

FRAME 1

An Answer To Frame's Critique Of Van Til (Profound Differences Between the Traditional and Presuppositional Methods) *Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen* (Tape One)

...actually the lecture I'm giving now—the discussion I will lead you in now, is a preparation for the afternoon session where I'll be directly answering some of the questions and criticisms that have been raised in Mr. Frame's book on apologetics about transcendental method of arguing and Dr. Van Til's presuppositional approach to apologetics.

I'm afraid as I teach apologetics at the Study Center and lecture on this rather...that the terminology that is used in evangelical circles has proven to be very misleading about schools of apologetics. I call this “evangelical meta-apologetics.” It is my conviction—and more on this later—well, it's my conviction that evangelicals, and especially reformed evangelicals, spend a great deal of time in meta-apologetics, and not nearly enough time doing apologetics. But in the great amount of time that we give to the meta-apologetics with the discussion of comparison schools of apologetics, proper approach, and so forth, what has happened is that we have ended up with a misleading way of looking at the big issue between two schools in the 20th Century. If there is good news, sociologically speaking, it is that I think these two schools are talking to each other much more; much more politely, much more sympathetically and with understanding at the end of the 20th Century than they did throughout much of the first half—especially the 20th Century. If you do, uh...any of your own research in the history of evangelical apologetics, you probably will be taken back if you look at [_____24_____] books and the way men wrote about each other—you know, in the 1930's and 40's and 50's—I mean, it just...you would think that it is religious warfare. And I think that some of that has gone away, maybe because certain personalities have gone away, but, I think as we get closer to the end of the 20th Century there's a much better spirit about discussing these things.

And to help us discuss the differences between ourselves and apologetics, it would be good if we got some clarity about what the differences are. And that clarity is being obscured greatly when we think that the two major schools of thought are evidentialism on the one hand, and presuppositionalism on the other. At the Study Center, in our Masters program, we have two required courses in apologetics: an Introduction, and then one that's called Presuppositional Apologetics. And many people start out studying with us with the idea that presuppositional apologetics is...that's the approach that's against evidence. Right? We don't want to use evidence in apologetics, that wouldn't be good. But we want to get away from these people who defend the faith by appealing to evidence, but they do so without any presuppositions. And so you have the presuppositionalist on the one hand—those who emphasize the presuppositions of argument and don't believe you should appeal to evidence, and then you have those people who appeal to evidence and do so as though they had no presuppositions. Well, I'm sure that all of you by now realize that that is a terrible over-simplification and a misleading way of putting that.

These two schools of thought are not separated by what most popular titles might suggest. And so as I speak to you today, now and after lunch, I'll be referring to the method many people call evidentialism as simply the traditional approach. I'm not going to bother to get into [_____49_____] over the history of apologetics and contraditionism, but the fact is, when I grew up as a believer in Jesus Christ, and started an interest in defense of the faith, what I ran into over and over and over again, until someone finally told me I should read Cornelius Van Til, I think always called that the traditional approach. It was traditional for me until my whole...of sanctification and Van Til taught me something about the Lordship of Christ and reasoning. So the traditional approach and the presuppositional approach are indeed distinct from each other; and I believe that the differences between these two schools are penetrating differences. They are not minimal, they are not shallow in significance. Those of you who have read your instructor's book be aware that on page 85, Mr. Frame tells us...he says:

On this account of transcendental direction, negative argumentation, certainty, and point of contact, there is less distance between Van Til's apologetics and the traditional apologetics than most partisans on either side (including Van Til himself) have been willing to grant. I am not at all saddened by this implication. This way of thinking opens to the presuppositional apologist many, and perhaps all, of those arguments generally associated with the traditional apologetics in the past.

Now, I may get through my discussion and Mr. Frame could very well say, yeah there are differences, but they're not as big as you think they are. Okay. And so this may come down to just one of these,...well, is it short or is it long, you know. It all depends on your perspective. And I'll be interested to see what Mr. Frame says about that myself. So I don't want you to think that I'm starting out thinking that I'm proving that Mr. Frame is wrong in that assessment; but I do think that, uh, at least if I live by the way that I teach and what I try to warn people about, I do think that I'm less inclined to say we have the door open to the traditional arguments than Mr. Frame would. And I'd like to highlight for you seven characteristics of the traditional method which sets it off from presuppositional apologetics.

And so, I'm going to give you seven points, and if you're going to be taking notes I'll repeat them slowly after I introduce them. And after each one of the points I'd like to illustrate from traditional apologetics that this is a point that is not just one of these, you know, bad attitude kind of things; whereas presuppositionalism [assumes 83] the worst of our opponents, I'd like to focus people to say, this really is what they are doing or are wanting to do, and I think it's objectionable. So, first of all I'll go through the seven points quickly so you can see what we're going to covering, and then go back and look at each one of them. These are seven ways that I think are philosophically profound and critical ways in which traditional apologetics differs from what Dr. Van Til has taught us.

First of all, the traditional approach to apologetics assumes that sinners can be, and ought to be, intellectually autonomous and religiously neutral in approaching, examining and reasoning about the truth claims of Christianity. Secondly, the traditional method assumes that presuppositions—what we call “presuppositions”—are merely hypotheses to be tested by factual observation rather than a person's most fundamental assumptions functioning as preconditions of intelligibility in terms of which hypotheses are tested. Thirdly, the traditional approach assumes that there are group-observational common facts outside of any interpretive theory by which hypotheses can be tested. Fourth, the traditional approach proceeds as though the unbeliever, in terms of his own professed philosophical perspective, has intelligible concepts or standards by which he may judge, test or verify the Christian hypothesis. Fifth, the traditional approach appeals to such concepts or standards that I've just mentioned. Presumed to be commonly understood or interpreted, and is thus noncontroversial as yet, as a basis for a line of argument which leads the unbeliever, if he would simply reason cogently, out of his unbelieving perspective, into the antithetical conclusions of Christianity. Sixth, the traditional approach portrays and defends aspects or parts of the Christian worldview in a way which is not distinctively Christian in conception, as though they are truths which may be properly understood in isolation from the overall worldview, and is thus theoretically compatible with some other presumably similar worldviews. And then finally, seventh, that the traditional approach proposes only to show that the truth of Christianity is highly probable, rather than infallible or certain.

That's where we're going to be going. Let me go back to the first one and we'll discuss this.

The first observation that I would make is that: the traditional approach to apologetics assumes that sinners can be, and ought to be (these are two points—can be and ought to be) intellectually autonomous and religiously neutral in approaching, or in examining, or in reasoning about the truth claims of Christianity.

Now that may not, you know, for rhetorical purposes be the best place to begin if I'm going to say, I'm not so sure that Mr. Frame is seeing how big a difference there is. Because you see it's on this point the Mr. Frame hammers as well as anybody I've ever read against the traditional approach. This book [*Apologetics To The Glory Of God*] is wonderful on that regard in my estimation. We could look a number of things in the book but, uh, on page 86, Mr. Frame tells us:

Certainly,...I have not removed all the differences between Van Til and his critics. [And then he adds...] The issue of neutrality...is still a high barrier between the two schools of thought, and on that matter Van Til is definitely right.

And, uh, later on I'll be saying some more about what Mr. Frame tells us about neutrality, and autonomy, and so forth. He and I would be, you know, like two peas in a pod in terms of criticizing the traditional method on this matter. The traditional method assumes that men can be neutral and they ought to be autonomous in drawing their conclusions. Let me give you a few quotations from E.J. Carnell, who I think is a good example of the traditional method. I'll be later referring to Francis Schaeffer as well. They're not the only ones I'll refer to. But I want to tell you what my strategy is

in choosing Carnell and Schaeffer. The interesting thing is in the 20th Century apologetics, when you look at people doing surveys and comparisons of schools, they will often put Schaeffer and Carnell in the presuppositional category. And at times, both Schaeffer and Carnell spoke of themselves as reasoning presuppositionally. And so, if I can use them to illustrate what I call the traditional method, hopefully you can see how strong the point really is. I haven't gone to the really easy examples, you know, like shooting fish in a barrel. You can pick out John Warwick Montgomery and get some outrageous sorts of remarks. So somebody will think, well of course you're going to go, you know, to Bishop Butler or to Thomas Aquinas, but I think that we can look at people who are being called presuppositionalists and make our points as well. And on this point, Mr. Frame and I are in total agreement. Dr. Van Til obviously taught us both in this—that the appeal to autonomy and the presumption of neutrality that we find in the traditional approach, are utterly unacceptable; and they do, uh...that does set off that approach from presuppositionalism. Let me quote Carnell in the *Philosophy Of The Christian Religion*, that's a book he published in 1952. He says:

There are moments when man is free to evaluate one ultimate over against another with a genuine, though never absolute, freedom from prejudice. There are moments when people can be virtually free from prejudice.

And then, his *Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, in 1948, he tells us:

A normal person does not submit his life to any authority until, guided by reason, he is fully assured in his mind that the authority in question is trustworthy.

In his *Christian Commitment*, an apologetic published in 1957, Carnell says:

But thinking individuals will not outrage their dignity by defying the verdict of a critically disciplined understanding. Whatever else faith may be, it is at least a wrestling of the mind in the sufficiency of evidences. The extent of this sufficiency is measured by a cool and dispassionate use of reason.

One thing you can give Carnell, he certainly was adept at expressing this dramatically and very clearly. And he outright says there's no way you're going to accept even God speaking on the basis of it being God speaking. No authority is accepted just because that's authority. It's the cool, dispassionate use of reason. And when you have those better moments when you compare the ultimates—we would say, presuppositions—that challenges you, you can put aside you're prejudices and be the rational man.

I suppose the best quotation from Carnell though, expressing this point of view, is in his Introduction on page 178 where it says:

Bring on your revelations. Let them make peace with the law of contradiction and the facts of history, and they will deserve a rational man's assent.

So here you have the traditional approach. The portrayal to the unbeliever that he has the right to be, and he has the ability to be neutral with respect to ultimate commitments and presuppositions; and that his religiously neutral, dispassionate use of reason will be the judge by which he should accept any purported revelation. And so, my first point is that the traditional method, here illustrated with Carnell, assumes that sinners can be and ought to be intellectually autonomous and religiously neutral when approaching, examining, and reasoning about the truth claims of Christianity. This hasn't been all that controversial. But let's move on, because we're going to start making some points that might indicate a difference that needs to be talked out between us all.

Secondly: the traditional method assumes that presuppositions are merely hypotheses to be tested by factual observation or logic rather than a person's most fundamental assumptions functioning as preconditions of intelligibility in terms of which hypotheses are tested.

Just by way of summary and to keep track of where we're going as I develop this: The first point has been about autonomy and neutrality. The second point, which I see very few people discussing when they do analysis or book reviews, and so forth, is that those who follow what's called the traditional approach, the classical approach, don't

understand presuppositions in the same way that presuppositionalists do. There's a whole question of what you mean by a presupposition that's been obscured. And for that reason, I think we talk past each other many times. And the assumption of the traditional approach is that if we're going to deal with presuppositions, traditionalists do that, what we are dealing with are hypotheses that are tested by factual observation or logic. We're not dealing with what of course the presuppositionalist school is talking about—we're not dealing with a person's most fundamental assumptions, in terms of which hypotheses are tested. In particular, we're not dealing with a person's most fundamental assumptions as they function as preconditions of intelligibility. That's the transcendental direction, of course, of Van Til's apologetic. But even forgetting that—which is kind of an aside, or an extra layer, if you want, of discussion—the fact is that many times traditionalists, when they talk about presuppositions, are talking about things that are tested rather than those commitments that give us the standards for testing. To quote Carnell again in *Christian Commitment*, he says,

If one will proceed to reality with a humble attitude, he will discover that the presuppositions of Christianity are friendly to the highest tests of reason.

And in his Introduction to *Christian Apologetics*, he says,

The Christian believes the [postulate 244] of a rational God to be a workable hypothesis in the light of the evidence.

And then, a very clear example from Francis Schaeffer in his book, *He Is There: He Is Not Silent*—now I'll read this slowly, I want you to pick up on this. I still remember the first day I read that book back in 1972, and I read this sentence and I could not believe that Schaeffer had made this big a mistake—but it is here. And I will say also that I have a high regard of Francis Schaeffer and what's he's accomplished in his ministry, so don't take any of this personally. But is a hugh mistake. Schaeffer says:

What I urge people to do is to consider the two great presuppositions: the uniformity of natural causes in a closed system, and the uniformity of natural causes in an open system. And to consider which of these fits the facts of what is.

And as I have said, it's a question of which of these two sets of presuppositions really and empirically meets the facts as we look about us in the world.

And so the point here is that on the traditional approach, if you're going to talk about presuppositions, what you're talking about is hypotheses, or fundamental hypotheses, or wide-ranging hypotheses—but hypotheses subject to testing. But Van Til talked about presuppositions—he's not the only one, but—he talked about presuppositions as those basic commitments in terms of which the standards of testing are determined. So you don't test your presuppositions in the same way: you'd have, say, a hypothesis that smoking causes cancer. On the traditional approach, you see, on this view of presuppositions, Christianity has no special [epistemic 274] status—Christianity is tested like everything else. So that, if the unbeliever has the proper standards in his epistemology, or the proper method for knowing anything at all, he just uses the same standards and the same method that he uses everywhere else. And, uh, we can make a list of the things that the unbeliever believes. What the apologist does is he says, use those standards or those methods and then add to your set of beliefs another one; namely, that Christianity is true. So Christianity, or the presupposition of Christianity, turns out not to have any special [epistemic 287] status. It too is tested, and tested like everything else. Carnell says, why should faith be exempted from the general rule that all belief is subjected to the law of contradiction in the light of the facts of history? What higher forum in the building of knowledge is there than coherence? By the way, for Carnell coherence means more than logical coherence, but what he's saying is, you do to the faith what you do to every other hypothesis—test it according to the general rule.

Elsewhere in *The Philosophy Of The Christian Religion*, he says:

If this credible individual be ones self, the man across the street, or God, one should follow exactly the same rule.

And so let me repeat then, that when the traditional approach refers to presuppositions, it's really referring to something that is closer to what we call an hypothesis, subject to testing. And testing in the same way that every other hypothesis is tested.

Thirdly: the traditional approach assumes that there are group-observational common facts outside of any interpretive theory by which hypotheses can be tested.

The third issue here is going to be our understanding of facts. And, uh, as the idealists like to put it, and Van Til often referred to it this way, the traditional approach sees the facts as "brute." They are not standing within a theory in order to be intelligible, but they are those brute posits that every theory must come to grips with. E.J. Carnell again:

Facts just are. [He says, "Facts just are."] A fact is any unit of being which is capable of bearing meaning. [Anything that exists that can bear meaning.] Each of these fact situations must be explained. Meaning is what the mind entertains when it passes judgment upon the facts.

Okay. So you have these kind of like brute empty [force] out here—those are the existing things of the world—and then the mind interprets them and now they have meaning. On this approach scientific observations are not affected by ultimate presuppositions or commitments. When one engages in science, one is not affected by ultimate presuppositions.

On page 214 of his Introduction, Carnell says:

Science seeks for the natural meaning of a thing. [The *natural* meaning of a thing.] Scientific conclusions, as such, do not depend for their meaning upon ones logical starting point. As long as the scientist confines his judgments to an impersonal description of what objectively exists in the world of flux, the problem of common ground has no relevance.

And indeed, facts are more ultimate than worldviews and can be used to test them. Facts are more ultimate than worldviews and can be used to test them. Here I'll quote Montgomery—he puts it so well. He says very simply:

One must move to the fitting of the facts as the ultimate test of a worldview.

So worldviews may be tested. And how are they tested? By their fitting the facts, if they do or they don't. Therefore human experience of the facts verifies the Christian hypothesis on this approach. Carnell...:

...acceptable hypothesis is its ability to explain the facts as we experience them. Is it not good science to postulate the existence of God to account for the knowing data in human experience.

That sentence is real important because what he's saying very explicitly is that there is data, there are facts which we know from human experience, and that ...know, and it's on that basis that we postulate the existence of God. Okay. So what is epistemically sure here is my experience of the facts; and what's not so sure is this postulate about God explaining the facts.

Schaeffer says in *The God Who Is There*:

The question is, does the Christian answer conform to and explain what we observe concerning man as he is, including my knowledge of myself as man?

And then later in the same book, Schaeffer says:

We are not asked to believe until we have faced the question as to whether this is true on the basis of space-time evidence.

I suppose one thing that discourages me, having done work in epistemology for my Ph.D., is that this is so

crucial to Christian apologetics, and Christians come right up to the edge of discussing these matters, but they often don't seem to know what is going on in terms of the epistemological issues. And there's an anatomy of epistemology from different schools of epistemology, and one gets the impression that Schaeffer, and Carnell, and others just kind of wandered into this particular approach. It's not the only one available, and it's certainly not in the 20th Century the most credible approach to epistemology.

But if you take these two points together—I'm going to try to schematize for you what's going on so no one gets lost here. Let's assume that a worldview, of these various geometric sorts—so they are different from each other, you can tell that—you have a square, and a circle, and a triangle. And the idea is that these are hypotheses and that there's something that's outside of these worldviews—just these posits we'll call facts—and the way in which we decide what is true is that we try to fit that hypothesis onto the facts. And I've purposely drawn it this way so I wouldn't, you know, prejudice and give it away. The question is now, given the ambiguity of the configuration of the facts, which of these worldviews best accounts for them. And then, I mean we can get into the details of the apologetical argument—oftentimes it's embarrassingly bad. I remember, you know, being at USC and studying and having evangelical, you know, brothers and sister, people that I love—watching them argue with other people in the Philosophy Department, with professors, and giving arguments that are just horrible arguments, really. I mean I'm a Christian and I'm embarrassed by how bad these arguments are. We could get into that, but that is not my point—that these are bad arguments. I want you to see what the nature of the argument is. The argument assumes that you can have facts that are not understood according to a theory. That they stand outside of worldviews—to use the popular parlance—and that worldviews or presuppositions are just like tech...to be tested. They're hypotheses that you take up against these brute facts to see which is best.

Fourthly: the traditional approach proceeds as though the unbeliever, in terms of his own professed philosophical perspective, has intelligible concepts or standards by which he may judge, test or verify the Christian hypothesis.

Let me read that again, it's a long one: it proceeds as though the unbeliever, in terms of his own professed philosophical perspective...we need to emphasize here “his professed philosophical perspective.” So when the unbeliever tells you what he thinks he believes about reality, about knowledge, about ethics, whatever...in terms of that professed perspective, he has intelligible concepts or standards that he can use to judge the Christian hypothesis. And I'm just going to write down “Concepts” and “Standards” here as the issue. The issue is, are the concepts and standards that we talk to the unbeliever about, or which he proposes, intelligible—given what he professes? And the traditional method just takes it for granted that the believer and the unbeliever can talk about causation, can talk about logic, can talk about moral absolutes, and that the unbeliever...

[Side Two]

...in his lecture, “Historic Christianity and 20th Century Man” in 1965.

There must be a pre-evangelism before evangelism is meaningful to 20th Century people. This preconsideration falls into two areas. The first, is in the area of epistemology...

I'll break the quote at that point, because that's what I want you to see. Pre-evangelism involves epistemology—issues pertaining to our hearing with knowledge precede evangelism. Okay. We first have concepts and standards that are intelligible; and if you're familiar with Schaeffer's work all of you know how much it's important to him that we get back to the Greek notion of antithesis and the law of noncontradiction, and those sorts of things. We don't want to do what the Hegelians and post-Hegelians did when they engaged in synthesis reasoning. I'm convinced Schaeffer did not understand Engel, does a very poor job portraying him, but let's at least understand where Schaeffer's coming from: Schaeffer says we can...before we test Christianity, we've got to get rid of this post-Hegelian synthesis thinking, and get everybody back to the Greeks; and then once you're back to the Greeks, then you can present that gospel to them and make sense out of it. But I wonder whether the unbeliever can make sense out the Greek concepts of logic. In *The God Who Is There* he says:

Before a man is ready to become Christian, he must have a proper understanding of truth.

And then, again, in his lecture on “Historic Christianity And 20th Century man”:

The Bible as a system must stand openly and by itself in the arena, in the forum of the thought of men. Never, never, never will I say you must believe it because the Bible teaches it. We cannot expect 20th Century men to take the authority of the Scripture as a reason for believing the Christian system.

And I have to admit, because of my affection and admiration for Dr. Schaeffer, that even I had to go back and look at that quote again and say, did he really say that?! We can talk about how these mistake were made sometime. And I think it’s only fair to tell you that this is not Schaeffer at his best—and not characteristically Schaeffer, either. But he did say, and does show, I think, these elements, these problems, that I’m putting on the board here. He said, “Never, never, never will I say you must believe it because the Bible teaches it. We cannot expect 20th Century men to take the authority of the Scripture as a reason for believing the Christian system.”

So the Christian worldview isn’t to be believed because of the authority of the Scripture. “Never will I say that...” Well he did say it, praise God. But here he tells us we shouldn’t. And the in The God Who Was There he says:

The truth that we let in first [the truth that we let in first] is not dogmatic statement of the truth of the Scriptures, but the truth of the external world and the truth of what man himself is. This, I am convinced, is the true order for our apologetics in the second half of the 20th Century.

Okay? So there is something that is more intelligible—somebody might even say more authoritative—but certainly, in isolation from the Christian worldview...in isolation from Christian commitment. It is intelligible to appeal to...how did he put it here?...the truth of the external world and the truth of what man himself is. Those things can be made intelligible outside of Christian commitment. E.J. Carnell:

All three tenses to revelation must be put through a scrutinizing test. The Bible should be tested in the light of relevant criteria....

And then elsewhere....

Like any hypothesis special revelation is verified when it results in a implicative system which is horizontally self-consistent and which vertically fits the facts.

Logic and historical evidence....

The only proof anyone can offer both for a system of philosophy and for the actions which flow from it, is systematic coherence....

That is a worldview that accords to the law of contradiction and the concrete facts of history. And then he goes on...:

It is in this framework that the Christian offers truth for his system.

Let me say it again:

The only proof anyone can offer both for a system of philosophy and for the actions which flow from it, is systematic coherence. It is in this framework that the Christian offers truth for his system.

So again, the systematic coherence, however that’s to be defined and so forth, is some kind of standard—there’s some kind of concept here which is intelligible apart from Christianity and in terms of which the system of Christianity is proven. He says:

Faith must be founded in objectively verifiable, metaphysical theories.

In *Christian Commitment* Carnell says,

If the meaning of God's character cannot be anticipated by information drawn from our own conception of decency, what significance is conveyed by the term "God?"

So we have a...Carnell was very, I think, "wooly" and ambiguous when he got into doing "apologetics of the heart" as it's sometimes called. What he did in his *Christian Commitment* apologetic, he wanted to appeal to a notion of decency—of moral decency. And he said that that notion of decency precedes any commitment to Christianity, and only in terms of that intelligible concept or standard can Christianity be seen to be true. In *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion* he said:

The reason why we are able to trust Christ is that He spoke and lived in a way which is congenial with our axiological expectations. Jesus Christ is worthy of our faith because both His person and His doctrine are rationally continuous with the values which we have already accepted in ordinary experience.

I really do want to promote, you know, a charitable attitude among ourselves as we discuss rules of apologetics. And I, uh, when I wrote a long essay on Carnell, I had three long pages of quotations of excellent material from him. So, please don't mistake.... But you do have to wonder when you hear a quote like this, how can a scholar get so lost in his study, apparently, that he gets this far off the mark? We accept Jesus only because He's rationally continuous with what we already expect from ordinary experience?! Well, there's no offense to the gospel at all then, is there? Jesus is just the most reasonable step anybody would ever take. Jesus never offends our sensibilities. Carnell said those sorts of things. I'm sure he didn't really believe that; I mean he didn't work that out consistently. But that is what is portrayed in the traditional method as what we should be doing. We should use concepts or standards which are intelligible, given the unbeliever's professed philosophy; rationally continuous with his ordinary experience; appeal to facts which are in and of themselves brute, not part of a theory or interpreted by presuppositions; and use these things, then, to test the hypothesis of Christianity, and in an autonomous way being neutral in our attitude.

And so the fifth point here kind of draws this together. (The traditional approach then appeals to such concepts or standards mentioned in Number Four): Presumed to be commonly understood or interpreted, and thus uncontroversial as yet, appeals to such concepts or standards as a basis for a line of argument which leads the unbeliever if he would simply reason cogently, out of his unbelieving perspective, into the antithetical conclusions of Christianity.

Okay, remember that the standards we're appealing to—real easy one would be the laws of logic. Because most Christians, in fact most presuppositionalist, I think, haven't thought this one through very well: Everybody agrees on the laws of logic. There's no interpretative differences there. We don't have to worry about that. So we can appeal to the standard of logic, let's say, and we presume that it's commonly understood and interpreted. And for that reason what we're appealing to is not yet controversial. No one should, you know, get agitated at the beginning of our apologetics. We're dealing with things that are—he had this really strange language of "common ground" in reformed discussions—but that's just common ground. Okay. We can go out there and everybody understands the same thing—no controversy yet—and then use that as the basis for a line of argument which leads the unbeliever, if only he'd do his homework correctly—you see, the unbeliever's problem is just that he hasn't reasoned clearly enough—use those concepts or those standards to lead the unbeliever out of his unbelieving perceptible, into the antithetical conclusions of Christianity just by reasoning properly. That is the traditional method of apologetics. Or at least that's what is hoped to be accomplished and that's the conception of what's being done by the traditional apologist.

Schaeffer says in *The God Who Is There*:

Christian apologetics do not start somewhere beyond the stars, they begin with man and what he knows about himself. He knows something of the external world, and he knows something of himself.

Now notice in this the stark similarity to Thomistic scholasticism. Reason, operating in the realm of nature, is a vestibule to faith. And though most of these writers will usually say something about there being a limited

[_____620_____] there, when you go from the realm of natural reason to supernatural faith or the realm of grace; the fact is, it's a small step if we speak comparatively. Because if you use your reason properly and understand the realm of nature, you know there is a god, you know that he's intelligent, you know a number of things—it all depends on who you're reading how much you can find out from natural reason. But, uh,....

JF: Is this Point 5? I'm sorry....

GB:Yeah, what I'm giving you is Point 5.

JF: Okay, because it wasn't on the board, so....

GB: Thank you.

I didn't use this expression in the way that I put it, but for the sake of abbreviating it, we then can trust our common notions. Okay. The traditional approach appeals to common notions. Ask the unbeliever to reason cogently on the basis of them into the antithetical conclusions of Christianity. (I'm trying to abbreviate a lot of this—a shorter way of putting it. Let me read the whole thing to you.):

The traditional method appeals to such concepts or standards presumed to be commonly understood or interpreted, and thus uncontroversial as yet, as a basis for a line of argument which leads the unbeliever, if he would simply reason cogently, out of his unbelieving perspective into the antithetical conclusions of Christianity.

And I was noting here the similarity to Thomistic scholasticism—the idea that reason, operating in the realm of nature, is one of the vestibules of faith. B.B. Warfield gives an excellent illustration of this in his Introduction to Francis Beatty's *Apologetics*. Warfield wrote:

Surely the unbeliever must first have the Scriptures authenticated to him as such, before he can take his standpoint in them. Faith has its grounds in right reason.

Okay. You can't ask the unbeliever to stand within the perspective of the Scriptures until he's first convinced by right reason that this is God speaking in this book called the Scriptures. E.J. Carnell says:

First we know rationally in order that we might believe; then we believe in order that we might know experientially.

Carnell split it that way—when we know when you have to choose between the Augustinian and the Thomistic approaches to the faith-reason issue, the Augustine...the Augustinian approach is often captured in Augustine's statement, "I believe in order to understand." So the question is, well, do we believe first that we might understand, or do we understand first that we might believe. Carnell says, well it's both! First you understand or know rationally, so that you might believe what the Bible says. And then believing what the Bible says, you'll come to know it experientially. That kind of splits the difference [even in this realm - 671], only at the cost of equivocation, logically. But his approach is that rationally we know in order that we might believe.

And then Schaeffer—at one of his...not one of his better moments says, and I quote:

Knowledge precedes faith. Only the faith which believes God on the basis of knowledge is true faith.

Okay, so if you're going to say you have faith in Christ, you believe the Bible, the only genuine article is the one that first knows these things to be true. And thus the unbeliever's perspective—I'm still under Number 5—the unbeliever's perspective is seen as all right as far as it goes, but needs to be taken further. Okay. There is this rational vestibule for faith that we can appeal to: the common notions of reason or human experience. And then, if we reason cogently, as Warfield said, using right reason, we can move the unbeliever into the realm of faith. He begins by knowing things and moves to the realm of faith. But that assumes that the unbeliever's perspective, epistemologically anyway, or

philosophically, is all right as far as it goes—he's just not correct about religion. And so I quote Carnell. By the way, Carnell said these words originally—he later used them in his *Christian Commitment Apologetic*, but he originally wrote these words in the "Christian Century", reviewing Van Til's *The Defense of the Faith*, and he said:

Like a ship that which has ten good days at sea but sinks on the eleventh, so paganism develops profound truths in various spheres only to fail when answering how a man may be just with God.

So the pagan ship is good for ten days in all these other areas of life but on the eleventh day, when we come to religion, how are you right with God—it sinks.

If Christianity cannot complete what is valid in the wisdom of the ages, then the unbeliever will be offended, not challenged, by the gospel. He will spew out any system that negates elements which by nature and common sense are foundations of the true, the good, and the beautiful.

That's a great quote! What he's saying is, the unbeliever's got the foundations for the true, the good, and the beautiful. And if you come along and say he doesn't have them, he'll be offended. What's funny about this is you would have thought Carnell himself would have said, well, isn't that what the Bible says happens when we witness of Jesus Christ? The unbeliever's offended. And I...I think honestly that this is one of the geniuses of what Van Til has taught us—he said, if we use the proper epistemological approach, people will be offended by that. You see, you're saying that I don't really know things about the world, or about logic, or about morality—apart from your worldview—and we'll say, yeah...we'll say it. And Carnell says, that's what you must not do. One more time:

Like a ship which has ten good days at sea but sinks on the eleventh, so paganism develops profound truths in various spheres, only to fail on answering how a man may be just with God. If Christianity cannot complete what is valid in the wisdom of the ages, then the unbeliever will be offended, not challenged by the gospel. He will spew out any system that negates elements which by nature and common sense....

...see what I'm saying?...by nature and common sense.... Did he mean that just in passing in the way that...refers to the common school of thought, or did he mean that more profoundly? Is this a sense which is common to all men? Common sense...[falls through the cracks.]

He will spew out any system that negates elements which by nature and common sense are foundations of the true the good and the beautiful.

In *Christian Commitment* he wrote:

Some apologists try to safeguard the finality of Christianity by the repudiating the possibility of truth outside of Christianity....

I'm sure he meant the possibility of knowledge rather than truth, but...

...But their effort, as one might suspect, is a failure. Christ Himself defended degrees of truth in the natural man. NonChristians can develop relative truths about nature and life, but they cannot answer the profound question, how can a sinner be just before God?

And one more quote—and is this a good time for a break, Mr. Frame?...

Frame: That would be good, yeah.

Okay. One short quote from *The Philosophy Of The Christian Religion*, again Carnell:

While rejecting the humanistic ideal as incomplete, therefore Christ nevertheless built upon its insights rather than derogating it as untruth.

What's crucial there is this notion that the unbelieving worldview, the humanistic ideal, is incomplete. And we need to take what's there, which is what Jesus did, according to him, and build on it, rather than derogate it.

Okay. Why don't we go ahead and take your normal break...and when you come back....

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...The traditional method treats the unbeliever's perspective as all right as far as it goes, or needs to be taken further—that's what we just talked about. And implicit in this is the view that there is a wisdom or an intelligence—there is a science, if you want to call it that—that is common to the believer and the unbeliever. E.J. Carnell says:

In the case of orthodox theology, general wisdom is not a threat to the gospel. Aristotle said many wise things about logic; Confucius may wise things about morals. When a Christian attacks general wisdom in the name of the gospel, the natural man will attack the gospel in the name of general wisdom.

Okay. So, by the way, that was directed at Dr. Van Til, personally. Don't you dare tell the unbeliever he doesn't have general wisdom because then he'll take all the things he knows and he'll use it to attack the gospel! Uh, well, more on whether we should worry about that very much.

The Bible is verified, thus, by common concepts and standards used in our thinking or our reasoning elsewhere. Carnell say, back in 1948:

Truth is systematically construed meaning, and if the Bible fulfills this standard it is just as true as Lambert's "Law of Transition."

Francis Schaeffer says in *The God Who Is There*, in a chapter entitled, by the way, "How Do We Know It Is True?"—he says:

Scientific proof, philosophical proof, and religious proof follow the same rules. The theory must be noncontradictory and must give an answer to the phenomenon in question. We must be able to live consistently with our theory. The answer must be conformed to what we observe.

Okay. Remember, what he says is this is the same method of proof in science, philosophy and religion. I don't know a of a modern philosopher who would agree with that. And although there are some scientists who haven't study the philosophy of science, I don't want to say there are no scientists who can say that. There are very few scientists who think that they're using the same method, and philosophers are using the same method, and theologians are using the same method—much less with any of those that you have in the 20th Century, as far as I know, think that the method we follow is testings by noncontradiction, whether you can live with this, and if it conforms to what you observe. Now Schaeffer says that is what we are doing. And, in the same book, two pages later, he asks...or indicates what he thinks demonstrates the truth of historic Christianity and his answer is:

Christianity constitutes a nonself-contradictory answer that does explain the phenomena, and which can be lived with, both in light and scholarly pursuits.

Okay. So, Number 5—just to bring us back on board here—was that the traditional approach appeals to such concepts or standards which are presumed to be commonly understood or interpreted, and thus uncontroversial as yet, as a basis for a line of argument which leads the unbeliever, if he would simply reason cogently, out of his unbelieving perspective into the antithetical conclusions of Christianity.

Number 6: the traditional method portrays and defends aspects or parts of the Christian worldview in a way which is not distinctively Christian in conception. I'll say that slowly: not distinctively Christian in conception. The way in which these aspects of the worldview, uh, the way they're portrayed, is not distinctively Christian, as though they are truths which may be properly understood in isolation from the overall worldview, and as thus theoretically compatible with some other presumably similar worldviews.

I've labored hard to say this precisely because I think there's a lot of talking past each other on this issue in apologetical or meta-apologetical arguments. The problem it seems to me, according to Van Til, with the traditional method, is that...not so much that it doesn't prove everything at one time—you know, it's like the whole shootin' match has to be talked about at once and no one's capable of doing that. That isn't really the problem. The problem is that those elements in the Christian worldview, which are defended in the traditional approach, those elements are portrayed as though they're not distinctively Christian notions. Okay. So if we say, everything has a cause—or every event has a cause—the traditional method doesn't have any difficulty moving from that to saying, and God's the cause of the universe as a whole. As though the notion of "cause" (where God is not the creator of "cause") is really consistent with Aristotle's notion of causation as well. That that element of the Christian system—by the way, it's true the Christian system teaches God caused the world, God created the world, no doubt about that. And if that's all the cosmological argument were about there wouldn't have ever been an argument about it. I mean, who could complain? It would have simply been the preaching—God is the creator of the world. But to say, and we can prove this by appealing to something which is understood outside the Christian system, and congenial to Aristotle and to, well any number of other schools of philosophy, has disturbed some theorists—it certainly disturbed Van Til. And that differentiates what Van Til's trying to do from what let's say Warfield, or Geisler, or whoever else, or Sproul is trying to do.

Now I want to make very clear: you may believe that what Van Til says here is wrong. Maybe he is. I don't think he is. But if he is, the important point here is, what he's attempting to do and what he understands by he's doing is not at all what the traditional approach claims to be doing. The traditional approach portrays and defends aspects of the Christian worldview in a way which is not distinctively Christian in conception, but rather, somehow—you don't want to say neutral; we can start that word too often and it will lose its value—but the notion that we're defending, or the idea of God causing the world, whatever it may be, is not uniquely indexed to the Christian theory. And it works, it functions intelligibly in other theories as well. That's the offensive thing: as though they are truths which may be properly understood in isolation from the overall worldview—or properly understood as theoretically compatible with some other worldview. It's not compatible with all of the worldviews, but there are some worldviews that are compatible with this in addition to Christianity. And thus, presumably, what you have here—and again I'm going to give you a visual picture that doesn't offer philosophical precision—but I think what Van Til was quite upset about is the notion that you have a Christian worldview, and then you have other worldviews that overlap it really, and there may be other ones that overlap that, and so forth.... So that when we try to use something that is common to all of them to prove the Christian worldview, in order to buy time or to gain the acceptance of the unbeliever thus far in the argument, we have to portray this common element as somehow compatible with all these worldviews—including Christianity. And then what the apologist does (if he does his job well in the traditional method) is that having bought your acceptance of this, and the idea that it is compatible with various worldview—of course, not the ones out here, that's been ruled out—then you start eliminating these other possibilities and then what you're left with is Christianity.

But what that tells you, if you're a Van Tilian, is that what you were talking about here was not a distinctively Christian notion of causation or creation—or a distinctively notion of miracle—that may be an even better illustration. If you look at the way in which miracles are defended in the traditional approach to Christianity, uh, it's nearly hair-raising if you're a philosopher, to see how evangelical believers can por...can give a notion of miracles to the unbeliever, and have him buy into that, which is not at all the biblical concept of miracle.

Anyway, what happens then, is that Christianity comes to be defended piece by piece. You have broad theism...not this is...you can see this...and Mr. Frame refers to this in his book as well: Usually, broad theism defends it, then you have historic Christianity defending it, or you have theism in general. Now I try to make it a habit, Mr. Frame may think I'm wrong, but I try to make a habit of telling when I do apologetics, I am not defending theism in general, in fact I don't even think it makes sense to talk about theism in general. And then you move to a unitarian conception, and then a trinitarian conception; or you defend the idea of personality—something that's common to God and man that we see in our experience somehow in the universe—and in God: uh, love, intelligence, causality, miracles, I just mentioned. We defend the idea that man's a physical creature, and we defend him as a spiritual creature, we defend him as a free creature, we defend him as a dignified creature. We defend Christ as a good man, as a mir....

FRAME 2

An Answer To Frame's Critique Of Van Til

(Profound Differences Between the Traditional and Presuppositional Methods)

Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen

(Tape Two)

...presuppositional standpoint we want to argue that the only way you can make sense out of causation, or miracles, or personality, or love, on and on, is by quoting it within the Christian world. Outside that worldview it doesn't function credibly or intelligently. Francis Schaeffer says in *The God Who Is There*:

Firstly, he needs to bow in the realm of being metaphysically. Secondly, he needs to bow in the realm of morals. Now he is faced with God's propositional promise, "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved."

So you see this is this tiered approach and what Van Til called the blockhouse method of saving faith. First we have to get people to bow to our metaphysical conclusions, then our moral conclusions, and then the challenge of what I call our soteriological conclusions. And, uh, if that's your view then one could rationally work up from lower religious values to Christianity. Carnell says in *A Philosophy of Christian Religion*:

A consistent venture in the religious life must lead a person step by step from lower to higher commitments. Religion reaches its perfection with faith in the person of Jesus Christ. Reasons will be suggested in each case why one must move on from the lower to the higher on the one hand, and from the higher to faith in the person of Christ on the other.

So you see, if you'll begin with the lowest common denominator, which Carnell thought was love—mutual respect—and if you begin with that value, then you can bump up to a higher religious value, and finally, through these steps, you must eventually accept faith in Jesus Christ. It's all rationally continuous from the lower values to a higher. And thus, the unbeliever's problem is that his knowledge is incomplete. This is the killer for Van Til: when the apologist suggests to the unbeliever, you're all right as far as you go, you just need a little bit more. Just keep reasoning the way you've been reasoning elsewhere in your experience and add Jesus to the mix—then you'll have it.

I remember when I was in about high school, I didn't happen to go to a Christian high school but I was the Assemblies Commissioner...through the year, but, uh,...one of the...excuse me, secular high schools in Southern California. And being a Christian, of course, I wanted to make use of my office as best I could, you know, for Christian purposes. And there was a speaker on the speaking circuit that we had available to us that I knew had come to our, uh, Youth For Christ club and had spoken, and so I got him in as a speaker, you know, for one of our assemblies—with over 3,000 raging pagans that I went to school with. And I still remember...and I was very pleased at the time...I mean, overall...I hope I've been growing...but I was very pleased at the time because he presented his talk on the well-balanced life that he called "Being A Well-Rounded Square." And he talked about how we had to have our lives in order in terms of our physical bodies—health and athletics, and so forth. And then we had to have our minds in order, you know, he challenged the students to be good students—get good grades, go to college, and be a success, you know, all that kind of rah, rah stuff. And then, of course, we had to have our social lives in order too, you know, and how we should get along with people, and this sort of thing, and all. But he said, "But you know, if you only have those three points, it's like being a square that's missing the fourth point." And so, what he wanted everyone to do, see, is to add Jesus—of course in that assembly it had to be more generally religious values, and so forth, but you have to have your religious life in order too. And again, at the time I thought, wow! isn't this great! I mean this guy's on board with the students, he's hittin' them on all these good points, and it's like at the very end, then, all you needed to do—here's the challenge to the Christian worldview—add Jesus to the mix!

Dr. Schaeffer, I won't stop telling you I love him, but in his book *Death In The City* he portrays materialistic science as fine as far as it goes. He, uh, in the chapter entitled "The Universe In Two Chairs" he says, we are to imagine that you have this room, you know, shut off from the rest of the world, and you have two chairs there; and you a Christian sitting in one chair, and a materialist sitting in the other, and the materialist goes first: He has all his research, writes all these books, gives them to the Christian to read, and this is what he knows about reality. So the Christian reads all these, and then Schaeffer portrays him, or he picks up the story by saying:

Finally the Christian turns to the materialist and says, "Well, this is a tremendous work. You really told me a

great deal about my universe that I wouldn't have known. However, my friend, this is all very fine but it's drastically incomplete. It's as if you had taken an orange, sliced it in half, and only concerned yourself with one of the halves. To really understand reality in our universe, you have to consider both halves; both seen and the unseen. You are completely unbalanced. You only know half of your own universe.

And so, this is characteristic of the traditional approach. Schaeffer, who is a quasi-presuppositionalist—whatever you want to say, he's got that in there. He says, look, you're all right as far as you go. You have half the orange. You've got the seeing part of the universe down, but it isn't correct, it isn't balanced—you need the unseen part of the universe added to it. So the problem is the incompleteness of the unbeliever's knowledge.

And then finally, Number 7: I should summarize six on the board for you...in a non-....[interruption in tape]....

* * *

What we've just been talking about is that the traditional approach takes elements of Christianity and defends them, but defends them as, well they can be understood in other worldviews, too—are as compatible with other worldviews. And then the final point is: the traditional approach proposes to show Christianity is highly probable rather than certain.

Christianity, under the traditional approach, is comparatively better than other options; but not absolutely necessary or the only intelligible option. Let me say that again: The traditional approach makes Christianity comparatively better to the other options, but not the only intelligible option. Carnell says, in the Introduction to *Christian Apologetics*:

The task of any philosophy of life is to construct an adequate explanation for the whole course of reality. The aim of this volume is to discharge the obligation which I Peter 3:15 lays upon us by showing how Christianity is able to answer the fundamental questions of life as adequately as, if not more adequately than, any other worldview.

You see. So the Christianity here is...it's certainly running as well as the other competitors in the race, and we really think we can show it's running a little better. But you see, Christianity then is not the only viable candidate; it isn't the only, and therefore, certain option that men have—it's got to be more probably true than the others. Carnell says:

The Christian finds his system of philosophy in the Bible and he accepts this because when tested it makes better sense out of life than other systems of philosophy make.

Better sense. So the other systems make some sense out of life—Christianity goes a little bit further. Uh, one more quote from the same book:

Proof for the Christian faith is proof for any worldview that's worth talking about, cannot rise above rational probability. Yet, the scientist cannot rise above rational probability in his empirical investigation, why should the Christian claim more?

Boy, there's a question that begs for an answer, right?! If the scientist can't go any further in this, why would we want to. Well maybe because we think we have something more important or more authoritative than what the scientist does? Well, my point isn't to get into every one of these things, but to show you that there is a difference in conception, or difference in the project, if you will, because of the traditional approach and what presuppositionalists are trying to do.

The traditional approach says we cannot rise above rational probability. This a tough point—I mean as a presuppositionalist—a tough point to stand against that today. I mean it is...it is, frankly, a dogma of prejudice of our culture, both academic and nonacademic, that only probability is available. Uh, I have to work hard with my students to push them to read in the history of philosophy its due work in epistemology, and to understand the very sloppy notion of probability and certainty that passes today. But there is a very dignified, noble, and—I'm willing to defend—

tradition—in philosophy that certainty is available, and defensible. And that you don't have to settle for probability, although that's subject to many interpretations. You don't have to settle for the idea everybody's a good competitor, and we've just gotten to the finish line first. We just ran a little bit faster. So that we're probably true. No, one can argue from—now this is language sloganized, you'll understand it—from the impossibility of the contrary. That if you oppose this system of thought, you can't run the race. It's not just that you don't run it as well.

Then one last point, here—just by way of criticism, granted—but I think you need to know it: when traditional apologetics argues that we can only argue that Christianity's highly probable, one of the ways in which this is advanced, and one that I've seen most commonly in John Warwick Montgomery, and Clark Pinnock, and others who push this, uh, this is really based on a kind of logical positivist approach to epistemology, that tells you you can't have certainty—you can't have analytical, you know, assurance about anything—non-negotiable assurance about anything for which you make a significant claim. That no one is allowed to have anything more than probability when you're talking about synthetic judgments; or you're actually adding something...uh, when you start with concept and add something to it—when you synthesize the judgment, you try to go to experience, only probability's available to you.

So that is one of the ways in which this is advanced. But there is a darker side to the probability-only polemic. And that we find in E.J. Carnell—he's not the only one, but he puts it out there, and blatantly. And the darker side is that the ultimate philosophical conviction here, and in fact, chief refuge for the apologist, is that nobody can know anything for sure. And that's why Christians shouldn't claim more than probability, because no one can know anything for sure.

But Van Til waxed eloquent when he talked about this. So eloquent that I think most of his students didn't even catch the point. But he would talk about how mystery is behind everything. You know, we're finally back to "old night", you know, Greek mythological, you know, problem of that everybody lives in a realm of darkness and no one really knows anything for sure. And if no one knows anything for sure, then you Christians can't claim to be sure—no one can claim to be sure. And that, I'm afraid, is often the philosophical reason why Christian apologists don't want to go beyond probabilities. They've bought into that notion that this universe is, even for us, ultimately mysterious.

But there's refuge in that. Because if no one can know anything for sure, then of course, no one can beat us down for sure in terms of our Christian claims. And this is exactly what Carnell says. Introduction to *Christian Apologetics*, page 113. Having said we can only claim probability, he says:

This admission is not a form of weakness. The system of Christianity can be refuted only by probability. Perhaps our loss is our gain.

Do you understand that? "Our loss is our gain" because if we all operate in this soup of mystery where no one can know anything for sure and certainty is not available, then, of course, we never have to worry if we're going to wake up tomorrow and the local professor's going to have come up with a certain refutation of Christianity. And so what we lose, not being able to claim certainty, is actually our gain because then no one can finally touch us. Because on the worst day of your life, when everything that you've read, and all your professors have been beating against your faith and repudiating it as illogical, and as unhistorical, and nonscientific, and all that—you can still say, but it's at least possible! Then this mysterious universe...still they can be true, though all the evidence is against it!

Now, I mean, I'm overplaying this; I'm making a caricature of it, but that's what Carnell was saying. He's saying, possibly we're losing something here, but maybe that's really a gain! No one can do anything, except appeal to probability. And so that's the traditional approach.

In seven major points I'm arguing that this sets out the traditional approach over against Van Til, and it's taught us do what presuppositionalism's all about.

In my conclusion: Presuppositionalism...presuppositionalism amounts to a methodological, as well as moral, challenge to the unbeliever's autonomy. Presuppositionalism amounts to a methodological, or you might want to put it this way, epistemological as well as moral challenge to the unbeliever's autonomy.

Let's go back and look at those seven points. And notice what I'm getting at here: that the method, or the theory of knowledge that's involved in the presuppositional approach, is quite distinct from the traditional. The first one is obvious enough, and I've already indicated Mr. Frame teaches you this very well in his book. Uh, according to presuppositionalists there is no intellectual autonomy, really. And no one has the right to be neutral, even in their reasoning. And secondly, presuppositions aren't simply hypotheses like other things that are tested, but rather, the preconditions of intelligibility. Thirdly, there are no brute facts. The facts can't be understood outside the Christian system. Fourthly, there are no notions or concepts that may be used to judge Christianity as though they were intelligible outside the Christian system of thought. Fifthly, kind of repeating this, I guess, the common notions cannot become a basis for a line of argument that is simply a matter of reasoning cogently from what you already believe into a conclusion, the antithetical conclusion, of Christianity. Sixthly, the Christian worldview and its elements cannot be portrayed in any way except as distinctively Christian. Seven, when we can offer...we believe we can offer certainty as to the truth Christianity, not simply high probability against the backdrop of pervasive mystery in the universe.

So, if I have portrayed these correctly, presuppositionalism is more than just a moral challenge to the unbeliever's autonomy, it's a methodological and epistemological challenge as well. It's a challenge to his rational self-sufficiency. And since this is missing in the traditional approach, my conviction is that the difference between it and presuppositionalism should not be minimized. Because philosophically speaking, this is not simply a crack in the sidewalk that's the difference between us, but it's a gap as wide as the Grand Canyon. That we're not like real, real close to the traditional approach and we just need kind of clean up some differences of opinion. But I'm suggesting that if you follow these seven points, that epistemologically and methodologically the traditional approach and presuppositional approach are miles apart.

Page 87 of Mr. Frame's book, he says:

It may no longer be possible to distinguish presuppositional apologetics from traditional apologetics merely by externals—by the form of argument, the explicit claim of certainty or probability, etc.

And then he says:

Perhaps presuppositionalism is more of an attitude of the heart, a spiritual condition, than an easily describable, empirical phenomenon.

I'm going to read to the end, here, because I don't want you to misunderstand him—he's making a very important point, even if I'm going to differ slightly with it. He says:

To call it "spiritual" is certainly not to say that it is unimportant—quite the contrary. Our biggest need in apologetics (as in all other areas of life) has always been spiritual at the core. And our "presuppositionalism of the heart" is not something vague and indefinable.

Then he goes on to summarize the "presuppositionalism of the heart" in a way that really thrills me. It was a real joy to read this. I was out on the road when I first got his syllabus and read it, so it's quite a treat to be in my motel room alone, and having to read my old friend John Frame's [_____272_____]. But I'm not sure that it's exactly right when he says that it's not "possible to distinguish presuppositional apologetics from traditional apologetics merely by externals." And if I can interpret him, and be corrected by him if I'm wrong here.

Mr. Frame seems to want to be moving you, as his students or his readers in this book, to the idea that method in apologetics, the way in which we argue, may not be all that different between the traditional and the presuppositional approach. But there is a very big difference. And I agree, here, and it's a very important difference. There is a difference in terms of heart attitude. (That, uh, Number One up here.) The presuppositionalist, just as a matter of wanting to live subject to the words of Christ, shuns...shuns the idea of neutrality. And so, what is best in Van Til, according to Mr. Frame and needs to be preserved as crucial, is this presuppositionalist's attitude of heart—submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. And then, speaking of Van Til, he says in a footnote:

...I would say that Van Til has a tendency to confuse issues of piety...with issues of method....

And then, let me add the parenthetical remarks:

...I would say that Van Til has a tendency to confuse issues of piety (What is my deepest loyalty, my presupposition?) with issues of method (What comes first in my argument: Should I prove the conclusion directly or disprove its opposite?)

And then Mr. Frame says:

Certainly our piety must govern our method, but we must be careful before we, in effect, impute evil motives to apologists who simply prefer to do things in a different order.

Now I'm only focusing on what amounts to two lines; and [you] say, well, you wasted two hours of our time talking about two lines in Mr. Frame's book. But I hope that I have not engaged in imputing motives. If I have in asides or being flippant, I really do apologize. But I think you can see in the quotations I've given you and the analysis I've offered that the traditional method, even beyond where Mr. Frame and I agree in terms of it being wrong in its autonomous and neutral [___306___], the traditional method, its epistemology, you see --- not just what's in the heart of a Carnell or a Schaeffer, whatever—I don't...I think that what was in their hearts was better than what was in their method in many cases. But the method itself is very different from presuppositionalism—on which to say these remaining six points.

The seventh point...how many of you, by the way, have read...maybe I shouldn't ask while Mr. Frame has his eyes on us...how many of you have read this [and] you know what I'm getting at. Okay. Now, you realize that there's a discussion of probability and certainty and so forth; and let me, for argument's sake, simply say, there may be some terminological disputes here. I mean just verbal disputes that have led us into thinking that we're really different from each other. I think the probability point is deeper than that—as I've already indicated. But let's just say; this idea about probability and certainty...we're talking past each other. And let's say that Frame and Bahnsen agree on this first point. I still would say that points two through six indicate that the method of the traditional approach is as different from presuppositionalism as the gap in the Grand Canyon—from an epistemological perspective. And I want to agree with Mr. Frame that you cannot tell whether you have the traditional or the presuppositional approach just by looking at the order of presentation. You notice that none of my points involve the order of presentation. So, he's right on that point; and Mr. Frame knows that I'm his friend that this is not a cutting remark—but that's a trivial point, I think. In other words, in granting it I'm not giving anything up because I don't really think presuppositionalists are very thoughtful as distinctive as the order of presentation from the specific form of the argument.

But these epistemological points are crucial and I think if you look at the argumentation, if you have enough evidence to go on, you can read more than just a paragraph out of Schaeffer, or out of Montgomery, or out of Aquinas, or Butler—that you will see that there are great methodological differences—not just moral differences between the traditional and the presuppositional approach.

I wanted to refer to a couple of other pages quickly and then I'll let you ask me some questions:

* * *

Oh yes, in a related work, Mr. Frame has written an article on Dr. Van Til for the publication, "Handbook of Evangelical Theologians." And in it, he interacts with Van Til, tries to clarify and correct some things. And one point says that Van Til has other objections to the traditional method. One of which is:

The traditional method seems to assume we can understand the meaning of cause, purpose, and being without presupposing God.

And then in his response Mr. Frame says:

This objection, Objection One, seems to be gratuitous. And apologists, using the traditional method, may very

well presuppose that God is the author of cause and purpose, and that they are unintelligible apart from Him. Indeed, the apologist may be using the traditional arguments to establish that very belief. But having that presupposition in no way prevents the apologist from discussing cause before discussing God.

It's another example of what we're looking at from the book. The issue here is not whether the traditionalist discusses one thing before he discusses the other; that's a matter of communication of theory—of rhetoric and persuasion, as a matter of fact. That has nothing to do with his epistemological presuppositions. Well, I won't say nothing, but it's a distance connection to his epistemological presuppositions. And the point that Van Til was making is more, I think, than what Mr. Frame is making. It's more than just a moral challenge to autonomy, Van Til is saying there is also a methodology that distinguishes the Christian approach. (And after lunch I'm going to discuss about...discuss that in particular.)

Back on page 77...we read:

Van Til tended to think that these problems were best handled by restricting apologetics to certain formulated methods...But that spiritual result [the result of banishing autonomy as an attitude of the heart]...that spiritual result is not guaranteed by a transcendental (actually epistemological) emphasis or a negative argument.

And of course that's true. Because if you're somewhat implying, you see, my presentation is plausible today; that the difference between the traditional and the presuppositional approach is epistemological and not simply moral, that there is a methodological difference, Mr. Frame is absolutely right—and I want to end on this point: You mustn't think that the spiritual problem, Number One here, is going to be taken care of as long as you can get your ducks in order, methodologically. Because there are plenty...well, I wish there were more—I won't say plenty...there are many people who understand the presuppositional approach and their lives are really out of sync with the Lord, and in real trouble because of spiritual attitudes or arrogance or what have you. And so, I hope I've been balanced enough in this presentation to show you where I think Mr. Frame is right, and very helpful. And I certainly want to end on this note of agreement. But I would like to suggest that there is more to it than you've been told in the book. That there are methodological and epistemological differences which are very significant. I wouldn't minimize them.

So, let me give you an opportunity to challenge what I've said, or correct it, or ask questions. Now, will you let Mr. Frame be the first one?

JF: Well, I don't know if I get started there may not be time for.... Well, uh, just very briefly, uh...remember that the stuff you were quoting on 87 is made, uh, those statement are very, very...let's see, very, very relative, right. Uh, it may no longer be possible, etc., to distinguish merely by externals. Perhaps...perhaps presuppositionalism is more of an attitude of the heart, etc., etc. So I'm not entirely ruling out what you're saying. And I think that there's a difference between us, here; it's only relative, a relative difference rather than a difference in principle.

So far as your seven points are concerned, you know, I agree substantially with everything you said. Descriptively, here...descriptively is the difference between the two approaches. Now the first two points—not just the one—but the first two are discussed very explicitly in this book. The third isn't, maybe it should be, but, uh, it is discussed at great length in [The Doctrine Of The Knowledge Of God]. Uh, now when you get to four through six, uh,...

[Side Two]

...arguments that we formulate in order to convey the evidence and I think that distinction has to taken account of.

GB: And I'll talk about that a little bit in a few minutes as well. Uh, I wanted to jump on and agree with what you're saying and make a personal comment: I think when people, in terms of the pedagogy of learning apologetics, when they realize that there are these clear differences between presuppositional method, not just heart attitudes but its method, from the traditional method, that brings them to the threshold of what is probably the most common objection Van Til has heard in the 20th Century—and I remember [_____480_____] over dinner telling me this is what was wrong with Van Til, I mean that's just how widespread it is—that, well if that were true, then the unbeliever couldn't anything at all. I mean you're denying any knowledge to the unbeliever at all. And if presuppositionalists or Van Tilians only understood this was the difference and that there you have only Van Til dismisses the traditional approach and this is what he has distinctively—I think they would fall right into that. But I think it's only at that point that Van Til becomes really interesting philosophically. And I would agree with you that he leaves a lot of things unresolved. That's why in my doctoral dissertation on self-deception, maybe I helped, maybe I didn't help [____487____]. People have to understand that Van Til has a really rich and interesting notion of the unbeliever professing one thing but believing in his heart in another, which is kind of reversal of what Bavinck said about religious hypocrisy—about Christians who, you know, say one thing and then they don't live it out in their life. And he's turned that around so that becomes an apologetical challenge when people say; well, on your view the unbeliever couldn't know anything—oh no, that's another chapter, you have to read about. It so happens they're living in two worlds. Because they do use these notions. And there was a time...when I finally dismissed it as a youthful notion. But I almost wonder, could you develop the traditional arguments given a Van Tilian idea that in every occasion we're appealing to what the unbeliever knows and is suppressing in his heart of hearts—he's really using the right idea of causality or he couldn't build a bridge. He really is using the right idea of logic or he wouldn't be able to do any arguments at all. And then you could reconstruct it all that way. But then after I thought about it, I said, well, once you've reconstructed that's what Van Til's told us to do—and after lunch I'll talk more about this. I think all of those reconstructions become illustrations to the transcendental argument, as a matter of fact.

But that's when Van Til becomes interesting. Because once you realize this, you have to...you have to go on to say...and the unbeliever also knows the truth. But...

JF: What about the other way. Truth, in the transcendental argument, becomes an illustration of these others.

GB: Uh, wait a minute. The transcendental argument becomes an illustration of the traditional method?

JF: Well, no. The reconstruction of the traditional arguments that you just proposed....

GB: Yes, right. Uh, what I'm going to refer to after lunch—and I think in your book you compliment this too—I think one of the finest Van Til wrote to help people is Why I Believer In God. I mean you read that; and, uh, I've had students come to me...and very intelligent...and sometimes you just say, where's the argument here? And then you take them to...you have to show them very slowly sometimes—that is the way we do presuppositional apologetics. You understand? It's not a matter of laying out a syllogism here. And when Van Til brought us to that point about, you know, the order—if I didn't believe in that order, there'd be no order in my experience at all. We couldn't even have this conversation. That is...I used to teach...that is a presuppositional version of a teleological argument. Okay. So, it's an appeal to order, but it's saying you couldn't have order—you couldn't even have order without order...meaning about order, without a Christian worldview. So we do agree you can reconstruct the arguments. But Van Til says that too. I still think we have to say...I told you at the beginning of today's lecture, we might end up with you saying, well, you know, it's a relative thing, small or, you know, big. I think the difference is rather big. And it's subjective. I hear you saying it can be minimized at that point....

Q: Uh, I had a question: With the assumption that, uh, reason can be done neutral, or autonomous; the question is, is the law of noncontradiction and some of the other basic, uh, givens in reason already a reflection of God; and so when the person is starting to reason, supposedly from his neutrality, that he's already reasoning from a conception of a Christian God, but when it starts leading him to the direction to that, that he rejects it—not based upon poor reason, but based upon his heart attitude that he's against God. And so then I question the whole thing: Is if...if autonomy is ever...actually ever used when a person reasons. They may say that they reason autonomously, but in actuality their reasoning is a reflection of the image of God already impressed upon them..

GB: Yeah, I hope you understand how profound what you just said is. I mean, there may be ways of understanding that people will think, that's not a very important...but that's crucial. That when we talk about the traditional method, or unbelievers being neutral or autonomous, we have to be careful to describe that as a project, not as an accomplishment. Because, as a matter of fact, no one ever reasons autonomously. It's just that many—and this is where Van Til is really great with his illustrations—you see, everybody uses borrowed capital,...and they won't acknowledge it. Okay. So even when the unbeliever is reasoning with us about how we should reason, he's living on borrowed capital. He's not being autonomous there. And so, those of us who teach need to be careful when we talk about man being autonomous, and so forth. We...that we make that clear...that that is what they are attempting to do.

You can summarize...one way of summarizing, I think, Van Til's critique of the traditional method, is that we ought not to be encouraging people to sin intellectually by calling on them to try to be autonomous. Even though we know they can't be, the project is always futile and they fail. The traditional apologist is wrong and misleading to think, go ahead and be your own final authority for a while—and then eventually you'll get to the place where you can submit to Jesus, and you say, He's the final authority.

Q: So then, in actuality, that would pull the two camps together if you looked at your, uh, faith statement as autonomy is not really that your reasoning autonomously.

GB: No. What I'm saying is that it won't draw the two camps together because what they are doing are significantly different [speech acts 580]. What I'm doing when I call on the unbeliever to realize he can't reason outside of the Christian worldview is different than what is being...what's even the intention of the traditionalist when he calls on the unbeliever to reason self-sufficiently and autonomously. Oh, and then by the way, you can't really do it. Because he's not challenging the unbeliever that he can't do it, in fact, he's encouraging him to try. And I think it's wrong to do that.

Q: A few minutes ago when you were talking about a [useful] project, trying to reconstruct the traditional arguments, are we to take that as agreement that Frame's direct proofs are also legitimate, but you prefer the indirect proofs?...

GB: That's the whole point of the next lecture. No, I don't believe he tries that yet. But I believe he's a wonderful man. No, I...that will come down to what is about a page and half. But I think on that that it's a mistake, and there is a real difference between indirect and direct proofs. But as long as we try to do it directly, we're going to engage in these mistakes right here. That's my view, and I'll try to, you know, to...you know, defend it later.

But there was another hand...over here....

Q: My name is John Wong. I appreciate you're discussions, number one. My impression is that you seem to downplay, you know, logic, reason; although I'm sure you use all these, uh, God-given gifts. Let me ask you, how do you, yourself, internalize the presupposition as you define it—as a heart commitment? How do you internalize that? What do you...how to you derive that presupposition and internalize it as part of your heart commitment. How do you do it?

GB: I just trying to be clear on what you would like me just to describe for you. What is the process of growing by God's grace in our theory of knowledge? Is that what you're saying? How do we sanctify our thinking?...

Q: No, no, no—no, no....

GB: ...How do we find our presuppositions? What?...

Q: I mean...how did, you know, when you said, I'm a presuppositionalist, okay, I use a presuppositional approach. I have a worldview which is, you know, spiritual in concept—which is a heart commitment, right?

GB: Well, it's more than that; but yes, it is a heart commitment.

Q: Well, what is more than heart commitment? To what?

GB: Well, I...the Christian worldview, uh, maybe we're talking...is true whether I'm committed to it or not. So these presuppositions are still...

Q: ...but it's meaningless, it's meaningless, from your point of view, unless you're committed to it. That's why you speak with conviction of your presupposition.

GB: Well, I think we're being ambiguous when we say it's meaningless from my perspective. There is a way...you're not saying.... I'm not hooked into this, you know, unless I'm committed to Jesus, and so forth. But it's not meaningless even from my perspective, just because of that.

Q: Well, from your perception—if it doesn't mean anything to you,...

GB: Yeah, but meaning is not person-relative, is what I'm trying to get away from....

Q: Well, okay. Well, I'm talking about, you know, I can only attach meaning in certain things if it's meaningful to me. Sure, that the thing itself, or the fact itself may be meaningful to others and independent meaning, okay?

GB: But I'm...what you've just said is, I can only attach meaning to things if I attach meaning to things.

Q: Yeah. If it's meaningful to you....

GB: As an autobiographical remark, I agree with you. Okay.

Q: Well, therefore, my question is, how do you internalize that presupposition? In other words, do you bypass all the logical, uh, uh, process; or the reasoning process....

GB: Okay, now...I'm sorry, I think I understand your question better.

Q: ...in other words, it's not a—it's a sudden ZAP! by God, you know, that you suddenly...Oh, I got this presupposition and I'm going to articulate it in this position.... I'm really...I'm asking very sincerely.

GB: Well, what's the Bible tells us. Romans 10: "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." Right?

Q: All right...

GB: Okay. So it was internalized in that God used the natural gifts that He had given to me, and to you, and to others, but which I have been sinning against and misusing; in that, when the Word of God came to me, despite my [_____646___] thinking, and my pride, and my sin, and other sorts of things—in this sense I'm not too embarrassed to say, yeah, if you want to call it "zapping", the Holy Spirit made a huge change in me that was not just by increments...my thinking, okay, this leads to this...I came to the point where I had to realized I

had to bow before God and admit that I was a sinner, and I had no hope in life or in death apart from Him. And the day came, I wish it would have come sooner and I wish it were more advanced now in my life, but the day came when where I realized I had no hope epistemologically either—not just eschatologically. So that I...does that answer....

Q: Okay. How...so therefore it's a spiritual conversional kind of experience? Right?

GB: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

Q: So from that point on, *then* you use reason, and logic, and so on, and really confirm, perhaps, your initial experience, don't you.

GB: It is true that from that point on we deepen our commitment, our understanding, and the power of the Word of God, and so forth. But we also realize how much we missed and how it was just that powerful and correct before we came to acknowledge it. And that's what we're trying to share with unbelievers....

Q: Okay. My point is...

GB: We know...is this what you're leading up to...we know that no matter how good the argument is, unless the Holy Spirit changes their hearts, they're not going to internalize it....

Q: We're in agreement. That's what I'm pointing to. Initially, this presuppositional concept that you have...possess...it is embryonic, undefinable kind of shape, it's it?

GB: Well, let's say an "infant shape." It's...it's baby steps...

Q: Because the...the...the...distinct way you arrive at now, with such a concrete, you know, structure, surely was not present when you first embraced it.

GB: After lunch [_____674_____] I'm going to talk about how I think presuppositionalism is taught to our children, and then we grow up and it just becomes more precise and detailed. Obviously it's time to go....

[Break in tape recording.]

GB: ...to be here this afternoon. I especially appreciate the fact that you didn't chose this day to do your taxes, which are due tomorrow. We have a very easy way not to come listen to this crowd of apologists. It's nice to have you all here. I called for plenty of time for discussion. I'm going to aim to lecture for about an hour, then open the floor to you to ask me questions, either about what I've said today, or Dr. Van Til's apologetic, or my own practice of apologetics—whatever would best, uh, scratch where you itch. Whatever you'd like to know that would help you be better defenders of the faith.

I'm going to eventually be returning to John Frames' book, *Apologetics To The Glory Of God*, and responding to his response—somewhat critical, somewhat supportive—of Dr. Van Til's presuppositionalism. Because my guess is that if we were just to open the floor to questions now, that's what I'd end up doing anyway. You'd like to know about, what do you say about this, what do you say about that? So I'm going to build up to that and try to make some remark that I trust will be beneficial, and I'll be very happy to give equal time to Mr. Frame to respond to my remarks if he thinks that I've, uh, that I've gotten it wrong. I hope I haven't.

Actually, before I can get into my discussion and the eventually the response to Mr. Frame's book, I really need to say something personal about John Frame—because I want you know where I'm coming from. Especially when I get to the point that may seem a little bit critical of what he has written. When I went to Westminster Seminary a number of years ago now, in Philadelphia, I arrived at Westminster as a committed Van Tilian. In college, where I was a philosophy major, I had begun to read Van Til and, uh, as best I can judge, when I got to Westminster, relatively I was well-read in Van Til—relative to the other students, anyway. And I was very glad that I was able to get there

before Dr. Van Til stopped teaching. I consider it one of the real high points of my life—just in terms of having a relationship with somebody as godly, as intelligent, as influential as Cornelius Van Til—that, uh, my senior year, as a seminarian, that Winter Van Til took ill, and I still remember him calling one afternoon. And I’m wondering why is Dr. Van Til calling me at home? And he asked if I would come and lecture in his room for him—in his classroom—because he wouldn’t be able to make it the next week, being ill. And I thought, Boy! is there anything better than this that Dr. Van Til’s willing to let me speak for him. That was really wonderful. So I had a high regard for Dr. Van Til. I worked as a student assistant to him. He means a great deal to me.

But I say that all by way of introduction to something that I said to John Frame the day that I graduated. After we went through the ritual of graduation, we had our diplomas, and so forth. And everyone was milling around. I sought out Mr. Frame because I wanted him to know how much his teaching had meant to me. And the way in which I indicated that to him is I said, “As important as Dr. Van Til is to me, I really think the most influential of all my professors here at the seminary has been you.” And I still believe that today. I have very high regard and deep affection for John Frame. I say that, not because it’s the courteous thing to do before a lecture where you’re going to criticize, but I want you...I want you to perceive what I say, because from my heart, this man has meant a great deal to me in my life. We know better, as Calvinists, than to say, well if something hadn’t happened, you know, that all these differences might be in our lives. God has a way of working out whatever He wants to accomplish in our lives. But God did choose to use John Frame, very importantly as I see it, in my life and my development. And so now I get to return the favor of trying to say something back to one of my favorite professors to see if, as he improved my way of thinking, maybe I can, just in a slight way, improve, uh, a little on what he has written about apologetics.

In his book, *Apologetics To The Glory Of God*, which everyone here will know has been out as a syllabus previously, and I had studied it in some detail before coming here. There are many things that must be commended. In the lecture I gave before our lunch break, I made a real point that Mr. Frame emphasizes a presuppositionalism of the heart and repudiates an attitude of neutrality...repudiates an attitude of autonomy as we defend the faith. And, uh, that is, of course, perhaps the most important of all of the points made by Dr. Van Til and Mr. Frame is right in line with that. He tells us we can go to Scripture for our norms in apologetics. The Scripture provides the proper reasons for us to believe that Scripture itself provides evidence that can be used as a reason for believing. There is to be no neutrality. There are two sciences—two ways of evaluating things. And yet all men know God on some level, he tells us. They’re suppressing it, nevertheless they know God. He does not repudiate what many people who are critical of presuppositionalism—he doesn’t repudiate, as they do, the notion of circular reasoning when it comes to ones ultimate presuppositions. He tells us that if you use (for nonChristians) epistemology, you cannot raise an effective challenge to unbelief. He says that Scripture should not be subjected to the judgment of anything beyond Scripture. He emphasizes the uniqueness of the Christian worldview, and tells us that nonChristian faiths are irrational. That the most serious epistemological error possible, he tells us, is autonomy. He says that even extra-biblical evidence must be evaluated by a biblical view of evidence. That the persuasion of the unbeliever depends on the gracious and mysterious work of the Holy Spirit. That the evidence for God is obvious. That faith is, therefore, not blind. That facts would be unintelligible without God. The choosing of unbelief, he says, destroys rationality. It destroys scholarship. And at one point he says, it destroys all knowledge in principle. And I can go on and on, but I just want to let you know I have read him thorough and in detail, and it’s a great delight to do that.

I spend more time on the road, perhaps, than I might personally chose and so many nights in hotel rooms, you know, looking for something interesting to do that isn’t just, you know, addling your brain—so when I got the syllabus Mr. Frame wrote I just want to tell you it was just a delight to me to read the material—a real blessing spiritually. Again, I say all of this by way of introduction so that you know that when I finally come to differ just a little bit with Mr. Frame, I do so with a height of respect and personal friendship that I hope will open the door to a good discussion.

I’m going to go through a series of observations about apologetics in this hour that I have that I hope will make, uh, will set the stage for a clear discussion of whatever differences there might be; and I think will help you as growing apologists to understand better what you need to be doing and what’s required of you. I’ve been teaching apologetics for a number of years now in a number of different settings, and I’ve found that these sorts of observations that I’m going to be going through—seven or eight of them here—are often misconstrued or not understood at all by students of apologetics. And so if you don’t mind I’m just going to launch into this and give you a series of observations and then in light of them turn to Mr. Frame’s book.

First of all, if I can share my experience as an apologist and as a teacher of apologetics, I would want you to be aware that the study of apologetics must be distinguished from apologetics. I'll say that again. The study of apologetics must be distinguished from apologetics itself. I wish I would have had the majority, I wish somebody had really drilled home to my heart this distinction—which is easy enough to grasp in theory—but in real-life situations, in practice, it's important for seminarians to know that what you're doing in the classroom, even if it's, you know, getting down to hammer and tong, you know, Bahnsen and Frame arguing about something, is different from defending the faith. And what you are called to do is not so much to debate schools of apologetics, which is where we spend a lot of our time, but you must defend the faith. Let me put it to you this way: The theory of fire fighting does not put out fires. Wouldn't it be a terrible thing if seminarians spent three years or more doing graduate work, maybe going on and getting a Ph.D., maybe writing books, entering into inter-school debates, and so forth—if they spent their entire lives working on the theory of apologetics, and they never defended the faith to an unbeliever. And as, uh, maybe extreme as that might seem, I think that happens. I really...I'm afraid that seminarians have more interest in the inter-school rivalries and debates than they do in actually getting out and putting this in practice.

At the Study Center, where I'm employed, we often try to push the idea in our seminars on apologetics that this has got to be taken out into the street. You know, you've got to get "down and dirty" as we're saying about our next seminar—you've got to do apologetics, not just study the theory of apologetics. And so, my first observation is to the effect that you should practice this and not confine it to the classroom. Because if you practice apologetics, your attempt to refine your methodology as you interact with other schools of thought or other authors of apologetics, it will help you to remember who the true opponent is. I think it would have been much better for the Christian church and for the witness of the Christian church in the 20th Century if, uh, if students at Westminster did not have the idea that Van Til and Clark were opponents. Yeah, they said different things, and I'm not trying to be ooey, gooey sweet and say everybody's right and nobody's wrong. But you see the real opponent for Van Til, and Clark, and Carnell, and Schaeffer and all the rest—the real opponent is the world that hates us, hates what we believe, and more importantly hates the Lord we serve. And when apologists lose sight of that I don't think we have much of a defense of the faith, to be honest with you. We may be real good at defending our theories to one another, but we aren't doing what God called us to do. So remember who the true opponent is.

Debates over theory naturally tend to divide believers. But they don't have to divide them in a wicked, and in an ungracious, or even in an unhealthful way. Debates over theory tend to divide, but I think you will find a greater harmony in the practice of apologetics. The reason for that is, as I tell people often, people are better than their theories. Apologetics sometimes amounts to a rational reconstruction of why I've become a believer, or what you might want to think through if you're going to become a believer. And because it's a rational reconstruction, of course we can get it wrong. And then if somebody kind of challenges our pride and our intelligence by saying that when we gave this rational account of how to defend the faith we, you know, we were mistaken here and there, and then we back up—we want to defend ourselves—and then the other person wants to defend himself. Then you see the theoretical debates separate us. But I don't have any doubt in my mind, as much as I want to be critical say of a Francis Schaeffer, that if Francis Schaeffer and I were at a secular university talking to some behaviorist, I'll bet you we would agree with each other *almost* entirely—I won't say entirely, but almost. The practice of apologetics brings greater harmony between us. Don't let theoretical discussions divide us.

So my first point—if there's any wisdom I can share—is to remember that the study of apologetics is not apologetics. Secondly, and this is crucial, especially for those of you who are going to become pastors: apologetics is the task of every believer—not simply philosophy majors. Have you ever notice...I mean it's not just at Westminster, and it's not just Westminster when I was a student, or Westminster now, but every seminary that I know of and every Christian college as well, it turns out that the people who take an avid interest in these things gravitate toward either being philosophical as their actual major or minor, or a real hobby and interest. And we have the idea therefore that apologetics is the job of those people who like to talk about Plato, or Jean Paul Sartre, or whatever it may be. But apologetics is the task of every believer.

That being true, it is my conviction that the method that we are to use in apologetics—the method that is faithful to the teaching of God's Word—should be a method applicable to all opposition and available to every believer. I know that you're writing this down, but I want you to reflect on that. What am I getting at? Well, because

the Lord's given me a taste for this sort of thing, [and] I hope something of an aptitude for it, uh....I tend to read things—Alvin Plantinga, you know, *God and Other Minds*; and he had a lot, you know, complicated argumentations, sophisticated philosophy, logic, and so forth in that. But I know very well that I could not give Plantinga's book, *God and Other Minds*, to 90% of the people in my congregation. I have a very intelligent congregation. If you went elsewhere you might say even 99% of the people there. If what Plantinga is doing is the right way to defend the faith, what I want to say is it needs to be able to expressed in a way that anybody in the pew can understand it—and use it. Apologetics is not the domain of the philosophy majors. Dr. Van Til used to draw a contrast between the bunny rabbits and the giraffes in his class. You know, the giraffes, the ones with the long necks, they like to eat those leaves, you know; that only the philosophers or those who study that sort of thing could reach. And the bunny rabbits often scurried around in the grass and felt at a loss all the time. And I guess the point I'm making here is—and it's not just to be nice to everybody—but it's a matter of reading God's Word I think faithfully, that apologetics is something that every believer is supposed to do. And there's a faithful way of doing it. And that therefore whatever the answer is about apologetical method it cannot be arcane, it cannot be so complicated or so sophisticated that it's beyond the grasp of Sophie the washwoman, to use Gordon Clark's illustration.

This method must be derived from the authority of Scripture itself. When someone suggests to you that here's the way to defend the faith, if we really believe that God's Word is authoritative over all of life and directs our thinking, then that approach to apologetics as proposed must in some way be traced back to the Bible.

An Answer To Frame's Critique Of Van Til
(Profound Differences Between the Traditional and Presuppositional Methods)
Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen
(Tape Three)

...maybe one of my sons...has something to do with what Dad teaches or something. But I believe that it is a faithful method of defending the faith. It's the sort of thing you teach to your children as they're growing up. And so you might think about it as levels of, uh, sophistication; levels of degree of detail, clarity, or rigor—philosophical rigor. When I taught my boys as they were growing up what Paul tells us in I Corinthians the first chapter, that the thinking of the unbelieving world is foolish in the eyes of God (even though most who were fools called the preaching of the cross foolish), I was teaching them presuppositional apologetics. I was teaching them that they have a distinctive approach to knowledge and they shouldn't let the world determine for them how they think. And that if they are ridiculed for what they believe, the most important question to them is, am I being faithful to what God teaches me?—not, is the world happy with what I'm saying?

Now I don't pretend that that goes real far in giving a specific way of defending the wisdom of God which makes foolish the best the world has to offer; but do you see right there the seeds of a child-like presuppositional faith were being sown? Now as my children grow—let's say they get up to high school and they encounter writings, or teachers, or fellow students, friends who believe in the theory of evolution. And now they come and they want to know from their Christian father, "What are we saying when people tell us this?" And so I add, if you will, a level of sophistication to their early childhood training when I say, "You remember how the Bible tells us that God makes foolish the wisdom of this world? Let's look at the theory of evolution and ask, 'What would be true if we were really were the slide that oozed out of the primordial slime?'" You know, and you start drawing, even for a high school student, some of the implications of evolutionary theory. And so now they are more sophisticated presuppositionalists aren't they? It's not just that they know there's the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world, and so forth; but now they begin to see how we might in college call a *reductio ad absurdum* can be done with the unbeliever's worldview. And maybe in their later years in college they learn more of what a worldview is, or what some of the demands of epistemology are. And then they go on to college, excuse me, to seminary, and they work to refine that even more. They may go to graduate school in philosophy.

The point I want to make, though, is that whether it's a five year old who's learning about the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world, or a 25 year old who's getting a Ph.D. in epistemology, the method is the same. The difference is the audience, the setting, the degree of sophistication, the level of rigor, if you will. And thus I believed that it's a very important to point this out because we're going to get into it when I finally come to John Frame in a few moments. I believe as a presuppositionalist, and I think Dr. Van Til really did, that there are specific arguments that must be used in the practice of apologetics. These specific arguments are not all the same wordings. It's not like as presuppositionalists we teach the four spiritual laws of apologetics and everybody's got to use this mass-produced, single argument of apologetics. But there is a general strategy in apologetics that can be illustrated in any number of ways, and those specifics are important depending on the audience and the setting—the demands of the moment. Moreover those arguments, just because there are levels of sophistication, those arguments are subject to sharpening. Hopefully, the presuppositional argument that I used out at Santa Barbara City College when I was early on a student at Westmont College, those kinds of arguments which were presuppositional could be expressed by me today. I'd like to believe that I can sharpen that effort—that I can become more detailed, more precise, more rigorous, more persuasive. And yet I wouldn't say that I've changed my argument, I've just said I think I can express it better.

And I think that Dr. Van Til was getting at the same point when he, maybe overstated it, nevertheless made a remark that has been jumped on by many critics, he said, "You know, the argument for the existence of God is absolutely certain. Now maybe it'll never be stated, you know, exactly right [I'm not quoting, I'm paraphrasing], but it's nevertheless a valid argument—sound argument." And people said, "Well how can there be an argument, you know, that's sound that cannot be stated?" Well of course he never said it cannot be stated—I think he was just saying, every time we put it out there somebody might come along and say, "Well now, you didn't take this into account"; or,

“Now don’t you want to be a little clearer on this concept over here?” That’s perfectly fine. But there’s nevertheless a common strategy, whether it’s our five-year-old covenant children, or our 25-year-old Ph.D. candidates, a common strategy that the Bible teaches for defending the faith. That’s my conviction.

Thirdly, moving along.... My first point is the study of apologetics must be distinguished from apologetics; secondly, apologetics is the task of every believer, not simply philosophy majors; and now thirdly, apologetics assumes, in both parties to the discussion, or the debate, or the argument (whatever you want to call it),... apologetics assumes in both parties a desire to be rational. It assumes the desire to be rational. Why do I say that? Well, just think of what I Peter 3 tells us. Someone comes and demands or asks of you a reasoned defense—an apologia. Someone asks for you an argument. And so when someone...it’s not simply saying, “Well now, what do you Christians believe; or what are the advantages of the system; or what’s wrong with my life?” Give information such as, “Well now give me a reason for that hope that is in you.” When someone is pushing you for a reasoned defense, that assumes a commitment to some kind of rationality. I don’t believe unbelievers have a proper conception of rationality—don’t confuse the issue here. But the point is that unbeliever who is demanding a reasoned account is looking to reason with us. In which case arbitrariness and inconsistency are unacceptable. Lots of people are arbitrary and lots of people are inconsistent. But in a reasoned discussion, arbitrariness and inconsistency are precluded. That’s a normative remark—I mean, it happens, but the norm is you’re not supposed to be arbitrary, you’re not supposed to be inconsistent if you’re trying to be reasonable in settling the dispute you have with another individual.

Both sides, therefore, if we’re doing apologetics, must be giving an account of what they believe. Now what does it mean to “give an account” of what you believe? That’s a lot of fun to explore that. Maybe, if you’d like, I can come back and give a lecture on that. I think that’s a very rich notion in philosophy. But giving an account is sometimes understood as putting something within a more coherent or broader theory. Sometimes giving an account is offering kinds of evidence, using particular ways of explanation. Sometimes clarification is what we mean by giving an account. Sometimes you prove, sometimes you warn.... There are a lot of varieties here and I’m not going to get into that. But I want to make the point that when you’re doing apologetics people need to give an account of what they believe, or what they refuse to believe. They can’t just say things arbitrarily; nor are they allowed to contradict themselves and say, “Well, I’m going to use this principle from 3:00 to 3:15, but I’m going to use the contrary principle from 3:15 to 3:30.” If you want a reasoned discussion, then we can expect these sorts of things on both accounts.

The reason I’m pointing this out is because sometimes we have the idea that apologetics is called to deal with irrationalists, and it isn’t. Christians are called to deal with irrationalists, no doubt about that. Irrationalists need our help. They need our testimony. They need our evangelistic witness. They need our ministry. But irrationalism is not the subject of apologetics—which is vindication, defense, proof. When people indicate to us, “I don’t care about reasoning, I don’t care about vindication, defense, and proof”, basically they’re saying, “I’m not playing the apologetics game.” They are playing games—self-destructive games, spiritually important games—but they are not playing the apologetics game. I want to make that very clear. When a person, you know, hears our defense of the faith and just becomes the wet noodle intellectually—just becomes an irrationalist (“I don’t have to give an account”); or if the person just concedes the case to the Christian because of his irrationalism, then either the person you’re talking to has given you just as much right to believe as whatever he believes—that is, can offer no objection in which case you’ve won the day. He comes with an objection, you try to answer it, you challenge him, he says, “Oh no, I can’t give an account—no one needs to give an account.” Say, “Oh, if no one needs to give an account, then I can just believe whatever I want, too. And you have no objection to my arbitrariness because I’m simply imitating your own.” And the irrationalist has defeated himself, you know, right then and there. You may need to explain that to him, but, uh,....

You know psychologists have to do that too. [When] counseling, George every once in while has to explain to people, “Don’t you realize that you’re playing this game—come hither, stay away, come hither, stay away?” It’s like, you know, the husband and wife are having problems and the wife is saying, “I want you closer to me. I want you to....” And whenever the husband tries to do things to be more intimate and close, then she always says, “Stay away from me—stay away from me.” And then she [_____126_____] that he’s staying away, “Come hither, come hither—stay away....” And it just drives a person nuts! What can you do with it? And there’s the intellectual version of that: The unbeliever will come and be real nasty, real rationalist, if you will. “Oh, you Christians are superstitious. You have no reason to believe that. Philosophy has refuted that. Science has refuted that.” You say, “Well, let’s talk about that.” And then you start pushing the other way, and then the person says, “Oh well, I don’t care. I don’t have to

give an account, I can believe anything I want.” That’s a version of this “come hither, stay away” stuff. And we need to point that out to the irrationalist and say, “Well, if you don’t want reasoning, if you don’t want to have to give an account—then I don’t have to give an account of what I believe.” Or, on the other hand, the irrationalist is admitting that in order to be rational you’d have to be driven to Christianity—and I refuse to go—so I’ll be an irrationalist. But when that happens, as an apologist—I’m not talking about as a minister, as a Christian in terms of the wide moral obligation you have to spread the Word of God—but specifically as you do apologetics, your job’s done. When the person says, “In order to be rational, you’d have to be a Christian, so I’m not going to be a Christian.” Say, “Fine. Well then you’ve conceded my point.” Because Christianity is offering a reasoned defense for the hope that is in us, and you can hardly ask for more. The person says, “Well, if you’re going to be reasonable you have to a Christian, I’d rather not be reasonable.”

Now this is an aside—I have to watch the clock here, and not get too far down this path. Even though you haven’t an obligation to go any further with the irrationalist as an apologist, I think as an apologist it’s important for you to see that no one can be an irrationalist either. You haven’t even given up all of the argumentative options that are available to you. The example I use with my students often is, uh, I talk to Hari Krishna sometimes, like in the airport—I end up in airports a lot, and they’re still around every once in a while. And I talk to a Hari Krishna and hear what his worldview is. I let him give his evangelistic spiel. And then I point out to him and say, “Well, now let me see if I have this right. According to your commitments if I don’t meditate and do the yoga; if I don’t finally get beyond this...it’s a Christian term...but sinful tendency to think of myself as a separate individual in the realm of reality; if I don’t do that then I’m not going to get to nirvana, and when I die I’ll be on the wheel of life that brings me back for another go around to see if I can get it right next time, and then next time, and next time—until I finally learn to gain the enlightenment of Hindu philosophy that in fact there is no distinction between me and the rest of reality and I’m really just a drop of water that’s fallen into the shoreless ocean of being.” The Hari Krishna says, “Wow! That’s good! You really got it! Yeah, that’s what I meant to say.” “Well,...difficulty with that. What you’re telling me is that the problems in my life and in the world in general are that we draw distinctions. And then on the other hand you’re drawing distinction between where I am now and that nirvana that I want to get to if I’m divinely enlightened. So you contradicted yourself.” Now I don’t know if many of you have done work with Hari Krishnas or Hindus in general, but, as much as...I hope that’s an impressive argument to you, or Westerners, or Christians, or whatever you want to say. Easterners are not terrible impressed with that kind of stuff. Do you know what they say?

“There goes your Western logic again.” I say, “Oh, Western logic...do you have a problem with Western logic?” And you always have to be a little bit like Colombo here, you see.... “And I just have one more question, now....” And he has a problem with questions.... “Well, so you repudiate logic, is that what you’re telling me?” “Yes, we repudiate it. It is illusion. It is part of [mahdia].” “Oh. Well then, if you repudiate logic I guess you don’t.”

Now the person will of course think that you’ve kind of got to get the wax out of your ears --

“What—didn’t you hear me? I said I repudiate logic. I don’t have to be logical.” And I say, “Oh. Then I don’t repudiate logic then, I guess.”

Now we’ll see where the brilliant ones in the class are. How many faces start lighting up. Think about this, when someone tells you, “I repudiate logic”, what he has said is, “I can no longer explain when you contradict me, because logic doesn’t matter to me.” And I so I just offer an immediate contradiction and say, “Well if you do, you don’t.” And every time he gets upset with that what he’s saying is, “I’m not really an irrationalist, I want to hold onto at least a little bit of rationalism—just enough to disagree with you.” And so, all I’m getting here is—although I’m making a point that the irrationalist has conceded the case, and as an apologist you no longer have to worry about that, there are still things you can say apologetically to deal with irrationalists.

Okay. My third point has been apologetics assumes in both parties the desire to be rational.

My fourth observation: studying apologetics is important to distinguish proof from persuasion. It is important to distinguish proof from persuasion. Well, it’s not just in apologetics, frankly; but in apologetics it becomes very important that you not be confused between these two different notions—proof and persuasion. An argument need not

be accepted by everyone for it to be conclusive. An argument need not be accepted by everyone for it to be conclusive. Another way of putting this is a sound argument is not weakened as an argument...a sound argument is not weakened as an argument by the errors, or fallacies, or stubbornness of someone who is not assenting to the argument. If I offer as an argument to somebody: All sailors are drunkards. Popeye is a sailor. Therefore, Popeye is a drunkard. On the assumption that my premises are true and the logic is acceptable here, the fact that a person may have the irrational desire to defend sailors against that kind of accusation, and therefore will not assent to my argument, has nothing to do with my argument. And there's more to it than argument here. But as you're assessing an argument, as you're assessing a proof, the response to it is a completely different matter. On the other side—I mean, I've talked about people that have good arguments who, through fallacies, or mistakes in their own thinking, or stubbornness don't want to assent to them. On the other side, there are people who are convinced of conclusions for very bad reasons. There are some people who believe things with no argument at all, as a matter of fact. They may be fully persuaded of something, and yet they don't even have an argument for it. I only bring these things out to help clarify there's a difference between proof and persuasion.

Moreover, there's a distinction to be drawn between reasons for believing some premise and causes for believing that premise. The reason why we draw this distinction is because it turns out that belief is both an epistemic and a psychological notion. It's fascinating what work is being done in philosophy, not only in [____244____] logic, but also in the philosophy of psychology—on the notion of belief itself. At the time that I did my doctoral dissertation which was specifically on the subject of self-deception, much of this work on the notion of belief was relevant. This belief is not simply an epistemic notion—a bearer of truth; something subject to proof or disproof—it's also a psychological notion. Accordingly, sometimes people believe things and the causes for their belief are not really related to the reasons they offer at all. You know that, don't you? You know people who want to believe, for instance, in the innocence of the Hillary Clinton, and the causes of your belief have nothing to do with the evidence that might or might not be offered.

This distinction between causes and beliefs (just to give you a little bit of a philosophical preview, you might just study this some time) especially comes to the fore when we look at conflict states within people and in their thinking. When we deal with irrational beliefs, or we deal with beliefs that are somehow more [__264__] self-condemnatory. I believe that's when we get ripe for self-deception. When people are caused to believe something because they want to defend themselves against the, well, the self-condemnation of knowing that they killed their own child—or they're responsible for some act they think is reprehensible, or whatever it may be. So causes of belief, reason for belief have to be distinguished.

Having made these observations let me point out, then, that persuasion, which is an important consideration for people who want to be ministers of the gospel—persuasion is person-relative. But for those of you who as ministers are going to be doing apologetical work, do not confuse epistemology with the sociology of knowledge. Don't confuse persuasion and the various factors that bear on what you might do to be more or less persuasive, with what makes an argument a sound or a conclusive argument.

Okay. I've made four observations up to this point, and I'm going to make three more, and then I'm going to interact with Mr. Frame's book.

My fifth observation is that presuppositionalism, as a method of defending the faith, does not seek to build up a worldview element by element, with one argument for this, another argument for that, etc., etc. Presuppositionalism does not use its specific arguments as though this argument helps put one of the pieces of the puzzle in place, this argument puts another piece of the puzzle in place, and we keep using our arguments, or a series of arguments, until all the pieces of the puzzle are put in place. To change the metaphor, Dr. Van Til said, "Presuppositionalism doesn't [____296____] like a blockhouse method" —you know, where you build the house block, by block, by block. Now it is true that we can only talk about one thing at a time—depending on how you individuate things—but we can't say everything that can be said about the faith, nor can we use every argument that's usable about the faith at the same time. However, don't confuse that fact that we can only deal with one thing at a time with the idea that presuppositionalists are trying to bargain for one limited point, then another limited point, and they finally want to add all them up to the house of knowledge, or the house of faith, whatever it's going to be. Even though we can only talk about one thing at a time, or focus attention on a particular aspect of our philosophy, or even pursue a specific line of

argument one at a time—these specific arguments are part of a larger more basic strategy, they are not a series of demonstrations of developing isolated points. And that’s why I believe when you’re a presuppositionalist, of course there will be a large variety of arguments. I might put it this way: a large variety of illustration are available for the point of our fundamental argument. Our basic strategy as presuppositionalist—to prove the possibility of the contrary, or how it’s impossible to make sense out of anything apart from the worldview, however you want to state that major point that we’re all trying to do—there are a variety of illustrations for that. But don’t confuse those illustrations with proving something about logic; now let’s use something about rationality; now let’s prove something about the uniformity of nature; and we’ll add all these up and we’ll finally get the Christian worldview. Presuppositionalists don’t believe that you build the Christian worldview. To put it very simply, the Christian worldview has been delivered to us as a packaged deal. I don’t mean to be disrespectful, but you know what I’m getting at. God has delivered to us in His Word the entire picture. We don’t always see Him correctly, obviously. We could have another lecture about the hermeneutical circle, when He wrote the theology, and so forth, and the better we understand the faith the better we can defend it. That’s all true. But all I’m getting at here is that ideally or in theory we begin with an entire worldview, and then we go and we set that over against whatever the unbeliever has to offer by way of contrast.

You need to be remembering that the unbeliever might not be able to tell you what his worldview is. Many unbelievers, many believers, don’t talk that way. You have to learn to communicate, obviously. And Dr. Van Til said we mustn’t expect that unbelievers walk around with all of their philosophical, you know, system worked out ready to just give it to us. So when we get into an argument and somebody challenges our faith, he says what you have to do is start inquiring into the presuppositions that this person is using—even though he or she didn’t know that she was using them. Okay. You may take a while to set the stage if you do this correctly; but eventually, in theory, to whatever degree we can with the time, and circumstances, and personalities involved, we want to set out the entire Christian worldview against the entire worldview of the unbeliever. And as we start arguing then, we’re dealing with isolated elements and illustrations of the presuppositional challenge.

My sixth point is just what I’ve already started to get into: presuppositionalism urges us to look beyond the surface of the faith in the discussion. It urges us to realize that there are important and unacknowledged factors influencing the kind of reasoning that each party employs. A few months ago I was at the University of California [at] Davis, debating an atheist lawyer who had at one time worked along with the ACLU and came from a Jewish family, and his...members of his family had been executed in Auschwitz, and so forth, and uh—well we could talk about that debate sometime. He was a real feisty fellow—I think fairly arrogant, trying to be honest with you here. There are, uh, sorts of things you want to say and challenge the guy, and so forth. But in that debate I opened by trying to explain to the audience—not everyone picks up on it—but I opened by telling them, when you watch what’s going on between us, you know, in our wrangling, or disagreeing over this line of reason or evidence here, you have to understand you come into the movie half way through the movie. Don’t think we’re just now developing, you know, what’s the evidence, what’s the argument, and so forth. There is a background to the way people think. And presuppositionalism I think has to be at least credited with this in terms of 20th Century apologetical theory—it’s drawn attention to that. The Christian shouldn’t take things for granted. They should start pushing...to say, well now what are you assuming about the nature of reality, when you say that? What is your theory of knowledge. How do you think we know what we know? Why do you believe there are universal abstract enemies like the “lost watch”, whatever it may be. We have to push about the presuppositions—the unacknowledged factors—that influence the reasoning that each party is employing. And in that sense presuppositionalism amounts to analyzing or doing an interlope critic of the implicit worldviews being used by the two parties, looking for their crucial presuppositions.

And this brings me to my seventh point. I’ve been trying to develop this slowly for you. The presuppositional approach that Dr. Van Til developed takes a hint, if you will, from the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Kant was the professor of logic and metaphysics at the University of Konigsberg in Prussia. He died in the year 1804. I can’t give you an entire lecture on Kant, but you might want to remember that Kant, as a philosopher, lived in a time that could be described as the crossroads of rationalism and empiricism—both of them needing to be salvaged from skepticism. Rational metaphysics had fallen into irresolvable controversy and had come to appear useless and speculative. The empirical method, on the other hand, it turned out could not verify metaphysical concepts, and thus destroyed science. In the name of science, it destroyed science, and lead to skepticism—of a very radical sort: solipsistic skepticism. And so Kant seeing this situation develops an approach to philosophy that is often called critical philosophy. You see that reflected, for instance, in the title of maybe his best-known work, *The Critique Of Pure Reason*, an examination of the

nature of reason—but a critical examination. What is assumed when we reason? And this critical philosophy he called transcendental idealism. And by transcendental idealism he simply meant we have to ask what are the pre-conditions of the intelligibility of experience. When we think of experience as intelligible what are we presupposing? What are the pre-conditions of that? So a transcendental, uh, you might put it this way; for Kant a transcendental is that which is presupposed by experience, and transcendental proof shows under what conditions it's possible to experience the world intelligently. Under what conditions it's possible to experience the world intelligently.

Now listen closely, because this is necessary to understand what I'm going to say about Mr. Frame in just a minute: Kant maintains that he could not prove the transcendentals—could not prove the transcendentals directly by appeal to clear and distinct ideas. That, of course, meant he couldn't follow the rationalist. He couldn't...let's just take the principle of causality—that's an easy illustration for most introductory students. Did Kant prove causality by saying....

[Side Two]

...conditions or presuppositions of rational inquiry. And you say, the claim that a basis for doubt is inconceivable. That is, when someone says, "I've got something here that's indubitable," he says that that claim is justified. That is, here's how you prove claims of that sort. A claim that a basis for doubt is inconceivable is justified whenever a denial of the claim would violate the conditions or presuppositions of rational inquiry. So you have what's known in many circles (and it's used in different ways) an indirect argument. Basically you deny his claim. I claim that the Christian worldview is indubitable. It's certain. And how do I know that it's certain, that's it's beyond doubt? Because if you deny it you have violated the pre-conditions of rational inquiry. That without the Christian worldview it turns out you wouldn't be able to do science, logic, ethics, find human dignity, on and on and on. That is the general nature of Dr. Van Til's apologetical approach.

Now of this approach Mr. Frame asks some questions in his new book, Apologetics to the Glory of God, and we begin on page 71. I'd like to very quickly go through these questions and try to answer them as one Van Tilian or one presuppositionalist might, and then we'll open the floor to get your responses to see what you think.

Near the top of 71, Mr. Frame says:

I agree with Van Til that theistic argument should have a transcendental goal. Certainly our purpose is to prove nothing less than the full biblical teaching about God—that he is absolute personality, transcendent and immanent, sovereign, Trinitarian. And indeed, part of that teaching is that God is the source of all meaning. Certainly we must not argument in a way that misleads the inquirer to think that God is anything less than this. But I have some questions.

Okay, so everything I've done so far is all just preparation, finally coming in why I came today to try to answer Mr. Frame's questions. He'll decide whether I do a very good job of it or not.

First [he says], I question whether the transcendental argument can function without the help of subsidiary arguments of a more traditional kind.

And if you want to do cross-references, it's important that you look at page 73 where a similar remark is made at the end of what is called Number 5, when he speaks of the transcendental argument requiring supplementation by other arguments.

Okay, so the first thing Mr. Frame is asking is, "Can you really use the transcendental argument without subsidiary...being required to [use] subsidiary arguments and subsidiary arguments of a more traditional tie. Well in my remarks this afternoon I have already given an account for the variety of arguments that might be used by presuppositionalists. And so in that sense I could agree; I could say, "Of course, it calls for other arguments." You don't just stand up and make the one remark: Christianity is the pre-condition of intelligibility—and that's it. And when someone asks a question about the king list of the Old Testament you say, "Christianity is the presupposition of the intelligibility of experience"...and go on and on and on. So I, in one sense, I'm agreeing it takes more than just

those claims or arguments of that nature. It takes other kinds of arguments as well. But as you know I've indicated that this variety of arguments are illustrative of the broader strategy. They are not arguments of a different kind, they are just illustrative of the broader presuppositional or transcendental thrust. They are not independent proofs of isolated elements of the Christian system. It's not as though, well now that I've proven you need logic, let me prove that you need induction; and now that I've proven you need induction, let me show that you need moral absolutes; and then I'm going to wrap it all up one day and include Jesus in there, and you've got the Christian worldview. It's nothing like that. Subsidiary arguments are called for, but I don't tend to call them subsidiary, I tend to call them illustrative of the general strategy. I suppose what concerns me even more about than calling them subsidiary though, is to say that they are of the traditional kind. If you heard my lecture this morning, you already know what I will be getting here. I believe that there's an epistemological and moral divide between traditional apologetics and presuppositional apologetics. And so I wouldn't be inclined to say that the arguments I'm using are of the traditional kind. But then, when you go on to see what Mr. Frame means by this—follow closely—it turns out he doesn't mean of the traditional kind either. He means of the traditional kind only as reformulated to be true to our ultimate commitment and loyalty to the Word of God, and final authority of Jesus, and so forth.

The difficulty I have with the traditional arguments—and I don't have time to elaborate, sorry—but the problem I have with the traditional arguments is of course a moral problem. I've explained that. It's an epistemological problem that is the theory of facts, concepts, logic, and so forth—is wrong. But just bottom rung of the rung of the ladder, they're bad arguments! They're really bad arguments as traditionally formulated. Now what I see what Mr. Frame does in reformulating them in his book, I—for the most part, I'm not going to give up all critical mindset here—but for the most part I don't have difficulty with that. I rejoice in it. But he's not giving you the traditional arguments. The traditional arguments are very bad arguments. If you appeal to the concept of causality to prove there's a creator of this world, you've proved that there are many creators of this world, as equally as you've proved that there's one. You can prove Aristotle's god to be the creator of this world as much as you can prove the God of Moses, and on, and on, and on, and on. The problem with these traditional arguments is not just moral or epistemological—it's just that they're bad arguments too.

So, to Mr. Frame's first question I'd say, "Yes." Transcendental presuppositionalism calls for other kinds of arguments, but I don't believe that they're of the traditional sort. They must be versions of presuppositional argument.

Number two, he says:

Second, I do not agree [that] the traditional arguments necessarily conclude with something less than the biblical God.

It sometimes said that, uh, if you try to prove that God is the first cause, what you've got here is an idolatrous conclusion because God is more than the first cause. And Mr. Frame, I think properly, goes on to say that, uh, if you prove what is true in Christianity, even though you haven't proven every statement that a Christian will make, you haven't necessarily been unfaithful to the biblical God. I mean if I preach a sermon in which I say "God is love" and somebody comes up to me afterwards and says, "Preacher, I find that you are heretical because you said that 'God is love.'" "Well, the Bible says that God is love...." He says, "Yes. But God is a consuming fire, too. You didn't say that." Well, wouldn't I say, "Well, but I didn't mean that God is love in a way that denies that He's a consuming fire." We can't prove everything at once; we can't talk about everything at once; and Mr. Frame's certainly right to point that out.

The problem I have, though, is the traditional arguments intend less than the biblical God. And not all traditionalists say this, but many openly state that they're not trying to trying to prove something distinctively Christian, that they're proving something that all religions of the following sorts should agree to. And then you can, you know, raise the intention and say, "Now we're going to add that God is also intelligent, and then God is loving...." And then on and on. And they will actually say that they're not dealing with the biblical God specifically or distinctively. Traditional arguments are presented as isolated and independent of the whole Christian view. And as they are abstracted from the Christian worldview and the context of the Christian worldview, the traditional arguments do lead to a kind idolatrous conclusion. After all, if you get thought thinking thoughts as the conclusion of your cosmological argument, you have not at all been honoring to the Creator of heaven and earth as presented in the Bible. And so, I

agree that you can't prove everything at once, but I'm not happy with the idea the traditional arguments might be the way we, uh, try to prove the things we do.

Number three. Mr. Frames said:

It should also be remembered that the traditional arguments often work. They work because (whether the apologist recognizes this or not) they presuppose a Christian worldview.

Well, I'm wondering what does he mean when he says that the traditional arguments "work." Does he mean that they succeed at persuading people? Well if he does I can't deny that, some people are persuaded by the traditional arguments. And I think that probably is what he means. I looked at page 73, uh.... Well he talks near the middle of the page about Van Til's transcendental argument:

...is not sufficient, by itself, to prove the existence of the biblical God to everyone's satisfaction.

In the above paragraph:

Since there is no single argument guaranteed to persuade every rational person,....

...so forth, and so on. So I assume that on page [73] he means that the traditional arguments work in the sense that they persuade. Okay, maybe they do. Here's my problem, though: they don't work as autonomous arguments, and they are not presented as reformulations of the transcendental argument, they are presented as autonomous by most traditional apologists.

When Mr. Frame goes on to talk about how these arguments work, again I have to point out he doesn't give you a traditional argument, he gives you a presuppositional version of the argument. And then notice this part of the opening line—this is crucial. He says:

It should also be remembered that the traditional arguments often work. They work because (whether the apologist recognizes this or not) they presuppose a Christian worldview.

"Whether...[acknowledged] or not" is not a parenthetical, peripheral issue. I would maintain that that is the key...that is the key to the methodological error in the traditional arguments. [It] is that they do not acknowledge that you must have a Christian worldview to make sense out of what is being argued.

Page 74—at the top of the page Mr. Frame says:

...we should certainly not say anything to an inquirer that suggests we can reason, predicate, assess probabilities, etc., apart from God.

Amen. I agree—that's the whole point. But the traditional method does that, and does it explicitly, and defends doing it explicitly. And that's why I'm a little concerned that, uh, we are told that the traditional arguments often work.

By the way, we have to ask in return to Mr. Frame, "Is it acceptable as apologists to use fallacious arguments with someone as long as they are not self-conscious enough, or sophisticated enough in their opposition to know that the argument is fallacious?" Mr. Frame acknowledges that if you get a self-conscious unbeliever—one with philosophical sophistication—he will resist the traditional arguments. He'll know better than to buy into a general notion of causality, or what have you. Yes, but once you have said that, then aren't you granting that those people who are persuaded by these arguments are only persuaded because they don't know better? It doesn't glorify God to offer fallacious arguments as long as the unbeliever doesn't catch the fallacy.

Question No. Four. Mr. Frame says:

Van Til's slogan, "Christian theism is a unit," should be understood with such qualifications.

And then down a couple of lines....

...I do not think that the whole of Christian theism can be established by a single argument, unless that argument is highly complex! I do not think an argument should be criticized because it fails to prove every element of Christian theism. Such an argument may be part of a system of apologetics which as a whole establishes the entire organism of Christian truth.

But as I've indicated in my opening remarks, presuppositionalism doesn't try to establish, point by point as separate elements, a developing worldview. We start with the whole—or at least ideally and in theory—we start with the whole of the Christian worldview. We don't aim to establish, as part of the system, elements of the entire organism. This bears on a response to him regarding Number Five on page 73. He says:

...we must prove more than that God is the author of meaning and rationality. Ironically, at this point, Van Til is not sufficiently holistic!

But if you remembered that, according to Van Til, we start with the entire Christian worldview and set it over against the non-Christian worldview by comparison and do an internal critic, Van Til is not speaking narrowly of meaningfulness. What he's saying is, the entire worldview is available. He is being very holistic. He's not trying to build it up piece by piece. And so I think there's something of a misconstrual of transcendental argumentation as though we are dealing with parts, not the whole worldview, when we argue.

And Number six:

All this suggests a further reason why there is no single argument that will prove the entire biblical doctrine of God.... Since there is no single argument guaranteed to persuade every rational person,...

And did you catch that—the move from “prove” to “persuade?” And that confusion, I think, has to be cleared up. Presuppositionalists, moreover, don't claim to be offering a single argument which rules out all other kinds. I've already spoken to you about that. Now the summary of Mr. Frame's evaluation of Van Til's transcendental thrust here is found on page 74. He says:

Must we bring this point up [the transcendental argument]...Must we bring this point up explicitly in every apologetical encounter? I would say no.

And I would say no also. I don't think you have to explicitly use transcendental arguments all the time when you're dealing with the unbeliever. But I think all the arguments you use need to be subsets of, or illustrations of the transcendental direction of thought. The problem with the traditional approach is not just that they're using a transcendental method implicitly, it's that the traditional approach explicitly denies resting on Christian presuppositions.

Just below the middle of the page—page 74:

Now we should not hesitate to declare the intellectual lordship of Christ (in the manner, e.g., of 1 Cor.... [1 and 2 to declare the intellectual lordship of Christ]) to would-be intellectuals, or others who are particularly afflicted with the desire, the prideful ambition, to think autonomously. But I should think that the majority of inquirers would not need to hear this point specifically.

Now, did you catch what happens here? “...the majority of inquirers. [_____705_____] I can agree with that. The majority of inquirers may not need to have their intellectual pride immediately smashed in the face, and so forth. But when they become intellectual opponents of the faith then we must use the transcendental approach. By the way, Mr. Frame ends on the point that I...that's so important and so well-put. I'd just like to read the paragraph to you at the bottom of the page. He says:

Still, modern “apostles to intellectuals” will find many occasions to stress the transcendental direction of apologetics. Autonomy has been routinely assumed in secular thought since the days of Greek philosophy (and

its Eastern counterparts). Intellectuals are often proud of their autonomy (sometimes called “neutrality,” “unbiased objectivity,” etc.), and that pride must be abased. An intellectual will often agree to submit to Christ as Lord in every area except that of the mind. Sacrificium intellectus, “sacrifice of the intellect,” is a dreaded concept among modern thinkers. “Oh yes, Jesus is Lord; but we must believe in evolution, because all the best scholars do.” “Jesus is Lord, but all the best Bible scholars deny biblical authority and inerrancy.” In reply, it is important for us to tell inquirers that Jesus demands all, not some, of our loyalty (Deut. 6:4ff; Mark 8:34-38). And that includes loving him with the mind—which may well entail holding some unpopular views on scholarly matters.

Of course, with that paragraph Mr. Frame and I are entirely in agreement. I think that’s what’s at stake in apologetics. When anybody would raise up anything against the knowledge of God, we must bring every thought captive to cast it down. And I can teach that my six-year-old child, and I can teach it to Ph.D.’s in philosophy, and what they are doing is all a version of that strategy. That’s what presuppositionalism, I think, is all about.

There’s one last point that has to be made. It’s the one many of you have been waiting for, and it’s taken a long time to get here. I apologize for that. Mr. Frame talks about indirect argumentation. His way of putting it, beginning on page 75, is to talk about negative and positive arguments. Negative [arguments] are those which refute the unbeliever’s worldview, positive are those which offer evidence for our own. And, uh, he tells us in arguments of the negative form are often useful, and he says, but I have a question about them. And here’s the question. He says:

Are indirect arguments really distinct from the direct arguments?

And the answer is, yes they are—really distinct from indirect arguments. The direct and the indirect are quite distinct from each other in terms of philosophical methodology. But of course Mr. Frame wouldn’t have been asking this question if he didn’t think there was some reason to think otherwise. And so, uh, let me go on and read for you why he wants to question this. He says:

Any indirect argument of this sort can be turned into a direct argument by some creative rephrasing.

He admits that the indirect form may have some rhetorical advantages. But nevertheless, he says you can rephrase an indirect argument to make it a direct argument.

It’s on this point that I have to, with a great deal of respect for my former teacher and...say, “John,...I think you’re wrong.” You cannot simply rhetorically rephrase an indirect argument and make it into a direct argument. I want to refer back to what I said briefly about Kant. Kant did not prove the principle of causality by appeal as the rationalist would want to clear and distinct ideas. He did not appeal directly to a sensation, or to a set of complex [_____773_____] as the empiricists would want. Kant rather said, in order to think at all intelligently you must employ this principle. That was an indirect version. And now, for some to say, well you know with some creative rephrasing, Immanuel, I think we could really make that an appeal to clear and distinct ideas; or really an appeal to sensation. I am sure that Immanuel Kant would say, no I think you’ve missed the point. And I think most commentators on Kant would say whether he’s right or wrong, you’ve missed the genius of what he offered.

Now here’s the way Mr. Frame attempts to do this, and I’m going to argue against this thing. He says:

...if I say, “Without God, no causality,”...

That, I think, is a short version—he does footnote here my debate with Gordon Stein—it may be a short version of what I was doing there. He says, “Without God, no causality”...or no logic, or whatever it may be....

Indeed, if I say “Without God, no causality,” the argument is incomplete, unless I add the positive formulation “But there is causality, therefore God exists,”....

Now, I’m not going to read on because it’s the next part that I think is the big mistake that he makes.

In one sense this is true. I could give an argument that doesn't express all of the premises, but if you want to draw it out when I say, you don't follow the Christian worldview, Dr. Stein, then you have no basis to appeal to an abstract, universal, absolute notion like the law of logic, or [_____802_____] like you've got the inductive principle. If you don't have the Christian worldview then you can't have causality, you can't have logic. See, of course you have to add to that if you're going to drive this point home. And of course we all want induction, we all want logic. Therefore, God does exist. Or the negative form is, "Deny God, you've deny logic; but you can't deny logic, therefore you can't deny God."

Mr. Frame says, but that is just a rhetorical, uh, matter, and there may be advantages to that—he's not altogether against it. But he says, it really could be reformulated as just identical with the direct argument. And here's why he says that. (Am I going to destroy anything by...?) This is not at all the way...you know, in graduate school of philosophy we get away with writing an argument out. Mr. Frame knows that, I know that, but for simplicity what he's saying is, we have one premise, uh, it goes: "Without God, no causality." I'll let "C" stand for whatever we're trying to talk about the meaningfulness of. Okay...now.... But my argument is going to conclude, "Therefore God exists." Okay, so far we're together. And he says, now if you're going to write this out completely you have to add another premise here. And the premises you would put in there is, "But there is causality," or, if you will, "It is not the case that there's no causality." Just so you can see the modus tollens that's involved here, okay. If you're an atheist, then you've got to give up causality; but you can't give up causality, therefore you can't be an atheist—God exists. See, Mr. Frame at this point is only adding the missing premise. But here's the problem. He goes on to say, "Unless I have a positive formulation that there is causality, therefore God exists," and then he says, appositionally, "A formulation identical with the direct argument." Meaning, if you take this premise and the conclusion—that is not not causality; or there is causality, therefore God exists—he says, well, that's just one of the traditional arguments; what you call the cosmological argument. And here's the problem, and I'm speaking as a philosopher to a philosopher: Mr. Frame has changed his terms. That's the fallacy of equivocation. This is not the traditional argument, although the traditional argument can use those words. But in this argument, "there is causality", is not taking up something that is intelligible by itself, and therefore God must be the first cause. "There's causality, therefore there is another cause, the biggest one of all, first one of all—God." In the argument given by Van Til, or Bahnsen, or a presuppositionalist, it says, "Without God causality has no meaning." It's unintelligible. However, causality is intelligible. "There is causality" here is not the Thomastic or Aristotelian observation about motion and efficient cause, and so forth. But when Mr. Frame says this is the traditional argument, I believe that's the only way he can make sense of that, and I have to point out that that's just mistaken. I don't think the difference in these arguments is just rhetorical. It is rhetorical, and I know Mr. Frame values that rhetorical difference; but I want to say that there is a clear difference between the kind of reasoning Immanuel Kant sought to do—he may not have done it well—and what Van Til has sought to do, and what Heraclitus were doing in the traditional approach. Maybe [_____886_____] all that he has to be said.

Wittgenstein once said [for] a mistake, "this is too big, this is madness." I'm not going to say Mr. Frame is guilty of madness, but there is something that has to be said here. In fact I shared this with one of my better students on the way down today: I said, Now, Mr. Frame is an intelligent man. He knows better than the equivocate like this—to turn a premise about the intelligibility of the causal concept, into a premise about the function or causation of the world—which is the traditional premise. And so it isn't enough for me just to conclude by saying I think he's made a mistake. I don't want to say he's mad, but I do want to say I think there's something else working in Mr. Frame here besides just the philosophical issues. I want to commend it, but I also want to caution you about it. And maybe he'll tell me I'm just all wet, and I don't know what I'm talking about. After all, I can't read his heart, and I'm not pretending that I can. But I do think that what might be going on here when he makes this kind of remark which is (I think, philosophically) just wrong—is a desire to promote peace within the Christian community, and to keep us from thinking that, you know, "there's us and them." And "us" presuppositionalists who have got our really good, strong arguments, and we're loyal to Jesus in the way the others aren't, need to realize that we can learn from others, and so forth. And let's not try to over emphasize this difference. Philosophically I don't think Mr. Frame should or would make this mistake. But if you think in terms of his convictions—very sincerely and personally held about evangelical reunion—then maybe you can make more sense out of that kind of remark being made. I may not agree with it, but I can agree with the motives that lead to this thing. I think we ought try to work more with each other, try to understand each other, and not try to be self-righteous in promoting the advantages of our system, if there are advantages. But I would still have to say—this is my bottom line: I think Dr. Van Til has offered us something distinctive by way of methodology as well as, which is the beauty of this book, has offered us something which is morally distinctive in

terms of our presuppositional commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here's Mr. Frame's summary on page 88:

The presuppositionalism we are talking about is (1) a clear-headed understanding of where our loyalties lie and how those loyalties affect our epistemology, (2) a determination above all to present the full teaching of Scripture in our apologetic without compromise, in its full winsomeness and its full offensiveness, (3) especially a determination to present God as fully sovereign, as the source of all meaning, intelligibility and rationality, as the ultimate authority for all human thought, and (4) an understanding of the unbeliever's knowledge of God and rebellion against God, particularly (though not exclusively) as affects his thinking.

Notice here, how our moral, our spiritual loyalty affects our epistemology, where he talks about the source of all meaning and thought being tied to the ultimate authority....

FRAME4

An Answer To Frame's Critique Of Van Til
(Profound Differences Between the Traditional and Presuppositional Methods)
Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen
(Tape Four)

...What would you like to ask me. Right here. Oh, Mr. Frame...we owe you the first opportunity.

JF: ...I don't know how much time that'll take, uh,....

GB: We couldn't possibly be [_____5_____].

JF: Well, uh, I don't know...I don't, uh, I'd have to sit down and think about this a little bit before giving a detailed response to what you developed here. I guess I would respond a little bit to the kind of theme that I think runs through the whole discussion...and, uh.... That...that theme perhaps, I don't know, maybe we need to talk a little about definitions, and so on. I noticed a number of places there where you were defining things a little bit differently from the way I would, and that may have caused some misunderstanding. Perhaps the chief of these is, uh, in identifying what is essential to the traditional apologetics. I sometimes use the term "traditional"—you sometimes do too, because we're students of Van Til, and of course Van Til made the very sharp distinction between the traditional method and his own method.

Uh, now, you see there's one...there's one level at which you can identify the traditional method by actual statements of neutrality that certain people have made over the history of apologetics. Now you quoted some really horrendous examples of that in your lecture this morning—Carnell saying, "Bring on your revelations...let them make peace with the law of noncontradiction of the facts of history and then they will deserve a rational man's assent." Well that's a kind of [probematic] statement of, uh, of, uh,...I think Carnell was needling Van Til there intentionally. But that's a pretty good example of the extreme to which the scopes where you say, "Look, we are not going to reason on the basis of Scripture. We are not going to reason on the basis of God's revelation. We want to be absolutely autonomous. We're going to reason on the logic alone, and the fact alone, and etc., etc." And obviously in the light, I want no, uh...I want to give no quarters to that kind of thing at all. I mean if that's what somebody defines as the traditional method, you know, in that sense the methodological differences between the presuppositional and traditional methods in that sense are [hard] the facts. I mean the goal between those two approaches is very deep indeed. I tried in this book to make that very very clear. I mean the first three chapters certainly try in many many ways to make that point; and of course my previous book, uh, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, tries in many many ways to make that point. So if that's what somebody means by the transcendental method, or the traditional method, of course I would say the same things about it that you are saying. And I wouldn't want to claim any type of closeness, or any kind of common ground with them. I wouldn't want to, uh,...to, uh, you know, try to narrow the differences in that sense if that's what we mean by the transcendental method, [early] the traditional method.

But I think what people sometimes mean, uh, when they talk about the traditional method of apologetics is simply the, uh, the history of the uses of evidence, the uses of logic, and the kinds of arguments that have actually been brought to bear against unbelief. Sort of a textbook of the history of apologetics. You'll read a section in one of them: the ontological argument, and a section on the cosmological argument, and a section on the teleological argument. And these will be more or less abstracted from the larger context of the thought of these people who have offered these arguments. And so you're not going to get as a part of this argument—bring on you're revelations and what will be tested according to logic and fact, and so forth. Rather you'll just have the offering of a particular syllogism, etc.

Now when I look at that, uh, I say, "That is not necessarily something that we have distance ourselves from." If you look at the history of apologetics from the church fathers, to Augustine and Anselm, and to Aquinas, on down through the present—and even some of the things that Bishop Butler says, you see. I look at some of those things and I find them persuasive; I look at some of them and I find them nonpersuasive. But I don't feel that because I am a presuppositionalist or a Van Tilian, I necessarily have to reject that kind of thing in toto; that I have to distance myself from everything that even sounds like that. And I think that some Van Tilians have made that kind of mistake; and every now and then, Van Til himself did. I mean Van Til said things like: You cannot start with the concept of cause and come out with God at the end of the syllogism, because if you do, you're assuming that cause is intelligible apart from God. Now I don't believe that's right. I don't think that simply setting out a causal argument like that necessarily assumes that we can interpret cause apart from God. In fact the argument might have it in precisely the opposite purpose. I mean, indeed I think that most apologetists, whether they call themselves traditionalists or whatever, I think most apologetists, when they set forth

that kind of argument have believed, because they are Christians, they believe in their hearts that the concept of the causality is not intelligible apart from God. But if, you know, I...would even attribute that belief to Thomas Aquinas....

GB: We differ at that point. Everything up to that I'm entirely with you. But maybe if we just read the history of philosophy here...but go ahead....

JF: Yeah. But, uh, well anyway,...we could argue about individual cases, but it does seem to me that, uh,...if somebody really believes causality, therefore God, they're saying that one cannot understand causality adequately, uh, logically and factually—they cannot understand causality adequately if they deny the existence of God. So there is a transcendental direction there, even though it's not a complete transcendental argument. So what I'm saying here is that we don't, as presuppositionalists, need to distance ourselves from the traditional apologetics in the sense of a distancing ourselves from every specific argument that's been used within the apologetic tradition.

Now, uh, so...it may be, uh, that the difference between you and me there has more to do with defining what we're going to call traditional apologetics. I think that most of the time when Van Til talks about traditional apologetics he's talking about the...explicitly same thing as logic: "Bring on your revelations," etc. But see the other factor that you have to figure in here is that, uh, just about everybody is inconsistent—you know, in the history of apologetics. I mean, you know, these guys, the church fathers and Aquinas, and so and so forth. They're...sure, basing an awful lot on pagan thought. They're giving a, you know, bringing in pagan thought into their theology and apologetics in a way we certainly wouldn't do. Nevertheless, they're also Christians. You know. They really believe in God—they really believe in Christ. So there are a lot of things that are mixed in here together. And I'm trying to do justice to that, you know, while rejecting the neutralism, while rejecting the reliance on autonomy, and everything that that implies. You see, I want to, nevertheless, be able to draw upon the insights that they've had. I mean God really has made the world into a causal order, and that causal order really does point to Him. It reveals Him, you know. And they had the insight to see that that's the case; and I want to be able to use that insight in dealing with, uh,...with unbelievers.

So, that's generally the thought I have in listening to you....

GB: Mr. Frame, let me try to diagram what the difference between us might be, so you can correct this if it's wrong—that you might give clarity to the rest of us if it's right. We are agreed that there's something that we'll call "an attitude of autonomy" and the traditional approach sometimes endorses an attitude of autonomy, sometimes displays an attitude of autonomy; and we would agree, I think, that presuppositionalists sometimes display an attitude of autonomy even though their theory is against it.

JF: Yeah.

GB: So you have a problem of attitude regardless of you methodology.

JF: Uh, huh....

GB: Okay. So...that means logic...then there's a separate question, and that is, "What's our method of reasoning?" or "What's our theory of knowledge, epistemology?"...I have to be brief here.

This morning I argued that the attitude of the autonomy actually leads to a certain method, or an epistemology, that involves things like brute factuality, presuppositions as hypotheses, on and on and on. And although in your book you suggest that what's really at...uh, pardon the pun here or the redundancy...what's at the heart of presuppositionalism is the presuppositionalism of the heart—where we reject the attitude of autonomy, rather than it being the externals of methodology. There's a sense, because you....

JF: Remember that's a relative statement....

GB: Yeah, right. I was going to say there is a sense in which you were willing to agree with that this morning; that you do believe certain aspects of methodology—and crucial ones—as you just said here, can be affected by this attitude, “We don’t want that method either.”

Now let’s just take the worst-case scenario: Some people with a really bad attitude—autonomous—and giving us a method that is conjoined to that or appropriate to that, have also developed certain lines of argument. Okay. My conviction has been that for the most part in the history of apologetics, these are tied together. The one links to the other. And what you are helping us to see—and I don’t want to minimize, you correct me if I’m wrong—is that this attitude doesn’t have to produce this...excuse me,...this method...how do I put it. Well, let’s start here. These lines of argument can be put under a different group here; that you can take them and put them under a presuppositional method that is not guilty, Lord willing, is not guilty of this attitude of autonomy. That if you have a better method over here—the presuppositional method—it could appropriate these lines of argument, and that would be to our value because there are certain insights that are important in the history of apologetics. We all do...it is interesting...you run into people...they do reason causally. There’s something kind of gripping about that. And so they’re inclined to say, “Probably there’s a cause for the whole world.” Now, the only reason I resist them, Mr. Frame, is because having, you know, worked with pagan philosophers, I know that if you try to use that argument they’re going to very quickly become self-conscious, you know, and they’re going to say, “Now wait a minute; the fact that causality operates in the natural world, doesn’t mean that it’s a cause for the natural world.” That is logically fallacious—and I think you know it is too. You cannot reason from what I see in my experiences, and especially the particulars to everything as a whole, as a cause. So when they start pointing those things out, we really need to reformulate the argument. So you and I both want to reformulate the arguments, and we both want them to be reformulated according to a different method. We both want to reject this attitude. Are we together on that?

JF: I’d say so, sure.

GB: Okay. And you believe that Van Til too quickly looked at the out-of-context simple expression of a traditional argument and assumed that it had both the methodological and attitude problems built into it.

JF: Oh, not....

GB: Well then, we don’t disagree. You know, sometimes that just happens. Right here....

Q: What you described there was pretty much what I was questioning: the whole use of causality and the law of noncontradiction, is to reflect on [all ready] the image of God. There was another question that I had, though; is that I was reading some quotes from Van Til and it says this: “If one really saw that it is necessary to have God in order to understand the grass that grows outside his window, he would certainly come to a saving knowledge of Christ and a knowledge of to the absolute authority of the Bible.”

GB: What’s your question?

Q: The question is....

GB: That’s a very short version of the argument, you see, but there are a lot of premises missing, right?

Q: Okay. Then, it almost would seem like to me that this is what he’s saying the genius of his apologetical method. But it seems like to me that it’s...it’s just missing one thing: just because you understand everything can be in reference to God, and understand that everything is referenced to God, and everything else, doesn’t mean that you’re going to love it. And so, you’re basic understanding of knowledge is not found in that you presuppose God, but that you presuppose Him and love Him. Because...just because you automatically, you understand who God is, and reference everything to Him, doesn’t mean you have a heart attitude to love Him.

GB: Okay. If I’m right, you’re telling us that even if your presuppositional argument—transcendental force, a [nuclear] strength—great arguments, so forth—even if you used that that wouldn’t necessarily produce a love

for God in the unbeliever.

Q: A love for God that would show him absolute authority of the Bible and a saving knowledge of Christ. Because that's what it would produce. That's what love for God would produce....

GB: This is an extreme hypothesis, but for the sake of clarity philosophers have to do this some times: I think it's true to Dr. Van Til, and I'm fairly confident this afternoon that I believe this as well, that in theory...in theory the transcendental argument could lead an unbeliever to say, "Yes, I know the triune God exists, that the Bible is His Word, Jesus is His Son, etc., etc; that there is an everlasting damnation, it will be what I inherit and what I deserve; but I don't wish to follow it." See that's why it's important—I mean that's extreme. And what the Bible tells us, now this is having to do with human psychology and phil...not philosophy so much—that men don't come to acknowledge the truth if they don't love it. Okay. But in theory, I think we want to say that the apologetical argument can demonstrate all that, and you can get an unbeliever to say, "Well, I suppose you're right because I have no answer, and I don't know anybody else in the history of philosophy that's had an answer. But even if you are right, I don't care because I have no intention of bowing the knee to Him." That is theoretically possible.

Q: But that's the psalmist said when he said, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."

GB: Yeah. But, you see, when a person says that...when the person says that.... How can I put this? There's an ideal acknowledgement that I've got to bow to God intellectually. I can't know anything if I don't bow to God. But the fact that...that this is what, of course, is so schizophrenically wrong: In this extreme example you have somebody who is fearing God intellectually, but will not morally give up. He'd say, "I rather go to hell...." By the way, I've had two occasions where I've had people, very self-conscious, they weren't just being smart aleck, and so forth, that have said, "Yeah, I know that's what's going to happen, but I have no desire to follow Jesus."

Q: So then, their presupposition has to be changed by God rather than....

GB: Their heart has to be changed.

Q: But doesn't that also affect their presupposition?

GB: Well yes and no. I'm just trying to clarify so I won't mislead you. What I'm getting at here is—I put it to my students sometimes, that it is not your job to change people's hearts. Of course you should try to be persuasive, you should pray to that end, that's what you hope happens, but that's not your work. In essence—this over-simple—but in essence your job is to close their mouths. If the Spirit open their hearts then they'll accept it. But when people come challenging Christianity, saying, "Jesus is not who He said He is, life is just made up of myths, that you Christians are illogical..." all these sorts of challenges—as apologists we can be trained to close every mouth. But it's only God who knows the heart. In theory, you could have a person whose mouth is closed, but nevertheless he doesn't have a heart for it—in theory. I think that's extreme.... Another question. Right here...then over here.

Q: This morning I asked you the question, "How you internalize your presuppositions?" And you said, if I understood you right, that it was initially a spiritually/conversional type of experience, right? Now, now you just said today....

GB: Not spiritual divorced from the Word, remember. My answer was, "I heard the preaching of the gospel and the Spirit made me a different person."

Q: Okay. Okay. But today you just said, uh, "This presupposition was delivered to you in a package."

GB: Yeah...in the Bible....

Q: ...piecemeal....

GB: ...in the Bible....

Q: ...in the Bible. So let me ask you, when you received this package, did you have such elaborate structure as you understand it now.

GB: No. I came into the kingdom as a very small child, and in many ways I still am childish. But I think I've grown some, so what you're seeing today in my apologetical work is not what you would have seen the week after I was converted. And I grant you that point.

Q: All right. So therefore from its embryonic stage to the state of maturity—okay, you say this elaborate structure....

GB: No...okay....

Q: ...did God zap you every so often, and therefore you start to grow, or did you employ reason, or logic, or reading, you know, discussions to...to reach this state of maturity?

GB: Okay, John, I want to answer your question; but I also want to say, as a friend, and I say this in a friendly way: Remember that when you characterize it as “zapping” that that is what we would consider derogatory.

Q: No....

GB: There is a sense in which there is a kind of magical, uh, sort of thing, where you don't by incremental, rational steps make changes in your life. And you might call that the Holy Spirit “zapping” you, and taking a big step in sanctification. I don't deny that that happens. But....

Q: ...yeah, Paul was zapped....

GB: No....

Q: ...on the road to Damascus. True many of us are zapped...but these were...instances...you know...increments....

GB: ...yeah, well...all I want to say...just one comment...one connotation. Okay. Now, if...

Q: ...light...I cannot use the word...irreverently...okay.

GB: Okay...okay....

Q:I use it very...you know...

GB: ...I trust you...you know how to interpret....

Q: ...you know, most of us been converted, you know, not by such a dramatic kind of a...climactic kind of experience, you know, like Paul....

GB: In answer to you question: For the most part the growth, I think of all Christians, including myself, is more of a gradual, and gentle, and kind, but there are times when God has to give me, and I'll now use a connotation—a kick in the pants—because I'm rebellious. Or sometimes I saw that rebellion was in my mind, not just in my behavior. And so, yeah, it happens both ways, I think.

Q: But what I'm driving at is, in your growth, what resulted, you know, what was the thing that made you grow?

GB: The Word divined is the work of the Spirit.

- Q: All right. How do you make the Word to make you grow.
- GB: I'm sorry...how do I...
- Q: How do you make the Bible to make you grow?
- GB: How do I make the Bible make me grow.
- Q: Yeah.
- GB: Well, if I understand you right, the answer is I don't. The Holy Spirit makes the Bible make me grow....
- Q: Okay. How does the Holy Spirit cause the Bible to cause you to grow?
- GB: Well, sometimes He shows me that what God says in His Word is contrary to my natural way of thinking and I have to be corrected. So let's say that, uh, I'm having trouble with the doctrine of predestination. I say, "Well, now wait a minute. God could not predestine free acts of men. I mean, I know very well, because I've studied philosophy, and I've heard a lot of people talk about it, and I can't for the life of me understand how that could be. But then I read in the Bible that God predestines the free acts of men." One of the ways in which He makes the Spirit make the Bible make me grow is by correcting my lines of reasoning: what I think is connected to...connected to...connected to....
- Q: All right....
- GB: And then other ways is that He shows me that I should love Him more tenderly, and I should not...that I should not be so standoffish or proud about my reasoning. Or I should love the unbeliever who is my neighbor more fervently, if you will—to be patient with him, and so forth. There's a whole combination of things...
- Q: ...well, that's the point....
- GB: ...but God also helps me when He sends me to graduate school, or to Westminster Seminary, and so forth, and brings people into my life who are teachers—who can show me things that I wouldn't have thought of myself. So there's a lot...
- Q: Okay. What I'm driving at is that the Holy Spirit did not bypass your mind, did He? Or does He? For you, you know, for you to grow. Does He bypass your mind...to cause you to have such elaborate, [fine] structure of presuppositionalism.
- GB: Yes and no. He does and He doesn't. He bypasses...now let me start in how He doesn't. My mind is a tool that God has given. I have certain abilities because of the mind God's given me. Just like I have a body that has certain abilities, and a tongue that has certain abilities...I can speak and so forth. And, uh, God does not—at least ordinarily—bypass the functioning of a person's mind as he hears the Word and the Spirit helps him to understand and apply it. But He does bypass my mind, if you mean by that my mind as somehow the domineering authority over what is acceptable and not acceptable in my thinking. He bypasses that because He knows that that's not true at all. And every time I want to act that way, and others do, if we're going to learn at all, He's going to bypass that.
- Q: But in any case, what you were learning when you were growing, it was never disjunctual or disconnected with reality—with your environment, was it.
- GB: I don't think anything I've said today would suggest that it is.
- Q: All right. So,....
- GB: Before we go piece by piece here, what is the final point you're trying to make...where are we going.

- Q: My final answer is—because this morning you said the only thing meaningful to you is this absolute certainty. You discarded about, you know, what, you know, Prof. Frame, you know, using the probability, the validity of the probability theory. My bottom-line question is: I do not say it pejoratively, okay—how is your position different from a psychotic? Who is totally disjunctive with reality—with logic, with evidence, with reasoning—but is so sure that he’s absolutely right?
- GB: Well, one of the ways it’s different is that I put on my clothes when I go out to give a lecture....
- Q: Okay. If that is the basis of your validity of your authenticity....
- GB: ...but you said, “How.”.... I gave you one of the “hows.” I didn’t say that it was the basis.
- Q: ...Well, how to other people evaluate your authenticity, you know, the authenticity....
- GB: ...Well,...
- Q: ...to be so certain...against the...that all the other people are wrong.
- GB: Okay. Two things, real quickly, and then I’m going to go on to the next questioner, if you don’t mind.
- Q: Yeah.
- GB: When someone listens to me.... Let’s just take the putting the clothes on, okay. If I didn’t put my clothes on and I ran around, you know, naked like a raving maniac...totally out of touch with my environment, and so forth, I wouldn’t expect the unbeliever to be much interested in talking to me. There aren’t going to be a lot of unbelievers who say, “Well you know it’s possible that that’s the only guy who understands reality.... Okay. So I do expect...I do expect...I do expect that if you live a Christian life you get on better in this world. That’s what the proverbs tells you about; that the best to live in God’s world is according to His law, or to His standards—to submit to Him. The beginning of knowledge is the fear of the Lord. And I’ll be able to know things and to get on better in this world if I submit to God. And people can see that. I mean, presuppositionalist don’t think that the depravity of the natural man makes it impossible to see the difference between marriages that are successful and marriages that aren’t; between people agreeable to accomplish things intellectually and people that don’t; between a beautiful symphony and just cacophony, and so forth. Unbelievers can draw those distinctions. And we should expect that being made in the image of God they’ll be more inclined to talk to a man with his clothes on, than a raving idiot running around naked. So, that’s one of the ways that is done.
- Q: Very good. Because...I do not dispute, you know, the pious living that you say you have; and I certainly, you know, admire your godly living, and your, uh, exemplary Christian life, but my point is: you’re not saying because of your lifestyle, your Christian living, therefore it authenticates the validity of your presuppositions....
- GB: Yeah, you started in before I was finished....
- Q: Yeah...that’s okay....
- GB: But that’s what I would finish with. If one way or another, though, it is not my lifestyle that’s the issue. Because I need to tell people when I defend the faith—when I witness to people, and so forth—do not judge Jesus simply on what you see in me. He’s much better than that. And I’m doing my best to live up to discipleship, and to taking up my cross everyday, and so forth. So I wouldn’t have you evaluate Him on the flaws you see in me.
- Q: But nonetheless, you reflect, okay, His character....

GB: I grant you....

Q: At the maximum, you know, uh, you agree that you try....

GB: But when I fail, Christianity is certainly true. This has nothing to do with certainty and probability.

Q: But my point is that evidentialists can live just as good a godly life. Do you dispute the validity of their presuppositions?

GB: This is the last sub-question that I'll answer, okay. And it's the most poignant of all you've given. So let's just be honest about this. If you mean by that, can an evidentialist love Jesus, go to church as regularly as I do, witness to people.... But no, on that point about reasoning, the evidentialist is not as sanctified as John Frame or Cornelius Van Til. Because Jesus expects us to love Him with all of our mind as well—and that calls for obedience and submission, faithfulness to His teaching, and so forth. And that faithfulness is not just whether I put on my clothes or I keep the traffic laws, or whatever it is; that faithfulness is also seen in the way that I reason and use this tool God's given me.

Q: By your standard....

GB: ...No, no, by God's standard....

[Side Two]

GB: ...and this one right here says that only Christianity can be that ultimate truth the provides for precondition of intelligibility. And someone says, "Well, there might be another worldview, in many respects just like Christianity." Well, this is pretty much the strategy of deism in history, I believe. So that, well we can have a lot of these things but we don't need the redemptive stuff—the deity of Jesus, and so forth. But we do need, of course, a god who's creator, who's judge, and so forth and so on.

Some of you might say, well now how can you be sure then that this one is the right one? ...If this one is wrong about its pointing to [exposivity 491], it doesn't provide the pre-conditions of intelligibility at all. You know, this is the domino theory, we can know how it'll work out. If the Bible's wrong about that, it might be wrong about...[_____495_____]. So it hasn't provided the pre-conditions of intelligibility. So now, does this one provide the pre-conditions of intelligibility. The answer is, no it doesn't. Internal critique, you know, many illustrations of that and so forth.

Anyway, but now...but now our argument that we've been engaging in up to this point, we have thought was intelligible. So again, with the impossibility of the contrary we're back here. This one would work. When someone tries to take just the [exposivity 501] principle out, it doesn't work, and we're left with nothing again.

Q: And then how does it work again to let's say a Moslem or perhaps even a Mormon presuppositionalist who would also have to build in that [_____504_____] into their own [_____504_____]?

GB: Well,....

Q: ...It seems like you need to demonstrate the impossibility of the contrary before allowing number one, the premise and truth of our worldview, and number two, to stipulate from within our worldview that conflicting positions are incorrect. So I'm wondering how you would breakdown, you know, maybe followers of the Koran, or Book of Mormon would also....

GB: Let me just say before I answer that, you're exactly right. That's what it comes down to. I know many people don't like it, but that is what the Bible does. The Bible says, this does provide—you submit to God, and you...what I'm saying, and by the way that submission means you have to submit exclusively to Him—He's the only one who can provide that for you. Just like Jesus is the only One to provide salvation. If I were to give

you a soteriological analogy to this epistemological problem we're talking about, I know that as a lover of the Lord, you'd have no problem with this. So [_____514_____] would say, "Oh, well, yeah, I see how Jesus could be the Savior; in fact, I think He is the Savior, but maybe there are others, too. Maybe the bodhisattvas have something to offer." We'd say, "No. You have to understand, if He's your Savior He saves you exclusively. You mustn't go to the bodhisattva, you must not do, you know, the yoga in a religious sense, and so forth." That's all I'm saying epistemologically.

Now you want to know how do you answer then other worldview that make formally similar claims. And...is it all right...can I give a commercial for Mr. Frame...is it all right to tell people...I've got lots of tapes and courses of study on that that you can get from the Study Center and the Tape Ministry, that I want to encourage you to get—I'm mainly doing this not because I want to sell them, but because I have to be so brief and I'm sure you'll want more than I can offer now. What I tell people to do when I teach apologetics is treat these other religions in the very same way you treat philosophical roles—be it Plato, or Sartre, or whatever. Because they come and they have a certain view of reality, they have a certain view of the theory of knowledge, certain view of ethics—and you can do an internal critique of them as well. In the case of the Moslems, Moslem theology excludes the possibility that the Koran could be what it claims to be. Because according to Moslem theology, the law is not affected by any change, and nothing in this world can reflect the unchanging [miracle] of the law. Well if nothing in this world is adequate to do this, then of course human language can't do that, and it turns out the Koran cannot be what it claims to be. So you can do an internal critique—I'm being very quick about this.

I think you can also—by the way this is what I think is one of the real glories of what Mr. Frame does in his book, and in his syllabus before in teaching that I got from him many years ago, too—is that we have to remember that, uh, the alleged competitors to the Christian worldview are either just versions, straight-out versions of the pagan impersonalism that we deal with with the materialist, and so forth; or they come out to be "aping" Christianity. And that you can, in all the cases that I'm aware of, you can treat all those other worldviews as Christian heresies. How do I argue with a heretic. Well I usually go to the Bible. Since he claims divine revelation is found in the Bible, then I try to use the Bible to show that he's wrong. And I think that's the shortcut to that. Now somebody says, "Oh, but wait a minute. The Moslems have the Koran, they don't have the Bible." When people say that they only point out they've never read the Koran. You obviously would be much better at apologetics with people who believe the Koran if you've read their book. Don't we say that to unbelievers? We say, you'd be in a much better position to decide about the Bible if you've read it. So please read it and we'll discuss this. Anyway, if you've read the Koran you know that Mohammed—this was a strategic error, to be sure—but Mohammed repeatedly said that the Jews and the Christians were people of the book. He said that Allah had previously revealed himself in the law of Moses, the Psalms of David, in the gospel of Jesus. And so when I deal with a Moslem who wants to get down—and many times people don't really want to argue, they just want to chant, you know, their submission to Allah, and condemn you—but if you have somebody who really wanted to study it, I'd go to the Koran and say, "Now according to your own commitments you believe Allah first revealed himself in this book that I follow, right." The person would say, "Yes." "And by the way, in the law of Moses, standards for future prophets are given." And then you just show all the contradictions, and I think you can flesh out the apologetic from that point.

It's real important that we argue that Christianity is in a league of its own. That there's a sense in which the Christian religion offers a worldview that no other religion, no other philosophy offers. And from that standpoint we can more persuasively make the point that it's Christianity or nothing.

What else. [Kim]

Q: A student asked me to ask you these questions. He had to go to work....

GB: Do you do everything you're told to do?

Q: Okay. The first question: Aristotle and Kant both used the transcendental form of reasoning. This form of reasoning is not set forth explicitly in Scripture. Does this mean that Bahnsen and Van Til have conceded that

this form of reasoning is neutral?

GB: Uh, I'm very glad for the question because it gives me opportunity to make a point. And I want you to remember this. I maintain that what I have presented to you, and what Dr. Van Til is [meaning] not every particular, but this general approach to apologetics—arguing for the impossibility of the contrary—is taught in the Bible. It's found in the Bible. Now I could give you a number of illustrations, but just think of I Corinthians 1: "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" Now that tells me that God says I can reason this way, that He's the one who backs up this attempt and this line of argumentation. I can show the people rise up against the knowledge of God—if I don't bring every thought captive to Christ, that may be cast down. It could be...made foolish. Now the Bible doesn't tell me that I can persuade people to cry "Uncle," and say, "Oh, we really are fools." But we can, I think, metaphorically close their mouths by reducing to absurdity, to make foolish, the wisdom of this world. So I don't think Van Til or Bahnsen have conceded that's a neutral point. I believe that that comes from the Scriptures.

By the way, as a personal note about Dr. Van Til, he said to me, and I think others as well, and a couple points—wrote this toward the end of his life—he felt that if there was a major failure in his ministry as an apologist, it was not to have developed more the exegetical foundations for his approach to apologetics. Those of us who heard him preach or heard him teach—sometimes there was not a whole lot of difference between the two—knew that he had at least what he believed, biblical warrant for his approach. But he was sad that he never developed that. And that's one of the motivation I have, somebody who respected him, the first thing that I published was a syllabus in having biblical introduction to apologetics. I'm sure it can be improved on, I may not have it all right. But there's an attempt there—and a fairly extensive one—to go through a lot of important passages to show what they teach us about apologetical method, as well as attitude.

So, no, I don't think it's neutral, I think it's biblically based. And I believe that Sunday School children can learn it, and I think Ph.D.'s and philosophers can.

Q: Okay...the last one...

GB: Oh, by the way. The question was also Kant and Aristotle do this.

Q: Yeah....

GB: Do remember the transcendental method of reasoning is not uniquely Christian any more than breathing air, or using logic, or trying to go out and learn about the world. I don't believe Van Til attempted to make that kind of a claim. The interesting thing is—if we had time, I have lots of notes about this—I would be glad to an internal critique of Kant's transcendental argument. I don't think it's a good argument at all. I don't think he proves his point. He doesn't accomplish what he wanted. He certainly didn't save science—he psychologized it. He didn't make room for faith—he mystified it. So, for...I think you can do an internal critique of other transcendental arguments, too.

Q: Okay. This is a long—but it's a good one....

GB: We'll be the judge....

Q: Okay. Bahnsen uses the transcendental argument to prove a distinctively Christian trinitarian theism. To do so, he must show how this version of theism is the necessary precondition for intelligibility. This in turn, is done by pointing out that the unbeliever unwittingly employs moral capital from this worldview. This is not so difficult to do when addressing a Westerner, but what if you are talking to a Buddhist monk with no exposure to Christian trinitarian theism. How can he have any borrowed capital taken from that particular form of theism. But yet, he has some intelligibility. To be consistent, Bahnsen must say that he has no intelligibility or reason at all.

GB: Maybe I need to just go home now.... I'm sure that isn't what was meant. Uh, the answer about the Buddhist

monk, and many others, is: according to reformed theology, which is biblical theology, we believe that the preconditions of intelligibility, in a broad sense, are known by all men through general revelation. And so when I talk to the Buddhist monk obviously he may not have heard the distinctive New Testament doctrines like the resurrection and things of that nature; but he is able to carry on his life to some degree—and I would say it's not extensive, but some degree of success—as a Buddhist monk, he can carry on his life, because he is borrowing capital from general revelation. And then, of all things, insulting the God who has revealed Himself, by turning to another religious system instead—of rituals and so forth—which God is not pleased by.

Is that enough to answer that question or do you want to pursue it more.

Q: Well, I...I'm asking for another student. That's fine. I agree with you!

GB: Let me tell you what I think is difficult to presuppositionalism, okay. And when I say the “difficulty” I don't mean that I'm implying to give up presuppositionalism for this reason. But there may be some of you who think that there's an initial plausibility, or power to this, or hopefully you think it's biblically faithful and useful, and you'd like to think about it more. What are the trouble areas? One, uh, one major area in terms of clarification of what Van Til, or presuppositionalism based on the Bible is all about, is...uh, is addressed at some length by Mr. Frame in his book and his syllabus, and that has to do with this whole question of the believer knowing but not know God. Does he have any knowledge. Van Til says, “No.” Van Til says, “Yes.” Well wait, how can it be both? What...sometimes he draws the distinction this way, sometimes he draws it that way, and I think it's perfectly legitimate for people to raise that question. So much so that, I don't know whether I solved it, but that's why I did my doctoral dissertation on what I did, because I thought it as an attempt to address that. Mr. Frame.

JF: Yeah. Just, uh, concerning the thing that in Van Til, which I agree tends to be, uh, he uses different models, and so on, to express that. I wrote an article called, “Van Til on Antithesis” that will be published through the Westminster Journal in the 1995 official Van Til centenary issue, and some of you might want to look at that. It gathers together a lot of Van Til's representations, there, and makes some evaluations.

GB: Oh, that's great. I'm very happy to hear you've done that. I'd like to read it. Interestingly, in the same volume of the Westminster Journal I'm supposed to be publishing an article on self-deception, and it's apologetical applications so they may have parallels. But then maybe we'll have to get together and discuss our differences. Okay?

And so that's one area, if you don't assume Dr. Bahnsen's solved everything,...because that's one area where more of thought, more clarification is called for. But I would encourage many of you to think about this—it has concerned me for a number of years, not just looking at my own method, but wondering what my students might do. It's sometimes possible to present the transcendental argument, the precondition of intelligibility argument, in a way that seems to leave out the redemptive work of Christ. Ask yourselves, how do we more sufficiently and consistently incorporate that in the argument? I have some hints, and I'll share one or two of them here, but I think that's something if there are people here who really wanted advance this school of thought, and our faithfulness, you can work on that. It's, uh, it is of interest that many times presuppositionists can get into debates. We debate things like the inductive principle, the laws of logic and moral absolutes. Evidentialists may seem more “Christian” than us because their debates talk about the resurrection of Jesus, don't they? Now I don't believe that the impression that one is like more deistic and the other more specifically Christian is correct. But it would be very good for Van Tilians, or presuppositionalists, to work more on that. And part of it's going to require us to look more into this area of philosophy of psychology—which you get...I've begun some work in terms of self-deception. We have to ask ourselves if...if Christianity is, as the epistemological argument says, the precondition of intelligibility, we have to ask, why is it that men don't come to that conclusion? What has kept them from coming to that conclusion? Why don't they just naturally see this, you know, and admit it? But that will lead us to talk about something in human nature that's warped its reasoning about science and logic. That is to say, we're going to have talk about there's something radically wrong—morally wrong—something disobedient about humans. And the very fact that we have arguments in philosophy in itself shows our perversity. So that if anyone has been able to come

to the truth about the preconditions of intelligibility, given what we have to acknowledge about the human condition, they can only come to that through the revelation and the work of Jesus Christ. We don't, uh, that's just...that's a program to develop. The reason I want to push that is because we want to make very clear that we have not done our work as apologists if we just get people to say, "Well, you know, in order to be a good scientist, I'm going to have to admit there's a creator." Because ultimately the Bible says, being a scientist, you need to bow to Jesus Christ. He needs to be your Savior intellectually, morally, eschatologically. And I think that would be well worth somebody...I can't do it, Mr. Frame can't do it in one lifetime. But if you want some...I think Mr. Frame would agree with that. But I think we need to do a lot more work on the redemptive necessity of the Christian moral view.

Q: May I ask Mr. Frame a question?

GB: He has the right to refuse, but....

Q: [____733_____] uh, you mentioned something that is [____735_____] can't be transcendental now, or we can't take or have certain [____735_____] positions, or something like that. He's backed up the claim that they were transcendental arguments, but he said that they were transcendentalist [____738_____] I'm not sure I'm following you on that and if you could clarify that for me.

JF: Well, I think that every valid argument for the existence of God makes some contributions to a transcendental conclusion; namely, that there is a God who is the author of all meaning, that the [____743_____] intelligibility is possible apart from that God. Obviously, Gordon established that conclusion, but, uh, there must be a God who exists. And, uh, you know...but, but, you know, it's more than that. It's also the fact that if you show, for example, that the concept of causality entails or presupposes God, you're saying that God is necessary to the intelligibility of the concept of causality. And so it seems to me that any valid, any sound proof of the existence of God is making contributions in the transcendental conclusion. Okay?

GB: Mr. Wagner.

Q: Maybe just a question about an observation that maybe you could give wisdom to students about [how to] avoid it: Seems like evidential apologists are better listeners to the nonbeliever's questions, concerns, issues, and, uh, at least a half-trained Van Tilian is so eager to cut to the chase that he often doesn't seem to listen as carefully and bear with the nonbeliever. Is that your observation in training apologists and working with pastors, and what do you recommend to counteract this?

GB: It is my observation, without any question. Now, of course, that's anecdotal, it's limited, maybe as a generalization it's not true. But as I see it, it is the temptation of students who are trying to be presuppositional to not be patient with the unbeliever and to move in for the kill, as it were, very quickly. One of the reasons for that, of course, is spiritual. We're simply not sanctified, we're not full of the fruit of the Spirit enough, and we get impatient. And when unbelievers—unbelievers can be, I mean, no doubt about it, just scoundrels and nasty people when they talk to you. And I've done enough witnessing and enough defending of the faith, privately and publicly, I mean, how many times have I been insulted, you know, for being, you know, duped and superstitious, and uneducated, and on and on and on and on. And when you know you've got a nuclear-strength argument back there that you can use, and here's this person insulting you, if you don't have a great deal of patience through the Spirit, your temptation is to say, "Okay, I'm going to pull it out and blast this guy!" Right? And so, in one sense, this is not a compliment to the evidentialist, we have to say, "Because presuppositionalism is so good, you've got to be really sanctified to use it." We can understand why you unsanctified evidentialists can get by so well because you have so much in common with the unbeliever. Now that's tongue-in-cheek, but you see what I'm getting at....

One of the things that I have to say in response is, we need to work on our own attitudes. We have to remember what we're doing in apologetics. Apologetics is not the defense of Dr. Bahnsen's intellect. I need to be willing to let people insult me. I don't care in the end...I shouldn't care in the end what they think of me.

But what they think of Jesus is paramount. And if Jesus helps me to convince them by taking this patiently—Peter tells us in I Peter 2, we need to learn to not revile when we are reviled. Not to repay, you know, what the unbeliever gives us. That is very important. So I think a lot of work on sanctification, preaching texts like that, would help—to answer your question.

Secondly, there are matters of strategy, not just sanctification personally in witnessing, but just matters of persuasion and strategy that would be very helpful for any presuppositionists. For instance...(public debate is a different matter. You have to understand—that's, that's...there's a different reason why we do public debate. I could get into my theory of that some other time.) But when you're privately defending the faith to somebody, you want to be careful not to make the unbeliever too defensive. You want to make him defensive, but if you make him too defensive—now I'm talking of sociology, the psychology of knowledge—if I make it so that he thinks he's losing face, and coming out to be just an uneducated moron, then I probably have not encouraged him to want to run with me. And so, learning...you've got to have some sensitivity about pushing, but not pushing so hard that you get the guy wanting to push back. It's kind of like he feels the pushing, he says, "I had that coming"—I mean I'm giving you a metaphor—but there are matters of how to do this, strategically.

One of the lectures I give in one of my seminars is "How to Deal With Your Obstinate Brother-in-law", and it's an attempt to go through texts of the Bible that tell us how to deal with unbelievers in this situation and that situation, and so forth. I think presuppositionalists [need to learn] that as well. And [_____838_____], this is the sort of thing you would expect, I think, arising from Mr. Frame's book. Presuppositionalists have things to learn from others. Maybe we ought to watch people like Sproul, or Geisler, or anybody that has been effective in communicating with people, and learn from them. We don't want to pick up their bad habits, obviously if there are bad habits there, but there are things they can show us about how to listen to people more effectively.