



Presuppositionalism

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pre•sup•po•si•tion

- ▶ Something you believe is true without necessarily having proof.
- ▶ Something assumed in advance.
- ▶ Assumption.

pre•sup•po•si•tion

Here are some definitions for the word *presupposition*.

- Something you believe is true without necessarily having proof.
- Something assumed in advance.
- Assumption (let's go with this).

3 Types of Assumptions



Bible



Results



Christian Worldview

There are three types of assumption we are talking about:

- **Assumption about the Bible (Revelational Presuppositionalism or Scripturalism):**
Some people start with the assumption that the Bible is inherently true, making it the starting and, in more extreme versions, the ending point for finding truth. The Bible does indeed claim to be inspired revelation from God. Some people begin their Christian experience with this assumption, without needing formal evidence of proof in order to believe it.
- **Christianity will Bring Practical Results (Practical Presuppositionalism or Verificationism):**
Instead of starting with evidence and proofs, this view proposes Christianity as a hypothesis that can be practically tested in life. The presumption here is that Christianity best describes reality and is the only self-consistent, livable belief system. The truth of Christianity can be confirmed through personal experiences, making it more of a pragmatic approach. This is very much like pragmatism.
- **Christian Worldview (rational presuppositionalism):**
This view begins with the assumption that Christianity is true. It says that there is no way to argue against Christianity without using the principles of Christianity. Therefore, Christianity must be true since it is unavoidable. It also appears to be the most consistent worldview. We would expect this to be the case if it were true, and it does seem to be so.

Skeptical of Evidence/Reason

- ▶ The Fall and Human Reason
- ▶ Bible as the Sole Truth
- ▶ Pragmatism Over Proof



Skeptical of Evidence/Reason

Christians that lean toward presuppositional apologetics can be skeptical about the role of evidence/reason in forming belief.

- **The Fall and Human Reason:** Both Rational and Revelational Presuppositionalism emphasize the effects of the Fall—humanity's inherent sin nature—on our capacity for sound reasoning. They posit that human reason is limited and cannot reliably lead us to truth, especially spiritual truth. Rational Presuppositionalists argue that traditional proofs for God are neither sound nor helpful, leaning instead on the presupposition of Christianity as the sole coherent explanation for reality.
- **Bible as the Sole Truth:** Revelational Presuppositionalists elevate the Scripture's status as the ultimate source of truth. This perspective, also called "Scripturalism", asserts that the Bible's truthfulness doesn't need empirical evidence or the endorsement of human reasoning. It emphasizes the Bible as both the starting and ending point of truth, putting forward a deep skepticism towards human reasoning's ability to discern spiritual truths, especially due to our fallen state.
- **Pragmatism Over Proof:** The Practical Presuppositionalist approach, also known as Verificationalism, suggests a shift in focus from proving faith through objective evidence to testing Christianity's livability and coherence. While human reasoning is used, it is employed more in a pragmatic validation of the Christian faith. This approach views Christianity as a hypothesis to be tested rather than a truth to be proven by reasoning or empirical evidence, further emphasizing a skepticism towards human reasoning.



Transcendental Argument

A PERSON MUST BORROW FROM CHRISTIANITY TO TRY TO DISPROVE IT. THEREFORE, CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE.

Transcendental Argument – Borrowing from Christianity

To argue against Christianity, one must use logic, morality, and the principle of the uniformity of nature. But these are all inexplicable without the Christian worldview. Therefore, by arguing against Christianity, one inadvertently confirms its truth.

Any argument against Christianity must, by necessity, use aspects of the world that are coherent and meaningful within a Christian worldview. In other words, it must "borrow" some things from that worldview.

- **Logic:** Logic is foundational to any argument. It allows us to process information consistently, draw conclusions, and detect contradictions. When someone argues against Christianity, they are using logical principles to structure their argument. But where does logic come from? Why is the universe organized in such a way that logical principles hold true? The Christian worldview proposes that logic is grounded in the consistent, non-contradictory nature of God himself. Therefore, any use of logic in an argument implicitly relies on a principle that, according to Christianity, is rooted in God's nature.
- **Morality:** When people argue against Christianity, they often make moral claims. For example, they might argue that if God is good, then evil should not exist. This argument presupposes the existence of objective moral standards by which we judge things as good or evil. However, without a transcendent moral law giver, it's challenging to explain the existence of these objective moral standards. The Christian worldview argues that these moral laws stem from God's holy and righteous character. Therefore, any moral argument against Christianity unknowingly borrows from the Christian worldview which provides a basis for objective morality.

- **Uniformity of Nature:** Many arguments against Christianity rely on the predictability and uniformity of natural laws. For example, one might argue that natural processes like evolution explain life's complexity, negating the need for a Creator. But this argument presupposes that natural laws operate consistently—yesterday, today, and tomorrow—which is foundational to any scientific endeavor. However, explaining the origin and consistency of these laws without a unifying, governing force is difficult. The Christian worldview attributes this consistency to God, who upholds the universe in a reliable, uniform manner.

The Transcendental Argument doesn't claim these concepts prove Christianity per se. Instead, it suggests that these concepts—logic, morality, and the uniformity of nature—are most coherently explained within the Christian worldview, and that any argument against Christianity must presuppose these concepts, thus borrowing from the worldview it seeks to challenge.

The Transcendental Argument, in its most classic form, focuses primarily on the above. But are other things a person must “borrow” in order to argue against Christianity:

- **Reason:** Any argument against Christianity must employ the tool of reason—deductive logic, inductive reasoning, analysis, and synthesis. This ability to reason abstractly and discern truth from falsehood is fundamental to any intellectual discourse. But how do we account for this? What grounds our capacity for reason? The Christian worldview argues that our reasoning ability is a reflection of God's nature. As beings created in His image, we've inherited a small portion of His capacity for understanding, analysis, and logical thought. Therefore, every use of reason in an argument indirectly relies on a principle that Christianity ascribes to God's nature.
- **Language:** Constructing and presenting an argument requires language—a complex system of symbols and sounds used to communicate ideas and feelings. Language is based on a set of conventions and rules that enable us to convey meaning. But what is the origin of language? Why is it that we can attribute meaning to certain sounds or symbols? Christianity posits that language comes from God—the divine Word or Logos. God used language to communicate with human beings, setting a precedent for our communication. Hence, any use of language implicitly borrows from the Christian understanding of its divine origin.
- **Identity Over Time:** When someone debates against Christianity, they implicitly presuppose that their personal identity remains constant throughout the discussion. The fact that 'I' continue to exist as the same entity from one moment to the next is a fundamental assumption in any conversation or argument. But what secures this constancy? What makes 'me' today the same 'me' as yesterday? The Christian worldview attributes this continuity of identity to God's sustaining power. Therefore, when arguing against Christianity, one indirectly draws on a concept central to the Christian understanding of personhood and divine sovereignty.

- **Causality:** The principle of causality—that every event or entity has a cause—is often invoked in arguments against Christianity. One might argue, for instance, that the universe and life could have come about through purely natural, causal processes, removing the need for a divine Creator. But this argument presupposes that cause-and-effect relationships exist and that they can be reliably discerned and understood. How and why is the universe ordered in this way? The Christian worldview suggests that God is the source of all causality, having set the laws that govern the universe at its inception. Therefore, when utilizing the principle of causality in an argument against Christianity, one is implicitly relying on a concept deeply rooted in the Christian worldview.



What kind of assumptions did you have?

What kind of assumptions did/do you have?

You might have been influenced by assumption in one way or another when you came to believe in Christianity. Ask yourself if any of these resonate with you.

Rational Assumptions

- “The following thought helped me become a Christian: ‘Everything makes sense if we just assume God exists.’”
- “Christianity seemed to be the only view that was consistent/coherent.”

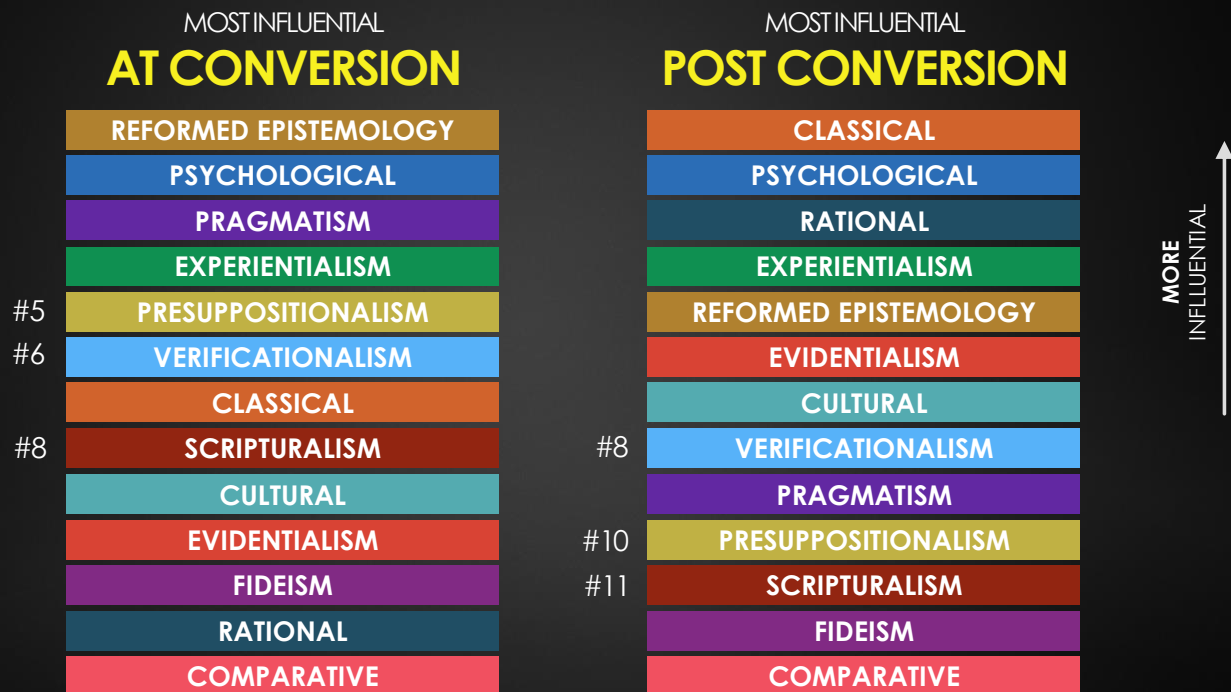
Revelational Assumptions

- “I just assumed the Bible was the Word of God.”
- “Nobody needed to prove to me that the Bible was true. It proved itself to be true to me.”

Practical Assumptions

- “I didn’t need hard proof from science or history. Instead, thought I’d explore Christianity. And the more I explored it, the more it confirmed itself to be correct.”
- “I decided to test Christianity like a hypothesis, and it confirmed itself to be true.”

Statistics



Experientialism Statistics

How many times did an apologetic appear in the 90th percentile (top 10%)?

Most Influential At Salvation:

1. ReformedEpist 63%
2. Psychological 49%
3. Pragmatism 35%
4. Experientialism 27%
5. **Presuppositional (Rational) 15%**
6. **Verificationism (Practical) 14%**
7. Classical 13%
8. **Scripturalism (Revelational) 13%**
9. Cultural 9%
10. Evidentialism 2%

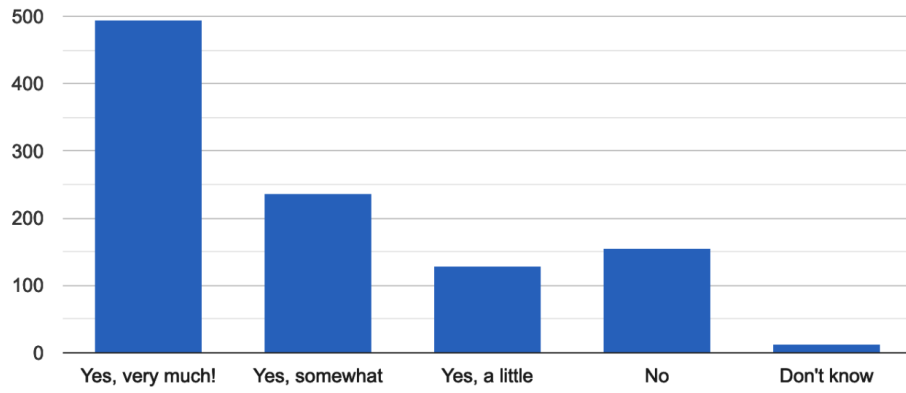
Most Influential Post Conversion:

1. Classical 57%
2. Psychological 48%
3. Rational 28%
4. Experientialism 22%
5. ReformedEpist 21%
6. Evidentialism 17%
7. Cultural 16%
8. **Verificationism (Practical) 10%**
9. Pragmatism 9%
10. **Presuppositional (Rational) 4%**

A Note About Percentiles

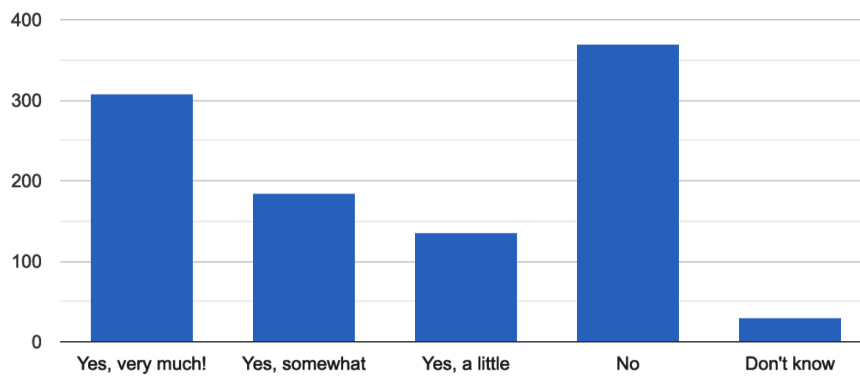
It is possible for a participant to have two or more apologetics with the same highest rank value and/or lowest rank value. For example, a candidate could have a top score of 11.0 for both Experientialism and Psychological Apologetics. I use percentiles to accommodate for this. The 100th percentile are the highest-ranking apologetics for a participant. The 90th percentile are those apologetics that were in the top ten percent. The 25th percentile are in the bottom twenty-five percent.

I just assumed the Bible was the Word of God.



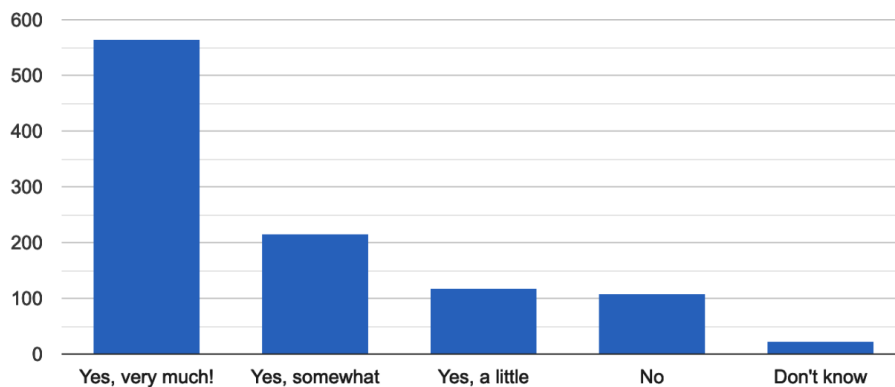
Yes, very much!	494
Yes, somewhat	236
Yes, a little	128
No	154
Don't know	13

The following thought *helped me become a Christian*: “Everything makes sense if we just assume God exists.”



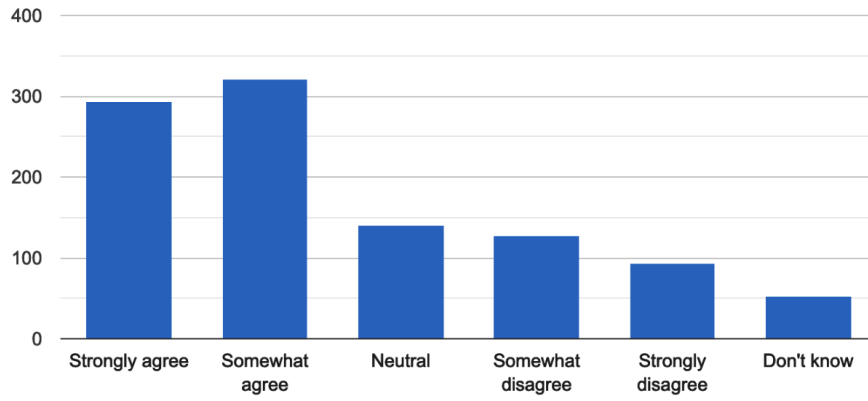
Yes, very much!	308
Yes, somewhat	183
Yes, a little	135
No	369
Don't know	30

Nobody needed to prove to me that the Bible was true. It proved itself to be true to me.



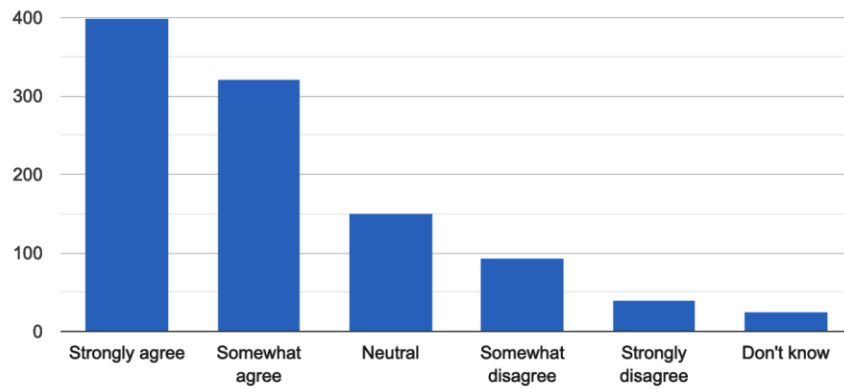
Yes, very much!	564
Yes, somewhat	215
Yes, a little	118
No	107
Don't know	21

Christianity is like a theory or hypothesis; we can test it and confirm it to be true.



Strongly agree	293
Somewhat agree	320
Neutral	140
Somewhat disagree	127
Strongly disagree	93
Don't know	52

The best way to prove Christianity is to show that it is the only view that is consistent/coherent.



Strongly agree	399
Somewhat agree	320
Neutral	150
Somewhat disagree	93
Strongly disagree	39
Don't know	24

Biblical Basis

- ▶ Presuming the Bible is God's Word



Biblical Basis

While there may not be any direct mention of the term "presuppositionalism" in the Bible, there are many verses and principles that support the fundamental ideas underlying these apologetic methodologies. Here are some Bible verses that illustrate these principles.

Presuming the Bible is God's Word

Christians hold the 3 'ins' of inspiration (Bible is from God), infallibility (it cannot fail), and inerrancy (is without error).

- **John 17:17** - "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."
Jesus' affirmation of the truth of God's word aligns with the presupposition of the Bible's truth in Revelational Presuppositionalism.
- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** - "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."
These verses underline the authority and utility of Scripture, a foundational assumption of Revelational Presuppositionalism.
- **John 14:6** - "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"
Jesus's assertion of being the truth aligns with the focus on the truth of Scripture in Revelational Presuppositionalism.
- **2 Peter 1:20-21** - "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried

along by the Holy Spirit.”

These verses emphasize the divine origin of Scripture, a key presupposition of Revelational Presuppositionalism.

Since the Bible is our source of revelation from God, we can trust it to be truthful in all that it says. Many Christians begin their Christian walk with the assumption that this is so.

Biblical Basis

- ▶ Presuming the Bible is God's Word
- ▶ Assuming Christianity will Prove Itself



Biblical Basis (Cont'd)

Assuming Christianity will Prove Itself

- Taste and see that the Lord is Good!
 - Psalm 34:8 – “Taste and see that the Lord is good. How happy is the person who takes refuge in him!”
 - We proceed to eat a meal for the first time assuming it will be good. After tasting it, its proven to be true.
- Do God’s Will to Know Whether Jesus’s Teaching is True
 - John 7 – Do God’s will to know whether Jesus’s teaching is true
 - “Jesus answered them, ‘My teaching isn’t mine but is from the one who sent me. If anyone wants to do his will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own.’” (John 7:16, 17)
 - You DO first and then you KNOW second.
 - This says that the authenticity of Jesus' teachings can be verified through the transformative impact they have on the lives of those who follow God's will.

Biblical Basis

- ▶ Presuming the Bible is God's Word
- ▶ Assuming Christianity will Prove Itself
- ▶ Starting with Assumption of God



Biblical Basis (Cont'd)

Starting with Assumption of God

- **1 Corinthians 2:14** - "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."
This aligns with the presuppositionalist claim that spiritual truths cannot be truly understood without first presupposing the truth of God's existence and revelation.
- **Proverbs 1:7** - "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."
This verse suggests that true knowledge starts with the reverence of God, aligning with the presuppositionalist view that all truth ultimately stems from God.
- **Isaiah 55:8-9** - "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." This passage reflects the view that human reasoning is limited and can't fully comprehend the divine, which aligns with the skepticism towards human reasoning found in Rational Presuppositionalism.



Advantages

- ▶ Challenges at Root-Level
- ▶ Engagement at a Worldview Level
- ▶ Challenges Relativism and Pluralism
- ▶ Internal Consistency
- ▶ Biblically Consistent
- ▶ Offers Certainty
- ▶ Defends Against Skepticism
- ▶ Focused on Scripture

Advantages

From an apologetic/evangelistic perspective, presuppositionalism has many pros:

- **Challenges at Root-Level:** Presuppositionalism directly challenges the non-Christian's worldview at its root, instead of just dealing with individual objections.
- **Engagement at a Worldview Level:** The approach deals directly with worldviews, allowing for a deep and comprehensive engagement with non-believers' belief systems.
- **Challenges Relativism and Pluralism:** By asserting the truth of Christianity upfront, it provides a direct challenge to the pluralism and relativism prevalent in contemporary culture.
- **Internal Consistency:** It provides a framework that is internally consistent, which can be an attractive feature in evangelistic conversations.
- **Biblically Consistent:** Presuppositionalism is seen as consistent with biblical teachings that faith precedes understanding (Hebrews 11:3) and that humans, due to the Fall, have limited understanding without God's revelation.
- **Offers Certainty:** By making Christianity the a priori assumption, it offers believers a level of certainty and security in their faith.
- **Defends Against Skepticism:** The method presents a robust defense against skeptical arguments, noting that even skepticism itself requires certain presuppositions that are best accounted for by the Christian worldview.
- **Focused on Scripture:** It positions Scripture as the ultimate authority and source of truth, encouraging believers to deepen their understanding of the Bible.

Challenges

- ▶ Barrier to Dialogue
- ▶ Limited Appeal
- ▶ Ignores Evidential Arguments
- ▶ Might Seem Dismissive
- ▶ Neglect of Personal Experience
- ▶ May Lead to Dogmatism



Challenges

Here could be some challenges with this approach:

- **Barrier to Dialogue:** Starting with the assumption that Christianity is true may create a barrier to open dialogue with non-believers who do not share this presupposition.
- **Limited Appeal:** This approach may only appeal to those already leaning towards Christianity. Its effect on staunch atheists or adherents of other religions may be limited.
- **Ignores Evidential Arguments:** Presuppositionalism de-emphasizes the value of evidential arguments, which can be powerful tools for demonstrating the historical and scientific credibility of Christianity.
- **Might Seem Dismissive:** Its skepticism towards human reason can seem dismissive of genuine intellectual inquiries and struggles people might have about faith.
- **Neglect of Personal Experience:** This approach may undervalue personal religious experiences, miracles, or the work of the Holy Spirit in an individual's life as evidence of God's existence.
- **May Lead to Dogmatism:** The strong emphasis on presupposing Christian truth might lead to a form of dogmatism that is resistant to questioning, doubt, or exploration, which are often part of an individual's faith journey.