

**Van Til's *The Total Picture*
His own Summary of his Apologetic
set out in a table format with Bible references added
by Steve Scrivener**

The left hand columns have been added to create the table

A) Comparison Of Presuppositional & Traditional Apologetics		
For comparison and to give a positive statement of Van Til's presuppositional apologetic, the Presuppositional Apologetics column has been added based on Van Til's text. Necessary supplementary or amended words are in square brackets.		
Issue	Presuppositional Apologetics	Traditional Apologetics
		A) My problems with the “traditional method.”
God's existence	God's existence is ... ontologically and “rationally” necessary.	1. This method compromises God himself by maintaining that his existence is only “possible” albeit “highly probable,” rather than ontologically and “rationally” necessary.
God's counsel	The counsel of God is the only all-inclusive, ultimate “cause” of whatsoever comes to pass [Eph 1:11].	2. It compromises the counsel of God by not understanding it as the only all-inclusive, ultimate “cause” of whatsoever comes to pass [Eph 1:11].
The <i>necessity</i> of God's revelation	Even in Paradise man had to interpret the general (natural) revelation of God in terms of the covenantal obligations placed upon him by God through special revelation. [So] neutral revelation can [only] be understood [in the light of special revelation].	3. It compromises the revelation of God by: a. Compromising its <i>necessity</i> . It does so by not recognizing that even in Paradise man had to interpret the general (natural) revelation of God in terms of the covenantal obligations placed upon him by God through special revelation. Natural revelation, on the traditional view, can be understood “on its own.”
The <i>clarity</i> of God's revelation	General and special revelation of God are ... [clear] so no man may say ... that God's existence is “probable.”	b. Compromising its <i>clarity</i> . Both the general and special revelation of God are said to be unclear to the point that man may say only that God's existence is “probable.”
The <i>sufficiency</i> of God's revelation	[All] “facts” [ultimately come from God and they are interpreted and explainable only] in terms of the general or special revelation of God.	c. Compromising its <i>sufficiency</i> . It does this by allowing for an ultimate realm of “chance” out of which might come “facts” such as are wholly new for God and for man. Such “facts” would be uninterpreted and unexplainable in terms of the general or special revelation of God.

Issue	Presuppositional Apologetics	Traditional Apologetics
The <i>authority</i> of God's revelation	The Word of God [is] self-attesting, and therefore has authority [over] ... man's reason and experience.	d. Compromising its <i>authority</i> . On the traditional position the Word of God's self-attesting characteristic, and therewith its authority, is secondary to the authority of reason and experience. The Scriptures do not identify themselves, man identifies them and recognizes their "authority" only in terms of his own authority.
Man's creation in the image of God	Man's creation [in] the image of God [mean's] man's ... knowledge [is dependent on] the Being and knowledge of God. ... Man [need's to] "think God's thoughts after him."	4. It compromises man's creation as the image of God by thinking of man's creation and knowledge as independent of the Being and knowledge of God. On the traditional approach man need not "think God's thoughts after him."
Man's covenantal relationship with God	Man's covenantal relationship with God [mean's] Adam's representative action [is] absolutely determinative of the future.	5. It compromises man's covenantal relationship with God by not understanding Adam's representative action as absolutely determinative of the future.
Man's sinfulness from the sin of Adam	The sinfulness of mankind resulting from the sin of Adam by mean's man's ethical depravity ... [extends] to the whole of his life, even to his thoughts and attitudes.	6. It compromises the sinfulness of mankind resulting from the sin of Adam by not understanding man's ethical depravity as extending to the whole of his life, even to his thoughts and attitudes.
God's grace	The grace of God [is] the necessary prerequisite for "renewal unto knowledge." [Col 3:10]	7. It compromises the grace of God by not understanding it as the necessary prerequisite for "renewal unto knowledge." On the traditional view man can and must renew himself unto knowledge by the "right use of reason."

B) Philosophical relationship between Christian & Non-Christian Positions

Christian Position

Non-Christian Position

B. My understanding of the relationship between Christian and non-Christian, philosophically speaking

1. Both have presuppositions about the nature of reality:

a. The Christian presupposes the triune God and his redemptive plan for the universe as set forth once for all in Scripture.

b. The non-Christian presupposes a dialectic between “chance” and “regularity,” the former accounting for the origin of matter and life, the latter accounting for the current success of the scientific enterprise.

2. Neither can, as finite beings, by means of *logic* as such, say what reality *must* be or *cannot* be.

a. The Christian, therefore, attempts to understand his world through the observation and logical ordering of facts in self-conscious subjection to the plan of the self-attesting Christ of Scripture.

b. The non-Christian, while attempting an enterprise similar to the Christian's, attempts nevertheless to use “logic” to destroy the Christian position. On the one hand, appealing to the *non-rationality* of “matter,” he says that the chance-character of “facts” is conclusive evidence against the Christian position. Then, on the other hand, he maintains like Parmenides that the Christian story cannot possibly be true. Man must be autonomous, “logic” must be legislative as to the field of “possibility” and possibility must be above God.

3. Both claim that their position is “in accordance with the facts.”

a. The Christian claims this because he interprets the facts and his experience in the light of the revelation of the self-attesting Christ in Scripture. Both the uniformity and the diversity of facts have at their foundation the all-embracing plan of God.

b. The non-Christian claims this because he interprets the facts and his experience in the light of the autonomy of human personality, the ultimate “givenness” of the world and the amenability of matter to mind. There can be no fact that denies man's autonomy or attests to the world's and man's divine origin.

4. Both claim that their position is “rational.”

a. The Christian does so by claiming not only that his position is self-consistent but that he can explain both the seemingly “inexplicable” amenability of fact to logic and the necessity and usefulness of rationality itself in terms of Scripture.

b. The non-Christian may or may not make this same claim. If he does, the Christian maintains that he cannot make it good. If the non-Christian attempts to account for the amenability of fact to logic in terms of the ultimate rationality of the cosmos, then he will be crippled when it comes to explaining the “evolution” of men and things. If he attempts to do so in terms of pure “chance” and ultimate “irrationality” as being the well out of which both rational man and a rationally amenable world sprang, then we shall point out that such an explanation is in fact no explanation at all and that it destroys predication.

C) Apologetic Methodology	
Question answered	C. My proposal, therefore, for a consistently Christian methodology of apologetics is this:
What is the basic principle to use?	1. That we use the same principle in apologetics that we use in theology: the self-attesting, self-explanatory Christ of Scripture.
Appeal to common what?	2. That we no longer make an appeal to “common notions” which Christian and non-Christian agree on, but to the “common ground” which they actually have because man and his world are what Scripture says they are.
How do we appeal to man who is made God’s image?	3. That we appeal to man as man, God's image. We do so only if we set the non-Christian principle of the rational autonomy of man against the Christian principle of the dependence of man's knowledge on God's knowledge as revealed in the person and by the Spirit of Christ.
What is reasonable?	4. That we claim, therefore, that Christianity alone is reasonable for men to hold. It is wholly irrational to hold any other position than that of Christianity. Christianity alone does not slay reason on the altar of “chance.”
How do we argue by “presupposition”?	5. That we argue, therefore, by “presupposition.” The Christian, as did Tertullian, must contest the very principles of his opponent's position. The only “proof” of the Christian position is that unless its truth is presupposed there is no possibility of “proving” anything at all. The actual state of affairs as preached by Christianity is the necessary foundation of “proof” itself.
What understanding behind preaching Christ is needed?	6. That we preach with the understanding that the acceptance of the Christ of Scripture by sinners who, being alienated from God, seek to flee his face, comes about when the Holy Spirit, in the presence of inescapably clear evidence, opens their eyes so that they see things as they truly are.
What is involved in presenting the message and evidence of Christianity?	7. That we present the message and evidence for the Christian position as clearly as possible, knowing that because man is what the Christian says he is, the non-Christian will be able to understand in an intellectual sense the issues involved. In so doing, we shall, to a large extent, be telling him what he “already knows” but seeks to suppress. This “reminding” process provides a fertile ground for the Holy Spirit, who in sovereign grace may grant the non-Christian repentance so that he may know him who is life eternal.

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