Introduction

Pressupositionalism emphasizes antithesis—the believer and the unbeliever possess two contrasting worldviews. The believer possesses the truth, while the unbeliever holds to a false world of his own creation. How, then, can there be any meaningful discussion?

I. Unregenerate knowledge of God (Rom 1:19-21)
   a. Universal
      i. The knowledge of God is available to all since the creation of the world.
   b. Revelatory
      i. God made this knowledge evident to people. It is not something we could discover on our own—God had to reveal it.
   c. Intuitive
      i. This knowledge is not the conclusion of a rational argument, but is clearly seen and understood. It is a kind of intuitive recognition.
   d. Personal
      i. This is not merely knowledge about God, but knowledge of God Himself. People do not know some abstract deity, but the Triune God.

II. Unregenerate rejection of God (Rom 1:18, 21, 25, 28, 32)
   a. Unrighteous suppression of truth
   b. Exchanging truth for falsehood

III. Battling on Borrowed Ground
   a. Because everyone knows God, their worldviews inevitably retain some truths, though they are often twisted. This creates a point of contact.
   b. Yet the unbeliever stands on the truth of God while he fights against Him.

IV. What if God did not exist? Realities of the false world atheists construct.
a. No meaning

i. No ultimate meaning (what difference does your life really make?)

ii. Richard Dawkins’ offers this depressing sentiment on what he argues is reality: *There is at bottom no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pointless indifference.... We are machines for propagating DNA.... It is every living object’s sole reason for being”*¹

iii. Sartre argued we must choose a meaning for ourselves, but that is ultimately absurd—it is just an act of self-delusion. If there is no meaning, it does not matter if we choose a meaning, since there is still no meaning.

b. No purpose

i. Purpose implies intention, but intention requires an intelligent designer. Without God, the universe is the result of accident/chance

ii. We try to answer with a noble lie—deceive ourselves into thinking there is meaning and purpose in the world.

iii. “If there is no God, and everything in this world is the product of (as Bertrand Russell famously put it) ‘an accidental collocation of atoms,’ then there is no actual purpose for which we were made—we are accidents. If we are the product of accidental natural forces, then what we call ‘beauty’ is nothing but a neurological hardwired response to particular data. You only find certain scenery to be beautiful because you had ancestors who knew you would find food there and they survived because of that neurological feature and now we have it too. In the same way, though music feels significant, that significance is an illusion. Love too must be seen in this light. If we are the result of blind natural forces, then what we call ‘love’ is simply a bio-chemical response, inherited from ancestors who survived because this trait helped them survive...Regardless of the beliefs of our mind about the random meaninglessness of life, before the face of beauty we know better.”²

c. Though this is the reality without God, people do not live as though there were no meaning or purpose in the world. They do not recognize the significance of their denial of God.

i. “‘Whither is God?’ he cried, ‘I shall tell you. We have killed him— you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now?... Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become

¹Cited in Craig, William Lane, *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision* (Kindle Locations 524-6).
colder? Is not night and more night coming on all the while? Must not lanterns be lit in the morning? Do we not hear anything yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God?... God is dead.... And we have killed him. How shall we, the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves?"

One of the reasons people do not live as though life is meaningless and purposeless is that they know better. They know that God exists, despite what they might claim.

V. Borrowed Ground: Truths about the world unbelievers still hold

a. Knowledge (Rom 1:21)

i. In order to trust our knowledge we must know that our cognitive faculties are working properly and designed to reach truth.

ii. Skepticism

1. Hume did not know how our faculties developed, which meant he was left to be skeptical of everything, even his own skepticism. Yet he could never convince himself to always doubt everything—Nature forced upon him the idea that his beliefs were true. But in his more sane and rational moments, he believed he could know nothing, including whether or not he could know nothing!

2. ILL: radio on a distant planet speaking in English and giving factual statements you can’t verify

a. “Imagine, then, that you embark on a voyage of space exploration and land on a planet revolving about a distant sun. This planet has a favorable atmosphere, but you know little more about it. You crack the hatch, step out, and immediately find something that looks a lot like a radio; it periodically emits strings of sounds that, oddly enough, form sentences in English. The sentences emitted by this instrument express propositions only about topics of which you have no knowledge: what the weather is like in Beijing at the moment, whether Caesar had eggs on toast on the morning he crossed the Rubicon, whether the first human being to cross the Bering Strait and set foot on North America was left-handed, and the like. A bit unduly impressed with your find, you initially form the opinion that this quasi radio speaks the truth: that is, the propositions expressed (in English) by those sentences are true. But then you recall that you have no idea at all as to what the purpose of this apparent instrument is, whether it has a purpose, or how it came to be. You see that the probability of its being reliable, given what you know about

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it, is for you inscrutable. Then (in the absence of investigation) you have a defeater for your initial belief that the thing does, in fact, speak the truth, a reason to reject that belief, a reason to give it up, to be agnostic with respect to it. Relative to your beliefs about the origin, purpose, and provenance of this apparent instrument, the probability that it is a reliable source of information is low or (more likely) inscrutable. And that gives you a defeater for your original and hasty belief that the thing really does speak the truth. If you don’t have or get further information about its reliability, the reasonable course is agnosticism about that proposition.**

iii. Naturalism

1. In naturalism, everything that exists is the result of evolutionary processes. Natural selection means that everything that developed, including our cognitive faculties, is because of some adaptive advantage designed for survival—not truth.

2. In naturalism, beliefs are merely neural events with electrochemical properties. But the content of belief is irrelevant—only the electrochemical properties that bring about certain reactions. A belief does not have to be true or false to produce those reactions, so the content does not matter. Thus, there is no reason to believe our cognitive properties developed in such a way that they are directed toward truth.

iv. Christianity

1. God, an intelligent Being, created our cognitive faculties in part to know Him, which means they are directed toward truth.

   NOTE: I am not saying that Christians are smarter or know more than atheists, but that atheists have no basis for trusting their knowledge—if they really believe atheism, they will doubt everything, even their belief in atheism.

b. Morality (Rom 1:18ff; Rom 2:14-15)

i. Moral Argument

1. If God does not exist, objective moral values and duties do not exist

2. Objective moral values and duties do exist

3. Therefore, God exists.

ii. Though people try to deny it, they believe in objective morality

1. We express moral outrage all the time

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2. We all believe some things are wrong, no matter what anyone says
   a. Rape; sexism; genocide
   b. The Holocaust was wrong, even though most people in Germany thought it was good. And it would be wrong even if Germany had won
3. We don’t believe ultimately that morals are cultural, because we want certain cultural practices to stop
   a. Cultural practices may point to socially acceptable behavior, but is murder really the same as burping too loudly at dinner?

iii. Without God, there is no explanation for objective morality
   1. It can’t be evolutionary, because it does not explain altruistic behavior outside of one’s group or when no one else will see it
      a. Further, we hold people accountable for wrong actions that we don’t hold nature accountable for.
      b. Nature is violent, but we don’t think that natural violence is right.
      c. As Darwin himself wrote in The Descent of Man, “If … men were reared under precisely the same conditions as hive-bees, there can hardly be a doubt that our unmarried females would, like the worker-bees, think it a sacred duty to kill their brothers, and mothers would strive to kill their fertile daughters; and no one would think of interfering.”

2. It can’t be the majority, because we don’t believe the majority should get to oppress the minority. You need a belief system in human rights that cannot be overridden by the majority.
3. Only God has the authority to be able to tell everyone what is right or wrong
   a. We can’t push our opinions on someone else—“who died and made you God?”
4. Without God, there would be no difference between oppression and charity, but we all believe there is a difference because we know God exists and He has written His Law in our hearts (Rom 2:14-15)

NOTE: I am not saying that people who do not believe in God will be evil. The issue is the basis of morality, not the practice of morality.

   c. Justice (Rom 1:31)

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i. We believe the world is broken, but we could not believe that unless our belief came from outside the world!

ii. If God does not exist, then wrongs will not be righted.

iii. “The cruelty of atheism is hard to believe when man has no faith in the reward of good or the punishment of evil. There is no reason to be human. There is no restraint from the depths of evil which is in man. The Communist torturers often said, ‘There is no God, no hereafter, no punishment for evil. We can do what we wish.’ I have heard one torturer even say, ‘I thank God, in whom I don’t believe, that I have lived to this hour when I can express all the evil in my heart.’ He expressed it in unbelievable brutality and torture inflicted on prisoners.”

VI. Why people suppress their belief in God.

a. They don’t want to believe (Rom 1:21)

i. “I took it for granted that there was no meaning. This was partly due to the fact that I shared the common belief that the scientific picture of an abstraction from reality was a true picture of reality as a whole; partly also to other non-intellectual reasons. I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning; consequently, I assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption. Most ignorance is vincible ignorance. We don’t know because we don’t want to know. It is our will that decides how and upon what subjects we shall use our intelligence. Those who detect no meaning in the world generally do so because, for one reason or another, it suits their books that the world should be meaningless.”

ii. “I am talking about something much deeper—namely the fear of religion itself. I speak from experience, being strongly subject to this fear myself: I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn’t just that I don’t believe in God and, naturally, hope that I’m right in my belief. It’s that I hope there is no God! I don’t want there to be a God; I don’t want the universe to be like that.”

b. They hate God (Rom 8:7-8)

i. “But he had to die: he saw with eyes that saw everything; he saw man's depths and ultimate grounds, all his concealed disgrace and ugliness. His pity knew no shame: he crawled into my dirtiest nooks. This most curious, overobtrusive, overpitying one had to die. He always saw me: on such a witness I wanted to have revenge or not live myself. The god who saw

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everything, even man—this god had to die! Man cannot bear it that such a witness should live.”

c. God offers an answer to this hatred—His love to create a new heart in us. (Rom 5:6-8)

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