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Is Cornelius Van Til's Apologetic Method Christian, or Merely Theistic?

We are grateful for this exploration of different approaches to Reformed apologetics to Mr Johnson who is a doctoral student at Baylor University

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In the field of Christian apologetics, the ongoing battle between the two dominant approaches, evidentialism and presuppositionalism, is well-known, at least within conservative Christian circles. Evidentialism is, of course, the 'traditional' approach to Christian apologetics, which relies upon arguments and 'evidences' (e.g. Aquinas' famous Five Ways, or William Paley's 'watchmaker' analogy) to convince the non-Christian that Christianity is true. The supreme example of evidentialist apologetics is found in the New Testament itself, where the historical resurrection of Christ is viewed by the various writers not only as proof of his divinity but also as a validation of the New Testament's entire salvific message. Presuppositionalism, on the other hand, completely rejects this approach to apologetics, arguing instead that non-Christians will never become believers until they surrender their sin-impaired autonomy and fully accept the biblical worldview, along with all that worldview entails, such as the noetic effects of sin upon human reasoning, humanity's utter dependence on God, our natural inclination to rebel against our creator and, *especially*, the *self-attesting truth* of the Bible.

Van Til's Approach

Presuppositionalism in its most thorough and familiar form was developed by the late Professor of Apologetics at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, Cornelius Van Til.¹ Van Til's system raises all

1 Van Til was influenced by the 19th-century Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper, who was a keen critic of evidentialist apologetics. See Robert D. Knudsen, 'Progressive and Regressive Tendencies in Christian Apologetics', in E. R. Geehan (ed.), *Jerusalem and Athens* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1971), 275-76.

sorts of complex questions, not only for apologetics, but for Christian epistemology as well, questions which would require far more attention than can be given here. But for the remainder of this paper, I wish to concentrate on his system as it concerns one issue only. That is, how does a Christian use the Van Tillian system to convince a non-believer (be she atheist or agnostic, but especially if she is a committed adherent of *another faith*), that the Christian worldview is correct? I believe Van Til's system is simply inadequate for such a task. I will use the writings of evidentialist apologete *par excellence* John Warwick Montgomery for assistance in this matter. Montgomery has been for several decades one of the most capable exponents of evidentialist apologetics, and has long been a critic of presuppositionalism. I will also examine the rebuttal to Montgomery's argument supplied by two of Van Til's most ardent defenders, Greg Bahnsen and John Frame.² I hope to show that Van Til's system fails to be of apologetic benefit when confronting the non-Christian for the following reasons: (1). It gives insufficient reason why the non-Christian should choose Christianity over another belief system, since any truth claims that presuppositionalism makes in favor of Christianity could equally be made in favor of another religion, especially a theistic one like Islam. (2). Van Til's system confuses the very different notions of *general* revelation and *special* revelation. Van Til's 'system' of apologetics, as he liked to call it, grew out of the fact that he believed evidentialism was an entirely backward approach:

The traditional method had explicitly built into it the right and ability of the natural man, apart from the work of the Spirit of God, to be the judge of the claim of the authoritative Word of God. It is man who, by means of his self-established intellectual tools, puts his 'stamp of approval' on the Word of God and then, only after that grand act, does he listen to it. God's word must first pass man's test of good and evil, truth and falsity. But once you tell a non-Christian this, why should he be worried by anything else that you say. You have already told him he is quite all right just the way he is!³

The outcome of Van Til's approach can be summed up with the following two main assumptions: '(1) that human beings are obligated to presuppose [the biblical] God in all of their thinking, and (2) that

2 Bahnsen has written a great deal in Van Til's defense, while Frame is a former student of Van Til, and has been called among the 'most consistent and sophisticated presuppositionalists' (*Classical Apologetics*, 299). If truth be told, both strike me as better expositors of Van Til's system than Van Til himself, whose prose was often difficult and sometimes vague.

3 Cornelius Van Til, 'My Credo', *Jerusalem and Athens*, 11.

unbelievers resist this obligation in every aspect of thought and life.’⁴ Thus, it is easy to see how Van Til would have little use for, say, the arguments of an Aquinas or a Paley. For Van Til the Christian must not meet the unbeliever ‘on his or her own ground’ by admitting that God’s existence is debatable and requires ‘proof’ to be accepted. No, Van Til wants the unbeliever to understand that the God of the Bible necessarily exists from the *outset* of the discussion, and any attempt by the unbeliever to deny God’s existence is the result of his or her own wilful, sinful ignorance. At first, it seems as if Van Til has a point. Those who are Christians know that the noetic effects of sin render human judgement less than reliable on all issues, especially spiritual ones. But is it not only because they are Christians that they know this? A person standing outside the Christian faith does not necessarily believe in judgement-impairing sin, so why should she not subject the Bible to her ‘sinful’ judgement? Indeed, it is the only way she can possibly approach the Bible, or any other object in the world. (In fact, it is the only way Christians *themselves* can approach the reasoning process concerning any issue!) What Van Til wants does not seem possible, for people are thinking, rational animals. All they can do, when presented with an argument, is examine the rationality from *their* point of view. It is simply the way we are ‘built.’⁵ I would go even farther, and assert that part of what it means to be made in God’s image is that we necessarily approach all things (including, and especially, the Bible!) in just the autonomous manner Van Til decries.

Montgomery’s Critique of Van Til

In a whimsical, yet critical article, the aptly named ‘Once Upon an A Priori,’⁶ Montgomery rightly begins with a prefatory remark that reminds us of the true purpose of apologetics, which is often lost amongst the learned tomes written by those who either favor or reject the presuppositional position: ‘I do not wish to increase the height of what sometimes appears already to be a dangerously top-heavy pile of refutations and counter-refutations. At the same time, I am too concerned about the plight of the non-Christian in the contemporary world of growing secularism to by-pass the question of

4 John M. Frame, ‘Van Til and the Ligonier Apologetic’, *Westminster Theological Journal*, 47:2 (1985), 282.

5 For one of the most thorough arguments that Van Til’s system is logically untenable see R.C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindley, *Classical Apologetics* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1984), 183-338.

6 *Jerusalem and Athens*, 380-403.

apologetic method so ably raised by Van Til.¹⁷ Quite true. The Christian world-view is under assault as never before, and the concept of religious pluralism is now almost a dogma of popular culture, rather than a rarified position held only by scholars and professors of religion. As I read Van Til and the writings of a defender like Bahnsen or Frame, I constantly find myself wondering: how can all of this be applied to the non-Christian, the person who doubts the validity of the Christian worldview, or perhaps has a strong devotion to a religion other than Christianity? Why would Van Til's system lead such a one to believe and embrace Christianity, and not some other faith as true? It is this question to which Montgomery addresses himself in his article, and to which I now turn.

Montgomery's essay actually contains three parables which raise important questions for those of the Van Tillian school in terms of how one can determine a 'true' Christian view of reality as opposed to a 'false' non-Christian view of reality, but it is the article's second 'parable' which I will address in this paper. In it, Montgomery presents us with two extra-terrestrial races, the amusingly-named Shadoks and the Gibis. He presents them as having mutually exclusive belief systems; each is certain that their religion is the true one, and each is certain that the facts support their case. However, each also realises, in good Van Tillian fashion, that facts alone can never prove any one religion to be true, even though 'brute' facts are all they presumably use to determine the veracity of virtually everything else in their lives! Why should the realm of religion be any different? Thus, the Shadoks and Gibis debate with each other on purely 'presuppositional' grounds:

Shadok: You will never discover the truth, for instead of subordinating yourself to revelational truth (Bible-Sh), you sinfully insist on maintaining the autonomy of your fallen intellect.

Gibi: Quite the contrary! [He repeats exactly the same assertion, substituting (Bible-G) for (Bible-Sh).] And *I* say what I have just said *not* on the basis of my sinful ego, but because I have been elected by God (Election-G)'

Shadok: Your religion is but the inevitable by-product of sin's tragic effort at self-justification through idolatry. Let us see what God (God-Sh) *really* says in his Word (Bible-Sh).

Gibi: I will not listen to your alleged 'facts.' Unless you start with the truth, you have no business interpreting facts at all. Let me

help you by interpreting the facts *revelationally* (Bible-G).⁸

This 'conversation' between a Shadok and a Gibi, not surprisingly, sounds all too much like a debate between two presuppositionalists! And, of course, '[n]either viewpoint can prevail, since *by definition* all appeal to neutral evidence is eliminated.'⁹ The gist of their conversation comes down to the fact that each debater criticises the other's position because he interprets the 'facts' of reality and religion incorrectly, because he is blinded by self-delusion, and because he refuses to submit to the one, true God.

For our purposes, we may substitute a Christian and a Muslim for the warring Shadok and Gibi. Is it not easy to imagine a Christian (especially a presuppositional one!) insisting to the Muslim that the Muslim has everything wrong, primarily because his *willful* sinful nature makes embracing the truth an utter impossibility? But of course, the Muslim could *also* attribute the Christian's unbelief in Islam to his persistent, sinful refusal of Allah and his Koran: '[d]enying the truth of the message of God, that is, abandoning the right way or going astray, is associated in the Qur'an with following one's lust, the pursuance of excessive selfish desires.'¹⁰ Surely the Christian is 'denying the truth' of Islam, otherwise, how could the Christian fail to see the beauty and perfection of the Koran? And, if the Christian happens to know Arabic, the Muslim may well be shocked that he is not already a follower of Islam. Can't this foolish Christian see the beauty and profundity of the Koran in its original Arabic? Surely this is a proof of its divine inspiration! The Van Tillian Christian will in turn reply that it is really the Bible, not the Koran, which possesses an inherent, self-attesting truth.¹¹ This debate, of course, goes on *ad*

8 *Jerusalem and Athens*, 385. Bible-Sh stands for the Shadok Bible, which is the Van Tillian version of the Bible/Christianity. Bible-G stands for the Gibi evidentialist version of the Bible/Christianity; similarly for the other parenthetical phrases.

9 *Jerusalem and Athens*, 385.

10 Mohammad Abu-Hamdiyyah, *The Qur'an'an Introduction* (New York: Rutledge, 2000), 98.

11 The literary beauty of the Koran in the original Arabic has often been used by Moslem apologists as an indication of its divine origin. For further insight into Muslim apologetic technique, the interested reader should refer to John Warwick Montgomery's 'How Muslims do Apologetics' in *Faith Founded on Fact* (Newburgh, IN: Trinity Press, 1978), 81-99. In the article, the author explains how a leading apologist of the Islamic faith can approach his task with the same sort of presuppositionalist rigor as can a Van Tillian. For the well-known apologist in question, (Muhammed Ali), Islam is self-evidentially true, just as Christianity is for the presuppositionalist Christian. It is so obviously true for Ali that he can confidently claim that 'Islam, more than any other religion, accords with the dynamic, evolutionary world-view of twentieth-century science and philosophy.' (89).

infinitum, since each side has a different religious world-view, and hence a different criterion for deciding religious truth.

Montgomery's parable of the Shadoks and Gibis (and my battle between the Christian and the Muslim) really boils down to one essential issue, and it is this which the presuppositionalist must address: when examining which religious belief system is true, how is one to know? How does the *outsider*, who is an adherent of neither system, decide for herself which religion she should embrace?

A Van Tillian Critique of Montgomery

The late Greg Bahnsen, an ardent defender of Biblical Christianity and a devoted Van Tillian, addressed Montgomery's critique with a lengthy critique of his own.¹² In it, Bahnsen reveals why he (and by implication, Van Til) does not agree that when presuppositionalism and a different religious world-view collide, there is a dilemma such as Montgomery implies. I believe that Bahnsen's critique of Montgomery shows the fundamental problem with presuppositional apologetics: when all is said and done, it is circular argumentation which proves nothing to the one who is not already a Christian.

Bahnsen begins his critique with the following statement: 'the parable [of the Shadoks and the Gibis] either envisions a monotheistic or polytheistic framework. If the latter, there is no practical need to respond.'¹³ I assume Bahnsen is implying that, if either the Shadok or the Gibi is a polytheist, there is no reason for him to address the matter, since presuppositional apologetics is thoroughly monotheistic in orientation. But what if a Christian finds himself in a debate with a polytheist, be it a devout Hindu, or an adherent of one of the many new age cults which have gained such popularity in recent years? Is Bahnsen saying that Christians never find themselves faced with such an opponent? Or that such opponents are unworthy of a serious retort? Regardless, I think Bahnsen misses Montgomery's point here entirely. The religious framework of Montgomery's argument (whether polytheistic or monotheistic) is not important – what Montgomery is stressing is, *how* does one adjudicate between different religions' claims? The problem is the same whether the presuppositionalist Christian is debating a polytheistic Hindu, or a strictly monothe-

12 Greg Bahnsen, 'A Critique of the Evidentialist Apologetical Method of John Warwick Montgomery' (Covenant Media Foundation, 1974). As found on the internet site: www.cmfnow.com.

13 *Ibid.*, 4.

istic Muslim.¹⁴

To further prove that Bahnsen does not seem to understand (much less adequately address) the simple point that Montgomery is making, I quote him at length:

[if] the positions to be described in the story are and must be incompatible [and this, of course, is *always* the case when two religions lock horns in debate!] then the type of argument put into the presuppositionalist's mouth would not be that which appears at all. Instead the presuppositionalist would seek to find if the opponent has a theoretically justified epistemology (e.g. could answer the one and many dilemma, substantiate the assumptions of non-contradiction and uniformity, etc.); he would attack at that fundamental level, bringing in the moral culpability of the unbeliever (i.e. law violations), and showing the strength and justification for his own world-view.¹⁵

So, basically, Bahnsen is appealing to 'evidence' that would prove that Christianity is true (because it answers the one and the many dilemma, for instance). What is the source for this evidence? It must be Scripture itself, for where else do we learn about the Christian God? Bahnsen is assuming (or 'presupposing') that Christianity does all of the things he thinks that it does. Let's start with the one and the many problem. I assume Bahnsen believes that the teachings of Scripture resolve this age-old philosophical problem. In other words, the New Testament concept of the triune God and the manner in which this God relates to the created universe solve this knotty philosophical problem.¹⁶ There is one problem, though. How do we know that such a triune God actually exists? If such a God truly exists, then that God may very well solve the one and the many problem. But what do we do with a Muslim, who responds that the triune God of the New Testament does not really exist, that he is the product of first and second century minds that were more interested in creating a God who satisfied their Greek-inspired philosophical mindset rather than describing the Supreme Being as he actually exists?

Well, what could a good presuppositionalist do, other than appeal to a sort of fideism which demands blind acceptance of the New Testament portrayal of God? A much more sensible approach, though,

14 Oddly enough, Van Til himself, in a rebuttal to Montgomery's article, never seems to squarely address the simple point that Montgomery makes, i.e., how does one decide between a false religious truth claim and a true one if all appeal to external evidence is ruled out? See *Jerusalem and Athens*, 392-403.

15 Bahnsen, 'A Critique', 4.

16 For a valuable insight into Van Til's understanding of the Christian solution to the one and the many problem, see Rousas John Rushdoony, 'The One and the Many Problem - the Contribution of Van Til', in *Jerusalem and Athens*, 339-348.

would be to recommend to the unbelieving interlocutor a good book which refutes the idea that the Christian trinity is the result of Greek philosophical speculation.¹⁷ Or, what if our unbelieving non-Christian friend took another approach? What if he claimed that the manner in which God in the New Testament is revealed (i.e. through the Man Jesus) is fallacious, since the New Testament documents were written two or three hundred years after the events they purport to describe, and therefore are in no way historically trustworthy? What would anyone do when faced with the claim of an opponent they know to be false? They would supply the skeptic with *evidence* that their position is wrong.¹⁸ There simply is no way to engage in a debate, much less win one, without some sort of appeal to evidence. This is true in every facet of human reasoning, so why should it be different when we are discussing religion? Why does the presuppositionalist insist on changing the rules of logic and basic common sense when it comes to matters of religion, even though she would never think of abrogating those rules in any other area of human life?

But Bahnsen utterly rejects this line of reasoning. For Bahnsen, there is really no comparison between the Christian worldview based on the Bible, and the Muslim worldview based on the Koran, because the Bible is utterly unique, and teaches an entirely different sort of religion than does the Koran.¹⁹ This may be true as far as it goes. In fact, as a Christian, I completely agree with Bahnsen (but of course, I am *already* a Christian!). But Bahnsen neglects the basic question: why should anyone trust what the Bible says? Maybe it was written by a bunch of clever, ancient presuppositionalists who wanted to invent a religion that would be impervious to attack, just like Bahnsen says Christianity is when it is defended from a presuppositional position. The simple fact of that matter is, evidentialist apologetics must be used when debating with a non-believer, and they must be used at the *very outset* of the debate. Otherwise, why should the non-believer accept this Bible which Bahnsen believes is so utterly unique and convincing? This, it seems to me, is part of the point Montgomery is making in his parabolic critique, a point which seems lost on Bahnsen, whose circular view of the veracity of scripture leaves him with no

17 A comprehensive, evangelical book of this sort is Ronald H. Nash's *The Gospel and the Greeks* (Richardson, TX: Probe Books, 1992).

18 A fine place to start would be with F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are they Reliable?* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1943). See also John Warwick Montgomery, *Where is History Going* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1969), 44-52.

19 Bahnsen, 'A Critique', 4.

room to convince others outside of the 'circle' that his position is true.

Of course, this circularity of reasoning in the Van Tillian system has been noted before, even by one of Van Til's most ardent defenders, John M. Frame.²⁰ What Frame has to say regarding this is quite interesting, and so I quote him at length:

But what is the alternative [to the circularity of the pre-suppositionalist method]? Again, the alternative seems to be that an unbeliever begins his quest, either with no criterion at all or with a 'provisional' criterion of a non-Christian (or perhaps 'neutral') sort; then by linear, noncircular reasoning, he learns that he must adopt the Christian criterion. But, as we have noted earlier, this construction violates Rom 1:18ff and 1 Cor 10:31. According to Scripture there is no one in this position – no one without a knowledge of God's criteria. Those who seek to adopt non-Christian standards (and there are no 'neutral' ones) are simply disobedient to the *Revelation* they have received (emphasis mine).²¹

The Evidentialist Approach is the New Testament Approach

This leads us into the second major difficulty with the presuppositionalist position which I want to address in this paper. Frame here is criticising the 'traditional' approach to apologetics, as exemplified by someone like B. B. Warfield, which tries to begin the apologetic task on 'neutral' ground with the unbeliever. Warfield started with 'general' revelation (the innate awareness of God which all men have), and progressed to 'special', Christian revelation.²² For Warfield, the first step in the traditional method is to get the nonbeliever to consider the fact that there may exist a 'God' who created the universe. This could be done, perhaps, through one or more of the classical 'proofs' for God's existence. Once this is accomplished, the field must be narrowed down, through the use of evidentialist apologetics, to prove that the 'God' who probably exists is the God of the Christian Bible.

Frame seems to be saying that in Rom. 1:18-21, Paul is employing some sort of Van Tillian presuppositional technique which proves

20 'Van Til and the Ligonier Apologetic', 288.

21 Ibid, 288. Why Frame mentions 1 Cor 10:31 here is a bit mysterious, since it really has no bearing on the question of apologetic method. He mentions earlier in his article that, since the Corinthians passage mentions doing everything 'to the glory of God', it is wrong to use an apologetic method which does not assume God's existence, since to do so would be to dishonor him, which is forbidden by the Corinthians passage (287). This seems to me to be a classic example of taking a text of scripture out of context!

22 *Classical Apologetics*, 38.

that unbelievers intentionally turn away from the Christian revelation. But Paul says nothing in these verses about Jesus, the Trinity, or the inspiration of the New Testament. In short, he mentions nothing specifically *Christian*. Paul is simply saying that all humans have an innate knowledge of God – he certainly is not saying that all men and women instinctively know that Jesus is God's Son or that the gospel Paul is preaching about the resurrection of Christ is known by all to be true!

That this is the correct interpretation seems quite clear from Paul's own words in this passage, not to mention his actions in Acts 17. There, Paul gives the Athenians credit for being religious, for 'knowing' God – but it is an *unknown* God they worship! He does not fault them because they do not know that the God in question is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.²³ Rather, Paul builds on their basic theme (just as Warfield would have done), and explains that the God they believe in is actually the Christian God, the Father of Jesus. Then, in verse 31, Paul says something which must surely warm the heart of any Christian evidentialist: 'He has given *proof* of this to all men by raising him from the dead.' In short, Paul here is showing that 'in the New Testament the honest intellectual problems of unbelievers are respected and dealt with on their own ground.'²⁴ The same apologetic technique is on display in Acts 26, when Paul appears before Festus and Agrippa. Here again, Paul is arguing the Christian case based on the evidence of the resurrection, which can only mean, *contra* Van Til, that Paul thinks 'these sin-blinded sinners can evidentially arrive at the facticity of the Resurrection.'²⁵ Paul obviously did not think it was presumptuous, or a 'violation' of 1 Cor. 10:31, to reason with non-Christians, to try to 'prove' the truth of Christianity based on the facts. If Paul, as well as the rest of the New Testament writers, did not think it was somehow inappropriate (even sinful!) to appeal to the fallen human intellect by arguing the truth of Christianity based on the evidence (i.e. the resurrection of Christ, the cor-

23 Van Til's comments on this passage prove interesting: 'Paul does not place himself on their level in order with them to investigate the nature of being and knowledge in general, to discover *whether* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob might possibly exist. He tells them straight out that what they claim not to know, he knows. He tells them that their so-called ignorance is culpable, for God is as near to them as to their own selves' (*Jerusalem and Athens*, 7). Van Til surely misses the point that Paul certainly *does* place himself on their level, for he obviously gives them credit for their theistic belief, misguided though it may be. However, once he places himself on their level, then he moves beyond to reveal the *specifics* of Christian faith, i.e., God's revelation in Christ.

24 *Faith Founded on Fact*, 36.

25 *Ibid.*, 78.

nerstone of New Testament preaching), why should a Van Tillian? The Van Tillian would have us believe that the traditional apologetic method is flawed because it leaves the question of the truth of Christianity in the realm of the erring, fallen intellect of man. But, as Montgomery shrewdly points out, it is actually the Van Tillian who forces unbelievers to rely on their own intellect when faced with differing religious truth-claims from two opposing sources:

Note that, under these conditions, an individual standing outside these two commitments has no way of 'testing the spirits' to see which view, if either, is worthy of *his* commitment. In the absence of an apology that will make sense to the uncommitted, it is impossible, *even in principle*, to decide between these views. But if this is where the religious decision is left, then the non-Christian will make an *arbitrary* decision – which will be dependent on *himself alone* (not on evidence outside himself) – and his commitment (even if to the true position) will be man-centered.²⁶

In short, the letters of Paul, and the rest of the New Testament writings, are replete with appeals to the evidence of Christ's resurrection. It is the resurrection which convinces the apostles that Jesus is who he claimed to be. It is the powerful preaching of Paul, and Peter, preaching based on Christ's resurrection and his fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, that forms the basis of the New Testament witness to the truth of Christianity. Were one to stop at what Paul says about our innate knowledge of God in chapter one of Romans, why shouldn't this knowledge lead to a belief in Allah, and his prophet Mohammed? Surely Muslims can use this very verse to prove that all people should embrace Islam, just as Frame seems to use it in favor of Christianity. After all, Muslims accept the Bible so long as it does not contradict the Koran. But Paul (and the other New Testament writers) did not stop at the first chapter of Romans, for the obvious reason that to do so would be to leave us unaware of God's plan of reconciliation with humanity through his Son.

To sum up: the point of Christian apologetics is to bring non-Christians to Christ. The question is, how best to do this? Shall we use the techniques of argumentation and debate which are used in every other realm of human intercourse whenever two sides disagree? Or, should we (in opposition to the evidentialist approach used by St Paul himself!) employ a method of apologetics which makes perfect sense to those already 'in the loop,' but which can only be utterly circular and non-convincing to the one outside of the privileged circle? Evidentialist apologetics certainly is not without flaw; since the time of David Hume, various attacks have been leveled against it with often

26 Ibid., 152.

damaging results. But if evidentialism is imperfect, presuppositionalism of the Van Tillian kind is even more so. For it fails to realize that any presuppositionalist claim that can be made for Christianity can be made for any religion. And, it confuses the general revelation which the New Testament says all men are privy to, with special revelation, which is a different matter entirely.

Abstract

This paper compares J. W. Montgomery's evidentialist approach to apologetics to Cornelius Van Til's presuppositional approach. My position is that Van Til's system is only theistic; it may support the existence of 'God,' but it does not prove the existence of the *Christian* God. In fact, Van Til's method could just as easily be used by a Muslim apologist to assert the validity of Islam. This is because Van Til refuses to allow objective evidence to have any place in Christian apologetics. Because of this, he offers the non-theist no way of judging between the truth claims of Christianity and other religions. In fact, the most powerful weapon in the Christian apologist's arsenal, the resurrection of Christ, cannot be used in an effective manner. This is in direct contradiction to the New Testament itself, where the resurrection is often used evidentially to validate the Christian faith.

From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch

T. Desmond Alexander

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