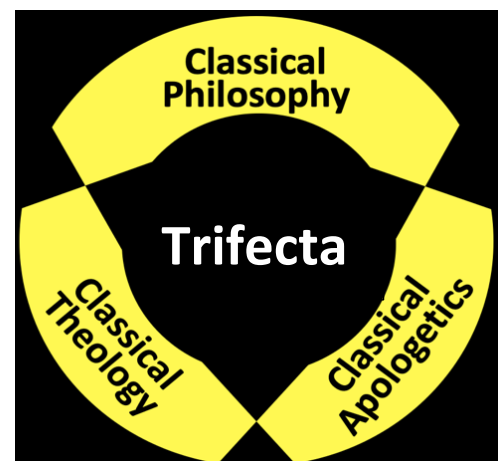


## THE GEISLERIAN TRIFECTA: CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY, THEOLOGY, & APOLOGETICS

### I. PROBLEM: MOST CHRISTIANS ARE NOT EQUIPPED TO IMPACT OUR SOCIETY TODAY

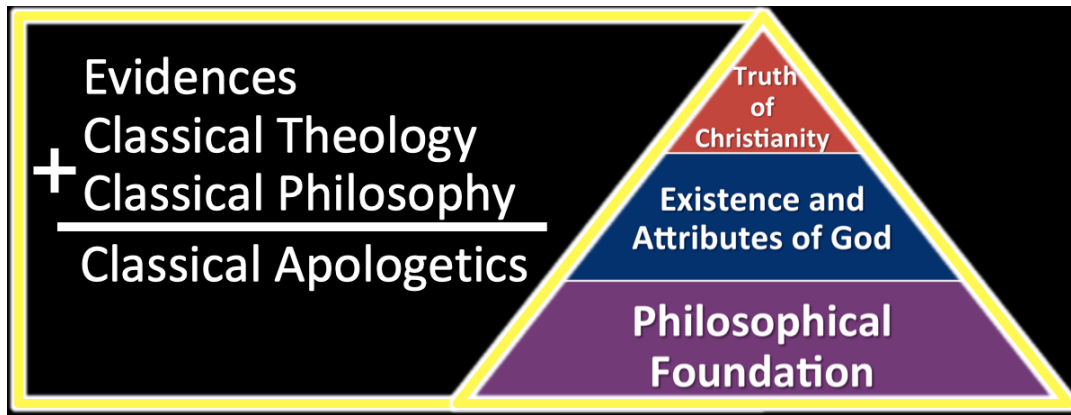
- A. **Worldview**- A set of beliefs we hold to through which we view the world and interpret reality. It's a narrative framework for understanding and explaining the world. A worldview can be expressed as an overarching story through which we explain reality, our beliefs, our experiences, and our moral positions. Our worldview determines how we behave, which philosophical positions we permit ourselves to believe, what we think can and should happen, and it influences and is influenced by what we find desirable.
- B. **Christian Worldview**- All of the following are part of the Christian worldview:
1. Theism: the belief in one, infinite, personal Creator.
  2. Miracles are possible.
  3. There's order to the universe.
  4. There's purpose and meaning in life.
  5. There's a proper way to behave; God established a proper moral order.
- C. **Fideism**- The position that all we need is faith and that we do not need to have reason or evidence for our beliefs. Fideism is unscriptural, irrational, and a losing position. Christians should oppose fideism.
- D. **Worldview Replacement**- An attempt to remove someone's worldview and replace it with another. Non-Christians are trying to replace Christian theism in the West with the naturalistic worldview.
- E. **The Top Anti-Christian Philosophies Promoted in Our Culture**- The following are impacting Christian growth in the West.
1. Naturalism- The worldview/philosophy which asserts that nature is all there is and natural processes can account for everything. There are no supernatural beings or supernatural events (no miracles).
  2. Scientism- The belief that science is the only way to know the truth about reality.
  3. Materialism- Matter is the only thing that exists. Only the material world is knowable.
  4. Relativism- Truth and morality are relative, and neither universal nor absolute.
  5. Pluralism- All religions are true; all religions lead to God.
  6. The New Morality- Redefining marriage, family, sexuality, etc.
- F. **Effects the Above Anti-Christian Philosophies Are Having on Our Culture:**
1. "No religious affiliation" is the fastest growing "religious" block in the USA.
  2. About 70% of youth raised in church abandon the faith after high school.
  3. Only 19% of Americans who claim to be "born again" have a Christian worldview.
  4. The church's reputation is that we are irrational, ignorant, intolerant, outdated, we teach hate, and Christianity is evil.
- G. **What Happened?**- The decline of classical philosophy, classical theology, and classical apologetics has made it possible for Christian to become unequipped and ungrounded in the faith and its why most Christians cannot give reasons for their faith, why many are falling away, and why Christian have a declining impact on the culture.

**II. SOLUTION: THE GEISLERIAN TRIFECTA**- Norman Geisler emphasized three areas that are necessary for grounding the Christian faith, for understanding the Bible and Christian doctrines, for proper Christian spiritual growth, for fruitful evangelism, and for impacting our culture. The three areas are: *classical philosophy*, *classical theology*, and *classical apologetics*. These three areas of study are interrelated and are necessary for establishing the truth of our faith and for addressing the issues challenging the church today. We at NGIM like to refer to these three areas as the "Geislerian Trifecta." The three branches of the trifecta are useful for grounding the Christian faith, evangelism, understanding God and reality, responding to objections, and for deconstructing false worldviews and philosophies. They are also useful for addressing current philosophies confronting the church such as atheism/naturalism, pantheism, scientism, materialism, relativism, religious pluralism, and moral issues such as life in the womb and the proper definitions for marriage, family, and sexuality.



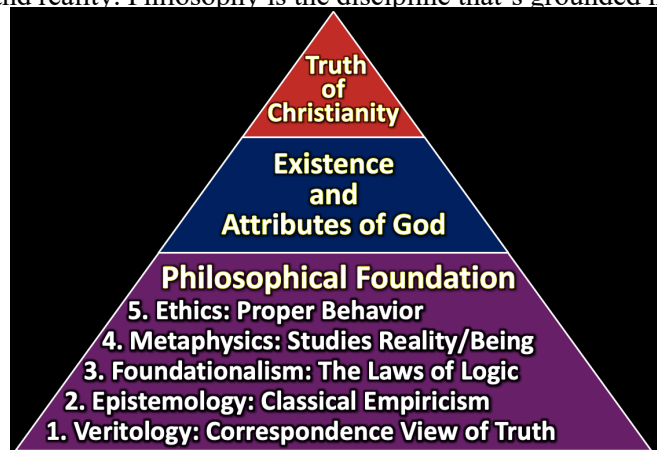
- A. **Classical Philosophy**- The philosophy of Aristotle (d. 322) and Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274). Classical philosophy is the missing part of our educational system, including our seminary curricula. Classical philosophy deals with how we define truth (veritology), discover truth (epistemology), think about truth (logic/foundationalism), study the truth about reality (Metaphysics), and how we behave toward truth (ethics). Philosophy undergirds all disciplines of inquiry and unites them all into one coherent system of thought.
- B. **Classical Theology**- Studies the existence, attributes, and acts of God (i.e. miracles and prophecies). Its object of study is broader than the Bible because God is the Author of more than the Bible. God is the Author of the natural universe, so we can know some things about God from studying the universe. This is called God's "general revelation." The truths God reveals specifically in the Bible is referred to as God's "special revelation." God is the ground and source of truth. Therefore, all truth is God's truth. Thus, Christians should study what God reveals about himself in Scripture and in nature.
- C. **Classical Apologetics**- *Apologetics* is the art and science of defending the truth claims of the Christian faith. The word comes from the Greek word, *apologia*, which means, "to defend." There are different methods for studying and doing apologetics. Classical apologetics uses all of the available arguments for defending the faith and ties them all into one complete system. Classical apologetics grounds the Christian faith in the three-step apologetic method. **Step one** is to establish the proper philosophical foundation for theism. This includes offering the proper definition for "truth" and that the truth about reality is knowable. Classical philosophy is necessary for this step. **Step two** establishes the truth of the theistic worldview, which includes God's existence, his classical attributes (infinity, omnipotence, etc.), and the plausibility of miracles. This step uses classical theology. **Step three** establishes the truth of Christianity by appealing to the evidences for the Bible. This step uses evidences for the faith, including evidences from history, archaeology, fulfilled prophecies, and reasons for believing Jesus truly rose from the dead. The Bible teaches that Christians should be using reason to think correctly about God and to properly define, defend, apply, and share the Christian faith:
1. **Luke 10:27**- "And he [Jesus] answered, 'You shall *love the Lord your God* with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and *with all your mind*; and your neighbor as yourself.'" (NASB)
  2. **Acts 17:2-4, 10-11**- ". . . Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he *reasoned* with them from the Scriptures, *explaining and proving* that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. 'This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ,' he said. <sup>4</sup>Some of the Jews were *persuaded* and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women. . . . <sup>10</sup> When they arrived [in Berea], they went into the synagogue of the Jews. <sup>11</sup>These were more *fair-minded* than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." (NIV)
  3. **Acts 17:31**- "because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having *furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.*" (NASB)
  4. **Acts 18:28**- "for he [Apollos] powerfully *refuted* the Jews in public, *demonstrating* by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ." (NASB)
  5. **Acts 19:8-9**- "Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, *arguing persuasively* about the kingdom of God. <sup>9</sup>But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way." (NIV)
  6. **Acts 26:24-25**- "Felix interrupted Paul's *defense*. 'You are out of your mind! . . . Your great learning is driving you insane.' 'I am not insane' . . . Paul replied. 'What I am saying is *true and reasonable.*'" (NIV)
  7. **2 Corinthians 10:3-5**- "For though we live in the world, we do not wage *war* as the world does. <sup>4</sup>The *weapons* we *fight* with are not the *weapons* of the world. On the contrary, they have divine *power to demolish strongholds.* <sup>5</sup>We *demolish arguments* and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." (NIV)
  8. **Philippians 1:7**- "It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or *defending* and *confirming* the gospel . . ." (NIV)
  9. **Philippians 1:16**- "I am put here for the *defense* of the gospel." (NIV)
  10. **Colossians 4:5-6**- "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. <sup>6</sup> Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to *answer* every man." (KJV)
  11. **Titus 1:9**- "He must *hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught*, so that he can encourage others by *sound doctrine* and *refute* those who oppose it." (NIV)
  12. **1 Peter 3:15**- "But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always *being prepared to make a defense* to anyone who asks you for a *reason* for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect." (ESV)

13. **Jude 1:3-** “. . . I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you *contend earnestly for the faith* which was once for all handed down to the saints.” (NASB)



### III. THE 3-STEP APOLOGETIC METHOD

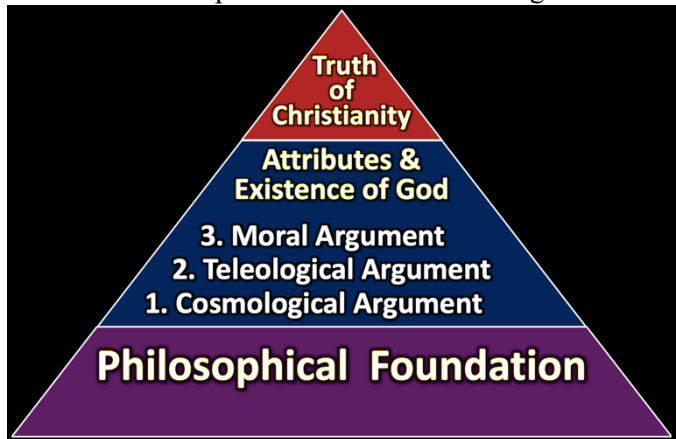
A. **Step-One: Establish the Proper Philosophical Foundation-** This first step requires learning and applying the principles of classical philosophy. *Philosophy* is a rational investigation into the true nature of reality. Philosophy deals with how we think about truth and reality. Philosophy is the discipline that’s grounded in observation and experience and verifies religion, proper moral behavior, science, history, math, and every other area of knowledge and inquiry. Christian can use philosophy to prepare a proper foundation for understanding the world, for understanding biblical doctrines, to ground the Christian faith, and to argue for the proper moral positions that ought to be implemented in society. Since it’s illegal to legislate laws *because* they are in the Bible, Christian can simply use philosophical arguments to support proper morality and public policy. Philosophy has many branches. The following are the primary branches of philosophy:



1. **Veritology: The Correspondence View of Truth-** “*Veritas*” is Latin for “truth.” Veritology is the study of the nature of truth. The *correspondence view of truth* is that truth is that which corresponds to reality or that which corresponds to its object. It’s telling it like it is. If something is true it is true for all people to believe. In order to do apologetics, the truth about reality must be knowable. Step-one of the classical apologetic method establishes that the truth about reality is knowable in order to verify the truth of God’s existence and the truth of the Christian faith.
  - a. *Self-Defeating Statements-* A statement that refutes itself cannot be true. An example of a self-defeating statement is: “There are no statements that are true.” This statement is asserting a truth. It’s claiming that it’s true that there are no true statements. If we take the principle expressed in this statement and apply the principle to the statement itself, then *that* statement cannot be true.
  - b. *It Is Self-Defeating to Claim that the Truth about Reality Is Unknowable-* What if someone said, “You can’t know the truth about reality,” or, “There’s no such thing as truth,” or “There’s nothing that’s true for everyone to believe”? To assert that reality is unknowable is to assert something known about reality. It’s self-defeating to deny that truth can be known or to deny that there are things that are true for everyone to believe. The truth is, the truth about reality *is* knowable.
2. **Epistemology: Classical Empiricism-** Epistemology is the study of knowledge and of how we come to know what’s true. Classical empiricism is the proper epistemological system. It’s the position that knowledge is built as we observe reality and then extract both the forms of objects and true principles about reality. When you think about an apple, what’s in your mind? Is the apple’s *matter* in your mind? No, it’s the apple’s *form* that’s in your mind. God designed humans to learn from sense experience. When we observe an apple, its form is brought into our minds. If you and another person observe the same apple, the apple’s form is now in both of your minds and it’s also in the apple itself.

- a. *Knowledge*- When reality is in your mind. We have knowledge of something when forms and principles are in our minds. If our ideas correspond to reality, then our ideas are *true*.
3. **Foundationalism: The Laws of Logic**- There are certain foundational laws of thought that govern the way we think and talk about reality. They are called the “foundational” and “first principles” of thought because all of our thoughts and all of our conversations about reality are based upon these laws of logic. These foundational laws are self-evidently true in that they cannot be denied without using them and you cannot think without them. There are no arguments or evidences that we appeal to in order to ground the laws of logic because they are already grounded. They are the very ground and foundation of thought and knowledge. They are also the laws of existence. Everything that exists follows these principles. In fact, these laws are in accordance with God’s nature. Below are some examples of the laws of logic:
  - a. *The Law of Non-Contradiction*- Something cannot be X and not X at the same time and in the same sense. I cannot be a human and not a human at the same time and in the same sense.
  - b. *The Law of Identity*-  $X = X$ ; an apple is an apple, a dog is a dog, a male is a male.
4. **Metaphysics: Studies Reality/Being**- Metaphysics studies reality or being itself. It’s the study of the way things exist and the natures of things. God is being, existence, and reality itself.
5. **Ethics: Proper Behavior**- Ethics is the study of what it means to behave properly and how we know what’s morally good or evil.

**B. Step-Two: Establish God’s Existence & Attributes**- Below are the 3 basic arguments that establish God’s existence, attributes, and the plausibility of miracles. Each of the premises below for each argument can be backed by ample evidence, which is not covered in this handout. And, after each argument for God’s existence, we can infer some of God’s attributes from each conclusion about God. Each of the classical arguments for God’s existence begin with what’s observable in this universe. None of the arguments start with God’s essence because we do not have direct observable evidence of God’s essence. We only have access to the effects of God’s activity that are displayed in creation. Upon analyzing those effects, we can infer truths about God.



1. **The Kalam Cosmological Argument:**
  - a. Everything that begins to exist has a cause.
  - b. The universe began to exist.
  - c. Therefore, the universe had a cause.
    - 1) There cannot be an infinite regress of causes; something must be uncaused and prior to the universe. The universe is composed of time, space, and matter. The Being that caused the universe must be uncaused, timeless, spaceless, and immaterial.
    - 2) Miracles- The natural universe could not cause itself to begin to exist. Therefore, the universe was brought into existence through a non-natural, or supernatural, cause. Creation was the first and greatest miracle.
2. **The Vertical Cosmological Argument:**
  - a. There are beings that exist that are finite, dependent, and potential beings.
  - b. Such beings cannot account for their own existence—they cannot cause themselves to being to exist, nor can they be the cause for their current existence.
  - c. Such beings are dependent upon a prior existing being to actualize their potential for existence.
  - d. When beings that are finite, dependent, and potential begin to exist, they become beings that have both actuality and potentiality.
  - e. All beings with potentiality are beings that were pure potential at one time; meaning, they did not actually exist prior to being actualized because they merely had the potential to exist.
  - f. If all beings were finite, dependent, and potential, then nothing would exist.
  - g. Therefore, there must be a being that is infinite, independent, and pure actuality.
  - h. The Being that’s pure actuality has no potential for non-existence; therefore, it is existence itself.

- i. All finite, dependent, and potential beings currently exist in, through, and by the act of the Being that is existence itself.

**3. The Teleological Argument:**

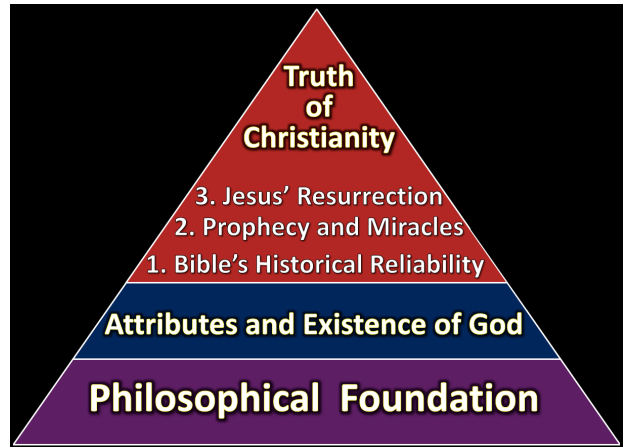
- a. Everything that has design has a designer.
- b. The universe has design.
- c. Therefore, the universe had a Designer.
  - 1) The Being that gave the universe, and everything in it, their intelligible forms and end-goals must be an intelligent Being. Therefore, the Designer has an intelligent mind.

**4. The Moral Argument:**

- a. If there are objective moral values, then there is a Moral Law Giver.
- b. There are objective moral values.
- c. Therefore, there is a Moral Law Giver.
  - 1) The Being that gave us morality did so for our good, and so that we would act good and relate to others (including him) properly. Therefore, this Being must be good and relational.

**C. Step-Three: Establish the Truth of Christianity-**

People who already have a theistic worldview can be persuaded by step-three alone. However, since most Westerners have been influenced by naturalism and its accompanying philosophies, many unbelievers need to hear some of the arguments from the first two steps. The evidences from step-three alone cannot *fully* ground the Christian faith because this step presupposes that the truth about reality is knowable, that God exists, and that miracles are plausible. This is why this step comes last in our pyramid. The 3 points below complete step three:



1. **The Bible Is Historically Reliable-** Evidence from history and archaeology verify that the Bible is historically reliable and that we have accurate copies of the biblical manuscripts.
2. **Miracles and Prophecies Indicate the Bible has a Supernatural Source-** Only God can perform miracles and know the distant future with precision. God used miracles and prophecies to verify that he was speaking through a prophet in the Bible. There are numerous fulfilled prophecies from the Bible that we can use to verify that the Bible's message is from God.
3. **Jesus' Resurrection Verifies the Gospel Message-** When applying the historical method to Jesus' Resurrection, the evidence indicates Jesus must have risen from the dead. If Jesus rose from the dead this would verify that his ministry was from God. Jesus' Resurrection combined with his fulfillment of messianic prophecies demonstrates that Jesus was from God. The Bible, which is a historically reliable text, says Jesus claimed to be God, that Jesus claimed his death paid for our sins in order to give us salvation, and it says Jesus affirmed that the OT was from God and that the NT would be from God. Therefore, all of these must be true.

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