

APOLOGETICS 5 – THE PRESUPPOSITIONAL ARGUMENT

INTRODUCTION

Apologetics - ἀπολογία apologia

The definition of Christian Apologetics is “the information that enables a believer to provide a defense for why a doctrine is believed.”

1 Peter 3:15 – But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.

2 Corinthians 10:5 – We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

GOAL

1. To strengthen the students so that they reach a confident, steadfast belief in God, Jesus, and the Scriptures so that they will never fall.
2. To prepare the student to give a proper response to common challenges.
 - a. The student may or may not actually give an answer.
 - b. The preparation is intended so that any challenge will not cause the student to doubt the truth of God, Jesus Christ.

THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

This philosophical argument gives evidence for the existence of God by observing the world around us and states that since things begin to exist, then there must be an original self-existing cause.

We examined this argument and found it to be both biblically and logically sound.

THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

The Teleological Argument is also known as the “argument from design and purpose.” It states that a designer must exist because the universe and living things exhibit marks of design in their order, consistency, complexity, unity (symbiosis), and pattern.

We examined this argument and found it to be both biblically and logically sound.

THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

If it is even possible that God exists, then logically, God does exist.

This argument is not biblically based. The concept of this argument is one of giving in to presumptions of a secular worldview in order to demonstrate that God exists.

Although well intended, this does not present the biblical view of God or His existence.

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THE MORAL ARGUMENT

God is necessary for objective moral values or ethics to exist. Since objective moral values and ethics do exist, God must also exist.

If God does not exist, objective and moral values and ethics do not exist. Since moral values and ethics do exist, God exists.

The Moral Argument is developed from an understanding that God is good, and He is only good. There is no evil in Him. Good and evil are objective and absolute because God is the absolute good. Without God, there would be no moral standard. Because we do know that there is a moral standard, we can direct others to the God of creation.

This is a biblical argument, and believers are encouraged to learn and understand this argument for their own assurance and foundation.

PRESUPPOSITIONAL ARGUMENTS

In my overview, I listed the Transcendental Argument but have decided to lump this in with the Presuppositional Arguments.

This form of Christian apologetics deals with presuppositions. A presupposition is an assumption that is taken for granted. This argument presupposes God's existence and argues from that perspective to show the validity of the true God. This position also presupposes the truth of the Bible and concludes that an unbeliever is sinful in his mind and unable to understand spiritual things and truths.

This means that no matter how convincing the evidence or good the logic, an unbeliever cannot come to the faith because his fallen nature will distort how he perceives the truth. The only thing that can ultimately change him is regeneration. Therefore, the first argument is to have a conversation that starts, "*Assume for the sake of argument* that the God of the Bible exists."

It must be noted that this argument is primarily, if not exclusively, focused on evangelism. This argument provides little to no value for the building up of the believer in confidence.

In this argument, you use what you assume in order to explain the world around us. If you presuppose God's existence, then the world makes sense. You could then explain how we came to be, how there can be absolute laws of morality, and why rationality is what it is.

Elements of Presuppositional Apologetics:

1. Presupposing the Triune God as the precondition of all existence and truth
2. Adopting Transcendental Arguments dealing with the precondition of logic, ultimate morality, and the grounding of knowledge
3. Presupposing the truth of the Christian Scriptures
4. Undermining the presuppositions of unbelievers by exposing their inability to justify logic, morality, and knowledge

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Addressing a person's presuppositions when discussing God and the validity of the Gospel is necessary because how one interprets information is based upon their assumptions and worldview. Here is an example conversation:

Atheist: I do not believe there is a God. Prove to me there is a God.

Believer: I do not think I can demonstrate the existence of God because of your presuppositions.

Atheist: Why not?

Believer: Because your presuppositions will not allow you to examine the evidence that I present to you for God's existence without bias.

Believer: If your presupposition is that there is no God, then you must explain information in a manner consistent with your presupposition, namely, that there is no God.

A person who is being challenged to believe that God exists, especially the God of the Bible, must be willing to set aside their presupposition that there is no God.

STRENGTH OF THE PRESUPPOSITIONAL METHOD

It is very true that presuppositions and worldviews do govern the way that a person evaluates information. Challenging someone to set aside their presuppositions is a very good start to having meaningful conversations.

REBUTTAL

Some "presuppositionalists" take this basic concept to an extreme. They would say, "God is the precondition of knowledge (specifically the Christian God), and unless we fear Him / start with Him / presuppose Him in our thinking beforehand, we lose all knowledge."

All knowledge is based upon God's existence, but understanding all information is not dependent on believing in God. Math, science, and history can be understood by the unbeliever. To state that an unbeliever has no knowledge is not verifiable.

WEAKNESS OF THE PRESUPPOSITIONAL METHOD

Presuppositional apologetics rejects the validity of traditional evidence for the existence of God. A pure presuppositionalist only addresses the worldview of a person and seeks to change the very foundation of how a person perceives facts.

If presuppositionalists are asked about dinosaurs, radiometric dating, or other discussion points, they would not answer or would give the discussion very little attention. They would simply return to their presuppositional framework, and some would not address the evidence unless a person believes in Jesus first or states they are willing to set aside their assumptions.

There is some validity to this point. Many antagonists of God present themselves as unmovable. Some are almost militant in their atheism. There were many in my past that I

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would not engage unless there was another party who was interested in the conversation. But I only do this if there is a history of antagonism and not truth-seeking. I do not disagree with some of the fundamentals of presuppositional apologetics, but it does go too far with the unwillingness to answer questions.

Typically, the pure presuppositionalist follows Calvinistic Theology. Since the only people who will believe are those who are those whom God enables to believe, they do not want to waste time or resources discussing the evidence that God Himself has presented in both the Scriptures and in nature.

This whole premise is based upon biblical authority. However, the presuppositionalist does not defend the validity of the Bible and does not feel the need to defend that authority. I believe that God has fully defended Himself in Scripture, and Scripture can also be demonstrated to be valid.

BIBLICAL REVIEW

This is very attractive on the surface. “The fool has said in his heart ‘There is not God.’” And why do we want to engage with fools?

Paul demonstrated addressing one’s worldview (Acts 17:22-31).

But the Bible records many instances where the people of God present evidence of God’s reality and truth.

Exodus 6:5-8, 9:13-17; 1 Kings 18:20-24, 37-39

John 5:31-57; Hebrews 2:1-4

A strict presuppositional stance that says evidence is not to be given is not scriptural.

CONCLUSION

There are some useful points to understanding presuppositions, and it is valuable to address the worldview of unbelievers, but in the intended form, presuppositional apologetics does not use Scripture correctly, and God does call on believers to demonstrate the evidence for the truth.

Remembering our primary goal –

To strengthen the students so that they reach a confident, steadfast belief in God, Jesus, and the Scriptures so that they will never fall.

The presuppositional apologetic method does not advance this goal.