

Christian Presuppositional Apologetics
Part Four: The Practical Applications of Presuppositionalism
by
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I. Summary of the Presuppositional Position

A. The apologetical situation

1. The controversy between the believer and the unbeliever is in principle an antithesis between two complete systems of thought involving ultimate commitments and assumptions.
2. Even the laws of thought and methodology, along with one's facts will be accepted and evaluated in light of governing presuppositions.
3. All paths of argumentation will trace themselves back to starting points which are taken as "givens." Thus all reasoning is circular but not all circular reasoning is valid.
4. Appeals to logic, evidence, and personality may be necessary but ultimately what is needed is a complete attack on the underlying presuppositions of the unbeliever's system of thought.
5. Consider the thought pattern of the unbeliever:
 - a. The unbeliever is made in the image of God and he is thus inescapably religious. His heart testifies to him as well as the revelation around him that God exists and has a certain character (Rom 1:18).
 - b. He exchanges the truth of God for a lie. He is a fool who suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Rom 1:22).
 - c. He chooses to serve the creature rather than the Creator and thus is committed to his own ways of thought.
 - d. He hates true knowledge when it is presented to him.
 - e. He has a culpable ignorance because he is without an excuse -- Literally, **without an apologetic for his thought** Rom 1:20).
 - f. His unbelief is not merely ignorance but rather a refusal to submit to the truth (willful ignorance).

B. The requirements of the apologist

1. He must have a proper attitude -- humility, love and respect
2. He must have a proper starting point -- taking God's Word and thinking God's thoughts after Him -- Neither he nor his opponent is not neutral
3. He must have a proper method -- Working on the unbeliever's un-acknowledged presuppositions (his dependence on God) and firmly grounded in his own presuppositions **he must cast down every imagination exalting itself against the knowledge of God --taking every thought captive** (2 Cor 10:5).

The unbeliever's "independence" must be repeatedly challenged.
The process is not dodging the opponent's bullets but taking the gun out of the opponents's hand!

Instead of putting God on trial, the unbeliever must be put on trial.

4. His goal must be the unconditional surrender of the unbeliever without compromising the truth -- **the exchange of foolishness with truth.** Christ must be Lord in one's heart 1 Pet 3:18 so that there is no higher authority than God's Word. The unbeliever must renounce all efforts to suspend intellectual commitment to God's Word.

C. The Procedure for defending the faith

1. Realizing the unbeliever is holding down the truth in unrighteousness, the apologist must reject the foolish presuppositions implicit in critical questions raised by the unbeliever and must attempt to educate his opponent with truth.
2. He will present the facts within the context of the Biblical philosophy of fact. He is thus evidential within a Presuppositional framework where the evidence makes sense. The **facts** he presents:
 - a. God is the Sovereign ruler over all that **is possible** and not **possible**.
 - b. To understand the facts you must submit to the Lordship of Christ.
 - c. The facts will only be significant to the unbeliever if he has a presuppositional change of mind -- From darkness to light.
 - d. Scripture has the authority to declare and interpret all that has happened -- i.e. God has provided salvation.
3. The unbeliever's presuppositions must be forcefully attacked by asking if knowledge is **even** possible on the basis of his presuppositions. Use his position to show him he is a **fool**. The unbeliever's position is impossible to hold when examined and internally critiqued.

Anything contrary to Christianity is impossible.

4. Appeal to the unbeliever as made in God's image and who has clear and inescapable revelation of God as his creator. Expose this knowledge in his thoughts. He needs God to make sense out of what he is saying.
5. Declare the self evidencing and authoritative truth of God as the pre-condition of intelligible thought and man's way of Salvation. Invite the unbeliever to put himself on believer's presupposition to show him that Scripture accounts for everything.

Thoughts, opinions, and independent conclusions do not provide a credible basis for a world view. They are arbitrary opinion and worthless conjecture. The Mormon, Muslim, Unbelieving Jew, Catholic, Orthodox, etc. all live by their own god and false prophets without a basis! Their beliefs are the speculations of men; standing in judgement of the God of the Bible. They have no basis for what they say; just themselves or others who said the same before them.

II. Applying presuppositional apologetics in ministry

- A. Remember that the academic is the practical
 1. Our apologetic is based upon, grows out of, and is everywhere conditioned by

one's theology.

2. Theology is indispensableness to every aspect of ministry.

B. There can be no integration

1. Creature worshipers do not agree with Creator worshipers at any point.

Not even on brown cows eating green grass to produce white milk as they will conclude the cows to be proof for atheism as they are "god denying cows." Unbelievers have no objective truth until they come to fear the Creator. Prov. 1:7, 9:10; Psm 36:9; Col 2:3, II Tim 3:7.

2. All knowledge must be subordinated to God's truth and interpreted in light of truth. 2 Cor 10:5. Very important to counseling issues.

C. There must be a total complete head-on collision between the natural man and his system and the Christian and his system.

1. We do not **grant** the lost man his autonomy and at the same time expect that man to reason to the position of giving up his autonomy.

2. The same is true of the sinning Christian who has returned to thinking like a pagan and thus needs the same direct confrontation

III The Practice application of this method

A. Start with an inerrant Bible as the standard of all faith and practice.

Memorize key passages and Biblical lines of argumentation.

Don't be timid or intimidated!

Show the love and power of Christ in your words and actions.

B. An example.

1. A Christian witness

a. Begin with a clear presentation of the Gospel with the full assurance that it is true and fully defensible.

1) Ask for the opportunity to present the Christian World view.

2) Present God, creation, holiness, sin, Christ's person and work, man's human condition, salvation, repentance, faith, man's need for dependance on Christ.

b. Call for the unbeliever to submit to his creator and to use his mind to think dependently upon God rather than independently outside of God.

c. Answer honest questions of understanding

Present Christian answers and Christian evidences based on the Christian world view.

d. Call for repentance and faith

2. A Christian defense

Example: "I do not need salvation and I am not convinced the Bible is true -- it is an interesting book written by men."

a. Answer from truth. Proverbs 26:4

- 1). The principle -- Do not answer a fool according to **his** philosophy or you will be like him -- to argue from his world view is to **encourage** his rebellion.
- 2). The application --- Do in **external critique** by reasoning with him **from** the Bible.
 - Press him back to the Bible.
 - Insist that the Bible is the only possible position
- 3). Example:
 - My answer is rooted in the Bible Acts 17:23-24
 - Allow me to present the Christian explanation for this question:
 - 1). The evidence of Scripture (O.T.). I Cor 15:3-4
 - 2). The evidence of the External World. I Cor 15:5-7
 - 3). The evidence of Personal experience. I Cor 15:8
 - Expose the reason why the unbeliever rejects your answer. Ask the “**Why**” question to push him back to his starting point of self authority or autonomy.

Why do you reject the message of the Bible? (Arbitrary opinion)
Why do you reject its claim of inspiration? (Ignorant conjecture)
What authority gives you the basis to reject the Bible?
 - Conclusion: He has no credible reason as to why he rejects Christ. save his **pride**. Cor 1:20

b. Answer from folly. Proverbs 26:5

- 1). The principle -- Answer him according to his folly (what his folly deserves) by showing him what God says about his world view.
- 2). The application -- Do a brief **internal critique** of his world view showing him that his position reduces to absurdity. Turn the unbeliever’s beliefs back on him.
 - A world view based on nothing cannot account for anything.
 - Show him that in his heart he is a theist for **atheism presupposes theism**.
 - He borrows for the Christian world view to make sense out of his view for he is inherently religious.
- 3). Example:
 - Based on his world view knowledge is impossible. He cannot account for anything he believes from within his word view. He continues to make absolute or super statements without authority. He offers only mere opinion, arbitrary statements relativism, ignorant conjecture, and unargued bias. These are all sins of the intellect.

- His world view reduces to his own arbitrary self invented ideas. His independent commitment is based on his own independent commitment. (JM: The god he believes in is the one he sees in the mirror).
- How can he possibly know enough to stand in judgement of the God of the Bible. His “certain” positions (i.e. super statements) are actually uncertain as they are based in his own conclusions.
- In denying theism, he has assumed theism. He is self deceived, for in an effort to deny God he assumes God for the laws of logic, laws of non-contradiction, morality that allow him to assert truth. In biblical terms, he is a fool Psalm 14:1; Rom 1:21; Col 2:3-4.
- The unbeliever is proving that Christianity is true by borrowing it’s foundation to assert his unbelief. He is saying, given God’s creation, man’s reflection of God’s image, God’s laws of logic, etc., I use all of this to rebel against him.

In Conclusion:

His world view is in conflict with itself.

The consequences of his view leads to absurdity.

His view does not provide the pre-conditions of intelligibility or rationalism.

c. Press your apologetic advantage

1). **The Bible can explain everything** -- God created everything and gives life, natural order, and the laws of logic.

2). **The unbeliever has no credible argument against God (1 Cor 1:20).**

3). **Return to the Gospel**

At first, the unbeliever says it is foolish to think:

- That man would need one to die for him
- That man should be confronted with his sin
- That man should need to understand the cross

Now it is wise for he is a fool who rejects the Lord

3. The reason for Our Hope: The impossibility of the Contrary

- a. A transcendental argument is one that transcends normal patters of thought and speaks to the possibility of intelligible though or rationality. It is a clash of ultimate starting points.
- b. It places the **unbeliever’s** circular reasoning which is filled with self-contradiction and irrationalism over against the **believer’s** circular reasoning based on the Bible which makes total sense out of life.
- c. The proof of God’s existence is the impossibility of the contrary:

- 1). If Christianity is not true, then nothing is true. Prov 1:7
- 2). Without the Christian world view, no position is possible
- 3). The Bible is the precondition of all rational thought. He needs the Bible to prove anything!
- 4). Unbelievers need God to account for the laws of logic, inductive reasoning, uniformity in nature, predication, human dignity, an invariant moral code, science, mathematics, and everything that underlies all their thinking.
- 5). Unbeliever use what God gave them to ridicule Him (Isa 45:21; Hos 2:8; Acts 17:28).
- 6). The unbeliever has rejected God with foolish pride.
- d. We must call for the unconditional surrender of the unbeliever to Christ so that he would think God's thought's after Him. 2 Cor 10:5.
- e. **The unbeliever is as foolish as the little girl, sitting on her father's knee, depending on him for everything while she slaps him in the face.**

C. The challenge

1. Some important suggestions
 1. Knowing the strength of our defense, declare the gospel of truth with unique authority.
 2. Do not prove God's existence to those who already know Him in their hearts.
 3. Do not encourage the unbeliever's rebellion but rather challenge it with biblically centered arguments.
 4. Speak the truth in Love. I Peter 1:15
 5. Use presuppositional apologetics in dealing with every kind of objection to the truth.
 6. Use presuppositional apologetics in your teaching and counseling ministries.
2. Asking leading questions

Why do you believe that way? Press the unbeliever back to his ultimate starting point

By what standard or criteria do you evaluate the truth or existence of God?

Make him declare his position while listening carefully as to how to challenge it(develop a keen ability to recognize sin while listening).

Press your apologetic advantage -- you have the truth, he does not.
3. Do not let the unbeliever control the conversation.
Return the issue to the Garden of Eden where the issue is man verses God.
Confront him with the truth -- Col 3:16

Speak with authority that only comes from God's Word.

4. Challenge the foolishness of the unbeliever wherever you see it.
Compel him to define himself
5. Do not let the discussion reduce to conflicting equal positions -- "that is what you believe." Explain, biblically what the unbeliever is doing to the truth
6. Remember, you have not lost because you do not know an answer
7. Refute the unbeliever and bring him back to the Gospel
Make the issue of the Gospel more than just Heaven and Hell-- make it serving God verses serving yourself; or obedience verses disobedience.
8. Attack the foundation of sinful thoughts and attitudes bringing down the entire superstructure of thoughts and deeds.
9. Develop discernment
10. Rely on the power of the Holy Spirit Rom 1:16
11. Call the person to repentance and truth.

Common Non-Christian World Views

World View	Presupposition	Source of Truth	Line of Reasoning	Answer
Christianity	"In the beginning God."	"Thy Word is truth" which is absolute truth	Submission to the will and intellect of the absolute God.	None
Atheism	In the beginning man	Man is capable of judging of god's existence	There is no God "I am my own god"	Absurd and arbitrary opinion which assume theism and omniscience for meaning. Self refuting
Agnostic	Man starts from within himself without any outside special revelation	Man is capable of judging of god's existence.	God is unknown and unknowable	Same
Skeptic	Man starts from within himself without any outside special revelation	Man is capable of judging of god's existence	The existence of god is doubtful	Same
Modernist(Hegel)	The ultimacy of the laws of logic and individual "common sense" thinking	Objective knowledge is tested by reason and truth is established outside God (chance)	God and the supernatural are not possible	Criteria for establishment is arbitrary and dependent on theism for meaning
Cultural Relativist	Everything is relative to the speaker's mind --no moral judgements made	Man is the source and measure of all truth	All truth is relative	The absolute nature of this view of truth is self refuting
Nihilist (Postmod)	Everything is relative to the speaker's mind--no moral judgements made	Relative truth flows out of the individual as self is the source of truth	There is no truth (absolute truth)	This itself is an absolute (and arbitrary) statement of truth
Theo. Liberal	Man's sincerity and imagination can produce a religion that makes all happy	Truth is learned by an absolute dependence on subjective understanding	God is what I sense and taste him to be	All judgements or evaluation of God is arbitrary speculation and rebellion
Neo-Orthodox	Man's subjective judgement is the beginning of reality and ultimately determinative of god	Truth is obtained as man is empowered by god through existential encounter	The Bible becomes the word of God as it speaks to me	You have become your own god!
RCC/ EOC	Reality begins with man guessing about god, the Bible and religion	Truth is found in the Bible as corrected by tradition & experience.	Roman Catholic/EOC teachings are ultimate	Exchange faith in the Living true God for faith in a self conceived god.
Orthodox Jew	Same	Truth is found in the Bible as informed by Jewish tradition (Talmud) & speculation	Denial of the Messiah along with other humanist claims	Same
Muslim	Same	Truth is found in the Bible as "cleared up" by the Koran	The Scriptures must be rejected for the Koran	Same
Mormon	Same	Acceptance of Joseph Smith's corrections & addition to the Bible through a subjective conclusion	The Scriptures must be rejected for Mormon teaching	Same