

Pastor Ryan Day

## An Introduction to Presuppositional Apologetics: Confronting the Natural Man with Biblical Authority

### **Preliminary Remarks**

1. Presuppositional apologetics can be hard to understand for several reasons:
  - a. The terminology associated with it is difficult.
  - b. The topic takes some level of working knowledge of other concepts.
  - c. The authors can be difficult to read (e.g. Cornelis Van Till).
  - d. There are multiple approaches to presuppositional apologetics.
  - e. You have to understand the other methods of apologetics to understand presuppositional apologetics.
2. The best way to begin to understand presuppositional apologetics is to understand what it's not.

### **The Counterproductive Approaches to Apologetics**

1. The Ineffectual Approaches (They Rely on Evidence)
  - a. The Classical Approach
  - b. The Evidential Approach
  - c. The Cumulative Approach
2. Why are these approaches ineffectual? (Evidence Cannot Help an Unbeliever)
  - a. Focusing on evidence requires the apologist to ignore the authority of Scripture (1 Pet. 3:15).
  - b. Focusing on evidence ignores the noetic effects of sin (Gen. 6:5; John 3:19; Rom. 1:18, 8:7-8; 1 Cor. 2:14 Eph. 4:17-18; Ti. 1:15).
  - c. Focusing on evidence confuses the nature of saving faith (Rom. 4:3; Gen. 15:5-6).

### **The Correct Approach to Apologetics**

1. Presuppositional Approach
  - a. "Presuppositionalists assert that any system of belief is built on certain foundational presuppositions (unprovable assertions that must be believed to make experience meaningful). As a result, the best means of Christian apologetics is not to prove certain specific assertions such as the existence of God, the historicity of the resurrection or the authority of the Bible. Instead, the presuppositionalist Christian apologist explores the foundational presuppositions of competing belief systems with the goal of showing that human experience makes sense (or has meaning) most clearly when viewed in the light of the foundational teachings of the Christian faith."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 94–95.

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2. Cornelius Van Til argued that presuppositionalism requires the exclusive use of the Transcendental Argument for God.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Core of Presuppositional Apologetics**

1. A God-Dependent Epistemology (Prov. 1:7, 2:6; Luke 11:52)
2. A Biblical Ontology (Acts 17:28; Rom. 3:9-20; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:17)

### **The Confidence of Presuppositional Apologetics**

1. Every Christian is called to be an apologist. You don't have to know all the terms, arguments, and methods to be used by the Lord to convert an atheist.
2. Don't *invite* (emphasis added) people to come to Christ, call them to come to Christ, call them to faith and repentance, beg them to be reconciled to God, all while relying on the Holy Spirit to do His work through His word! Proclaim the Gospel for *it* (emphasis added) is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Rom. 1:16)!
3. "The work of the Christian apologist is not to remove the intellectual objections to Christianity by rational argument from a plateau of supposedly common ground. His duty is to confront every part of the thinking of the natural man with *biblical* authority, allowing the Holy Spirit to accomplish His results in the heart and mind. A truly biblical apologetic method must remove all props of self-help and every vestige of intellectual autonomy of the natural man so that his only recourse is the sovereign grace of a loving God who has revealed Himself inerrantly in the self-accrediting Bible and the self-identifying Christ of the Protestant canon."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Frame, John M., *Apologetics: A Justification of Christian Belief* (p. 67). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

<sup>3</sup> Rolland McCune, *Promise Unfulfilled: The Failed Strategy of Modern Evangelicalism* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador International, 2004), 228.