

A Theology of Truth

Definition: Alethiology – The study of truth

God loves truth

Exodus 20:16 - “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Ephesians 5:9 - (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),

Philippians 4:8 - Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Hebrews 6:18 - “...in which it is impossible for God to lie...”

Proverbs 12:17 - Whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence, but a false witness utters deceit.

Ephesians 4:25 - Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

1 Peter 2:22 - He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

The devil loves lying

John 8:44 - You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Revelation 21:8 - But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

Proverbs 6:16–19 - There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.

Proverbs 12:22 - Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who act faithfully are his delight.

Jeremiah 9:5–6 - Everyone deceives his neighbor, and no one speaks the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves committing iniquity. Heaping oppression upon oppression, and deceit upon deceit, they refuse to know me, declares the LORD.

Colossians 3:9 - Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices

We are commanded to refute falsehood

Titus 2:1 - But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

2 Corinthians 10:5 - We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

Romans 16:1 - I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.

Ephesians 4:14 - so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine,

1 Timothy 4:6 - If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.

Titus 1:9 - He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

Theories of truth

1. Correspondence theory of truth – The truth of a statement is dependent on whether or not it corresponds to reality.

Example: If there is a cat on the mat and I say, “there is a cat on the mat.”

“To say that which is, is, and that which is not, is not, is true.” –Aristotle

This is the theory of truth in Plato, Aristotle, Christianity, almost all of Western History, etc.

2. Coherence theory of truth – The truth of a statement is dependent on whether or not it coheres with other things in your (possibly incorrect) worldview.

Example: If I am an atheist and I say, “human evolution began millions of years ago.”

Notice that this statement is true, regardless of what actually happened, simply because the belief in human evolution “coheres” well with the beliefs of atheism.

This theory of truth is not about whether something is true “objectively” or “in reality” but only whether or not it fits with other things you believe to be true.

3. Pragmatic theory of truth – The truth of a statement is dependent on whether or not it is helpful to believe in accomplishing some goal.

Example: “If having an abortion will help me have a happier life, then I should have an abortion.”

Notice that “truth” in this definition isn’t really about truth at all – it is about what is *useful* to believe to reach some pragmatic goal or desired outcome.

Absolute Truth

What are some statements that could be false but, in reality, are absolutely true?

1. I am a human.
2. Geoff is $\frac{1}{4}$ Japanese.
3. Baseball is a game.
4. You name some...

What are some statements that are, not only absolutely true, but *cannot* be false?

1. I exist.

"If I am mistaken, I am." -Augustine

“Cogito ergo sum.” (“I think, therefore I am/exist.”) - Descartes

2. All homo-sapiens are humans.
3. $2 + 2 = 4$

4. The phrase, “absolute truth exists.” (Because its opposite, “there is no such thing as absolute truth,” is a contradiction).

5. Incorrigible statements (“Red seems to be appearing to me”).

Relativism

Notes:

The Law of Non-Contradiction

Definition: Contradictory statements cannot both be true in the same sense at the same time.

It states that something cannot be both true and not true at the same time in the same way.

If X is true, then X cannot be false (at the exact same time in the exact same way).

The law of non-contradiction is absolutely true and cannot be false. It holds regardless of whether you are a believer or a non-believer.

Consider the following examples – Can they both be true at the same time in the same way?

1. There is a cat on the mat.

2. There is not a cat on the mat.

1. I am male.

2. I am not male.

1. I see a room full of people.

2. It is not the case that I see a room full of people.

1. God exists.

2. God does not exist.

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1. A gay person cannot change their sexual orientation.
 2. Their partner can change their gender.
 3. Therefore, either #1 or #2 above must be false.

Even the skeptic that says, "I don't believe in the law of non-contradiction," can't mean "I actually do believe in the law of non-contradiction." In fact, you need the law of non-contradiction to even try to argue against the law of non-contradiction!

Can God break the law of non-contradiction?

-Can God do the *logically* impossible? Is that even a thing to be done?

The law of non-contradiction is deeply biblical

Examples:

1. If it is true that Jesus is Lord then the phrase, "Jesus is not Lord" is false.
2. If it is true that adultery is sinful then the phrase, "adultery is not sinful" is false.
3. If it is true that people are only saved by Christ then the phrase, "people can be saved apart from Christ" is false.
4. If it is true that God cannot lie then the phrase, "God can lie" is false.

One of God's attributes is being logical, it is being true. *God is Truth.*

Many of our confusions in language come from accidentally breaking the law of non-contradiction.

The following sentences are not actual statements because they contain contradictions:

1. "God can make a rock so big he cannot move it."
2. "This sentence is false."
3. " $2 + 2 = 5$ "
4. "I see a circular square."
5. "A true believer can lose their salvation."

If you hold a contradiction in your theology, then you are wrong in some area and need to repent.

Examples:

Premise 1: The Bible only allows one to divorce in the case of physical adultery or physical abandonment.

Premise 2: But this married couple wants to get divorced for a reason other than physical adultery or physical abandonment.

Conclusion: Therefore, they do not have the right to get divorced and allowing them to do so would be sinful - without exception.

Premise 1: You hold a particular theological position.

Premise 2: I hold a contradictory position.

Conclusion: Therefore, either we are both wrong (in some cases) or at least one of us is wrong (in other cases), but we cannot both be right, and therefore one of us is in sin, needs to repent, and needs to stop believing something that is false.

Things people do to avoid repenting when they are wrong

1. They try to shift the argument.
2. They try to appeal to their personal experience (race, gender, tough life circumstance, personal experience, etc.) instead of dealing with the actual argument.
3. They will threaten you.
4. They will critique you instead of your position.
5. They will critique your tone instead of your position.
6. They will appeal to what their friends and what those in their circles believe.
7. They will say they “just disagree.”
8. They try to shift the blame back to you.