

Christian Presuppositional Apologetics
Part Three: The Presuppositional Approach to Apologetics
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I. Introduction

A. Apologetics is an issue of Presuppositions (starting points)

1. To presuppose is to suppose or assume before hand. All world views assume. These assumptions are the pre-condition for all thinking.
2. The Christian Presupposition is: (Gen 1:1)
 1. There is a God -- an absolute authority
 2. He has revealed Himself in His Word -- absolute truth
 3. His word interprets all the issues of life, existence, and salvation-- Propositional truth.

For the Christian this is not a blind, irrational leap of faith but rather a faith based upon the reasoning of scripture from God.

The Christian world view provides the basis for right thinking and an understanding of all man sees around him.

3. The Non-Christian Presupposes:
 1. Man or some other part of the creation as his starting point (Rom 1:25)
 2. Man becomes the interpreter of all things -- relative truth
 3. Man's word explains all things

The non Christian also begins in faith, a foolishly reasoned faith in himself and some part of God's creation that he takes as his starting point.

This, of course, puts in a desperate dilemma because in his world view cannot account for position he has taken. He cannot explain the source of the laws of logic, his inner sense of morality, and the unity of the creation that he draws upon to building his system

4. The argument between the Christian and the Non-Christian must be at the level of starting points. It must be an argument that is **transcendental** in nature, that is, exceeding the limits of normal thought. (We speak of God as transcendent in that He exceeds the limits of ordinary experience). We must address man's **a priori** (that which begins his reasoning -- the "givens") or conditions of knowledge and intelligent discussion. For the Christian this is the Ultimate Personal Triune God of the Bible (Gen 1:1). For the non-believer, it is himself. This the Bible says is utter foolishness (Prov 1:7; Psm 14:1). We must raise the issue of **Authority**, asking the

questions of “by what standard” or “why do you say what you say.” It must be an argument of ultimate issues.

Thus believers and unbelievers both reason in circular from a starting point. Sadly unbelievers reason in a “vicious circle”

B. What is Presuppositional Apologetics?

It is a view that places the Christian world view and it’s starting point **over against** the non-Christian view and it’s starting point! It places presupposition (or ultimate starting points) **over against** other presuppositions. It addresses the **pre-conditions of intelligent thought**. It attacks the non-Christian with a head on collision, presenting him with the **opposite** of what he believes. It understands that the common ground between the Christian and the non-Christian is not facts upon which both agree, but rather the inescapable sense of Deity that exists in every sinner (Romans 1:18-22). Presuppositionalism presents reasons and evidences within a biblical framework and thus reasons from faith to faith. It calls the unbeliever to submit to the Lordship of Christ, thinking His thoughts after Him (2 Cor 10:5) lest he be a fool. **The Presuppositionalist puts the unbeliever on trial in God’s court and exposes his true problem.** It defends the truth in a way consistent with the truth.

C. What Pre suppositional apologetics is not:

1. Evidentialism -- An independent use of reasoning that leads to faith as if Christians and unbelievers have many facts they both agreed upon. Presuppositionalism **uses** evidence dependently as part of the Christian world view that it declares (Acts 17:32).

Note: Evidentialists have presuppositions also but only use them later after their unbiblical attempt to build a probability case for God.

2. Fideism -- The view that reason is inappropriate and that truth is inaccessible to reason. One does not suspend reason to believe based on irrational faith, but rather exchanges false reasoning (a lie) for the truth Rom 1:25. It is a grave error to associate Fideism with Presuppositionalism.

II. Biblical Features of Presuppositional Apologetics

Present the truth of Christ to the unbeliever as the very truth that it is and present it as the **opposite** of what he believes, insisting on his repentance. Argue presuppositionally against his starting point.

A. The case for God is not merely probable or permissible but absolute

1. Christianity offers absolute certainty— Many infallible Proofs (Acts 1:3)
Acts 2:36 “all the house of Israel knows for certain . . .”
Luke 1:4 you may know “the exact truth”
John 20:31 “these things are written that you may know and believe”
II Tim 1:12 “I know whom I have believed”
2. Christianity offers infallible proofs
I Peter 1:18 “The conviction with in us”
I Thess 1:5 full assurance ; full conviction with no doubt
Col 2:2 full assurance of understanding
Heb 6:11 full assurance of hope
Rom 4:19,21 Paul had full certainty
Heb 10:22-23 full assurance of faith
Prov 14:26 Fear of the Lord is strong confidence
Prov 22:17-21 Certainty of the word of truth

The Christian position is one of full certainty

B. A head on collision -- challenge his “right” to challenge God

1. The opposite of foolishness is truth — Call him from sin to obedience (Isa 1:18)
2. The unbeliever must be challenged to take his faith out of himself and place it in Christ
3. The unbeliever’s proud “right” to judge God -- confronting his pre-commitment to naturalism.
4. Ask him to embrace the Christian faith **and** its “Christian evidences” -- not an irrational leap of faith but rather faith rooted in biblical reasoning.

C. A Fundamental conflict over the issue of authority.

1. The believer and unbeliever can join to together to discover truth (integration).
2. The so called wisdom of unbelievers must be challenged (2 Cor 10:5) and destroyed (I Cor 1:19)
3. Present the truth of God’s word as the opposite of the arbitrary thoughts of the unbeliever in order to reverse “the exchange of truth for a lie”
4. Call for repentance and faith and acceptance of the Gospel that was first presented to him.

D. Argue the existence of the God of the Bible by the impossibility of the contrary

1. You know God and Suppress Him
2. You need God to explain anything (His laws of logic, code of morality, system of natural order). **Again, atheism presupposes theism**
3. You even depend on God’s truth to ridicule Him
4. Your position against God is arbitrary (mere opinion and conjecture), internally

inconsistent, leading to unacceptable consequences, and unable to provide the preconditions of intelligibility! It is impossible to hold.

5. In the end, the unbeliever has no credible argument to bring against God!
I Cor 1:20. In the end: He is a fool Psalm 14:1-3. It is not the Christian who is foolish and irrational but the unbeliever who has rejected his only hope of salvation. He has crucified reason and the possibility of truth.
Isa 45:21 “Set forth your case -- there is none except me”
6. You must embrace God for there is nothing else credible to do.

E. The Holy Spirit will draw to Himself (the Effectual Call) those He chooses to save. 1 Cor 2:14; Eph 2:1 (absolute passages)

1. Only the Spirit can call a man to Christ I Cor 2:10,12
 2. The Lord chooses to use us to present His truth but He must call the lost to Himself with his effectual call.
 3. Without the Spirit man will simply continue to suppress the truth in unrighteous as they have done with the creation.
 4. The effectual call is effectual I Cor 1:18; 2:6-8; 10,12; Luke 10:21-22:
John 6:44; 12:32; I Cor 1:9; Romans 8:29-30
- *Regeneration is not necessary to begin this but this results in regeneration.

III. The Example of Acts 17:16-32

- A. Motivated by a provoked spirit. v 16
- B. Begins with a Gospel message (Jesus and the Resurrection) vs 17-18
- C. It assumes a context of spiritual confusion vs 18-21
- D. It recognizes that all men are inherently **religious** (Rom 1:19). v 22
A point of contact
- E. It characterizes this “religion” as defective (**wilfully ignorant**). v 23
The know God but they do not know God as they “ought” to know Him. Rom 1:21
- F. It defends the truth by declaring the truth (**Proclaiming**) to the unbeliever, namely that God will not tolerate his ignorance. I Cor. 1:20;2:2. v 23
- G. It assumes the natural revelation has been given to all in Creation (Rom 1:19-20) and God is sovereign over His creation. These truths hold all men condemned and accountable (**made** and **determined**). vv 24-26
- H.. It acknowledges that the unbeliever mis-interprets revelation (**gropes**). v 27
He is right there but still lost!

- I. It exposes the unbeliever's unacknowledged dependency on God . God is every man's environment and every unbeliever has in **inescapable sense of deity**. This truth should convict them. vv 28-29
Paul quotes their pagan poet demonstrate that they know and suppress the truth!
Paul then re-interprets the poet comment with biblical content, turning foolishness into truth.
- J. It calls men to accountability and **repentance** before the true God. vv 30-31
Since vs 24-29 are true as evidenced by their dependence upon suppressed truth, they must repent of their foolishness and acknowledge the God of the Bible.
- K. God has given ample evidence of His claim. vv 31-32.
The resurrection of Christ.

III. The Ultimate Questions

A. Why do I believe Christ to be the Savior of Men?

Because Christ said he was the Savior and Lord (His Claim).

B. Why do you believe what HE says?

Because it is presented in the Bible -- the Word of God-- And I believe it is the very Word of God.

C. Why do you believe the Bible to be true?

Because He has convicted me and saved me as I have read His word.

Because without God I would be a fool I Cor 1:20; Psalm 14:1

Because without the Bible nothing makes sense--

Not the past, the present, the future

Not morality

Not reasoning (the laws of logic), understanding

Not uniformity in nature or human dignity

Christianity is the only position possible!

Comparison Of Apologetic Systems

Evidentialism

Reason is an independent ultimate authority and a neutral enterprise

Reason to faith independent rationality

Knowledge -- Common ground or "Brute Facts"

Opposite of true knowledge is the lack of information

Joins with the unbeliever using common "truth"

Argues a Probability case for Christianity

"Christianity is the most logical view"

Uses classic probability arguments developed by Aquinas

Presents neutral evidences and arguments introducing presuppositions later

God is on trial in man's court

Presuppositionalism

Reason is a tool of revelation and is never neutral including the laws of logic

Reason from faith to faith dependent rationality

Knowledge -- No agreement all facts are "interprefacts" Only Romans 1:18-22 in common

Opposite of true knowledge is rebellion and foolishness

Head on collision with the unbeliever; The truth as the opposite of his position

Argues an Absolute Case for God form the impossibility of the contrary **"atheism presupposes theism"**

"Christianity is the only view"

Uses transcendental argumentation To set competing world views against each other and to address precondition of intelligible thought

Presents "Christian Evidences" and arguments based on one's presupposition

The unbeliever is on trial in God's court

Fideism

Reason is inappropriate truth is inaccessible to reason

Suspend reason and leap to faith

Same

Same

Does not reason with the unbeliever

Makes no argument merely quotes scripture Denys the possibility of an apologetic

"Repent"

Uses no arguments

Presents faith without argument or evidence

No trial takes place

Conclusion of Pre-suppositionalism: We cannot grant the unbeliever his autonomy and at the same time expect him to reason to the position of giving up his autonomy. We must exploit the last stronghold to which the unbeliever retreats. Evidentialism is Arminian leprosy in the bosom of Calvinism. Fiedism is unacceptable in light of the Biblical mandate Prov 26:4,5; I Pet 3:15