to behave opposite the wrong way to act. This is explored within the context of racial norms, prejudice, and personal expectations at an Italian pizzeria in a predominantly African American neighborhood of Brooklyn in the 1980s. Local youths are offended there are only photos of white Italian celebrities honored on the wall of the pizza parlor – “How come there’s no black people?” This segues into arguments, tensions, anger, actions that epitomize *absolute truths* vs. relativism regarding the correct ways to treat others - irrespective of the situation. *Absolute* ethics is inherent in the film’s title because there IS a “Right” thing to do that transcends upbringing, ethnic background, racial biases, and situations. The dichotomy of absolute ethics vs. situational ethics is popular in the workplace. Most collegiate business schools offer courses in *Business Ethics* focused on cases about the “Right” thing to do vs. the “Best”

thing to do in a given decision-making context. Are the Right thing and the Best thing different from each other? One favorite book I have used with MBA students is *The Ethical Imperative* [1998] by John Dalla Costa – with this intriguing subtitle: *Why Moral Leadership is Good Business*. This has the connotation that managers need convincing that moral behavior translates to positive results in business. But managers should ALWAYS do the right thing, right? Another book I enjoyed with students is *Moral Mazes* [1988] by Robert Jackal. This provocative title also connotes the challenges within business decisions. If morality is about navigating a maze, that does not reflect well on absolute truth. Ethics is typically described as a **Judeo-Christian** concept [code for *absolute* moral principles found in the Bible] - a widely recognized SOURCE for *absolute* truth. Ethics are not typically described as a Hindu ethic, Buddhist ethic, or Islamic ethic, and certainly never an Atheistic ethic, but always Judeo-Christian. The Bible also shows up in “The Golden Rule” [do unto others as you would have them do unto you] - an *absolute* principle for making decisions the “Right” way – the universally CORRECT way to live and treat others. My 1997 book on this topic, *Entrepreneurial Ethics*, delineated surveys I did of 400 randomly selected entrepreneurs whose firms were listed on the *Inc. Magazine* 500 Fastest Growing Companies from 1991 to 1996. It showed empirical results of how the top entrepreneurs at high-growth ventures incorporated ethics [or not] into their own managerial decision making. The end result was entrepreneurial ethics actually tended to be mostly *Situational Ethics*.

Absolute Examples

Relativism says, “What's true for you may not also be true for others - truth is dependent on situations, cultures, times, and preferences”. Consider these few examples of *absolute* truths. A triangle ALWAYS has

three sides. By definition it *cannot* have more. There are ALWAYS 360° in a circle or sphere. Water ALWAYS boils at the temperature of 212°F. At birth, a baby is ALWAYS male or female. But more recently, society has shifted to a premise that people have a "birth sex" [an *absolute* truth based upon physiology and biology] - and a "chosen sex" decided at a later time in life [and it may not even be binary, but along a continuum]. This is pure *Relativism*. I was present at the birth of all four of my children, I literally caught each one as they entered the world. The first was male, the next three were female. Back in the 1980s we did not do a "gender reveal" party while my wife was four or five months pregnant. The gender reveal happened in the delivery room. Being a biological-physiological male or female at birth is an inherently ***absolute scientific truth*** found in the Bible [Genesis 1:27]. Modern digital ultrasound technology is truly amazing. 3D images of a child in the womb show the ***absolute truth*** of a living person inside the mother. Head, eyes, nose, arms, fingers, toes, legs, with a steady heartbeat PROVE this truth [Psalm 139:13-15]. Taking what is not yours is the definition of stealing. There are dozens of laws in the California Criminal Code about stealing, theft, shoplifting, burglary, and robbery. It is an intrinsic, ***absolute truth*** [Exodus 20:15]. Yet today, in San Francisco, Proposition 47 gives a *relative* interpretation that it is no longer a felony to steal if the value of what is taken is under \$950 [only a misdemeanor]. This is due to reduced funding for police officers and city attorneys to arrest and prosecute what are now "small crimes". Anyone can enter a store and ***steal*** with impunity. As such, many retailers have closed their stores because of revenues lost to increased theft. The Earth is a sphere [Isaiah 40:22] suspended in space [Job 26:7]. The Bible stated these ***absolute truths*** centuries before Pythagoras or Aristotle. There are pathways flowing within the seas [Psalm 8:8] is an ***absolute truth*** about Earth's ocean currents, confirmed by oceanography and

satellite imaging. When God concluded His creation [Genesis 2:1] that exemplified the **absolute truth** of the First Law of Thermodynamics. Yet, sometime in the future, the Second Law of Thermodynamics states that increasing entropy will cause the physical world to wind down – an **absolute truth** referenced within the Bible [Revelation 6:14, Isaiah 34:4, Psalm 102:25-26, 2nd Peter 3:12]. Earth’s water-cycle is well-documented **absolute truth** found in the Bible [Amos 9:6], as oceans evaporate into clouds that rain down fresh water. The human body is comprised of iron, sulfur, oxygen, calcium, magnesium, carbon, and aluminum - the same common elements found in dirt - an **absolute Biblical truth** [Genesis 2:7, 3:19]. The life in a person comes through the blood [Leviticus 17:11]. The stars in the visible universe cannot be counted [Jeremiah 33:22]. The Babylonian Empire will be replaced by Medo-Persia, which will fall to the Greeks, who will be supplanted by the Romans - the definitive **absolute truth** in the Bible from the 6th Century BC [Daniel chapters 2 and 7]. The exact dimensions of Noah’s Ark [Genesis 6:14-16] were confirmed in 1993 by the *South Korean Research Center* as the optimum 1.5 million cubic-feet design to be sea-worthy and carry such cargo for one year. In each case these are confirmed **absolute truths** from one SOURCE.

Absolute Authority

Can there be an absolute authority for what ALWAYS constitutes truth? Exodus 20 states definitive principles of how people should interact with each other, including: 1] honor your parents, 2] do not murder, 3] remain faithful to your spouse, 4] never steal, 5] never lie, and 6] never covet what others have. These are very common sense, logical, and rational. Consider what life would be like if these were how everyone lived. They are summarized in the axiom known as “The Golden Rule” - treat others exactly the way you would like to be treated. These all originate from

the Bible. Could that book be an **absolute** authority for all of mankind? The *Veritas Forum* started 32 years ago in 1992 at [yes, of all places] Harvard. These public events sought to showcase the university's motto



regarding absolute truth in the context of the contemporary relativistic world. Today, there are over 200 chapters at college and university campuses across North America, Europe, and Asia. [Flip back and review the Harvard seal with VE-RI-TAS across three Bibles.] During the 1990s, I was on the Board of the local *Veritas Forum* chapter at the University of California campus here in Santa Barbara. We planned public programs each year to bring world-class scholars to campus for debates about Christian Truth vs. relativism. In each of these standing-room-only public dialogues the focus was on the Biblical *absolute* 'veritas' about an issue of science, philosophy, religion, or business. The debate always included Worldview, and the premise "Does God exist?" At some point in almost every interaction, the Naturalist vs. Biblical Worldview became part of the Absolute Truth vs. Relativism approach to the issue. The Bible was THE source for how to understand an issue vs. humanist-relativist ideas. Lively, spirited dialogue ensued about abstract thought, logic, morality, and cognitive rationales as either core *absolute* truth or simply functions of naturally evolved ideas. The *Veritas Forum* purpose states clearly that '*Christian faith offers a framework and motivation for pursuing truth through dialogue with humility*'. This echoes Peter's first letter [3:15] in the Bible to do Apologetics *with gentleness and reverence*. Virtually all debates with a skeptic will eventually deal with whether the Bible is a credible and reliable SOURCE for knowledge and understanding - an *absolute* authority about God's truth. The Bible states plainly that

mankind was *Created* in the image of the infinite God - entirely unique from the animal kingdom. Humans have a physical body along with conscious awareness. Animals have a body and instinct-awareness. But humans have a unique third feature of a *spirit*, completely distinct from all other forms of life. The Pharisee Saul noted these three human dimensions in his first letter to the Macedonian city of Thessalonica [5:23] - the physical body [*soma* in the Greek], the consciousness [Greek root *psuche* for psychology], and the spirit [*pneuma*]. These are referenced throughout the Bible as intrinsic **absolute truth** because mankind was intentionally designed and created by God [Genesis 1:26 says it was in "Our image" - plural]. As such, mankind is positioned for a unique cognitive, personal, spiritual interaction with the Creator of the universe. This is a specific, purposeful characteristic that distinguishes mankind.

Six of the Ten Commandments were noted on page 35. A legal scribe tried to entrap Jesus by asking which Command was the most important [Matthew 12:28]. He replied all ten could be summed up in: "*Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength – and love your neighbor as you do yourself*". Notice there are no conditions or pretext of culture, time, location, or context of a situation. This is **absolute truth**. Jesus was very clear on this. It makes sense. It is logical and rational. Here the Bible again makes the case that it is a SOURCE for objective truth. The Bible plainly states *absolutes* about the created character of men and women that transcend biology, physiology, psychology, and chemistry. It is this third-dimensional spirit [*pneuma*] that gives life meaning in the physical world. *BIG-Think.com* [August-2022] published, "Can Science Ever Discover the Absolute Truth About Reality?" and this quote: "*The human endeavor of science is the **ultimate pursuit of truth** - by asking the natural world questions about itself, we seek to gain an understanding*

of what the universe is like, what **the rules are that govern** it, and how things came to be the way they are". While this statement is thoroughly couched in Relativism, it violates its own *relative* bases by first stating "Science is" and **everything in the universe came about by** [accidental, random chance over billions of years of uniform natural processes]. That is an *absolute* premise that nullifies the inherent definition of Relativism.

Summary

Truth MUST be inherently, by definition, *absolute*. Relative truth is an oxymoron that depends on situations, culture, preferences, or opinions that change over time. And yet, if one embraces relativism and tries to define it as truth, that premise undermines the entire position. Relativism always collapses by requiring a precursor which ultimately becomes an 'absolute' condition – a disclaimer that is not relative. The Bible makes a case to be a stand-alone SOURCE for hundreds of statements and principles about God, mankind, and the physical-natural world. These are not subject to conditions, time, or situations. These statements are true whether a person believes or not. The Atheist-Naturalist skeptic claims there cannot be anything that is inherently true in a world whose origin is from accidental random chance without any purpose or intent. Many groups, individuals, and writings propose their own thoughts and ideas about what is true, but are these axiomatic and reliable sources or do they also fluctuate over time? There is very strong evidence the Bible originated outside space-time [see Books 4 and 5 in this series] such that its *absolute* content-principles transcend the typical limitations of human perspective. The dialogue [argument] ultimately does come down to *the Bible vs. Man's ideas vs. there is no absolute truth*. Only one of these can ALWAYS be truth. While many have disdain for God's instructions and commentary about the physical world and mankind, that does not make them untrue. Give the Bible a deep review and decide for yourself.

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Art Lindsley	<i>True Truth: Defend Absolute Truth in Relativistic World</i> [2004]
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Josh McDowell	<i>The Unshakeable Truth</i> [2011]
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Doug Groothuis	<i>Truth Decay: Defending Christianity Against Post-Modernism</i> [2000]
Jefrey Breshears	<i>Absolute Truth About Relativism</i> [2013]
Mike Singer	<i>The Search For Truth</i> [1974]
Robert Jackal	<i>Moral Mazes</i> [1988]
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Kelly and Drew	<i>Understanding Postmodernism</i> [2017]
Perry Anderson	<i>The Origins of Post-Modernity</i> [1998]
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