

## **Autonomy Is No Ladder to Christ's Supreme Authority**

*By Dr. Greg Bahnsen*

The Christian's final standard, the inspired word of God, teaches us that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7). If the apologist treats the starting point of knowledge as something other than reverence for God, then unconditional submission to the unsurpassed greatness of God's wisdom at the end of his argumentation does not really make sense. There would always be something greater than God's wisdom - namely, the supposed wisdom of one's own chosen, intellectual starting point. The word of God would necessarily (logically, if not personally) remain subordinate to that autonomous, final standard.

Ludwig Wittgenstein confessed that a devastating incongruity lay at the heart of his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. If he was correct in his eventual conclusion, then the premises used to reach that conclusion were actually meaningless: "anyone who understands me eventually recognizes [my propositions] as nonsensical, when he has used them - as steps - to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up by it)" (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961 [1921], section 6.54, p. 151).

In similar fashion, Evangelicals sometimes utilize an autonomous apologetic method which does not assume the authority of Christ, treating it like a ladder to climb up to acceptance of Christ's claims, only then to "throw the ladder away" since Christ is now seen as having an ultimate authority which conflicts with that autonomous method. Their method is used to reach a conclusion which is incompatible with what their method assumed - the self-sufficient authority of man's reasoning.