

CHALCEDON Report

Faith for All of Life

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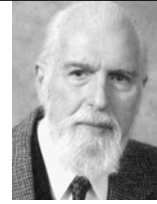
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The Myth of Neutrality

(Reprinted from *The Roots of Christian Reconstruction*
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One of the most pernicious and evil myths to plague the human race is the myth of neutrality. It is a product of atheism and anti-Christianity, because it presupposes a cosmos of uncreated and meaningless factuality, of brute or meaningless facts. Because every atom and fact of the cosmos is then meaningless and also unrelated to every other fact, all facts are neutral.

The Nonsense of Neutrality

The word "neutral" is a curious one. It comes from the Latin "neuter," meaning neither the one nor the other and has original reference to gender, *i.e.*, neither male nor female. It still has that meaning: a neutered man is a eunuch, a castrate.

It now has also the meaning of not taking sides and, supposedly, the law and the courts are "neutral." This in itself is nonsense. No law is ever neutral. The law is not neutral about theft, assault, murder, rape, or perjury: it is emphatically against these things, or should be. Again, no good court or judge can be neutral about these things without destroying justice.

Moreover, neither the law nor the courts can be neutral with respect to a man charged with any of these crimes, or others. Rather, a good court "suspends judgment" pending the testimony. Neutrality posits an indifference; a suspended judgment means that any conclusion must be preceded by a rigorous examination of evidence.

The myth of neutrality prevents justice because it ascribes to the law and to

the courts a character very much in conflict with their very natures. Moreover, it gives to the courts the power to falsify issues, as the United States Supreme Court habitually does. For example, in dealing with educational issues, the Court, which had declared humanism to be a religion, will not acknowledge that humanistic education, *i.e.*, our state educational systems today, is not neutral religiously. Christian schools are held to be "religious" and "non-neutral," but the humanistic state schools are seen as "neutral."

The Greatest Violation of the First Amendment

There is a reason for this willful blindness. To admit that education is inescapably a religious task and is always non-neutral means that state schools violate the First Amendment. They are religious establishments which teach a religion alien to most citizens, and they do so with public funds. Few things in the United States are more in violation of the First Amendment than the public schools. From its inception, the public or state school system has been destructive of civil liberty and, increasingly, of Biblical faith.

For the Court to recognize this fact would require a radical re-direction of life in America. It would, moreover, require a radical change in the Court. The U.S. Supreme Court has become the Sanhedrin, Vatican, or National Council of humanism in America. It is a militant and fanatical agency of humanistic religion, and it uses its power to sup-

press and punish the rivals of the Federal religion. The sessions of the Court constitute a modern version of "the holy war" against Christendom.

At the same time, the myth of neutrality has been used to castrate theology and the churches. The American Educational Trust of Washington, D.C. recently published an atlas and almanac by John C. Kimball (*The Arabs*, 1983). Kimball writes:

Muslims have always believed strongly that religion concerns not only what a person believes but what he does and the interrelationships of society. Unlike Christian thought that sees a clear distinction between the secular and religious dimensions of life, Muslim thought holds that ideally the secular and spiritual belong to the same sphere. (p. 5)

This, of course, is the Biblical position, that all things are under God's law and rule, and any division of life between the religious and the non-religious is false. Because God is the Lord and Creator of all things, there is no sphere of life and thought outside His jurisdiction, government, and law. To hold that there is denies God and affirms polytheism. And this is precisely what all too many theologians have done. The resurgence of Islam is due to the revival of this premise.

Van Til's Button

The myth of neutrality is most congenial to man's fallen nature. Dr. Cornelius Van Til has pointed out that, if there were one button in all the universe, which, if man pushed, would give

him a small realm of experience outside of God and in freedom from God, fallen man would always have his finger on that button.

The tragic fact is that too many churchmen assume the existence of such a button! They hold that most of life is outside God's law, and even deny the validity of God's law. They believe in effect that man must be saved in the church but can be unsaved outside of the church, in education, politics, economics, and all things else. They literally posit that most of the world is by nature to be and to remain a godless realm.

The Gilamesh epic of the Babylonians held that only a small area of life is the concern of men, who are inescapably ignorant of good and evil because the gods "withheld in their own hands" knowledge of most high things. This was clearly an expression of religious cynicism. Modern theology goes fur-

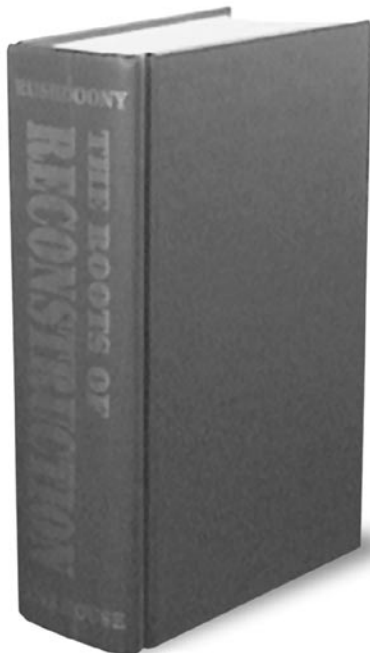
ther: it sees God as unconcerned about most of life, and limits the province of the sacred to a small realm. In Babylon, the laws of "justice" came from the king, not the gods. In modern Western civilization, the laws of "justice" come from man, from the state: Babylon the Great is in process of construction.

Phillip Lee Ralph, in *The Renaissance in Perspective* (1973), said, "Together with other thinkers of the age, Erasmus, More, and Machiavelli shared a conviction that, without any change in human nature or any drastic altering of institutions, the political order could be made to serve desirable human ends" (75f.). In other words, the whole world is outside of God and neutral to Him, and therefore the good society can be created outside of God's salvation and His law-word and in indifference to Him. In the United States, this is the assumption of every modern State of

the Union presidential address, and it is everywhere the premise of modern politics. By beginning with the premise that there are neutral spheres outside of God, man ends up by declaring God out of bounds as a concern to men. We are told that it is a matter of neutrality whether or not men believe or disbelieve in God and His law. In all such thinking, man is operating on the assumption that, by pushing this intellectual button of neutrality, the claims of God are eliminated and disappear.

The fact is, however, that God controls all the buttons! And His verdict on the myth of neutrality and all its adherents can only be judgment. **CR**

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Revelation or Reason?

It is very easy for a person to say and believe that he has faith in God while, in reality, he has faith in his own opinion about God. Believing our own opinion of God is, in fact, present in our sin because it was a very real part of man's first sin.

You have likely heard the quip, "You think too much!" In a similar vein, our sin often centers around thinking too much of our thoughts. Much of our sin occurs when we give our thoughts priority over God's Word, which is, really, to put ourselves before God.

Satan and Eve

Satan's first words to Eve were a challenge to doubt God's Word, to question it. Rather than "Thus saith the LORD," Satan encouraged Eve to question, "Yea, hath God said...?"

Eve, in fact, knew the words of God and quoted them to Satan. Satan's response was to cast doubt on the reliability of God's words: "Ye shall not surely die." Man, Satan declared, had other options. In fact, he claimed, God was hiding the full truth, He was being selfish in trying to maintain control over two potentially autonomous moral beings. God, the tempter claimed, was a spin-doctor hiding the full truth, "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

Satan's suggestion to Eve and "her husband with her" was first of all to question God's revelation of truth and then to decide on a course of action for themselves based on their own self-interest. All sin repeats this pattern of rejecting God because we are too busy playing God.

Man's sin was to play God, to determine for himself good and evil. In order to do that, man has to repeat the concurrent sin of Adam and Eve of questioning God's revelation, of determining truth by his own criteria. Satan persuaded our first parents to submit God and His Word to the bar of their reason, as if their intellect could sit in judgment over their Creator.

In Modern Times

In modern times, two major intellectual movements in the West represent the continuing struggle between ultimate faith in revelation and in reason. The Reformation stood firmly in terms of Scripture as the basis of faith and life. This faith in the revelation of God was accompanied by a corresponding faith in its Sovereign Author. Scripture, as the law-word of God, was the standard of truth to which men deferred.

The Enlightenment rejected the theistic emphasis of the Reformation. It involved a conscious repudiation of divine revelation and Biblical law in favor of man's reason and nature as the

source of "natural law." Building on the advancing frontiers of Protestant Europe, the Enlightenment saw the progress of reason as inevitable. The French Revolution was the beginning of a series of horrors spawned by this humanistic rationalism. More revolutions followed in the 19th century, until WWI broke the faith of modern man in the inevitability of progress. Darwin also contributed, on an intellectual level, to the loss of faith in man's progress. Though he attempted to explain the world by naturalistic means, in doing so he destroyed the concept of nature as a source of natural law. Darwin's theory necessitated a view of nature as a realm of the random, meaningless combination of matter. Nature, after Darwin, could not be a source of law.

Marked by a sequence of blood-letting revolutions and war, the faith of man in reason as a process of civil discourse gave way to what we now call political correctness, which is a code of humanistic morality imposed by coercion. Such coercion in schools, courts, and media was accomplished by the advance of relativistic rationalism not by poets and philosophers, but increasingly by revolutions and statist action. The progress of reason's march has continued to be marked by enslavement, destruction, decapitalization, and death.

Sin, whether by an individual or by a culture, never allows man to get ahead.

In viewing the present state into which Enlightenment thinking has brought us, we are, at times, awed by the forces that align themselves against God and His Word. The threat of coercive action awaits all those who resist the march of the humanist's dream.

Today's Humanists

The humanists, however, have failed to live up to their professed allegiance to reason. They display this failure every time they resort to law and coercion. As liberalism becomes truer to itself it becomes uglier and its failures more prominent. Because God is Truth, all things must conform themselves to His logic and plan or be dashed to pieces in judgment.

Lest we see the sin of reliance on reason only in terms of its most anti-Christian advocates, we must remember that Christians can and often do elevate reason above God and His Word. Rationalism is not just the sin of avowed rebels. The serpent was, remember, "more subtle than any beast of the

field." As Adam and Eve fell for Satan's subtlety, we fall for it whenever we place ourselves in the position of questioning God.

When we create an idea or image of God that we try to impose upon Him we put that idea above Him as our law and act as the judge of God. When we view the world as one of mere facts that are ours to interpret in terms of our own understanding we play god and allow our reason a priority over God and His Word. When our experience, logic, or preferences cause us to preface our approach to God with the idea "I think..." we play the role of a deity standing over God Himself. Ultimately, a man who depends on reason knows only one authority, himself.

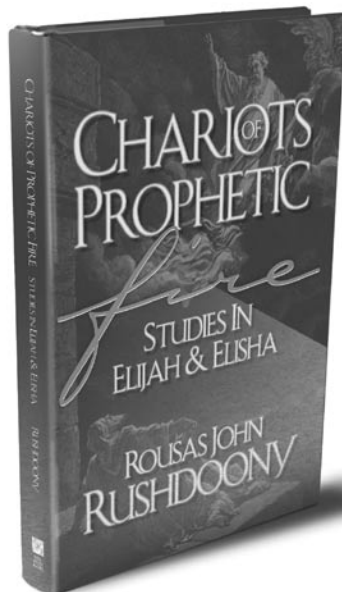
God as Our Center

It was part of man's first sin to believe that he could question God's revelation and decide good and evil for himself. We repeat that sin every time we fail to begin and end with God as the center of our thoughts.

God gave us minds to use in His service. He did not give us minds to exalt over Him and His revelation. Reason, when used to challenge God, is irrational and schizophrenic, for reality and truth are centered in God. Reason cannot be independent of God or it becomes a false god and an aspect of rebellion against the living and true God.

Our God must be the God of Scripture. Our faith must be in Him and we must claim no other standard of understanding and judgment. We are called, moreover, not to prove God by our fallen and fallible criteria, but to have faith in Him as He reveals Himself to us in His Word.

When Adam and Eve sinned, their eyes were opened (Gen. 3:7). They knew what they had done and hid from God's righteous judgment. God had mercy upon them, however. May He have mercy upon us for too often elevating our pathetic minds over Him and His Revelation. **CR**



Power today does not lie in politics or governments, but in God's people of faith.

There is a marked resemblance between our time and that of Elijah and Elisha. Like ours, their day was an age of radical compromise between the worship of God and Baal. By blending the two into one, they sacrificed the power of an uncompromising religion.

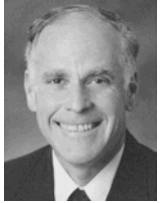
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Van Til's Illustrations

Jim West



There is an Arabian proverb that reads, “He who speaks best must turn men’s ears into eyes.” We see this aphorism displayed in the ministry of Christ, who made frequent use of metaphors, similes, and especially parables in His public and private preaching.

The employment of colorful speech to illuminate Biblical truth can be a tricky matter, especially when we try to prove a point with an illustration. Actually, the best we humans can do with an illustration is to do just that, that is, we illustrate, but we do not prove. To prove, we must rely upon other criteria. Consider the compelling illustration of theologian Robert Dabney, who justified church unity, but without a mandate for actual, organic union. To accomplish this, he appealed to the coinage of the United States. There are dimes, nickels, one-cent pieces, Morgan dollars, Double-Eagles, etc. Thus, as there are different denominations of coinage and yet one nation, so (he argued) there can be different denominations of Christian churches, and yet one church. He argued from his *Paradigm of the Mint* the idea of “unity without union.”

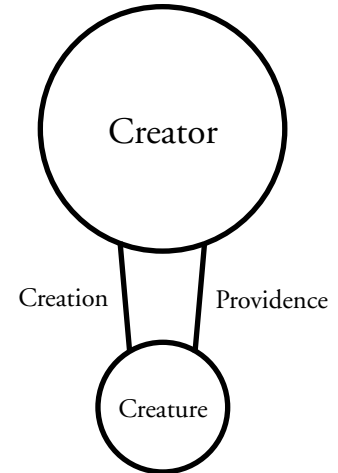
Dabney’s example is compelling, but not conclusive. It is only illustrative, and no more. If we want to dub illustrations with absolute authority, we should batten the hatches for illustrations *against* the Christian Faith, too. My favorite is from Richard Porson, a classical scholar of the early 19th century. He was walking with a Trinitarian friend when a buggy passed with three

men in it. “There,” said the friend, “that’s an illustration of the Trinity.” Porson countered, “No, you must show me one man in three buggies – if you can.” The lesson is that only the Bible itself can infallibly establish the truth of the Trinity. The only exception is when Jesus Himself coins an illustration; Jesus’ illustrations *always* prove and illustrate simultaneously.

Now, when we muster Dr. Cornelius Van Til’s illustrations concerning Christian apologetics, we must always keep the previously stated rules before us. Van Til always proved before he illustrated; therefore the following samples must be viewed as confirming illustrations that follow his weightier, clincher arguments. None of his illustrations stand by themselves. They are the G.I.s who occupy the field after a city has been leveled. Or, better, they are supporting artillery that accompany the onslaughts of the infantry who alone win the field.

Two Circles

There is a renowned Van Tilian illustration. Imagine two circles, and these distinguish between the creature and the Creator (Rom. 1:25). Man is not God; God is not man. Pantheism (“all is God”) is a lie; Panentheism (“All is in God”) is a lie; and mysticism (man being absorbed into God) is a lie. Man is man and God is God, two circles! The Greek idea that all reality is one endless Chain of Being so that the only difference between man and God is gradational is also a lie. Elton John’s popular song, *The Circle of Life*, is spurious because it envisions only one circle. There are *two* circles and these two



circles illustrate the Creator-creature distinction. That is fundamental Van Tilian apologetics.

Yellowed Glasses

The sinner is born into this world harboring enmity against God (Rom. 8:7). He is not a white slate, nor a *tabula rasa*. Rather, what he sees he sees through colored glasses; his eyes are jaundiced and all is yellow to him. When the believer looks into the starry skies, he sees the glory of God. When the unbeliever looks, he sees Big Bang, evolution, and chance. When the princess kisses the frog and it turns into a handsome prince, the believer exclaims, “Fairy Tale.” But when Darwin says that frogs turn into princes, unbelievers call that “science.” It is thus impossible to be neutral; the unbeliever’s understanding of the facts is distorted by his jaundiced subjectivity.

Sky-rocket God

A skyrocket god is a projection of men’s carnal minds. On the Fourth of July when we are mesmerized by the fireworks so that our eyes are in a heavenly trance, we are quickly brought

back to reality when we consider that the skyrocket has been launched from *this terra firma*. Van Til used this illustration to show how the god of Neo-orthodox theologians, who *appears* to be the same God of the Bible, has really been launched from Cape Cerebrum. Thus the Christ of Karl Barth, who is cloaked in an orthodox wardrobe, is an entirely different god from the true God of the Bible. Van Til employed the skyrocket imagery to warn gullible evangelicals about the glittering wiles of Barthianism. The true God of the Bible descends (from heaven); the god of Neo-Orthodox theologians, no matter how spectacular, colorful, and explosive, ascends. He is a “belly god,” even if he presents himself with the name of Jesus (2 Cor. 11:4).

The Brat Who Slapped Her Father’s Face

Once while Van Til was a youth traveling on a train in Holland, he noticed a father with his young daughter sitting in his lap. Apparently, the father urged his daughter to do something when she suddenly slapped her father in the face. Van Til’s application? The girl’s behavior illustrates rebels who live in God’s world and who are supported by God’s common grace (Ps. 24:1). They sit, as it were, on the lap of God, and it is precisely because they sit on God’s lap that they are able to deliver the slap of ingratitude. Thus unbelievers who toot their own independence and autonomy are only able to do so as they are supported by God Himself (Jn. 19:10-11). Their denial of God is His affirmation. Atheism does not invalidate theism, but proves it because atheism is only possible given the premise of theism. As the atheist Nikita Khrushchev once described the Soviet Union, “In Russia, *thank God*, there is no God” (my emphasis).

The Man of Water

Perhaps alluding to the primordial ooze that is the hallmark of evolutionary philosophy, Van Til compared the natural man’s search for truth as futile. His metaphor was vivid: the unbeliever is like a man of water standing upon a ladder of water in an infinitely extended and bottomless ocean of water, against a wall of water, trying to climb out of the water. “So hopeless and senseless,” said Van Til, “a picture must be drawn of the natural man’s methodology based as it is upon the assumption that time or chance is ultimate.” The man-of-water analogy shows the futility of all thought that is not anchored in God’s self-attesting Word. Darwin himself unwittingly acknowledged this when he asked that if man evolved, who would rationally entrust himself to the worldview of a monkey mind? He was not able to face the obvious answer to his own question.

The Stolen Ducks

In Holland there was a young boy with a father who was a thief. The young boy would often come to school and, unsolicited, blurt out, “My father didn’t steal no ducks! My father didn’t steal no ducks!” Reminiscent of Shakespeare’s “The lady doth protest too much, Methinks,” the boy’s denial was an admission of guilt. The boy’s denial is like the child who in family devotions reports on his sister, “Mary didn’t have her eyes closed for prayer!” Or, like the Apostle Peter who began to curse and swear, saying, “I do not know this man of whom you speak!” (Mk. 14:71) Sinners are vulnerable; they shake at leaves and when their consciences are riddled with guilt, the very thought of stolen ducks incites a preemptive confession of their own criminality.

Borrowed Capital

There is another stellar Van Tilian metaphor that illustrates the doctrine of God’s common grace, that is, that God

bestows favor on both the just and the unjust. The unbeliever lives in God’s world and even lives and moves and has his being in God, whether he acknowledges it or not (Ps. 24:1; Ac. 17:28). All of the contributions of the unregenerate in literature, science, mathematics, etc., are borrowed capital from the Bank of Heaven (Jn. 3:27). Few emulate the theological honesty of Samuel Morse who sent his first telegram in 1844. The text of his telegram read: “What God hath wrought.” Because men are prideful and defiant, they refuse to acknowledge the true source of their wealth. Like Nebuchadnezzar who was proud not only of his empire, but also the artistic and educational achievements of his kingdom, he thinks to himself, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?” (Dan. 4:30)

Ripley’s Believe it or Not

Van Til often challenged the anemic apologetics of Evangelical Christians who capitulate too much in the interest of “winning” the unbeliever. One way this is done is by disclaiming the Bible as a dogmatic, self-attesting Book that bears infallible witness to the resurrection of Christ. Evangelicals might say that “No book is self-attesting” or that “The statements of the Bible do not prove themselves to be God’s Word.” Instead, the Bible is presented as a history (like any other history book), and its doctrines as historically-verifiable truths that can be proven to men with *neutral* minds. It is thought that the unbeliever can be convinced of the resurrection of Christ on the basis of probability arguments from this reliable history book. Van Til argued that even if we are able to convince the unbeliever of Christ’s resurrection that this would not bring him one millimeter closer to

continued on page 28

Appointed for the Defense of the Gospel: The Life and Ministry of Greg L. Bahnsen

Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., Th.D.



One of the key areas of Christian endeavor is also one of the most pressing religious concerns before the church today: apologetics. The Scriptures call us to “sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence” (1 Pet. 3:15). And with the world set in rebellion against God, man universally “suppresses the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18). So not only do we have an obligation to engage in apologetics but we also have a *difficult* obligation — in that Scripture forewarns that men will resist us from the very depths of their being.

Both of the Biblical statements mentioned in the previous paragraph have a strong bearing upon apologetics. Peter directs us to an apologetic that sanctifies the Lord; not just any apologetic method will do. Paul informs us that man really knows the truth, which, because of his unrighteousness, he vigorously suppresses. With these Scriptural insights we are pressed to engage an apologetic that is uncompromising in its commitment to Christ and that takes account of man’s inherent knowledge of God as a point of contact. This calls us to the transcendental method that engages apologetics at the presuppositional level — the view explained and promoted by Dr. Cornelius Van Til and two of his leading disciples, Rousas J. Rushdoony and Greg L. Bahnsen.

My Interest in Bahnsen’s Life and Ministry

I have been asked to write a brief article introducing the ministry of Dr. Bahnsen, whose ministry was largely rooted in apologetics. I thank God that, by His providence, I was able to study under Bahnsen at Reformed Seminary from 1975 to 1977. The four theologians who have most influenced my personal life, Biblical faith, and pastoral practice are John Calvin, Cornelius Van Til, Rousas J. Rushdoony, and Greg L. Bahnsen. They have shown me that Calvinism is “Christianity come into its own.” And I praise God for their ministerial labors.

Paul tells us of the victory associated with Christ’s entry into heaven. At that glorious event He poured out abundant and glorious gifts upon men (Eph. 4: 8ff.). One of those important gifts for the ongoing life and ministry of the church is the gift of “teacher” (Eph. 4: 11). I count Greg Bahnsen as one of the great gifts of God to the church in our time.

In my circuitous route to Reformed theology and the Presbyterian pastorate, I had come out of a dispensational church, through a dispensational college (Tennessee Temple College) and seminary (Grace Theological Seminary), to the growing conviction of the covenantal nature of God’s dealings with man.

In 1976 I transferred from Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, Indiana, to Reformed Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. As providence would have it, I was there for most of Bahnsen’s tenure with that institution. But those

two years were of dramatic life-changing and ministry-encouraging consequence — because of Greg Bahnsen.

When I first enrolled in a Bahnsen class, I admit that I was not pleased. Here was a professor who really made you work for your grades. And some of his views were new and unusual to me: theonomic ethics and postmillennial eschatology, in particular. But thank God for this mind-expanding, ministry-altering experience! Initially I resisted Bahnsen’s unusual positions. In fact, I set about to challenge those positions among my fellow students. But anyone who has experienced Bahnsen’s instruction, knows that he was so careful in his presentation, so logical in his argumentation, so quick in his thinking, so Biblical in his foundations, and so forceful in his conclusions that all hope of credible resistance was futile. I eventually was swayed by his presentations and adopted his positions. And I have never regretted having done so.

Intellectually, he taught me to study and to think; pastorally, he showed me the relevance of Scripture for all of life; personally, he encouraged me to stand firm in my convictions and to trust in God against all opposition. I will never cease to be amazed at the incredible breadth of knowledge he possessed, at the ease with which he could analyze and respond to questions and arguments, both philosophically and scripturally. He is an example for anyone who would promote God’s Word according to the Pauline directive in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5.

Over the years it was my joy and privilege to have Greg stay in my home on several occasions, to have him proclaim the Word of God in my pastoral charges, to co-author a book with him, and to appear on the same platform with him at several conferences. I continued to grow because of his ministry even after my formal training under him in seminary. I am thankful for the enormous influence he has had, and for the large collection of tapes (over 1800) that are and will continue to be available and circulating among God's people. My only disappointment is that circumstances did not allow him time to produce more books — though the few he did release are enormously important contributions to applied theology.

I am thankful, though, that the Lord allowed him to finish his extremely important work: *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis*. Greg knew the enormity of his health difficulties in his final days, so he labored diligently to finish the book before his heart surgery — just in case. The book focuses on key passages in Van Til's writings which are necessary for understanding presuppositionalism, arranges them topically for easy, flowing reading, and provides clear and insightful commentary on the issues involved. It is a must-read for understanding the greatest Christian apologist of the 20th century, Dr. Cornelius Van Til — an apologist who was not the clearest of writers.

Bahnsen's Early Life and Training

Greg L. Bahnsen was born on September 17, 1948 in Auburn, Washington, to Robert and Virginia Bahnsen. He was the eldest of two sons. As a young child Bahnsen grew up in Pico Rivera, California, where he suffered numerous medical complications. His most serious problem was a severe blood platelet problem that nagged him for the rest of his life, causing him to have

difficulty stanching bleeding. His physical problems were aggravated at the age of five by a water tank falling on his right hand, causing a mild deformity. It was not until his medical exam, required for enrolling in college, that he discovered he also had a heart problem, which was to claim his life twenty years later after his third valve implant surgery.

Despite his physical difficulties, he was blessed to be raised in a Reformed home with loving Christian parents who saw the importance of covenantally passing on their spiritual inheritance to their sons. He regularly attended church, church camps, Youth for Christ, and other Christian and church related activities, never straying from the Faith. For his entire life he was either a member of or a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC).

Dr. Bahnsen was also gifted by God with a strong intellectual capacity, which showed itself in superior grades all the way through high school. Even as early as high school he was already reading and absorbing the works of Cornelius Van Til. Later he graduated from Westmont College in 1970 with a Bachelor of Arts in philosophy, securing magna cum laude honors and the John Bunyan Smith award for overall grade point average.

Before graduating Westmont College, Bahnsen married Cathie Wade in 1969 (they would eventually have three sons and an adopted Vietnamese daughter; they were divorced in 1990 after she deserted him). While he attended college he began writing for Rushdoony's Chalcedon Foundation, where he could employ his appreciation of Van Til. His covenantal Calvinism was becoming more pointedly focused; his desire for applied Calvinism was leading him to admire Rushdoony's strong convictions in the fields of apologetics, theology, and social ethics.

His Graduate Life and Later Ministry

In 1970 he enrolled in Westminster Theological Seminary (WTS) in Philadelphia, the premiere Reformed seminary in the nation at that time. There he studied under and became close friends with Dr. Van Til, who greatly appreciated his apologetic prowess. He graduated from WTS in May of 1973, securing two degrees simultaneously: a professional ministerial degree (the Master of Divinity) and an academic degree (the Master of Theology). Not only did he acquire these two degrees but he did so in style, winning the William Benton Greene prize in apologetics and a Richard Weaver Fellowship from the Intercollegiate Studies Institute.

Upon securing his graduate degrees in theology, he enrolled in graduate studies in philosophy at the prestigious University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles in 1973. Two years later (in 1975) he was ordained as a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and moved to Jackson, Mississippi, to accept the position of Associate Professor of Apologetics and Ethics at Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS). He would continue in his doctoral work at USC while teaching at RTS, earning his Doctor of Philosophy degree in June of 1978. His dissertation was in the field of epistemology and was titled: "A Conditional Resolution of the Apparent Paradox of Self-Deception."

In 1977 a reworked version of his master's thesis from Westminster Theological Seminary ("The Theonomic Responsibility of the Civil Magistrate") was published as the nearly 600 page *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*. Unfortunately, theonomic ethics caused a firestorm of controversy in seminary and presbytery circles, resulting in his contract with RTS not being renewed after the 1978–79 academic year. The

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Presuppositionalism vs. Evidentialism

Eugene Clingman



“Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?” (Rom. 1:

18). According to Cornelius Van Til this verse and the next contain the crux of the Biblical apologetical method, which has come to be known as the presuppositional method.

Van Til, thoroughly familiar with the writings of the ancient philosophers, believed God had allowed philosophical history to progress to such a state by Paul’s time that it was evident that man’s wisdom had proven itself incapable of giving an answer to the deepest issues of life (origins, personality, morality, intelligence, after-life). According to Paul, the Greek worldview was not simply uninformed or mistaken, but apostate, knowingly rebellious, actively obfuscating the Truth. The Greeks had so worked out their philosophy and epistemology that with skill and precision they would “suppress the truth in unrighteousness,” while they “exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen” (Rom. 1:25).

A Head-on Collision

Van Til observed that Paul did not come to the Greeks and place the gospel alongside their other Greek epistemological options in order to ask them to reason and consider if they might please kindly take the gospel as their world-

view, or at least examine it in light of their accumulated wisdom as to whether it was worthy of being incorporated into their worldview. Rather, says Van Til, Paul “proclaimed,” he “preached,” he set forth the reality revealed by the only One capable of knowing reality (*i.e.*, knowing on His own and knowing fully), the only Living God. Paul’s gospel, says Van Til, was preached fully with all its implications, including creation, the Fall, sin, redemption, and eternity. Van Til said the only way to meet the philosophy of unbelief is “in head-on collision.”

Van Til taught that the ancient Greeks were not as modern textbooks portray them — innocent and child-like in their search for truth and reality; helplessly blind, chained by the neck in a dark cave (as in Plato), groping for light, longing and searching for truth. Rather they were those who intentionally put out their own eyes; they were culpable, guilty in the first degree of knowing clearly the truth of God and exchanging it for a lie, “being darkened in their understanding...*because of the hardness of their heart*” (Eph. 4:18). Van Til said, “Psychologically there are no atheistic men; epistemologically every sinner is atheistic.”¹ The presuppositional apologetic takes this fully into account when presenting the gospel to the unbeliever.

Second, the presuppositional approach denies the natural man’s claim to the right to predicate (*i.e.*, to begin with and from himself to determine

for himself the standard of truth and reality). The presuppositional approach acknowledges the Biblical position that man has neither the ability nor the right to predicate. Any statement of ultimate reality must come from an ultimate authority. The natural man claims to be able to draw ultimate conclusions about reality from his observation, reason, logic, and intuition, and thus claims for himself ultimate authority. The presuppositional approach insists the Creator is the ultimate authority from which definitive statements about reality must be received; such knowledge of reality comes by revelation given in Christ and the Scriptures.

Fundamental Errors

So the presuppositional approach finds two fundamental errors at the crux of the natural man’s unbelief: He willingly rejects the truth and claims not to believe in God whom he in fact knows; and he insists he has the right to decide for himself what reality and truth are, the right to “be like God.”

Here then is the essential difference between the presuppositional and evidential approaches to apologetics. The evidential approach essentially agrees with the natural man in the two fundamental errors that the presuppositional approach targets. The evidential approach assumes that the natural man needs and *has a right* to more evidence; and that once the natural man receives the new evidence, he *has the right to decide for himself* whether the evidence is worthy of inclusion in his view of real-

ity. Van Til's presuppositional approach does not allow the sinner to maintain either his claim to a lack of sufficient evidence, or his right to predicate. The presuppositional approach maintains that man's ignorance is willful and culpable and that man's autonomous epistemological position is nothing less than rebellion against God his Creator whom he in fact knows to be the Creator, also knowing himself to be His creature, and utterly dependent on Him. The evidential approach does not challenge these fundamental issues.


In reality the evidential approach agrees with the natural man, for when the unbeliever says, "I need more evidence to believe," the evidentialist says, "Here is more proof." The presuppositionalist, on the other hand, will draw the unbeliever's attention to the fact that he already has overwhelming evidence which he continues to reject and close his eyes to, and that, so long as he rejects Christ (to whom all the facts witness) he is "suppressing the truth in unrighteousness." As the natural man steadfastly maintains that he does not yet have sufficient evidence to believe in an unseen God, the evidentialist seeks to provide more and more, while the presuppositionalist insists that he is already rejecting overwhelming evidence for which he is in fact now culpable and for which he will be judged. Van Til claimed that by not challenging the fundamental issues, the evidentialist essentially moves off of the solid epistemological ground of the gospel (*i.e.*, Biblical reasoning) to reason with the natural man from his false epistemological position (beginning with a false premise can never rationally lead to discovery of the truth). In doing this, the evidentialist essentially (at least temporarily) forfeits his Christian worldview.

Are presuppositionalists opposed to evidence? Not at all. Evidence is useful both for the edification of the saint,

and for the conviction of unbelievers. However, when it comes to challenging the unbelief of the natural man, the real issue is moral rather than evidential. Van Til would often admonish his listeners in words like these: "You must be gracious when you are talking to the unbeliever; you must always pay for the extra cup of coffee! But before you leave him, you must bring to his attention the real issues."

For Further Study

As Van Til himself often referred, a careful reading of Romans 1 and 2 is indispensable for understanding Christian apologetics. He also often told his students, "If you have not read Calvin's *Institutes*, at least read the first two pages" (I think he probably meant the short first three chapters). In those pages Calvin mentions Cicero, whom he calls the "eminent pagan," and quotes Cicero's own words, "Where is there to be found a race or tribe of men which does not hold without instruction, some preconception of the gods?" In these beginning pages of the *Institutes*, Calvin demonstrates from the Scriptures and from common knowledge that "Men of sound judgment will always be sure that a sense of divinity which can never be effaced is engraved upon men's minds."²

Two other books are of great benefit in further understanding Van Til's apologetic, in this order: 1) *Defense of the Faith*, by Van Til; 2) *Van Til's Apologetic – Readings and Analysis*, by Greg Bahnsen. Recorded class sessions and sermons by Van Til are available. 

Eugene Clingman is Executive Administrator of the International Church Council Project (www.churchcouncil.org) a theological effort (of Coalition on Revival) seeking to halt the slide of the evangelical church toward liberalism and compromise. Eugene also works part-time as a representative for an Inc. 500 company (MoreHealthTimeMoney.com). Anyone interested in information about obtaining tapes of Van Til may contact Eugene at 209-795-0974 or EugeneAndEdna@aol.com.

1. Greg Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1998), 191, citing Van Til, *Common Grace* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1947), 53-44, 88-89.
2. John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 45.

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Pascal's Wager: Examined from the Van Til Perspective

Forrest W. Schultz



The question of life after death has always been one of the major bones of contention between Christianity and atheism. After we die do we remain dead, as the atheist claims, or will we, as the Christian claims, be resurrected from the dead to enter our final destinies — believers going to Heaven and unbelievers going to Hell? Blaise Pascal, a Catholic mathematician and philosopher, in Section III of his *Pensées* took a unique approach to this question. Instead of setting forth arguments in favor of Christianity, he asks us to approach the matter as a gambler would in trying to determine where to place his bet. This “Wager of Pascal” is simply stated: If, as the atheist supposes, after we die we stay dead, then our theological beliefs will have no effect upon our final destiny; but if, as the Christian supposes, after we die we are resurrected by God to face His judgment, then our theological beliefs do affect our final destiny. Therefore, Pascal concluded that a smart gambler will bet on God. If God doesn't exist, he will not have lost anything. But if God does exist, he will have gained Heaven and avoided Hell. Because Pascal's Wager sounds valid, Christians have used it in their evangelistic and polemical forays, and believers have claimed that their pondering of Pascal's Wager has been instrumental in their conversion to Christ.

Much analysis of Pascal's Wager fails to get to the bottom of things, to find the foundation of the various surface

ideas. In fact, there are even some thinkers today — called “anti-foundationalists” — who are opposed to looking at foundational matters! Fortunately, though, we have available to us the very careful thinking about these foundational matters by one of the most brilliant men of the 20th century, Dr. Cornelius Van Til, who served as Professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary for many years. Van Til taught a careful deduction of ideas as they logically follow from Biblical theology, contrasted with ideas that flow from the presuppositions of philosophies that are antithetical to Biblical theology. This Van Til perspective is the tool we need to carefully examine theistic proofs such as Pascal's Wager.

The Van Til perspective lays great stress upon the principle that the ultimate foundation of all thought rests upon the cognitive validity of our knowledge-acquiring abilities (when used as intended and when functioning properly), of which we can only be certain if these abilities were designed and created by God. Let me use my favorite example to demonstrate this point: If the Christian epistemology is true, then it is easy to prove that grass is green. Since God is omniscient, He knows all truth, including the truth that the grass is green and the truth of how to make my eyes and optic nerve and the visual perception parts of the brain so that when I look at grass I will see it as green. Since God is omniscient, He is able to make these organs so that they perform correctly so that I see the

grass as green. Since God is omnihonest and cannot lie, He does not deceive me by making my visual apparatus such that it would tell me something false about the grass. The Christian epistemology, therefore, is the only basis for real knowledge. It is the only basis upon which we can know that grass is green. (Perhaps it could be said, therefore, that only Christianity has a “green” epistemology!) If man got here by chance or if man was created by a finite god, *i.e.*, one who is not omniscient, omniscient, and omnihonest, then we cannot be sure that our eyes are really telling us the truth about reality.

Begging the Question

The same principle, of course, holds for the other factors involved in the acquiring and verifying of knowledge. For instance, we can only be sure that logic is epistemically valid because God gave it to us. Anyone whose starting point is an uncertainty as to the existence of God cannot consistently set forth any kind of argument because he cannot be sure he knows anything or that his rational faculty is valid. Anyone advancing a theistic proof as a reason for believing in God is therefore guilty of begging the question because he must presuppose the existence of God in order to be able to advance it. But Pascal's Wager claims to be starting not with the presupposition of the existence of God but with an uncertainty as to God's existence. The Christian says, “Believe in God because He exists.” Pascal's Wager says, “We don't know if God exists, but, your best bet is to go with Him rather than

atheism.” Therefore it is just as logically invalid as are the theistic proofs because it does not presuppose the existence of God.

Pascal’s Wager is also theologically objectionable, for two reasons. First, like the theistic proofs, it does not treat God as God. Since God is the ultimate being, He ought to be treated as such in everything we do including the way we frame our arguments. This means that, as the ultimate being, God should, in all our arguments, be regarded as the starting point, the foundation, not simply as the conclusion. Proponents of both theistic proofs and Pascal’s Wager claim to believe that God is the ultimate being, the ultimate foundation of all reality, the ultimate truth on which all other truth rests, etc. Yet, in their reasoning they treat God as though He were uncertain, but they treat something else as certain and ultimate, and then they try to derive the existence of God or some truth about God from this other basis. That is, these inconsistent arguers want their hearers to believe in God, but their arguments don’t treat God as though He really were God. Whether the existence of God is proven or merely a good bet and the only safe bet, in both cases these apologetes, by the way they argue, undermine their cases because they are not treating God the way He must be treated if He really is what we say He is.

True Conversion

There is a second, closely related, theological flaw in Pascal’s Wager — this one of a more personal nature. Genuine Biblical conversion involves more than an intellectual belief in the existence of God. It also involves — in fact it centers on — a personal relationship with God, a relationship which, among other things, grants due honor unto God. If we have even a glimpse of what this must mean, then we will surely need to conclude that anyone who comes to God solely on a Pascal’s Wager type of

reasoning is actually insulting God. In fact, it is rather dubious, to say the least, that such a person has really been converted at all. Biblical conversion is not a mere “betting” on the existence of God, just to be on the safe side in case He exists. Nor, can the covenant of grace be reduced to a mere Hell insurance policy. Biblical conversion involves genuine repentance and faith, which involves a radical spiritual change.

This point should be so obvious that it is surprising Pascal’s Wager could ever be taken as seriously as it has been by otherwise godly and astute men. Again, if we want people to come to God in repentance and faith then we must treat Him as God or else we are guilty of misrepresenting Him. Anyone with even a modicum of spiritual insight should be able to recognize this. In fact, there are even some atheists who appear to see it more clearly than some Christians. For instance, in his primer for atheist debaters, B.C. Johnson assesses, “God may damn anyone who ‘bets’ on his existence merely for reasons of prudence. He may consider such a ‘bet’ to be an insult.”¹

Thus, when examined from the Van Til perspective, Pascal’s Wager is seen to be not only philosophically superficial but spiritually superficial as well. In fact, it is highly doubtful that the gambler even appreciates what the stakes really are. Does he know what makes Heaven Heaven and what makes Hell Hell? Probably not. Although it is appropriate that Heaven be a beautiful place because God cares about beauty, this is not what makes Heaven Heaven. It is Heaven because believers there will be in the fullest possible fellowship with God unimpeded by any depravity from within or by societal or satanic opposition from without. In short, it is God and our love for God and His love for us that makes Heaven Heaven. C.S. Lewis in his novel *The Great Divorce* showed that if any

of the unsaved were permitted to leave Hell and go to Heaven they would not be comfortable because they were not adapted to live in Heaven, and so they would choose to go back to Hell. In short, he showed that for the unsaved Heaven is not Heaven. But, you see, Pascal’s Wager only looks on the surface. It says bet on God, because if He exists, you can go to a place with beautiful trees and streets of gold instead of to a place with burning sulfur. In this framework God is seen only as the means to an end, not as the End Himself. Pascal’s Wager does not indicate what Heaven is really like (being in vital relationship and vibrant fellowship with God with all that entails) and what Hell is really like (the horror of being cut off from God and, thus, never finding fulfillment), thus it cannot be taken seriously because it doesn’t tell us what the stakes really are. And if it were to tell us what these stakes are, then it would refute itself, because it would show that it is not possible to get into right relationship with God by seeing Him as a prudent bet. Pascal’s Wager would see that genuine conversion — genuine repentance unto faith — is not consistent with such a bet.

The Van Til perspective helps Christians to understand the roots of such theistic philosophies, which are in the final analysis just as misguided as their secular counterparts. And there are several excellent resources for learning more about Dr. Van Til and his teachings. Two by Van Til himself that are very helpful are his *The Defense of the Faith* and *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*. The two about Van Til I recommend are R. J. Rushdoony’s *By What Standard* and Robert L. Reymond’s *The Justification of Knowledge*. Two essay collections I recommend are *Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective* edited by Gary

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Pluralism: The New Enemy

Roger Schultz



A Chalcedon reader who attends a state university in southern California recently wrote to me about his experiences. “My prof opened up a lecture with this statement: ‘I am a Jew from Brooklyn and I am agnostic. My favorite topic of discussion is religion... *and I hate Christians.*’” The Christian student had known that he would have to jump through some “fiery hoops” in academia, and understood that the higher he went “the worse it [would] get.” But the Jewish teacher from Brooklyn took him by surprise — as “this class that I am taking is called, of all things, *cultural pluralism.*”

There is increasing hostility to Biblical Christianity in America, and it comes from the erstwhile promoters of pluralism and toleration. Some evangelicals have puzzled over this creeping intolerance, assuming that Christianity would be welcomed as one of the viable alternatives in the marketplace of ideas. They fail to understand, however, that man is not morally and epistemologically neutral. Sinful man is in fundamental rebellion against God (Rom. 1: 18; 2 Tim. 2:25f.), and cannot tolerate the teachings of Christianity. There are, I believe, four reasons why Biblical Christianity is anathematized by modern secularists.

Anathematizing the Christian Faith

First, Biblical Christianity asserts God’s absolute sovereignty over His creation and His creatures. Humanistic man, striving to be autonomous, resents any element of divine authority and

control. Those who see human freedom as the highest good will despise God’s sovereignty and providence. Likewise, they will hate the societal institutions God has ordained to govern society. I once knew a feminist religion professor at a mainline but relatively traditional Presbyterian college in Georgia. She always spoke of Christianity as “Christofascism” and contended that the Bible had imposed “patriarchy” on Western culture. Hating the doctrines of divine sovereignty and providence, her scholarly goal was to offer a feminist and Marxist critique of the New Testament.

Second, Biblical Christianity asserts the infallibility of God’s Word. Humanistic man hates the inerrant and infallible nature of the divine law-word. “The basic premise of law and society today is relativism,” Rushdoony presciently noted in 1973. For Christians, he continued, “An absolute law set forth by the absolute God separates good and evil and protects good.”¹

Third, Biblical Christianity asserts the doctrine of salvation through Christ alone. Jesus is the only way of salvation: “No one comes to the Father but by me,” Jesus said (Jn. 14:6). The exclusivity of salvation through Christ alone is a fundamental Christian teaching, but one that the world despises.²

In an earlier age, Christians universally embraced this doctrine. The *Thirty-Nine Articles* of the Anglican Church, for instance, includes a powerful statement on “obtaining eternal salvation only by the Name of Christ.” Article XVIII reads: “They also are to be had accursed that presume to say, That every man shall be saved by the Law or Sect which he professteth, so that he be

diligent to frame his life according to that Law, and the light of Nature. For Holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the Name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.”³

Finally, Biblical Christianity asserts an absolute standard of morality. No contemporary Christian leader raises the ire of liberals and secularists like Jerry Falwell, who is vilified because of his affirmation of Biblical morality and his crusade against abortion and gay marriage. Last year, two homosexual activists moved to Lynchburg, rented a house across from Falwell’s Thomas Road Baptist Church, and began organizing homosexual rallies.⁴ Those in rebellion against God hate the restraints of His law, and hate those who are faithful to His Word.

Academics sometimes have bizarre ways of manifesting hostility to Biblical principles. I was at a meeting once with a feminist English professor who absolutely loathed Pat Robertson. Robertson, she argued, was responsible for the oppression and degradation of women (he opposed abortion and preferred that moms stay at home with their children). Eventually, the group discussion moved to the topic of clitorrectomy, a barbaric practice of female circumcision still found in Muslim regions and in pagan Africa. The feminist professor, who was rarely silent, especially on topics related to women, had nothing to say. So I invited her opinion about this bizarre practice of mutilating young women. She responded that one must respect the cultural norms of other societies. For liberals, apparently, it is only appropriate to sit in judgment of Christians and Christian cultural norms.

At the same meeting, a Political Science professor discussed his work as a youth with the Peace Corps in Africa. He was initially shocked when natives stole his spare clothing from the clothesline and boldly wore them in his presence. Yet he said that he admired their different concept of property and their unique social ethic. He called it “compulsory sharing.” (Where I’m from, we call it stealing! No wonder that this African country, with its apparent contempt for private property and capital development, was one of the poorest countries on earth.) The professor saved his strongest criticism for American capitalism and materialism. (But at least the capitalists don’t steal his underwear.)

The Pluralist Creed

The new mantra of today’s pluralists is tolerance. Everyone’s faith is legitimate — as long as it isn’t exclusive. Everyone’s moral convictions are good — as long as they aren’t restrictive. Any worldview is acceptable — as long as it is authentic. The only requirement: you must not judge any one else. The emphasis on toleration appears to reflect a live-and-let-live neutrality among modern pluralists and seems relatively benign.

Modern pluralism, however, is rooted in a comprehensive worldview, which has its own creed and agenda. Christians are vilified as intolerant precisely because they violate the maxims of this new orthodoxy. Rushdoony was excellent at identifying the religious presuppositions of competing worldview systems. He notes, “there can be no tolerance in a law-system for another religion. Tolerance is a device used to introduce a new law system as a prelude to a new intolerance.”⁵

What are the central tenets of the pluralist creed? The first principle concerns human autonomy. Man must be free. He must be free of God and any

restraints of the God-ordained social order.

The second axiom of pluralistic orthodoxy is that all truth is relative, and all traditions are equally valid. As Rushdoony has argued, our generation’s “infallible word must be a changing word, the word of flux.”⁶

Ten years ago I was a fellow at the National Humanities Center for a program on multiculturalism. Faculty members from around the southeastern United States met for three weeks to discuss emerging scholarship on multiculturalism, which was a hot topic. We had special guest presenters from prestigious universities: a (lapsed) Muslim feminist from Pakistan who taught English at Yale; a (lapsed) Christian-turned-agnostic from Ghana who taught African and African-American Studies at Harvard; and a (lapsed) Buddhist anthropologist from Sri Lanka who taught at Princeton. The seminar leader was a (lapsed) Jewish psychiatrist-turned-anthropologist from the University of California who was an expert on Hinduism in Nepal. The seminar was valuable and I learned much, but its underlying themes were cultural relativism, the inferiority of western civilization, and the evils of Christian culture.

Most astonishing was a statement made by the seminar leader, who forthrightly presented his worldview assumptions and pointed to his cohort’s shared convictions. He argued that Hinduism was a better religion than monotheism for the modern era, since “one God means one truth, and many gods allows for many truths.” The need for relativistic truth, it seems, propels pluralists back to polytheism. Rushdoony makes a telling observation about the implications of the first commandment: “[I]t means *one God, one law*. The premise of polytheism is that we live in a multi-verse, not a universe, that a variety of law-orders and hence lords exist....”⁷

The final tenet of pluralism is that the state is sovereign. A little over two hundred years ago in *The Social Contract* Jean-Jacques Rousseau hinted at the direction of modern pluralism in a discussion of “Civil Religion.” He was happy to encourage religion, so long as it recognized the sovereignty of the state, taught good morals, and advocated toleration for all other religions. But he couldn’t tolerate a religion that taught absolute principles. “Wherever theological intolerance is admitted, it must inevitably have some civil effect; and as soon as it has such an effect, the Sovereign is no longer Sovereign even in the temporal sphere: thenceforth priests are the real masters, and kings only their ministers.... [T]olerance should be given to all religions that tolerate others, so long as their dogmas contain nothing contrary to the duties of citizenship. But whoever dares to say ‘Outside the Church is no salvation,’ ought to be driven from the State....”⁸ Those advocating a transcendent view of God and the importance of salvation, then, are a challenge to the state, are guilty of heresy, and cannot be tolerated. In a pluralistic society, Rushdoony notes, man cannot “be under one law except by virtue of imperialism.”⁹ The new pluralism inevitably leads to statism.

We are surrounded by new modern pluralists who claim to be interested in toleration. In reality, they adhere to a radically anti-Christian and anti-Biblical worldview, and, as at least one candid professor admitted, they “hate Christians.” Christians are already feeling the heat from this new orthodoxy, and it will no doubt grow worse. The challenge for Christians is to remain loyal to King Jesus and to His unending Word. **CR**

Dr. Schultz is the Chairman of the History Department at Liberty University, teaches Church History at Christ College, and is the homeschooling father of nine children.

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Christian Civilization Under Attack

Samuel L. Blumenfeld



Hebraic Christianity is the religion of a people in covenant with the God of the Bible, the Sovereign of the Universe. The greatness of Hebraic Christianity is in the fact that out of it sprang universal Christianity, which extended that covenant to the rest of mankind through the divine intervention of Jesus Christ. That this was good for the human race is easily seen by the humane civilization that has been built on Judeo-Christian values.

A Beacon of Hope

The United States, founded by Calvinists and Puritans, has become the best fruit of the Biblical seed. No civilization in history has provided so much freedom, so much abundance, so much happiness to so many human beings. No civilization in history has provided such freedom of invention, science, and intellectual endeavor. In short, the United States became and still remains the beacon of hope for millions of human beings who come to our shores in pursuit of all that America offers: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Christianity gave Europe its science and cathedrals, its art and music, its literature, its universities, its spiritual strength. But despite all of that, Europe succumbed to the false, malevolent philosophies of Nazism and Communism, largely based on hatred of the God of the Bible. So fanatical was this hatred among the Nazis, that the Jews became the object of extermination. By destroying the Jews, the Nazis hoped to destroy Biblical prophecy and Biblical truth. As for the Communists, their hatred of the

bourgeoisie was so fanatical that they killed millions of Jews in labor camps and before firing squads.

It was the United States that came to the rescue of Europe when it seemed that its Judeo-Christian civilization would be permanently crushed under the heels of pagan or atheist totalitarianism. Europe, restored physically, politically, and economically, with the generous help of the American Marshall Plan, now lives with a ghostly Christianity, the cultural strength of which still radiates faintly from its ancient cathedrals and churches and in the arts and music of its past. It still celebrates the Christian holy days: Christmas and Easter, even though socialist secular humanism dominates European culture.

The Islamic Advance

But because of the massive influx of Muslims into Europe, Christianity — or what's left of it in European culture and institutions — is once more under attack. The Muslims were expelled from Spain in the 16th century, and they were largely expelled from the Balkans in the 18th century. But now they are back throughout Europe.

Much of this is the result of French President Charles de Gaulle's retreat from North Africa in 1962, the retreat of Christianity from what had become a vibrant European civilization in North Africa. What de Gaulle didn't realize was that the Muslims had no intention of simply destroying a vibrant, productive Christian civilization in North Africa. They planned, in time, to reclaim what they once held on the continent of Europe.

And so the Islamic takeover of Europe is proceeding very efficiently as they use all of the social protections given them by the European Union. They will win over the Europeans in the same way that the Turks won over Bosnia. In Bosnia Christians converted to Islam because they were given the choice of living as first class Muslims or persecuted Christians. The Serbs resisted and died by the thousands. But the Bosnians surrendered.

Will the Christians of Western Europe surrender to Islam? They seem to be in no mood to resist. One French professor recently told journalist Mark Steyn that in Western Europe there are no values worth dying for.

A Culture of Death

Islam has created a very different civilization from ours. It has created one of poverty, hatred, and unceasing suffering. Its people, for the most part, live under tyrants who use the religion to subject them to lives of crippling superstition and intellectual degeneracy. Without the wealth derived from oil, the Islamic world would be even more backward than it is today.

Its greatest obsession is with the existence of Israel, the only state in the Middle East based on Western democratic values. Even though Israel occupies a tiny space in the vast Islamic empire, it has engendered such murderous hatred among Muslims that their children are taught that it is virtuous to commit suicide by killing Jews.

To many Christians in America, the return of the Jews to the ancient land of Israel is a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. That is why so many Christians

focus their attention and concern on the fate of the Jews in that part of the Islamic world. That part of the world is the dangerous fault line where civilizations confront one another: Judeo-Christian versus Islamic.

The murderous attack on America by Islamic fanatics is a permanent and grim fact of history. It is true that most Muslims in America are embarrassed and frightened by what Islamic terrorists have done to this country. But it cannot be denied that most Islamic organizations in America promote hatred of Israel. Many of these organizations support Palestinian terror and the Arab economic boycott against Israel. And it is that hatred of Israel that has created a wide and very uncomfortable cultural gap between Muslims and Christians in America. Hatred can never become the basis of trust. If Muslims are ever to become truly integrated in American culture, they must first divest themselves of hatred of Israel.


The Third World War

The war between the West and Islam has become the Third World War. On September 11, 2001, Islam launched its Pearl Harbor by destroying the twin towers of the World Trade Center, bombing the Pentagon, and killing over 3,000 innocent people. Nothing like this had ever happened to New York City and Washington D.C., let alone the United States. Our government has tried to convince us that this is not a religious war, that it is merely a war against international terrorism. But we must acknowledge that this terrorism is driven by Islamic religious fanaticism that views America as the Great Satan. America has no desire to destroy the Islamic religion. We simply don't want Islamic fundamentalists to destroy us.

We do not know how this war will be fought, how much suffering it will cause American families or our adversar-

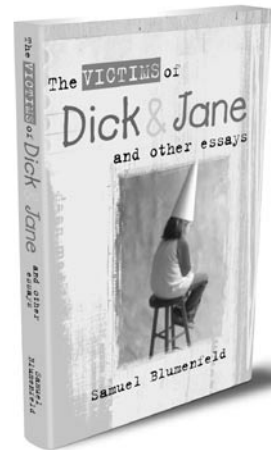
ies. What we do know is that it must be won. Throughout its tumultuous history, tiny Israel has faced Muslim armies and terrorists and has beaten them. And despite this permanent threat to its existence, Israel has thrived, creating the most democratic and economically advanced nation in the Middle East. We can learn some lessons from them.

The first lesson is to go directly after the terrorists, where they live, where they operate. And that is why we have invaded Afghanistan and Iraq. Saddam Hussein was in a position to shelter terrorists and supply them with weapons of mass destruction. He and his government had to be removed. After a great military victory, we have bunkered down in the task of fighting the resisters and establishing a friendly, democratic government in Iraq. We are at war, even though support of the war may be waning. But to retreat would give the fanatic Islamists the hope that they could cripple the United States.

We had thought in our naiveté that the new millennium would bring us permanent peace, prosperity, and well-being. Instead, we have another world war in which it is expected that the Islamic terrorists will try to use germ warfare or dirty bombs to decimate the American people. The sad truth is that the benevolent world Americans have grown used to no longer exists. And only by defeating Islamic fanaticism can it be restored. 

Samuel L. Blumenfeld is the author of eight books on education, including *NEA: Trojan Horse in American Education*, *How to Tutor*, *Alpha-Phonics: A Primer for Beginning Readers*, and *Homeschooling: A Parents Guide to Teaching Children*. All of these books are available on Amazon.com or by calling 208-322-4440.

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Living Defensively: Managing Debt

Tom Rose



If your bank is like Imine, you have been inundated with sweet-appearing advertising posters every time you enter your bank. These posters have captions similar to: “Because you keep your promises!” They encourage people to take out a home-equity loan for a vacation or other consumer expenditure. Recent posters depict a single female parent or a married couple wistfully looking at a young child. The unspoken, but well communicated, idea is that if you love your child, you will use the equity in your home to show your love by keeping any promise you might have made, regardless of changing circumstances — promises, you realize, must be kept!

What is wrong with the message being communicated? How could any parent who loves his or her child object to borrowing money for making good on a promise? After all, doesn't the Bible require us to keep our word?

A number of things should cause Christians to think twice about borrowing money to make good on a promise to children, or to anyone else for that matter. Note that I use the term “think twice,” for there can be extenuating circumstances that might lead a person to borrow money for honoring a business contract or promise that is morally binding (Ps. 15:4). But borrowing money through home equity loans for consumer spending is just one aspect of the many clashes in our modern society between Christian philosophy and secular humanist philosophy.

For instance, most promises to children (“I’ll take you shopping tomorrow,” or “Let’s go see Grandma next week,” or “If you are a good boy we will go see Niagara Falls next summer”) are not ironclad oaths made before the Lord that must be honored to the hurt of the swearer. Rather, such “contracts” of future intentions with children, or with other persons, should always be phrased conditionally to conform to the advice given by the apostle James (Jas. 4:13-15). We, after all, are not like God who is omniscient and has already determined the future, so we should always be open to the possibility that God might overrule plans we make. As Christians we must always stand ready to adjust our plans to meet changing circumstances, for it is God who is author of the future.

A second reason to eschew home equity loans in most circumstances is that borrowing against the equity of one’s home for consumer spending runs counter to the sense of economic frugality and warnings against debt that are found in the Bible (Pr. 13:11, 22:7; 1 Tim. 5:8).

Mountains of Debt

How does this apply to us in our current world economy? Political leaders in many countries, including our own, have long followed inflationary monetary policies that have led to, or threaten to lead to, inescapable deflationary collapses in economic activity. Japan has been experiencing a deflationary collapse for over a decade, and the United States has been experiencing one

for over two years. The American economy has become very dependent on consumer spending financed by credit extended by other countries (China, Japan, other low-cost Asian exporters, oil-producing nations, Canada, etc.). Just to keep our frail consumer-oriented economy going requires the continued willingness of foreign exporting nations to hold ever-increasing amounts of American debt instruments. As Jim Puplava notes:

Asia now holds \$1,000 billion [\$1 trillion] of foreign exchange reserves out of a global total of \$2,500 billion [\$2.5 trillion]. Most of these reserves are held in U.S. dollars that come from trade imbalances between Asia and the U.S.¹

And the evidence is echoed by David Vaughn:

In just five years, total financial as well as non-financial American debt has surged by 51% or \$10.9 trillion to more than \$32 trillion, three times the annual Gross National Product. During the last quarter alone American households added \$397.6 billion in mortgage debt & another \$40 billion in credit card debt.²

This growing mountain of American debt held by foreigners should cause thinking persons to quake in fear that some unforeseen event will cause foreigners to stop accepting additional debt denominated in U.S. dollars, which are increasingly losing purchasing value. Even worse, we should fear the growing possibility that foreigners might soon find it to their advantage to disgorge trillions of dollars into the international money market. The possibility of such

an imminent event has been brought upon us by profligate spending by both the federal government and consumers. Wasteful spending has been encouraged and sustained by fiat-money creation by the Federal Reserve and its fractional-reserve banking affiliates.

Servant to the Lender

Once again I encourage readers to ponder Proverbs 22:7. If foreign central banks decide to unload their holdings of U.S. dollar-denominated securities, homeowners who have succumbed to the siren call of easy credit through home equity loans are likely to find themselves unexpectedly saddled with increased debt and rising interest rates at a time when equity ownership in their home has fallen far below its market value. Post-boom deflationary periods always find some people encumbered with too much debt and no means to service it. During such periods there is always a vast transfer of wealth from financially weak, over-extended individuals to the relatively stronger lending financial institutions, often at a fraction of the real worth of the defaulted property. Thus, financial institutions that offer temptingly low-cost credit terms to unwary consumers are not really friends to borrowers, who are the very ones who stand to lose in case of an economic downturn.

In the mid-1950s I served as manager of the Chamber of Commerce in a town in Southeast Kansas. During the Korean War the town was booming because of employment supplied by a nearby munitions facility. But when the facility shut down, the boom fizzled. Families suddenly found the homes they had purchased at high prices, financed by government-guaranteed loans, to be worth much less than their outstanding mortgages. What did they do? Easy! They simply moved away and left an entire subdivision almost completely

devoid of human habitation! This is an example of what happened in just one small locality of our country in 1956-57. It took years for the local economy to be revitalized.

Today the problem of home indebtedness is much greater and more widespread. It is nationwide and is now exacerbated by exceedingly high levels of credit-card debt and the reckless amount of federal debt mentioned above. At present, the Federal Reserve has been flooding the economy with fiat money in a failing effort to keep the speculative bubble of the 1990s from deflating, but the present rising price of gold is clearly evidencing the weakness of the U.S. dollar relative to foreign currencies that have not been inflated as much.

Is There a Solution?

What can be done to solve the problem of easy credit generated by government-sponsored fiat money?

In the long run, we must eliminate America's fiat money machine, the Federal Reserve, and our system of fractional-reserve banking. We must go to a 100-percent reserve system of banking. I won't explain the mechanics of making the change now, but it can be done. The artificial control of interest rates would no longer be in the hands of untrustworthy central bankers whose main concern is to support special interest groups, both domestic and foreign. Interest rates would quickly adjust to a free-market level that would no longer penalize savers at the expense of spenders. Older people who have saved many years for their old age or to pass wealth on to their children would no longer be legally robbed by the insidious tax called inflation. Fiscal integrity and honor would return to our country's entire financial sector. But these are long-term goals to use as guiding stars in our journey of trying to right our ship of state among the treacherous waters created

by growing secular statism in both our country and the world.

Until we succeed, and while we are in the process of succeeding, to correct past errors committed by our political leaders,³ there are some constructive things we can do as individuals to withstand the manufactured dangers that now beset us.

First, we as individuals can avoid additional debt and even pay down existing debt as one of our highest priorities. The fact that our central government has embarked on the road to financial bankruptcy provides a compelling reason why American families should stand financially tall and strong as private entities. In my lectures and writing I have often stated this maxim, "He who holds gold wields power." Similarly, he who stands financially and economically independent is also in a position to wield beneficial power and influence. Christians who heed the Biblical admonition to build and conserve family wealth will be in a position not only to protect their closest loved ones, but also to be of wholesome leadership to our country. We must think positively while we follow the dictates of Biblical prudence in setting our financial affairs in order.

Related to this is the need to counter the popular humanistic ploy of sacrificing everything "for the sake of the children," which comes through in the bank posters mentioned above. Over the last few decades our society has been overwhelmed with the humanistic call that depicts children as the main focus of all that we do, thus the line "Because you keep your promises!" While children are indeed important and our only way of building Christ's Kingdom from one generation to another, children are not the main focus of our Kingdom-building work.

Today our society is so child-oriented that many "children," now in

continued on page 29

The Defense of the Faith: John Weatherford and Patrick Henry

R.G. "Rick" Williams, Jr.

*There is an inclination, on the part of many, to enjoy the fruit of
the tree without even ever looking up to see whence it came.*

— Lewis Peyton Little



One of the most cherished books in my library is Lewis Peyton Little's *Imprisoned Preachers and Religious Liberty in*

Virginia.¹ Since I have the distinction and blessing of being a 7th generation Virginian, this book holds a singularly special place, both in my heart and on my bookshelf. The book is a chronology of persecution against Virginia Baptists by the established state church — the Church of England, or Anglicans — during Colonial times.² While this book's primary focus is on Baptist persecution, Virginia's civil magistrates (with the blessing of the tax-supported Anglicans) were also fond of persecuting Presbyterians and Quakers. Oddly enough, these branches of the Christian Faith found one of their most stalwart defenders in Patrick Henry, whose father's side of the family had a long and rich heritage with the Anglican Church, though Henry's mother was a devout Presbyterian. The preaching of Samuel Davies, which Henry was exposed to in his mother's church, put in the bosom of young Henry a fire for religious liberty that could not be quenched. That fire helped lead to America's independence.³ It is probable that the persecution and suffering of Elder John Weatherford stirred Patrick Henry's heart to contemplate his own relationship with Christ. Weatherford's story, and Henry's

involvement in it, should also stir our hearts as we consider American culture's increasingly hostile stance towards orthodox Christianity.

Imprisoned

John Weatherford was born in Charlotte County, Virginia in 1740. He began preaching the gospel in 1761. According to one biographer, "He became at once a zealous and successful herald of the cross," and "it was his honor to suffer persecution for the sake of Christ."⁴ The persecution that Weatherford endured is something that 21st century American Christians can scarcely imagine:



John Weatherford in the Chesterfield County Jail, 1773. This painting commissioned by the 200th Anniversary Committee of the Middle District Baptist Association, hangs in the Chesterfield County Museum, Artist Sidney E. King-photo by Bill Lane). Used with permission.

The rulers of the Episcopal Church were much vexed at the success of Mr. W. Wherever he went, his ministry was attended by crowds and many were converted through his instrumentality. It was a source of great mortification that a plain man, without any pretensions to learning, should so far obtain the confidence of the people.⁵

The Church's "mortification" was manifested through the civil authorities' actions against Weatherford when he was arrested on May 15, 1773. The official Court record of Chesterfield County, Virginia for June 4, 1773 reads as follows:

...John Weatherford appearing in Court being taken up by a Warrant issued by Archibald Cary Gent. for that purpose and acknowledging themselves to be of the religious Sect called Baptists and that they had practiced preaching and assembling the people together...without having any License for so doing. On consideration of the premises the Court adjudging them on that account guilty of a Breach of the peace & good Behaviour....⁶

The Price of Freedom

The records go on to state that a fine was assessed and that Weatherford was to remain in jail until such fines were paid. Since Weatherford had no money, he "remained." What is noteworthy for our purposes is what occurred during Weatherford's incarceration and how he came to be freed. Weatherford was so loved by those in

the area who were familiar with his ministry, that during his five months imprisonment in the Chesterfield County jail, “his brethren and admirers flocked on Sunday to the village and thronged the yard of the jail.” This show of support and eagerness to hear the gospel inspired Weatherford all the more and he “would lift the window and thrust his hands through the bars that he might shake hands with his loyal friends.” Weatherford preached to the assembled multitude and several “experienced the renovating influence of Divine grace, nine wished to follow their Master.” Not all gathered were appreciative. On at least one occasion “men of the baser sort” stood on both sides of the window and as Weatherford extended his hands during preaching, they cruelly slashed his hands with knives until he “would scatter his blood on his hearers or on the ground.”


Dr. William White, a prominent physician and Virginia Baptist of the 19th century, later told of seeing Weatherford’s wounds as a child when he attended the preacher’s funeral:

I was barely tall enough to look into the coffin. The hands of the veteran minister lay ungloved upon his breast with palms downward. I noticed the stiff and bloodless look they had and saw white and rigid seams extending across the back of each hand. The fact impressed me at the time, but I kept silence, and a thousand times I dare say I recalled those singular marks on the hands of the dead preacher.... They were the marks of the Lord Jesus — martyr marks of God’s hero.⁷

Patrick Henry soon heard of Weatherford’s plight. The situation stirred Henry’s strong sense of justice and he attempted to intervene. Henry was able to secure an order of release, but the jailer was adamant — he would not release his prisoner until all fines and jail fees were paid. This was a considerable sum. Henry departed, but not long after-

wards, someone anonymously paid the amount due and John Weatherford was again a free man. Providentially, twenty years later, Patrick Henry moved to Charlotte County and became a neighbor of Weatherford’s, who was at that time shepherding a small country flock close by. As the two of them discussed their common labors in struggling for religious liberty in the young republic, Weatherford, for the first time, learned that it was Patrick Henry who had paid his fine. Weatherford would henceforth always speak of Mr. Henry “with a glow of affection.”⁸ Weatherford was not the only Baptist preacher that was the beneficiary of Henry’s kindness and zeal for righteousness. Others would write that:

...they were so fortunate as to interest in their behalf, the celebrated Patrick Henry; being always the friend of liberty, he only needed to be informed of their impression, without hesitation, he stepped forward to their relief. From that time until the day of their complete emancipation, from the shackles of tyranny, the Baptists found in Patrick Henry, an unwavering friend.⁹

After preaching for almost eighty years, John Weatherford was gathered to his fathers on the 23rd of January, 1833. Weatherford was the last survivor of all the Baptist preachers that had been imprisoned in Virginia for their faith. Patrick Henry’s admiration for Weatherford, and other Virginia Baptists, greatly influenced his own political philosophy and devotion, and confirmed his commitment for the cause of religious liberty in America. Both of these men are branches of the tree from whence comes the fruit of our liberty. May we never forget to look up. 

Rick Williams is a businessman, publisher (www.VirginiaGentleman.com) and freelance writer. He has edited and compiled a book of quotes from the life of Robert E. Lee in *The Maxims of Robert E. Lee for Young Gentlemen*. He currently serves as Asst.

Chaplain of the Stonewall Brigade Camp, Sons of Confederate Veterans in Lexington, Virginia. He also served 12 years as a Virginia Magistrate, for which he asks the forgiveness of Baptists, Presbyterians, and Quakers everywhere.

1. Lewis Petyon Little, *Imprisoned Preachers and Religious Liberty in Virginia*. (Lynchburg, VA: J.P Bell Co., 1938).
2. The Anglican Church was renamed the Episcopal Church after the American Revolution.
3. Davies’ preaching also sowed in Henry’s heart the seed that would be watered by the great revival that took place at Hampden-Sydney College in 1787. This revival resulted in the conversion of over half of the students at Hampden-Sydney and more than thirty of them entered the ministry as Presbyterian preachers. God brought the increase and Henry experienced “a deep Christian conversion experience.” It was during this same revival that the renowned Archibald Alexander, who would go on to become the first professor of the newly formed Princeton Theological College in 1812, was converted.
4. James B. Taylor, *Virginia Baptist Ministers* (New York: Sheldon & Co., 1860), 51-53.
5. Taylor, 51-53.
6. Little, 335-336.
7. Little, 344.
8. Weatherford sent 5 pounds currency to Henry in payment for his services, but it was promptly returned.
9. Little, 346-347.

The Development of Van Til's Presuppositionalism in the Apologetic Practice of Greg Bahnsen

Christopher B. Strevell



Early in the 20th century, Christian apologetics recovered its objectivity and moved a step closer to theological consistency through the work of Cornelius Van Til. Building upon the anthropology of Romans 1 and the revelational epistemology of John Calvin, Van Til reminded the church that the apologetic endeavor must take the fall of man and the condemning function of natural revelation seriously. The unbeliever's fundamental problem is not ignorance but rebellion. The encounter with unbelief, therefore, must expose and challenge unbelief's rebellious presuppositions. Failure to do so obscures the clarity, necessity, and all-sufficiency of Scripture. It also denies the comprehensive Lordship of Jesus Christ, especially in the realm of knowledge. Any method of apologetics that fails to stress the absolute certainty of the Christian worldview revealed in Scripture undermines the claims of the gospel and capitulates to unbelieving logic and science, which themselves manifest the consequences of unbelief and must be reformed in the light of God's Word.

Accordingly, Van Til insisted that Christian apologetics must proceed on two fronts. Negatively — and this was Van Til's primary though not exclusive emphasis — it must demonstrate the

utter impossibility of achieving objectivity, certainty, and truth in terms of the unbeliever's professed worldview, whatever form it may take. God has made foolish the wisdom of this world, and that foolishness has devastating consequences for man in every area, intellectually as well as spiritually. Positively, the apologist must unashamedly defend the absolute truth and certainty of the Christian worldview, for God, His revelation, and the person and work of Jesus Christ are the foundations of knowledge in every sphere. Van Til's positive, incontrovertible proof for the existence of God was that without Him, one cannot prove anything else. In fact, unbelief presupposes the existence of God and the truth of His Word, even though at every step he denies this and seeks to establish and preserve his autonomy. Unbelief must operate in God's world; it is unavoidable.

Teaching By Example

Greg Bahnsen did more than anyone else in the 20th century to popularize, explicate, and apply Van Til's method. He recognized that Van Til's writing style was often obtuse and difficult for those not versed in the leading movements of western philosophy. Moreover, Van Til was not a systematizer, in that he did not produce a single volume in which every facet of his apologetic method, answers to critics,

and exegetical foundations were carefully laid out. This was one important aspect of the life work of Greg Bahnsen. He produced numerous books, essays, taped lectures, and series in which he provided the specific exegetical foundations of what has come to be called "presuppositional apologetics." Through his public debates, he demonstrated for his students that Van Til's method was not only workable but also effective to demolish every thought raised in opposition to Jesus Christ. These are well-known aspects of his legacy and subsequent generations will come to understand and appreciate Van Til through the contributions of his gifted student. Greg Bahnsen also emphasized certain practical yet often neglected aspects or implications of presuppositional apologetics.

The Christian Apologist's Difficult Task

First, against the tendency to view presuppositional apologetics simplistically, as if it were a formula for easy apologetic success, Bahnsen reminded his students that this method actually commits its votaries to hard work and careful analysis. "Answering the fool according to his folly" requires patient study of unbelieving systems so their "foolishness" (*i.e.*, devastating philosophical and moral consequences) may be understood and exposed. Since

apologetics is essentially the confrontation of opposing systems, the believer must seek to understand the entire system espoused by the unbeliever, not simply summary sound bites. The heart of man is deceitfully wicked, and he will seek many hiding places for his unbelief that must be investigated and understood in the light of the total system of which they are a part. Only by ascertaining these can the fool be fully exposed and the claims of Christ be pressed upon him comprehensively. By his personal example and encouragement, Greg Bahnsen called his students to gain a mastery of competing systems of thought, for only thereby may he avoid thinking apologetics “easy” or “formulamatic.”

The Christian Apologist’s Humble Attitude

Second, Greg Bahnsen encouraged humility. One of his constant themes was that the Christian apologist must remember that he has received understanding by grace. Therefore, he does not engage in apologetics as a strident intellectual but as a humble disciple of Jesus Christ. Moreover, because grace alone given through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit effects conversion, the believer must ultimately and constantly depend upon the work of the Spirit in the unbeliever to bring him to faith in Jesus Christ. This preserves the apologist from thinking that he can “argue” the unbeliever into the kingdom of God. Since faith in Christ is the goal of the apologetic encounter, dependence upon sovereign grace keeps the Christian apologist from viewing the encounter as an opportunity to demonstrate his intellectual superiority, which he often does not possess. Heaven or hell is the issue at stake, not intellectual domination. At the same time, dependence upon the grace of the Holy Spirit does not render humble argumentation superfluous. Because “answering the fool”

is a thoroughly Biblical idea, the Holy Spirit often uses the negative aspect of apologetics to bring the unbeliever to a recognition of the futility of life apart from faith in the triune God of Scripture. While presuppositional apologetics is often caricatured as obscurantist, arrogant, or hyper-intellectual, properly understood, it generates meekness, personal winsomeness, and patience in seeking to gain the unbeliever for Christ.

The Christian Apologist’s Comprehensive Claim

Third, Greg Bahnsen strongly emphasized the positive aspect of Christian apologetics. The reduction of the unbeliever’s worldview to absurdity clears the ground for the gospel, but it does not erect the structure. The Christian gospel must be seen in all its saving power and glory not only as the way to forgiveness of sins and the obtaining of righteousness through faith in Jesus’ obedience and sacrifice, but also as the revelation of God that preserves knowledge for man, provides the foundation for human culture, and directs man to the only source of ethical guidance. This must be demonstrated by careful argumentation not simply posited as a faith claim or encouraged as a way to psychological fulfillment. Christian apologetics is not merely a bulldozer that demolishes every stronghold of unbelief; it must also function as the architect that erects the city of God firmly upon the foundation of God’s revelation in Scripture. This positive aspect of apologetics is especially important in the postmodern climate, for the pluralist will join with the Christian apologist in affirming many of his criticisms of western philosophy and the presuppositional nature of human thought. If we focus only upon the negative, we have not demonstrated the truth of the Christian worldview. We may in fact confirm the radical relativist in his darkness by

failing to impress upon him that not all systems of thought are bankrupt and biased; not all circles of reasoning are vicious. He may not embrace the gospel, but he must be confronted with the claim and demonstration of the claim that Christianity alone rescues man from relativism, prejudice, and chaos.

A Final Challenge

While not the only legacies of Greg Bahnsen, hard work, grace and humility, and positive demonstration are three practical distinctives of his approach to presuppositional apologetics. Defenders of presuppositionalism would do well to heed them. The work of developing a full-orbed, Biblical, and Christ-honoring apologetic is not complete. The groundwork has been set out by Van Til and enhanced by Greg Bahnsen, but it is the work of every generation to build upon the foundation of its fathers, not by rejecting their contributions because they are incomplete or imperfect, but by standing upon their shoulders and continuing the great work of presenting, defending, and persuading men that Jesus Christ is the way, truth, and life in every area of human inquiry, moral decision, and spiritual pursuit. ■

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What's Love Got to Do with It?

William Blankschaen



I'm sorry. Well, not really. Not yet, anyway. When most people think of an apology, that's what they hear — "I'm sorry." But when Peter uses the word *apologia*, nothing could be farther from his mind than a Christian who regrets believing.

Quite the contrary, when Peter commands us to be "ready to give an *apologia*" (1 Pet. 3:15) he is requiring an answer to an inquiry, not an "excuse me" for believing. That's how we get *apologetics*, the science and art of defending our Faith. But what we often seem to miss as we tenaciously defend the Faith is that we are responding to a question. And a question requires a questioner. And a questioner is a person. In our rush to launch doctrinal missiles from our fortified redoubts, we overlook Peter's penultimate point that the most effective defense of the Faith is not found in theological tomes or dusty debate halls. Instead, Peter's *apologia* actively answers the question. It really responds to the questioner. It touches his hand, connects with her heart, cares.

Loves.

OK. Now I'm sorry. Well, not really. But lest you think I'm calling for a group hug, let me allay your fears. When Satan's forces attack, we certainly must possess the intellectual ammunition to rout our foes. Furthermore, we must use the ammo efficiently. I believe the most effective (because it is the most Biblical) intellectual method for defending the Faith is a presuppositional defense. A fancy word, indeed, but with quite the simple meaning. *Pre-* means

before; suppos means *knowledge*. Once assembled, the word refers to an apologetic method that confronts and appeals to knowledge that the Creator implants in all men before they know anything else.

What may be known of God is manifest in them...His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead. (Rom. 1:18-20)

Hence, the problem is not that men do not know the truth, but that they suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

Confronting the Dead

The natural man knows the truth, but can't truly comprehend it until the Spirit opens his spiritual eyes (1 Cor. 2:14). Thus the unregenerate man consciously chooses to reject the truth because it seems foolish to him. So we regenerate folk confront him with the truth. Sounds simple enough. We whip out our Biblical baseball bats, brandish them menacingly in the air, and wind up to beat the blind beggars with truth until they're bruised and bleeding. Until they surrender. Until they beg for mercy. Or until they run at the very thought of becoming unfeeling brutes like us. Because although we love doctrine — a good thing! — and crave cold, hard logic — also a vital tool — we miss the critical context in which the *apologia* must take place.

Love.

Somehow we disconnect truth from love when, in fact, they're like love and marriage, horse and carriage — you can't have one without the other. Paul wastes no words in solving the dilemma Plato grappled with several centuries earlier — what is love? "He who loves

another has fulfilled the law.... Love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom. 13:8, 10). You can't get more truthful than that. Love happens when we treat God and one another the way God says we should. Love happens when truth acts. Jesus reinforced the same principle when He said, "If you love me, keep my commandments." Want love? Obey. Submit to His revealed truth. We say we love Christ? Then love the least of these blind beggars as yourself. Especially when they question you about Christ, you must answer by "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15).

The House Truth Built

Love is the house that truth built. On the one hand, love depends on truth to give it structure; in return, love provides the context in which truth lives and thrives. Like sea monkeys without water, truth can technically exist without love, but it does not truly come alive until you put it in the context of love. And who wants to watch a barrel of sea monkeys without water? That's like watching a bowl of dry oatmeal. But how many unbelievers have heard our unloving answers only to be convinced that a bowl of dry oatmeal is the best answer Christ can muster? As William Wordsworth poetically penned, "For this, for everything, we are out of tune; It moves us not. — Great God! I'd rather be a Pagan...."

Although we fail to presuppose love, Peter started there, and ended there, and only tossed in the stuff about an *apologia* as a consequence of the real issue — love. Peter's primary message rings clearly throughout his entire discourse:

Be of one mind; have compassion;

love as brothers; be tenderhearted, courteous, and full of blessing; seek peace and pursue it, etc.

No wonder the curious unbeliever might feel compelled to inquire about the hope within you when he sees such incredible truth in action. He just doesn't get it. Why would you sacrifice yourself for another's good? Submit your own will to another's? Pursue peace when hatred comes so easily? So he asks about the hope he sees in you — or does he?

Be honest. When was the last time someone asked about the hope he saw in you? Not when did he notice that you dress in styles several decades outdated, don't have clue about those "dreadful" Tolkien movies, or didn't join the conga line at your cousin's recent wedding. But rather when was the last time he saw you endure tragedy with a smile, lay your desires down for Christ's sake, or extend a hand when you knew full well it would get bitten off? In short, when was the last time someone asked about Christ because he saw Him in you?

I thought so.

True Communication

Studies indicate that up to 90% of communication is non-verbal. If that's true, words account for only a tenth of our persuasive power; actions apparently do speak louder than words. According to John Maxwell, "Your talk talks and your walk talks, but your walk talks louder than your talk talks." If truth is the voice of Christ, love is its megaphone and the lack of love its gag order. The Love chapter in Corinthians warns that without love, all our knowledge is nothing. Jesus clarified it when He said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn. 13:35). People will "see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven" (Mt. 5:16). Bottom line: People don't care how much you know

until they know how much you care.

And isn't that why Peter gave us the command in the first place? People. People will see us. People will ask questions. People made in the image of God will challenge us with inquiries. And how are we to answer? With vitriol and violence? God forbid! We answer in meekness and fear, knowing that we once walked in the same darkness. We answer, as the late Dr. Greg Bahnsen put it, with humble boldness. The humility is the love part; the boldness is the truth part. Christ requires both from those who dare defend His name. Our Lord requires us to defend His name with our hearts and hands as well as our heads.

We need not speculate as to Christ's opinion because He addresses precisely this problem in the church at Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-6). There were some things the Ephesians were good at — identifying false teachers and running them out of the church, for example. Yet, although Christ commends them for their high-energy defense, He threatens to remove His presence if they don't fix one tiny little thing: "You have left your first love." Aha! You may say that Christ is referring to their love for Him. Of course, but how do we demonstrate love for Christ? "Keep my commandments. Love one another. Feed my sheep." We show our love for Christ by loving people, especially those pesky people questioning our Faith.

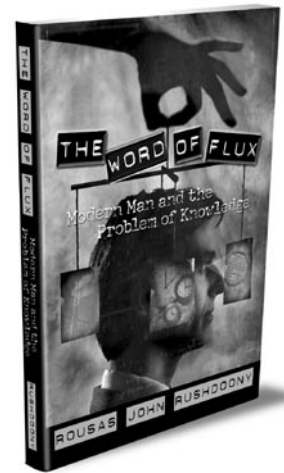
The Ephesians mistakenly narrowed obedience to understanding and espousing a set of doctrinal creeds and arguments. They had mastered defending the faith with a Biblical billy club and a theological tazer. But somewhere along the way they had forgotten that Christ came to seek and save, not seek and destroy. Christ reminds them, "Do the first works." You know, the stuff you used to do when the love of Christ consumed you. Speak the truth, yes, but only in the context of passionate love for

the blind beggar stumbling toward the gates of Hell.

That's what love's got to do with it. **CR**

William Blankschaen has been blessed with a beautiful wife and three children. He is a teacher and administrator at Cornerstone Christian Academy near Cleveland, OH, and a writer of challenging essays and Christ-honoring fiction.

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Presupposing the Young

Ian Hodge



Presuppositionalism is a fact of life. Everyone works from basic assumptions, or presuppositions. But not everyone is self-conscious of

his or her presuppositions. The task of evangelism, therefore, carries with it the necessity to expose presuppositions in the light of God's Word and challenge hearers to adopt Biblical assumptions, not ones they make up themselves.

Presuppositionalism as we know it has been around for half a century or more. The initiating work of Cornelius Van Til and his later followers have exposed a large number of people to the idea of presuppositions and the way they should be used in evangelism. But it seems there is good evidence for us to re-evaluate the way we teach and use presuppositions in an evangelistic or lifestyle framework.

Startling Revelations

A recent study by the George Barna Research Group has highlighted the fact that spiritual maturity needs to begin at a young age. After three years of research, Barna has identified the following:

1. An individual's moral foundations "are usually in place by the age of nine. While those foundations are refined and the application of those foundations may shift to some extent as the individual ages, their fundamental perspectives on truth, integrity, meaning, justice, morality, and ethics are formed quite early in life."

2. An individual's "response to the meaning and personal value of Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection is

usually determined before a person reaches eighteen. In fact, a majority of Americans make a lasting determination about the personal significance of Christ's death and resurrection by age 12."

3. Barna's research indicates that "in most cases people's spiritual beliefs are irrevocably formed when they are pre-teens."¹

It seems that by age thirteen, most people are set in their ways. What are the implications of this for teaching presuppositions?

Exciting Opportunities

To date, most books on presuppositionalism are aimed at the adult market. Now while there seems some reason to aim books on Christian apologetics at the adult market, it also seems necessary to provide a framework to teach young children about assumptions.

A lot of educational pedagogy stands in the way at this point. It is believed that children should not be taught difficult concepts. These are often saved for university days or later. Yet according to the Barna research, this is too late. However, in the 1970s, Chalcedon published an essay by Dorothy Sayers, "The Lost Tools of Learning" which opens the door to teaching presuppositions to pre-teen children.

Speaking on the medieval concept of education, Miss Sayers highlighted the three stages of learning that were used in the older methods of education. Using the concepts of Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric, Sayers explained how medieval education provided the tools of learning so that students could go on in life and educate themselves. They were

given the tools of learning, so they could learn on their own.

In contrast, modern educators teach the child what they think he should know. They teach vast quantities of information rather than give students critical thinking skills. The result? Modern students do not have the tools of learning so they find it difficult to carry on continuous learning.

Pre-teen Potential

More importantly for us here, however, is that Miss Sayers identifies the ability of the pre-teen child to learn quite complex information. In music, for example, we now understand why children could compose music at an early age in past eras. They were taught how to do it. They learned the grammar of music, just as they learned the grammar of language or mathematics. The result? Highly skilled musicians and composers by the time they were teenagers.

We should not be afraid, then, to use presuppositional arguments on young children to ground them in the Faith. While the way we teach may be different than it would be for adults, nevertheless the need is there to educate the young in these concepts.

Can young children understand philosophical argument? That is not the first question, according to the older view of education. The first step is to ground the student in the grammar of a particular subject. The second step, to be undertaken when the child reaches around the age of ten, is to add explanation (logic) to the information they have been taught. By the time the student is

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The Problem with Islam

Warren Kelley



Since the collapse of the Twin Towers on 9/11, much has been written and discussed about the nature of Islam and whether it is truly a religion of peace. But in the two and a half years that have passed since that terrible day, how much have we learned about what Islam teaches and how those beliefs compare to our own?

Common Ground

Christianity and Islam have many things in common. Both religions are monotheistic. Both believe that God is just, sovereign, and forgiving. Both hold Jesus in very high esteem and refer to him as Christ. Many American Christians even believe that we worship the same God.

The sacred book of Islam, the Qur'an, also teaches that we worship the same God and that it was He who imparted his truth to Moses. Sura 5:44 says, "It was We [Allah] who revealed the Law to Moses: therein was guidance and light." It goes on to say in verse 46, "And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him. We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light."

However, this is actually somewhat of a problem for Islam. Muhammad was not very well educated and did not have firsthand knowledge of the Jewish or Christian Scriptures. Early on, he believed that what he had written in the Qur'an was compatible with Scripture and that the god he served was the God of the Jews and Christians.

Sura 10:94 records Allah instructing Muhammad, "If thou wert in doubt

as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee."

Significant Disagreements

Later, when Muslims began to come into contact with Christians and Jews they realized that the Old and New Testaments did not agree with the Qur'an. In fact they disagreed on many key points. Since they believed that God's word could not be changed they had to find an explanation for this problem. The solution? The Jews and Christians must have corrupted God's revelation.

Islam teaches that Allah sent prophets to reveal his truth to all peoples to help them understand the truth and to serve him. Since the Jews and Christians corrupted Allah's teachings and others fell into worshiping many gods, Muslims believe the only uncorrupted, true revelation of God remaining is that of the Qur'an.

It is important to understand that the differences between Christianity and Islam are significant. While Muslims esteem Christ as a great prophet they strongly deny His deity. Consider the passage from Sura 112 that is recited in prayer *every day* by Muslims: "Say He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him."

To believe that Jesus is the Son of God is blasphemy to a Muslim. Sura 5:72 says, "They do blaspheme who say: 'Allah is Christ the son of Mary.' But said Christ: 'O children of Israel! Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.'" Just a few verses later in verse 75 it says, "Christ, the son of Mary, was no more

than a Messenger."

Abdullah Yusuf Ali, a noted Muslim scholar, put it this way, "Begetting a son is a physical act depending on the needs of men's animal nature. Allah Most High is independent of all needs, and it is derogatory to Him to attribute such an act to Him."

Christians cherish the belief that God sent His only Son to bear the price of our sins. For the Muslim it is blasphemy to believe that Allah would allow one of his prophets to perish in such a way and they deny that Christ was crucified.

No Sin Nature

Muslims see no need for a savior and look at sin and the sin nature differently than Christians. Muslims believe in a creation story similar to the one of the Bible. However, in the Islamic version, Adam and Eve were created in a state of righteousness in the garden, sinned, and were forgiven. There was no sin left to pass on to descendants as a sin nature.

In fact, Islam teaches that Adam, after his fall and forgiveness, became the first prophet. Unlike the Bible, Islamic theology believes that prophets are kept from fundamental sins. Adam, as a prophet, could not have had a sin nature to pass on.

Without a sin nature, there is no need for a savior, no need for redemption. All people are born innocent and remain so until they themselves sin. At that point all they need is the grace of Allah to forgive their sins which come simply as a result of personal weakness, not from a sinful nature.

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the kingdom of God. Why not? Because the resurrection would be viewed as a *monstrosity* (his word). The unbeliever admits that strangeness occurs in the universe. All kinds of “miracles” happen. So why, then, should there not also be random resurrections both here and there? Thus, even if the Biblical writers were right about the resurrection, it would prove nothing at all. Monstrosities occur. As Van Til writes, “The resurrection of Jesus would be a fine item for Ripley’s *Believe It or Not*. Why not send it in?” What is really needed? Convince the unbeliever that the Bible is a self-authenticating authority and that both its miracles and interpretations of those miracles are infallible. Then the unbeliever would be convinced that Jesus not only rose from the dead, but that by rising He justifies sinners and is declared to be the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:4; 4:25).

Blockhouse Methodology

Each fact in God’s universe is like a block we use to build our house. But when we lose sight of the overall picture, which is that *all* facts are God-created facts and intelligible only in terms of God, we fall into the sin of Blockhouse methodology. A fair example is Eve when she was beguiled to eat the forbidden fruit. Satan’s strategy was to woo her to analyze the *block* (in this case the forbidden fruit) in terms of her own autonomous rationality. She sought to interpret the “block” apart from God’s infallible interpretation of the *whole* Tree. Therefore she was dead-meat for Satan. The unbeliever has a similar problem; Camus (reportedly) said that if there is even one fact in the universe that has meaning, then all is lost (from an existential, philosophical standpoint).

The Prodigal Son

The Parable of the Prodigal Son was perhaps Van Til’s most popular Bibli-

cal metaphor. Van Til used the Prodigal as an illustration of the inability of the covenant-breaker to drown out the voice of the living God. His metaphor of “borrowed capital” was probably drawn from this story, too. He wrote, “When the Prodigal left his father’s house he could not immediately efface from his memory the look and voice of his father. How that look and that voice came back to him when he was at the swine trough! How hard he had tried to live as though the money with which he so freely entertained his ‘friends’ had not come from his father! When asked where he came from he would answer that he came ‘from the other side.’ He did not want to be reminded of his past, yet he could not forget it. It required a constant act of suppression to forget the past. But that very act of suppression itself keeps alive the memory of the past.”

In short, the Prodigal’s futile attempt to drown out the voice of his father was like the discharged servant of Immanuel Kant, who had been with him for years. Angrily, Kant wrote a famous entry in his memorandum book: “Remember, from now on the name of Lampe must be completely forgotten.”

Van Til’s illustrations were always discreet, which made them all the more effective. He was no “skyscraper” preacher or theologian, who majored in stories. Yet he was wise enough to know the limits of his audience, especially when he was critiquing hard, philosophical concepts of autonomous sinners to whom everything was yellowed and thus confused. **CR**

Jim West has pastored Covenant Reformed Church in Sacramento for the last 18 years. He is currently Associate Professor of Pastoral and Systematic Theology at City Seminary in Sacramento. He has authored *The Missing Clincher Argument in the Tongues’ Debate*, *The Art of Choosing Your Love*, *The Covenant Baptism of Infants*, and *Christian Courtship Versus Dating*. His latest book is *Drinking with Calvin and Luther!*

Gentry, Bahnsen...continued from page 9

and accepted a faculty position with the prestigious Newport Christian High School in Newport Beach (September 1980).

In February of 1985 Bahnsen debated the president of Atheists United and the American Rationalist Federation (Dr. Gordon Stein), demonstrating his remarkable apologetical and debating skills before an audience of hundreds. The taped debate is one of the best-selling tape sets available through Covenant Media Foundation (which distributes his materials) and has been a source of great encouragement to untold numbers of Christians. He engaged in several other public debates on apologetics and various social and political issues (including theonomy, gun control, homosexuality, Roman Catholicism, Islam, and Judaism), and spoke at conferences across America, in the British Isles and Russia during his distinguished career.

In 1990 Dr. Bahnsen worked with Michael Nelson to establish the Southern California Center for Christian Studies. The Studies Center has as its mission cultivating “intelligent commitment to the Christian faith, seeking with skill, sincerity and love to: challenge unbelief in all its forms and defend the claims of Christ, expound and explain the system of precious truth found in the Scriptures, apply God’s word to the life of believers as well as to their world, train God’s people for service to the Lord, and to encourage Christian piety, outreach, compassion and maturity.” After Bahnsen’s death, the Board of the Studies Center established Bahnsen Theological Seminary to provide distance education for those seeking advanced theological degrees.

Bahnsen authored six books: *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*; *Homosexuality: A Biblical View*; *By This Standard*; *No Other Standard*; *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*; and *Van Til’s*

Apologetic: Readings and Analysis. He co-authored one with me (*House Divided: The Break-up of Dispensational Theology*), contributed major articles to seven other books, wrote hundreds of articles, and produced over 1,800 audio tapes.

On December 5, 1995, he underwent his third open heart surgery to replace his aortic valve. Within twenty-four hours he developed serious complications. After being comatose for several days he died on December 11, 1995 at the age of forty-seven. Since his death his ministry influence has actually grown, primarily due to his large catalog of tapes and the influence of SCCCS and BTS. Certainly, though he is dead, yet he speaketh. **CR**

Dr. Gentry is the author of thirteen books and a contributor to eight others, from publishers such as Zondervan, Baker, Kregel, P & R, and American Vision. He is the editor of a new title from Ross House Books: *Thine Is the Kingdom: A Summary of the Postmillennial Hope*. He has spoken at conferences and on radio across the nation and runs a website for Reformed educational materials: www.kennethgentry.com.

Schultz, Pascal's...continued from page 13

North, and the Festschrift for Van Til titled *Jerusalem and Athens* edited by E. R. Geehan. **CR**

Forrest W. Schultz has a B.S. in Chemical Engineering from Drexel University and a Th.M. in Systematic Theology from Westminster Theological Seminary.

1. B.C. Johnson, *The Atheist Debater's Handbook*, (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1981), 97.

Schultz, Pluralism...continued from page 15

1. Rousas Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (n.p.: Craig Press, 1973), 119. A surprising number of Christians dislike the doctrine of infallibility. Recently some evangelicals, influenced by evidentialist apologetics, asked me for some non-Biblical "proofs" for a theological case I had made. Of all people, I chided them, Baptists should be satisfied with a good "thus saith the Lord." A Presbyterian shouldn't have to tell them that!

2. Jerry Falwell frequently goes to the mat on this issue. On the Donahue Show last year, Phil Donahue whined about the justice of God sending a Jew to hell for not believing in Jesus. Falwell's response, as I remember it, was superb: God would even send a Baptist — or a talk show host — to hell for not trusting in Jesus!

3. Originally drafted in 1571 for the Anglican Church, the American edition of the *Thirty-Nine Articles* date to 1801. The *Thirty-Nine Articles* have ambiguous authority in the Episcopal Church today.

4. Those interested can check what Lynchburg's new gay-activists are doing at www.soulforce.org. One can measure Falwell's influence by the hostility he generates with such activists. Dick Knodel, the pastor of the local OPC church, and Christ College students were visible in leading counter-protests and doing street evangelism during the Soulforce rallies.

5. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, 5.

6. Rousas Rushdoony, *Infallibility: An Inescapable Concept* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1978), 51.

7. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, 17.

8. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (N.Y.: Dutton, 1950), 139-140.

9. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, 17.

Rose, Debt...continued from page 19

their 40s and 50s, still think and act as children. They will never be able to grow up and accept responsibilities as independent thinking adults. Thus, we must rediscover the inescapable fact that childhood is a relatively short period of life and that an orderly society is built and maintained by adults in an adult-oriented world. In past generations children were taught that they lived in an adult world and that their role as children was to learn the discipline and responsibilities of adulthood as they grew and matured in wisdom. Many in our society have lost this common-sense view of generational relationships between children and adults, and it has caused many individuals to become short-sighted in their world-and-life view, which is unbiblical. This, too, should be kept in mind as we plan for a better future. God has placed man in a cause-and-effect world. We must discern the times by sound thinking and perception based upon Biblical principles. **CR**

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Tom Rose is retired professor of economics and author of nine books and hundreds of articles dealing with economic and political issues. Rose's latest books are: *Free Enterprise Economics in America* and *God, Gold, and Civil Government*. Phone: 724-748-3726; Website: www.biblicaleconomics.com.

1. Jim Puplava, "West to East: the trade deficit represents largest wealth transfer in history," in *News & Views*, ed. Michael J. Kosares, Fall 2003, 4 (www.usagold.com publication).

2. "Daily Reckoning 10/10/2003," in *Gold is breaking through!*, David N. Vaughn, ©Le Metropole Café, Inc.

3. Tom Rose, "America's Central Bank," *Chalcedon Report*, Jan. & Feb. 2003.

Kelley, Islam...continued from page 27

For the Muslim salvation is simply a matter of works to earn his way into paradise. Sura 23:102-103 paints an image of our lives being weighed in a scale on judgment day, "Then those whose balance is heavy — they will attain salvation: but those whose balance is light, will be those who have lost their souls; in hell will they abide." Because we cannot see the totality of our own good and evil, salvation for the Muslim is never assured. Only on judgment day will the balance be known.

No Justice

Along with the acceptance of this belief comes a loss of justice. For the Muslim all that is needed to do away with any sin is enough good deeds to balance the scales. So, as long as they put in enough hours of community service, even murder or rape can be simply overlooked.

To summarize these beliefs, Islam teaches that Jesus was a great prophet who was often misquoted and misunderstood by His disciples. He is not God and His death is not necessary for the forgiveness of our sins. All that is necessary is to do more good in this life than evil and we will be allowed into paradise in the next life.

That said, it seems that the belief system of a large percentage of American Christians is closer to the teachings of Islam than the teaching of the Bible. ■ CR

Warren Kelley serves as Executive Vice President for International Christian Media, the ministry that produces *Point of View Radio Talk Show*.

Hodge, Presupposing...continued from page 26

in his early teens, the rhetorical stage of education should begin: the ability of the student to defend the knowledge he has acquired.

It does not seem an insurmountable task, for example, to have young children learn the basics about the origins of life, for on our assumptions here hang the moral foundations that we adopt in life. The choice, as always, is between a created, personal universe, or an impersonal uncreated one. If the world is uncreated and impersonal, then morals are a dream and everyone can be his god determining for himself what is right or wrong.

Leaving off the Baggage

Underlying all this is a commitment to how we know that what we know is true. The impersonal universe leads only to a dead theory of knowledge, with no basis for knowing whether or not the information we have is true or false, right or wrong. In fact, these concepts tend to disappear in an impersonal universe. Or, as Paul puts it in Romans chapter one, the unbeliever suppresses the truth in his attempts to deny what he knows deep down to be true: that the God of the Bible created all things and really exists.

Without the baggage of a humanistic education, it is not difficult to teach these basic ideas to children, and there is an incentive to move down this path. Barna's research opens up a vision of children's ministry that may have been overlooked in the past. But in our Christian schools and homeschools, we have the opportunity to educate the young in the assumptions that will carry them through life. And it seems that if we don't do this by their early teenage years, it may be just a little too late. ■ CR

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for the Business Reform Foundation (www.businessreform.com) a ministry that teaches how to apply the Bible to business and provides consulting services based on Biblical principles. He writes a weekly Commentary at www.biznetdaily.com. When he is not business consulting, Ian enjoys exercising a ministry in music with his family (www.musicreform.com).

1. "Research Shows That Spiritual Maturity Process Should Start at a Young Age", available at www.barna.org.



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