

THE PRESUPPOSITIONAL APPROACH TO APOLOGETICS

INTRODUCTION

- There are two kinds of people living in the world today, holding opposite views of God, the world, and themselves
- These two competing perspectives are the Christian and non-Christian worldviews
- The Christian worldview is to worship and serve the Creator (Acts 17:28)
- The non-Christian worldview is to worship and serve the creature (Acts 17:24); Non-Christians still remain under the curse of sin; denying the Creator-creature distinction and committing themselves to independence from God, they live in futility
- All worldviews that don't include God and His Word are contrary to God's design

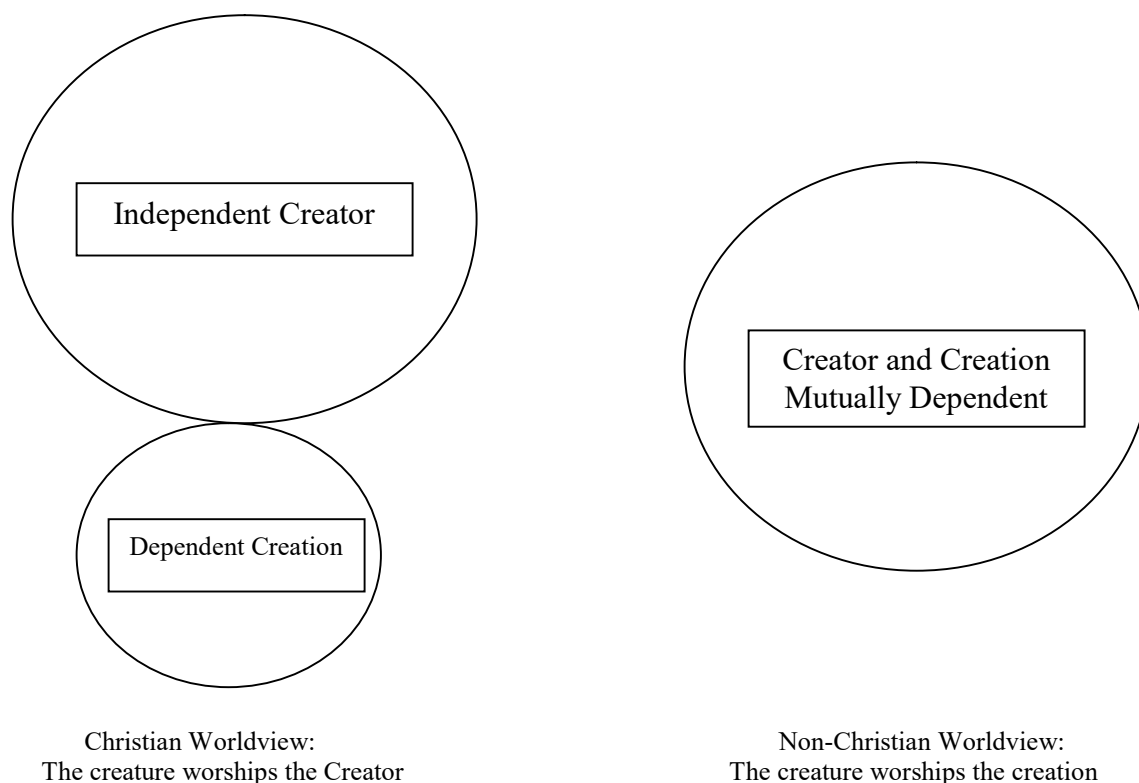
📖 **Colossians 2:8** ~ See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

- In this verse, Paul says that any worldview that is not "according to Christ" is ultimately only "empty deception" based on worldly principles
- Paul is not here opposed to philosophy in general; he is opposed to non-Christian philosophy which is "empty deception"
- There have been many important unbelievers who have made worthwhile contribution to man's knowledge but as a whole non-Christian philosophy has the potential of nothing more than empty deception
- "Commitment to independence is so fundamental to non-Christian philosophy that no matter how much the unbeliever may claim otherwise, every reason he may give to support his commitment is actually resting on it. If a non-Christian is challenged to give a reason for his religious commitment he may respond in a number of ways, but he will always respond with a reason that is supposedly valid according to his principle of independence. He may argue that his experience has in some way informed him of his independence, but his trust in experience as a criterion for truth is itself founded on that allegiance. Essentially, non-Christians try to lift themselves by their own boot straps, supporting their commitment to independence by arguments founded on their commitment to independence" ~ Richard Pratt 46

NON-CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW REGARDING WHAT EXISTS

- Non Christians remain under the curse of sin; denying the Creator-creature distinction and committing themselves to independence from God
- All of their efforts are darkened and impure

📖 **Ephesians 4:17-19** ~ So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.



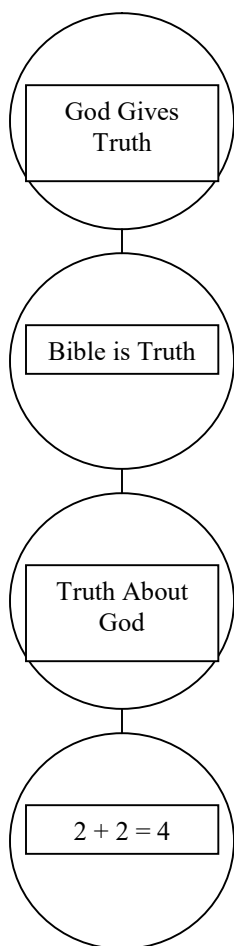
- Thus, the goal of apologetics is to confront the unbeliever and call him to repent of his rejection of the Creator-creature distinction
- Therefore the goal of presuppositional apologetics is to call the unbeliever to recognize that: 1) God is the ultimate Creator; 2) Man is dependent on that Creator

NON-CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW REGARDING KNOWLEDGE

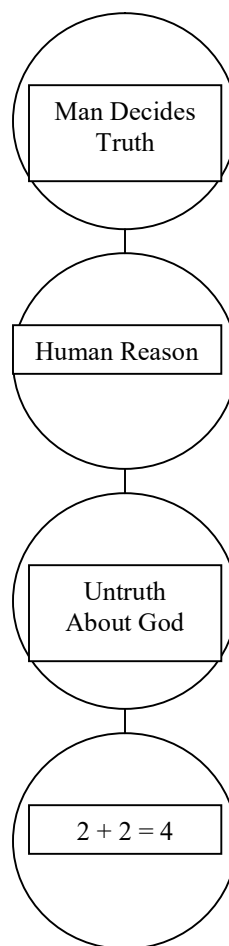
- Truth is either objective or subjective:
 1. Subjective Truth – truth that is individually determined to be true (non-Christian)
 - Pragmatic Theory of Truth – truth is what works
 - Rationalistic Theory of Truth – truth is what can be clearly understood by reason
 - Relativistic Theory of Truth – truth is what we can sense and experience
 - Emotional Theory of Truth – truth is what I feel
 2. Objective Truth – truth that is independent of the knower (Christian)
 - This truth is found in the Scriptures – Truth is what God has said
 - John 1:17 ~ grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.
 - John 14:6 ~ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life”
 - John 17:17 ~ Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.
- For the unbeliever, the opposite of truth is not ignorance but rebellion and foolishness

📖 **Romans 1:25** ~ For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.
- Although an unbeliever may be an expert in his field and know more than the Christian, because he rebels against God, they are foolish and their knowledge is foolishness

📖 **Proverbs 1:7** ~ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.



Christian Worldview:
The creature looks to God for truth
"In the beginning God"



Non-Christian Worldview:
The creature determines their own truth
"In the beginning me"

- Both can come to similar conclusions, but for two totally different reasons
- The unbeliever engages in God-hating math because he has stolen God's truth and made it his own; he becomes a plagiarizer
- Even though he says that he has the truth ($2 + 2 = 4$), he has no basis for it
- He borrows truth from God but then denies that God and will not acknowledge Him
- This becomes especially important when it comes to moral/spiritual issues: killing, obedience to God's law, eternity, etc.
 - Example:
 - The unbeliever knows that killing is wrong
 - We must ask them by what standard he knows that
 - The believer knows this to be true because God says that killing is wrong
 - The unbeliever knows this to be true also because God has said killing is wrong, but he has stolen that truth and made it his own (Rom 1)
- There are no brute or neutral facts – all facts are interpreted by God (Col 2:3)
- Therefore, the goal of presuppositional apologetics is to push the unbeliever back to his starting point or presuppositions, show them that their position is ultimately foolishness, and urge them to repent

THE MYTH OF NEUTRALITY

- There is no area of neutrality between the Christian and non-Christian worldview
 - 📖 **Matthew 12:30** ~ He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.
- It is supposed that the non-Christian sees and hears the same things the Christian does and that there is therefore a neutral ground on which to operate
- Even though we are exposed to the same information, Christians are committed to understanding that information as it really is in light of God's revelation and non-Christians are committed to misconstruing the world in terms of their allegiance to independence from God
- In fact, there are no so-called facts of any science that believers and unbelievers hold in common
- Whether in psychology, biology, history, mathematics, philosophy, theology, etc. the facts of the science are understood differently by Christians and non-Christians so that they are not neutral
- We either understand the facts as Christians or we understand them as non-Christians
- How do we communicate to unbelievers then?
- We do have in common the world we live in, our creation in the image of God, and the free offer of the gospel
- Christians and non-Christians live in the same world, walk down the same sidewalks, shop in the same stores, and eat the same food
- Moreover, as the image of God, the non-Christian knows God and His demands in his heart
- Though he denies it, every fact of creation speaks to him of God
- It is only when we recognize that there is no neutrality that we begin to communicate with the non-Christian in a way that is relevant to his need for Christ

SO WHAT IS PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS?

- Apologetics is an issue of presuppositions; To presuppose is to suppose or assume before hand
 1. The Christian Presupposes:
 - a. There is a God who possesses absolute authority
 - b. He has revealed Himself in His Word which is absolute truth
 - c. His Word is sufficient for everything in life and salvation
 2. The Unbeliever Presupposes:
 - a. Man or some other part of the creation as his starting point
 - b. Man becomes the interpreter of all things (relative truth)
 - c. Man's word explains all things
 - This begins in a leap of faith as he cannot explain the origin or basis of anything he says
 - He cannot give a reason for what he says or explain the source of the laws of logic, morality, or the creation he draws upon to explain his system
- Therefore, presuppositional apologetics assumes that the debate between the believer and the unbeliever must be one of starting points

- The issue is one of authority or “by what standard?” or “why do you say what you say?”
- A Definition: A view that places the Christian worldview and its starting point over against the non-Christian worldview and its starting point. It places presuppositions (or ultimate starting points) over against other presuppositions. It understands that the common ground between the believer and the unbeliever is not facts they both agree on as each interprets everything differently, but instead the common ground is the inescapable sense of deity that exists in every sinner (Rom 1:18-22). Presuppositionalism call the unbeliever to submit to the Lordship of Christ, thinking his thoughts after Him (2 Cor 10:5) lest he be a fool (Ps 14:1).
- What are the biblical features of Presuppositional Apologetics?

A Head On Collision of Worldviews

- Presuppositionalism challenges the “right” of the unbeliever to challenge God
- The unbeliever is called to take his faith out of himself and place it in Christ
- He is challenged to repent of his judging of God and asked to embrace Christ

Press the Issue of Authority

📖 **Proverbs 26:4-5** ~ Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Or you will also be like him. Answer a fool as his folly deserves, That he not be wise in his own eyes.

- To argue from the non-Christian worldview is to encourage the unbeliever’s rebellion
- Instead, we reason from the Bible – press the unbeliever back to the Bible and insist in believing in the Bible as the only hope and only means of making sense out of life
- The unbeliever is lovingly and graciously pushed back to his starting point until he appeals to what he can only steal from God to explain what he believes
- In this interaction, we must learn to turn the unbeliever’s belief against him: Why does he not believe in God? Why does he not believe the Bible to be true? Why does he not believe Christ rose from the dead?
- By doing this, we are turning the unbeliever’s beliefs back on him by doing an internal critique of his worldview
- The unbeliever must be asked what his standard is – in the end it will come down to his own arbitrary presuppositions
- Show him that the Bible can explain everything he cannot explain
- In the end, he has no credible argument to bring against God

📖 **1 Corinthians 1:20** ~ Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

- In the end, the Scriptures call the unbeliever a fool because the god he believes in is the one he sees in the mirror

📖 **Psalms 14:1** ~ The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good.

The Case for God is not Merely Probable but Absolute

📖 **Proverbs 14:26** ~ In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, And his children will have refuge.

📖 **Acts 2:36** ~ Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

📖 **Luke 1:4** ~ so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

- Christianity is supported by many infallible proofs:
 - The witness of God in nature and in man’s conscience
 - The uniqueness of the Bible in all of history
 - The authority of Scripture – it speaks like no other book
 - The incomparable message of the Bible – it alone calls for a broken submission to God in repentance and biblical faith
 - The miracles, the resurrection, the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy
- The Christian position is one of full certainty

Argue Existence of God by the Impossibility of the Contrary

- If Christianity is not true, then nothing is true
- Without the Christian worldview, no position is possible
- The unbeliever needs God to explain anything (laws of logic, science, morality) – they are spiritual weasels
- Unbelievers use God’s truth to ridicule Him; they need God to know anything

📖 **Isaiah 45:21** ~ “Declare and set forth your case; Indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the Lord? And there is no other God besides Me, A righteous God and a Savior; There is none except Me.

- We must call the unbeliever to surrender to Christ and embrace God fully for he has rejected his only hope of salvation
- 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

📖 **Acts 17:28** ~ for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’


The Holy Spirit Will Draw to Himself Those He Will Save


- Only the Spirit can call a man to Christ
- The Lord chooses to use us to present His truth but he must call them to Himself
- Without the Spirit man will simply continue to suppress the truth in unrighteousness as they have done with the creation
- This is necessary because:


📖 **1 Corinthians 2:14** ~ But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

📖 **Ephesians 2:1** ~ And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

- The effectual call is effectual – God will save whom He has determined to save

 **John 6:44** ~ No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

 **John 6:65** ~ And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."

 **1 Corinthians 1:9** ~ God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.