

Mission, Meaning and Truth

Peter Hicks

Faced on Mars Hill with religious pluralism, Paul declared the unique truth of the gospel, building his case on revelation, the resurrection of Christ, and rational argument. Some of his hearers may have sneered; but others took him seriously, and some even became believers. The contemporary Christian apologist may well feel envious, since the task she or he faces seems much harder than Paul's. Today's Areopagites are conditioned to reject appeals to revelation. The historicity and significance of the resurrection are constantly being challenged. And plenty of people are telling us that rational argument has no place in religion.

But there is a more radical issue than any of these three: the contemporary challenge to the very concept of truth. We can, we are told, no longer declare the truth of the gospel because there is no such thing as truth. If that challenge can be sustained then we need waste no time over the other issues. The purpose of this essay is to examine this challenge to see if an answer can be found to it that is reasonably in keeping with a Christian theistic worldview; I shall argue that this can be done, and that such an epistemological foundation has implications for the way the Christian apologist might approach the defence of the concepts of revelation, the resurrection, and rational argument.

The challenge to truth is something much deeper than the questioning of the truth of this or that religion or worldview. It is nothing short of the rejection of the concept of truth: there is no such thing, at any rate in the generally understood meaning of the word. For two millennia western culture, taking its cue from Plato, was built on the assumption that there is such a thing as truth, and that it is more or less fixed and, in part at least, knowable, something we

can discover, grasp, depend on, and, in a sense, be subject to. We may not all immediately agree what the truth is; but such is its nature that truth itself holds the key to settling disagreements; one claim to truth can be set over against another, and by careful investigation and rational enquiry, the claim that is true can be identified; the alternative claim is therefore seen to be false, and necessarily will give way to the authority of the truth. The great scientific enterprise of the last four centuries depended on this approach, and could not have existed without it. And still today the vast majority of our thinking and communicating and doing takes it for granted.

The past one hundred years has seen the disintegration of this traditional western concept of truth. It has been claimed that, at any rate in the form in which we have inherited it, it is philosophically untenable. It may have worked, it may have unlocked the door to all sorts of advances in learning and wisdom and scientific discovery, but it cannot itself be true. All our so-called truth has been built upon a falsehood.

The argument can take a number of forms, but in essence is simple. One form would start with the statement that any claim to truth, whether it be 'The cat is on the mat' or 'Jesus rose from the dead', needs to be evaluated or verified in order to be accepted as truth. To do this we need some basic principles of evaluation or verification. But before we can use these we have to ask, 'Are these principles true?' To answer that we need some meta-principles by which we can evaluate our principles. But then how do we check that the meta-principles are true? And so we are launched on an infinite regress, with no hope of ever finding a fixed point on which the truth of all else can depend.

Another form of the argument is based on the observation that it is perfectly possible for something that has long been accepted as true to be shown to be false. For thousands of years everyone believed the earth was flat. Indeed, they not only believed it, they knew it, they were certain of it; they had excellent evidence for it; the earth's flatness was an undeniable truth. But if such a long established and universally agreed 'truth' can be overthrown, then any truth can be overthrown. However psychologically certain we may be, we can never be epistemologically certain of anything; we may only ever have opinions or beliefs, never truths.

A third form of the argument points out that I am never aware of any object. I am only ever aware of my awareness of the object. I may think I am looking at a sheet of white paper; but I can never claim that or know that. The most I can claim is that I am having an

experience of what I interpret to be whiteness, paperiness, and so on. So if I start making claims about facts, knowledge, truth, or an objective world outside of me, all I am doing is describing my subjective mental state. I am saying nothing about the real world; and while I may claim to be giving an accurate, and so true, description of my mental state, I cannot claim to be producing truth about anything other than that.

Faced with these arguments, two possible courses are open to us. We can accept that the concept of truth as it has traditionally been understood over the last two thousand years has been destroyed and therefore must be abandoned. If we are going to continue to use the word, it must be with a radically new meaning: truth can no longer be objective and fixed, discoverable and regulative; it can only be subjective and relative, truth-for-me, which I adopt or abandon according to whim. Alternatively, we can seek to discover a justification for retaining the traditional concept of truth (or something very like it) as something objective and fixed, and to find an answer to the arguments brought against it. The incentives to do this are high; has not the traditional concept served us admirably for two millennia? Are we really to say it was all a false scent, and opt for the chaos of relativism instead?

The option of abandoning the traditional concept of fixed objective truth in favour of relativism can be traced back to a number of possible sources, but perhaps has its main roots in Kant's concession that we can know nothing about things as they are in themselves, but only about 'appearances'. For many who followed him this meant that our knowledge does not arise in any way from the real external objective world (if any such exists), but rather from the mind of the knower. The whole process of knowing starts and finishes with the knowing subject. I can only ever know that I am having an experience which I interpret as seeing a red post box; I can never make any claims to truth about the existence of post boxes or even of redness.

The two most influential streams of western philosophical thought since Kant have both tended to lead to relativism. Existentialism has focused attention on the subjective; in protest against the overwhelming tendency of the objectivist 'scientific' worldview to destroy the self by reducing it to a machine, the existentialists insisted on the primacy of the subjective; what is real is the existing person, the self: 'truth is subjectivity'. Empiricism for a century and more sought to validate and build on the objective principles of the scientific enterprise, climaxing in logical positivism's confident verificationist assertion of what is and is not

objectively knowable and so capable of being true. But logical positivism collapsed into Wittgensteinian relativism, conceding that there was no justification for its claim that the criterion of possible empirical verification supplied the one and only basis for knowledge and truth. The logical positivist's claim was no more and no less valid than the existentialist's, or the theologian's, or the Marxist's or the poet's. All claims were valid within their own fields; but, equally, none was able to pass any judgment on what was outside their field, nor was there any way of adjudicating if apparently conflicting claims were put forward.

Another strong influence towards epistemological relativism came from the spread of relativism through other disciplines. Aesthetics and ethics were fertile breeding grounds: it was easy to argue that 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder', and that concepts of right and wrong were often dependent on circumstances, presuppositions, time, place, and so on. The softer disciplines like sociology, anthropology and history found it liberating to realise that there was no one definitive way of seeing and understanding a culture or society or historical event. More recently several areas of science have abandoned the claim to be providing definitive truth about the world as it really is, and moved to talk of 'models' or 'paradigms', none of which are in themselves right or wrong, true or false, but rather pragmatic ways in which, for a time, we choose to view the world.¹ Even the disciplines of maths and logic have to face the challenge that there is no one definitive mathematical or logical system; truth even there is not fixed or absolute. In all these areas knowledge and truth have become relative to time, place, culture, circumstance, presuppositions, conceptual framework, and standards of evaluation. We have moved from truth to truth-for-me at this time and in these circumstances.

Despite all this, epistemological relativism is untenable. It falls to a variation of the 'All Cretans are liars' puzzle. The relativist claims

1 It is generally held that Thomas S. Kuhn's concept of *paradigms* as developed in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970 2nd edn), entails the abandonment of science's claim to be presenting definitive truth in that Kuhn specifically states there is no independent rational or methodological court of appeal that can uphold one paradigm over against another; paradigm shifts are not caused by evidence or argument. While Kuhn felt that this did not necessarily undermine the rationality of science, Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge* (London: Verso, 1993 3rd edn), has argued for 'epistemological anarchism', in that historically and philosophically scientific advance is always nonrational, even anti-rational; the logical outcome of Kuhn's position is pure relativism or scientific pluralism.

absolute truth for the assertion 'No truth is absolute'. Any claim to truth ('true-for-me') is, for the relativist, right and true; but this means of course that as well as the relativist's claim being right and true, the anti-relativist's claims ('Relativism is incoherent', 'There are absolute objective truths', etc.) are equally right and true. But this doesn't just remove the distinction between right and wrong, true and false: it makes the concepts meaningless. Relativism cannot make statements about what is true (even true-for-me) or claim that it is a true or right epistemological theory without emptying the concepts of truth and rightness of meaning. To put it another way, the very concept of relativism is parasitic on the concept of objective truth, the thing whose existence it is denying.

That brings us to a further argument against relativism. If held consistently, it produces solipsism. Let us assume I make the statement 'London Bible College [LBC] is in Northwood'. The epistemological relativist has no problems with that; it is clearly true for me that LBC is in Northwood. But, as far as he or she is concerned, if Agatha states 'LBC is in New York', her statement is equally true, that is, true for Agatha. Fair enough; but I would like to meet Agatha; I would like to know what she is trying to do when she says 'LBC is in New York'. Perhaps several members of LBC teaching staff are at a conference in New York City, and she means that there is a valid LBC presence there. Perhaps 'New York' is Agatha's way of describing a London suburb to the north-west of Harrow. Given something like this, the difficulty between me and Agatha disappears; I am able to make sense of what she is claiming to be true. If talking together fails to resolve the difficulty, I might try producing other people, who know both LBC and New York, and who state most clearly that LBC is in London. If that doesn't help I could take Agatha to LBC, and show her round the site, pointing out the on the ground evidence that it is not in New York; we could even get a plane to New York and search every inch of ground there for LBC. Maybe there would be other things I could do, but when I've tried them all and they have all failed, I must arrive at a point where her statement not only appears untrue, but it has no meaning. I have tried to understand what she is saying; I've explored all possible means of squeezing significance from her words; but now I have to give up. There is no meaning; all the conceivable information content of it has been found wanting; she is saying nothing; no communication is happening when she speaks those words. Epistemological relativism leads to the loss of meaning and the impossibility of communication. The price of 'true for me' is silence. The concept of independent objective truth is foundational for the

existence of meaning and communication, and for the developing of relationships and the sharing of ideas which lie at the heart of what it means to be human.

Some relativists may be quite happy to accept this, and remain silent. Many will accept it and inconsistently continue communicating, even trying to argue the truth of epistemological relativism, assuming, for the sake of their argument, its falsehood. Many will claim that even if relativism is untenable in epistemology, it still applies in other disciplines; though we may have to concede the need for some independent truth, say on the whereabouts of LBC, we can still refuse to allow the possibility of, say, independent ethical or theological truth.

But I suggest the same argument applies in all areas of relativism. Take the case of ethical relativism, something so well established that few would dare challenge its orthodoxy. Granted that the amount of flexibility in the application of ethical principles is very great, I suggest that for ethical statements to have any meaning at all there must be at least some agreed and accepted independent objective standard of goodness, badness, rightness, wrongness, and the like. Without it, statements that 'X is right for me' will be meaningless; we have to agree, at least minimally, what 'right' means before we can communicate.² So, while there is a great deal of relativism in ethics, it cannot be true to say that ethics are totally relativistic, that there is no independent objective truth in the field of ethics. There must be at least some; otherwise meaning and communication in the field will be impossible.

Relativism, then, cannot be held consistently. And if it cannot be held consistently it should not be held at all. To avoid solipsism and preserve meaning, communication, relationships, knowledge, culture, and all that makes us human, we must find an alternative that can be held consistently. And that, for most, is the problem. Anti-relativists have found it very difficult to develop viable theories which will take the place of the traditional concept of truth and save us from relativism. That fact in itself, of course, does not establish that it cannot be done.

2 I am not necessarily arguing here for the objective existence of 'the right' or 'the good' in some kind of Platonic sense, though such a case could perhaps be made. My argument applies whatever concept of 'rightness' or 'goodness' is used: e.g. the greatest happiness of the greatest number, the conservation of earth's resources, or whatever. For any such criterion to be meaningful there must be agreement over the objective reality of 'the greatest number', 'happiness', 'the earth', 'resources', and the like.

Let us see how far we have got. I have argued that total epistemological relativism is untenable. There must be some such thing as fixed objective truth. But I have argued this not by refuting the arguments against the traditional concept of truth so much as by showing the impossibility and unlivability of relativism; the relativist can only claim rightness and truth for her or his position, and attempt to convert me to it, by denying its central thesis. We will return to a consideration of the arguments later, but first we will look a little more specifically at what constitutes objective truth, and allow this to lead us into a fuller concept of truth than the one that has been used by those who have been keen to argue for relativism.

As soon as we make the claim that there is such a thing as fixed objective truth, we have to face the question: 'Where can we locate this truth, or at least some of it?' After all, we are no further forward than Kant was if we believe in objective truth but can never decide what is objectively true and what is not. So where can we find things we can confidently call 'objective truths'?

Our discussion above has already supplied us with one or two candidates. At the very least, statements like 'Relativism is untenable' are true. Arising from that, we can go on to claim that, however great our doubts about the shape of the earth, the statement, 'If the earth is spherical it is not flat, and if it is flat it is not spherical', is also true. But this kind of statement, though it establishes the existence of some objective truths we can be sure of, hardly satisfies. What we want is practical down-to-earth objective truth; we want to be able to decide which of the two statements 'LBC is in Northwood' and 'LBC is in New York' is the truth.

It is this difficulty of providing a clear cut answer to the question of how we distinguish what is true from what is false that lies at the root of the objections to the traditional concept of truth. All the answers that have been put forward seem to be inadequate. Someone might suggest, for instance, that something is true if it is beyond doubt. Thus $2 + 2 = 4$ and 'My name is Peter' are true because no one doubts them; 'Bristol Rovers are the best football team in Britain' is not true because a substantial number of people would have their doubts about it. Unfortunately for this theory, sceptical philosophers have found no difficulty in doubting just about everything; if immunity from doubt is the test of truth, there is very little truth left. Nor does it help if we revise the criterion for truth to something that most people do not in fact doubt, since this falls to the flat earth objection.

An alternative approach is to set the criterion for truth in the area of proof or evidence. A thing is true if we have proof or sufficient

evidence for it. In support of my name being Peter I can produce documentation, the testimony of those who know me, and so on. In support of Bristol Rovers' champion status we would need to produce evidence that they have won the league, the cup, the cupwinners' cup and so on. The problem here is to decide what constitutes proof or sufficient evidence. The sceptic can always challenge the offered proof and demand something better. Granted Bristol Rovers have won just about everything this year, Manchester United are still better because the Rovers' victories were the result of lucky flukes and poor refereeing. And if the sceptics want to be really philosophical they can go back even further, and ask, How can you prove that there is such a team as Bristol Rovers? How can you prove that they aren't a product of your dreaming?

Given the demand for total freedom from doubt or irrefutable proof as the criterion for truth the sceptic seems set to win. But these, of course, are not the only possible criteria. True, they have been the central criteria for the past three and a half centuries, ever since Descartes and Locke launched western thought into the rationalistic mind-set of the Enlightenment. But there are many who would argue that the Enlightenment's stress on the centrality of reason was overdone, if not totally mistaken. There is more to human personhood than reason; our awareness of truth is something more than simply the exercise of our reason. It arises from who we are and what we experience as much as from how we reason.

Leaving the rationalistic doubts of the sceptical philosophers on one side for the moment, there are three things that most of us would claim we can be sure of. One is that we do have experiences. The second is that these experiences are not random, unconnected, or meaningless; as we might expect if they were the product of our dreaming or whatever. Rather, they cohere, they work as an integrated whole; things fit together. They follow a consistent pattern which we can grasp; we can discover purpose and meaning, and even predict what is going to happen. Further, we are such that we are able to be involved in them; we can live with them, cope with them, react to them, and affect their course; our involvement is meaningful, significant, and real. True, there are some things, like mirages and dreams, which, on first encounter, do not appear to fit; but they are very much the exception, and further reflection finds ways of fitting them in too. Thirdly, the only way we can live with our experiences and cope with their meaningfulness and coherence is to assume that what we are experiencing is real and objective; that is to say, our experiences give us real objective truth about the world around us. However philosophically sceptical I may be about the

difference between a wall and a doorway, I can only continue to cope with living in the world if I assume the truth that I cannot walk through walls. However vehemently I may assert that LBC is in New York, I will only get paid if I fulfil my teaching obligations in London.

There are two significant steps here. The first is that of allowing our experience as much authority in the forming of beliefs as Enlightenment thinkers allowed reason. The sceptic is not to be allowed to rob us of the conviction that experience is a valid means of discovering truth. We *experience* as well as *reason*. The second step is that of accepting that we are not isolated detached observers of the world. We belong to the world and the world, in a sense, belongs to us. Our experiences can only make sense and be consistently lived with if we assume that as experiencing beings we are directly involved and interacting with what is real and objective. We are part of the world; our experiences are of the world; they come from the world; they are the world doing something to us; and, in our turn, we, as we experience things, have an effect on the world. Besides experiencing and reasoning we *relate*. We make sense of our experiences and our relationships on the understanding that they are of objectively existing reality that can be truly known; the consistency, predictability, and so on, of our experiences make this assumption inevitable.³

So, for example, David Armstrong, a contemporary Australian philosopher, has paralleled the relationship between a person and a truth with that between a thermometer and the temperature. A thermometer measures temperature accurately because there is a law-like relationship between the two. In the same way, confronted with a tree, I can have a true belief that there is a tree there because there is a law-like connection between myself and my experience and the external world. Just as a thermometer measures the heat and accurately describes it, so I experience and form true beliefs about the things around me. As a further step I then go on to infer further truth on the basis of the truths arising from direct experience.

How does this happy state of affairs arise? Some may choose to accept the correlation between the objective world and our ability to experience it and know truth about it as an inexplicable brute fact. Others will seek an explanation in the context of the evolutionary process or anthropic principle. The traditional answer, involving the concept of design and so a Designer, has recently come very much

3 The three elements I have identified may well not be exhaustive; and the relationship between them will doubtless require further exploration.

back into fashion, ranging from Francis Schaeffer's argument for the epistemological necessity of the existence of God to Alvin Plantinga's carefully argued trilogy on epistemological warrant, in which he invokes concepts of 'proper function' and 'design plan'.⁴ It is surely more than coincidence that the rise of relativism coincided with the rejection of the concept of God as foundational, as is so vividly illustrated in Nietzsche's 'God is dead' passage.⁵

This is by no means to reject the role of reason in our finding and knowing of truth. Indeed, without it we could know no truth at all. What we are rejecting is the view that reason is the sole criterion for what is objectively true and can be allowed arbitrarily to set on one side the data of experience and of human relating. Rather, these are to be accepted as foundational; reason then has a vital role in analysing and building on them.

It is at this point that we can frame an answer to the three arguments against objective truth we looked at above. In introducing them I suggested they were in a sense three forms of one argument; the brief answer to all three is to reject their implicit demand that the test of truth is total rational justification. The first two arguments claim that we can only call something true if it can be exhaustively verified or if it is indubitable. The third allows no credence or authority to be given to the data of experience. Our discussion has

4 For what he calls 'a particularly powerful argument from truth to God' see Brian Hebblethwaite, *The Ocean of Truth: A Defence of Objective Theism* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988), ch. 7. Hebblethwaite argues that metaphysical realism (the conviction that what we are aware of is truly there) is inescapable both from the starting point of common sense and of science. But the metaphysical realist needs to find adequate explanations for two things: the givenness of the objective world, and the existence of minds that can comprehend it. The best way of supplying such explanations is to posit 'an infinite creative Mind that makes things what they are and preserves them as what they are for us to discover'.

5 'Whither is God? 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? Whither are we 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 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 grave-diggers who are burying God? Do we not smell anything yet of God's decomposition? Gods too decompose. God is dead. God remains dead.' F. Nietzsche, *Die frohliche Wissenschaft*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974), 125.

shown the flaw in all these approaches: they allow reason, particularly in the form of the demand for full logical demonstration, to be the sole arbiter of what can be true.

Relativism is untenable; we can live as rational human beings in the world only by accepting as a foundational presupposition that real objective truth exists, and that human personhood is such (whether by accident or design) that we can and do know it; we live in a relationship with the external world that involves communication between the external world and ourselves. That communication may not always be totally reliable; on a foggy day I may mistake a red post box for a distant bus; but we can be sure of its reliability for the most part since it all fits together into a coherent whole. Indeed, it could be argued that even the small number of cases, so loved of the sceptics, where we are mistaken, helps to establish the reliability of the large majority of the things we hold to be true. Far from being totally gullible, we are aware we may get things wrong, and learn to develop ways of checking and verifying, so as to be able to reject the spurious and identify all the more clearly what is really true.

This brings us back to the first aspect of Paul's proclamation of the truth of the gospel on Mars Hill: that of his appeal to revelation. When he claimed, 'What you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you', he was presumably drawing on the whole range of God's self-disclosure, from the law and the prophets and the story of Israel to the day on the road to Damascus when God revealed himself specifically to Saul of Tarsus. Those who reject revelation as a source of truth generally do so on the grounds that it is something quite other than our normal means of discovering truth. But, on the contrary, a contemporary apologist can well argue that all truth is received in a sense by revelation, whether it is a red shape looming up out of the mist and revealing itself to be a double decker bus, or getting to know a person through a developing friendship, or the communication of ideas and information by spoken or written word. Once we have rejected relativism, we are able to look on each of these experiences as an external objective reality communicating objective truth to us. Why should we view the concept of God revealing himself or his truth to us as something very different?

Of course, we will have to concede that, as with ordinary experience, we may be mistaken when confronted with something that claims to be a revelation. But that is not a problem for the concept of revelation. If we are able to say, 'At first I thought it was a post box, but when it got closer I realised it was a bus', Paul had every right to say, 'At first I thought Jesus was an impostor, but on

the Damascus road I realised he was the Christ'; or, indeed, if his interpretation of the Damascus road experience failed to stand up to the test of time: 'I thought that was a revelation of the Christ, but now I realise it was a hallucination.' Claims to be revelation, like all the data of experience, need to be checked; but this by no means invalidates the use of such claims in our proclamation of the gospel.

Revelation is communication; all communication involves revelation. Whether we are saying 'Fire!' or 'LBC is in London' or 'Jesus rose from the dead' we are necessarily presupposing that there is a real objective world about which we have something 'revelatory' to say. We experience it, relate to it, and understand it in a certain way; as we do so it makes sense, it works, and it provides sufficient grounds for us to be convinced that our statement is objectively true. Because we believe in an integrated consistent universe we are also convinced that it will work in the same way for others as they experience, relate and understand as we do. Our statement calls on them to accept this; it is an invitation to them to react to the statement in the way we are reacting: running from the house, catching the Underground from Baker Street, or bowing in worship. The statement does not compel the appropriate reaction, but, provided we are being honest, we would only make the statement if we were convinced that there were sufficient grounds to justify the reaction.

We have moved away, then, from the demand for rational justification of the statement, or for empirical proof of its truth, to a much more personal concept centred on relationships and experience. Necessarily, concepts like 'persons', 'relationships' and 'experience' are a lot less clear cut than our usual understanding of rational justifications and empirical proofs. An invitation to a person to react to a statement is necessarily open ended; they may choose not to react and so in effect reject the truth of what we are saying. But, again, that is part of what it means to be human. We have the right to ignore the cry of 'Fire!' and get burnt.

It is at this point we can pick up the second major apologetic tool Paul used on Mars Hill: the truth of the resurrection. For him this was both a historical event, and much more than a historical event. His own encounter with the risen Christ clearly did something for him that arguments about the empty tomb failed to do. Here is experience and relationship with a vengeance! I find it hard to picture Paul preaching the resurrection simply in detached historical terms. His proclamation was not just facts about the resurrection; it was the heralding of the risen Christ; to some, maybe, a fragrance of life, and to others a stink of death; but, supremely, the existential

experience of a person. Here again we are way beyond the narrow confines of rational demonstration or empirical proof, though both of those elements have their place.

Our explorations into the relative roles of reasoning, experiencing and relating in our approach to truth help us set the third apologetic tool Paul appears to have used on Mars Hill in its context. Paul, it would seem, had no problems using rational argument to further his case, whether it was deductions from and application of the Scriptures with the Jews, or logic and quotations from Greek poetry at Athens. But, from the scanty evidence we have, we could justifiably claim his approach was a far cry from that of the rationalist evidentialism that has dominated much of modern apologetics and is nowadays so out of favour. What he most certainly did not do was make reason either source or arbiter of all that can be true. Rather, rational arguments find their role in supporting what Paul was convinced of from experience and personal encounter with Christ. Truth, as we have seen, is bigger than logic; but, in an integrated universe, logic has a vital role to play in receiving and testing claims to truth. The opportunities for the contemporary apologist to start from scratch and provide convincing rational arguments for the existence of God and the truth of the Christian revelation are few and far between; much more impact is to be made by those who use reason the opposite way round, and seek to demonstrate that the presuppositions of the existence of God and the truth of the Christian worldview provide a basis for understanding and explaining our experience of and interaction with the world around us that is more comprehensive and satisfying than any other worldview.