

# THE END OF CHRISTIAN PRESUPPOSITIONS

An Exchange Between Jersey Flight and Dr. John Frame

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Before deconverting from Christianity, Jersey Flight used to defend the Christian faith on college campuses. He is well read in apologetics and theology. Before dropping out of seminary he was at the top of his class. Jersey Flight is the founder of the Socratic Forum for Thought. He is an original thinker of varied proportions; he is a lecturer, learner, debater, autodidact, conversationalist, anti-academic and anti-authoritarian free-thinker. His dialectic has been described (by pious readers) as hostile and immature. His mission in life is to see how far he can think before he dies.

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# CHRISTIANITY- THE BEGINNING OF THE END

(An Open Letter to John Frame)

By: Jersey Flight

Many times we have heard the Christian speak of autonomy, but we are baffled as to how he thinks he can escape his own autonomy?

Indeed, I have seen your little system and known your arbitrary rules, but how can something have authority if it must forever remain an arbitrary assumption? The most dogmatic, the most holy cry out that their assumptions are necessary assumptions! But can the second axiom ever be as authoritative as the first?<sup>1</sup>

For you say god is a Trinity, but I say your god is a wish, just as all religions have their wishes; just as all religions have their gods. And still you will argue that your Trinity is better than all Gods? But in this you fail to comprehend the nature of your system, for you argue by reason until reason never ends<sup>2</sup>. Hence, even the smartest hypocrites are forced to assume what they desire to prove; for all laws can be questioned, and the hermeneutics of your system are equally arbitrary laws.

No, there is no god to prescribe the exactness of your system; instead, you must invent god by your system, which is also the end of your system; for even if you manage to prove, that some generic concept of god is possible, such an assumption is not equally necessary.

No, you will not be able to prove that any point of your dogma is necessary from the basis of your assumption, or for that matter, that your Trinity is necessary. For the thing you call essential

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<sup>1</sup> The refutation here is that the presuppositionist confessed starting point is not his true starting point, something else necessarily precedes it. In this case, it would be the philosophy of science, by which the textual critic seeks to determine the contents of the Bible. Another point to make here is that the first assumption of the Christian apologist is not that of scripture, and as such, scripture is not the first issue or thing, it is a secondary issue, indeed, not even second! The Christian presuppositionalist cannot use it as any kind of authority seeing it is not the first thing that is assumed.

<sup>2</sup> This is a reference to Biblical exposition of the text, that is, the exegete makes his point, but he is forced to continually push back his reason until he finally arrives at the axiom of another assumption. Thus, all presuppositional apologetics are ultimately systems of pure assumption, even the doctrinal points are assumed, but this is a violation of the apologist's own principles; for he thought to only assume one thing and is devastated when he learns he must assume all things! Also on this point, the apologist initially tries to argue by reason, and whether or not he admits it, tries to avoid circular reason, but finding he cannot escape it, realizes he must use it, and as such, begins to assume it.

is equally defined by you, and your definition can only come after your first assertion<sup>3</sup>, but then all is lost to your definition because reason has its end; because you are forced to assume the thing you desire to prove<sup>4</sup>. Alas, you cannot deny your enemy what you have also done yourself!

You silly Christians, troublers of the mind, rejecters of reason, how ready you are to slay all systems because they leap to reason, which is also your own leap of reason, and in this I call you hypocrites! You have confused light with darkness and sight with blindness. For is your system not a scalpel, by which you take out your own eyes, and do you not also teach others to take out their eyes? Have you not tricked men into happiness, which is really blindness, by tricking them to believe that blindness is sight? Yes, that is your vocation; to teach men blindness, and even worse, to aspire towards the insanity of blindness as a virtue to be achieved.

*“On the conventional wisdom, the biblical doctrine of Scripture is implausible; but if you presuppose a Christian worldview, no other doctrine of revelation is conceivable.”<sup>5</sup>*

Of course “no other doctrine of revelation is conceivable” if one assumes, against all other possibilities, the very axiom by which this revelation is conceived!

*“But certainly the overall goal of apologetics is transcendental. That is, the God we seek to prove is indeed the source of all meaning, the source of possibility, and of predication.”<sup>6</sup>*

Then transcendently speaking, if we must prove God then we cannot logically start with God? Is it not rather the case, transcendently speaking, that the source of all meaning is the same thing you use to prove the thing by which you claim to prove God? “That God is the source of all meaning,” is a conclusion of proof and not a proof for all other conclusions? By teaching this you are teaching blindness. Indeed, what possibility is there of testing the axiom of the system; no matter how hard one kicks, no matter how compelling the evidence, one can never escape the error of the first principle! The point, as it seems to me, is to get the student to where he or she will never question the first principle; for only then can you secure your Christianity. And just so long as all questions are filtered through this principle there will never be a danger of contradicting Christianity.

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<sup>3</sup> That is, the Christian calls scripture necessary, but scripture is also defined by the Christian, and any definition of God can only come after this first assertion.

<sup>4</sup> All Christians, of necessity, have a confession whether conscious or not, but this confession, like all other aspects of their system, is something which must be assumed. Thus doctrinal points are really points of desired preference.

<sup>5</sup> “Apologetics to the Glory of God,” John Frame pg.135, P&R Publishing 1994

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. pg.73

Two roads diverge in the woods, neither having better reason than the other, but you epistemological hypocrites, you take the road that gives you what you desire, and you are false because you pretend that you took it because it was true. So, why does the schoolmaster refuse to teach from certain books; ultimately, because they do not say what he desires. Thus, your mighty system falls, and that, because it must be founded on presumption; and that, because your dogma remains unnecessary; and this, because its existence affirms the authority of contrary principles.

In the end, even if the Christian can prove that one thing must stand, he cannot prove that all things must stand; or that any portion of his dogma is necessary, or that his premise leads to his desired conclusion. Hence, Christian doctrine must die the death of a thousand unnecessary assumptions.

Confidently Yours  
Jersey Flight

## JOHN FRAME RESPONSE:

Dear Skeptic,

Thanks for your interest in my Apologetics to the Glory of God. I don't have time for a long analysis or exchange, but I will reply to you briefly.

The gist of your criticism is that I assume the conclusion to be proved. In a way that is true, but in that way everybody does the same thing. If you believe that human reason is sufficient, then you can only prove that by a rational argument—assuming what you are trying to prove. If you believe that the Quran is the ultimate source of truth, you can prove that only by the Quran.

But of course that's not the end of the story. If you read further in AGG, or my other books, or books by Van Til, Bahnsen, et al., you'll find an argument to the effect that assuming autonomy always self-destructs. To assume autonomy is to assume both rationalism (my thinking is sufficient) and irrationalism (the universe exists and operates by chance). These two principles are contradictory.

Is Christian thought also autonomous? Only in the sense that we think our own thoughts, see with our own eyes, hear with our own ears. But not in the sense that we accept our own thoughts, visual, and aural impressions without correction. We all know what it is like to discover that we have been wrong and that we should have deferred to a higher authority. The Christian is one who always defers to a particular higher authority, insofar as he is consistent with his presupposition. In that sense he is not autonomous.

May God enable you to see the truth of his word.

Sincerely yours,  
Dr. John Frame.

## FLIGHT REPLY: A Comprehensive Refutation of Presuppositions

Mr. Frame-

I think you have gravely misunderstood and underestimated the force and relevance of my position. You speak of more pressing things... of having no time for analysis or exchange, but in this you fail to comprehend the weight of my objection.

When you say, "everybody does the same thing," you are somewhat mistaken. Does everybody assume the 66 books of the Protestant Canon? Does everybody assume the same Confession by which to interpret that Canon?

As I say, you are mistaken; the forced axiom of mankind, whether we like it or not, is a position of autonomy. The problem is that you, like every other presuppositional Christian, would like to think you can escape it, even as you pretend, that by confessing not to use it, you are logically exempted from it. But breaking away from autonomy is not as easy as denying it!

What then is the difference?

It is only this: the object of the conclusion which "must" be assumed. You see, it is entirely possible to reject the Protestant Canon, and the Confession which must accompany it, but it is not possible to reject the necessity of autonomy, or more specifically, the human sciences. One can argue the fallibility of induction, but this will not allow one to escape it. The fact is that induction, as well as reason, must be assumed, even as they remain necessary assumptions.<sup>7</sup>

What I put before you is the end of Presuppositional apologetics in all its varied forms:

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<sup>7</sup> "Apologetists for a religion often point to the shift that goes on in scientific ideas and materials as evidence of the unreliability of science as a mode of knowledge. They often seem peculiarly elated by the great, almost revolutionary, change in fundamental physical conception that has taken place in science during the present generation. Even if the alleged unreliability were as great as they assume (or even greater), the question would remain: Have we any recourse for knowledge? But in fact they miss the point. Science is not constituted by any particular body of subject-matter. It is constituted by a method, a method of changing beliefs by means of tested inquiry as of well arriving at them. It is its glory, not its condemnation, that subject-matter develops as the method is improved. There is no special subject-matter of belief that is sacrosanct. The identification of science with a particular set of beliefs and ideas is itself a hold-over of ancient and still current dogmatic habits of thought which are opposed to science in its actuality and which science is undermining. For scientific method is adverse not only to dogma but to doctrine as well, provided we take "doctrine" in its usual meaning- a body of definite beliefs that need only to be taught and learned as true. This negative attitude of science to doctrine does not indicate indifference to truth. It signifies supreme loyalty to the method by which truth is attained. The scientific-religious conflict ultimately is a conflict between allegiance to this method and allegiance to even an irreducible minimum of belief so fixed in advance that it can never be modified." John Dewey, *Common Faith*, pg.38-39



It is “asserted” by the Presuppositionalist that every objection against his position presupposes the truth of his position<sup>8</sup>. But this is only an “assertion”- a faint light unable to penetrate the fog.

Here then is not the opposite “assertion,” but the opposite “transcendental proof” that all forms of Christianity presuppose the autonomy of human reason:

If you would be so kind as to tell me how you “know” whether or not the last twelve verses of the Gospel of Mark (16:9-20) belong in the text?

The answer of course, has to do with method; that is, you must utilize a specific science by which to discern the nature of the content, and on the basis of this science, decide your conclusion?

And what is the method of this science Mr. Frame? Is it revelation? Or is it not rather, transcendental, rational and empirical? The choice of content is determined on the basis of human reason, of God forbid, induction, and human autonomy!

What then is the conclusion? Not something asserted (as is the case with Christian presuppositions) but something transcendently confirmed (for which we have already given a concrete example)<sup>9</sup>.

No Mr. Frame, if I were to presuppose your worldview I would first have to presuppose mine!<sup>10</sup> Thus, the very fact that you argue from the Bible is proof that my autonomous, rational worldview is essential, necessary and inescapable! Like it or not, we are forced to accept it with all its fallibility. The error is that Christians seem to think they can escape it simply by asserting against it.

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<sup>8</sup> It might be noted that there are those, Frame included, that would like to pretend that this is not their position, but if there is, at any point, an affirmation of sufficient autonomous principles, not presupposed by Christianity, then those principles must always stand above God. See Van til, *The Defense of the Faith*, Fourth Edition, pg.339

<sup>9</sup> We are referring to the method by which the content of scripture is determined. In this case we have specifically cited the last twelve verses of the Gospel of Mark. Textual science demonstrates that they were most likely added by a scribe. “*Jerome and Eusebius knew of almost no Greek mss that had this ending. Several mss have marginal comments noting that earlier Greek mss lacked the verses, while others mark the text with asterisks or obeli (symbols that scribes used to indicate that the portion of text being copied was spurious). Internal evidence strongly suggests the secondary nature of both the short and the long endings. Their vocabulary and style are decidedly non-Markan (for further details, see TCGNT 102-6). All of this evidence strongly suggests that as time went on scribes added the longer ending, either for the richness of its material or because of the abruptness of the ending at v. 8.*” NET Bible, commentary on Mark 16:9

<sup>10</sup> It is futile to argue that the method of science must rest on Christian principles, precisely because Christian principles rest on the Bible, and the Bible rests on the science of textual criticism, and the science of textual criticism rests on human observation, reason and induction; what Van til would call, “human autonomy”.

**FRAME:** *“The gist of your criticism is that I assume the conclusion to be proved. In a way that is true, but in that way everybody does the same thing. If you believe that human reason is sufficient, then you can only prove that by a rational argument—assuming what you are trying to prove.”*

**FLIGHT:** That we all do the “same thing” needs qualification.

That we all reason from “assumption” does not mean that every “assumption” is equal, by which we mean, authoritatively the same? While “knowledge” is transcendental by nature, pointing out that every axiom is circular is not an argument for the equalization of axioms, unless of course, and this is the vital point, *every axiom is transcendently affirmed by experience?* And in your case, the case of the Protestant Canon, this cannot be said to be true. One can easily reject the axiom of the Protestant Canon, which must also presume an axiom of Confession, but one cannot easily reject the axiom of human reason or induction, in that they are transcendently affirmed by experience.<sup>11</sup>

**FRAME:** *“But of course that’s not the end of the story. If you read further in AGG<sup>12</sup>, or my other books, or books by Van Til, Bahnsen, et al., you’ll find an argument to the effect that assuming autonomy always self-destructs. To assume autonomy is to assume both rationalism (my thinking is sufficient) and irrationalism (the universe exists and operates by chance). These two principles are contradictory.”*

**FLIGHT:** If to assume autonomy is to self-destruct then how do you escape autonomy when it comes to discerning the content of your axiom? And is this not the most vital point in your system, the point from which all your other premises are deduced? To pretend we have escaped the universe, because we refuse to recognize its existence, does not mean we have actually escaped the universe, does it not?

*“The whole idea of the revelation of the self-sufficient God of Scripture drops to the ground if man himself is autonomous or self-sufficient. ...if man is in any sense autonomous, he is not in need of revelation.”<sup>13</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup> Please note: Frame did not deny my conclusion he simply tried to minimize its significance as it pertained to his system: pointing out that all systems must do the same thing in that they rest on circular principles, is true, but assuming that these circular principles are and must be, principles of Christianity, is not.

<sup>12</sup> “Apologetics to the Glory of God” abbreviation for John Frame’s book.

<sup>13</sup> Christian Apologetics, Second Edition, Van til pg.114, P&R Publishing 2003

## **BAHNSEN**

Consider Bahnsen's solution: *"It is clear to anyone who will reflect seriously on this question that the statements of Scripture ABOUT Scripture are primary and must determine our attitude toward all the rest."*<sup>14</sup>

Then any document which claims to be scripture would ultimately have to be taken as scripture, and any document which lacked testimony of scripture would have to be rejected as scripture, but the final authority in determining the content of scripture would ultimately be the statement of the document itself— *would it not?* Or has one presupposed the infallibility of a council of men?<sup>15</sup> This is simply unsustainable! How then, for example, could one resolve *copiest errors* in the text? Surely one would not appeal to science outside the text? Further, any determinative theology must be decided after the fact; this means any statement, which alleges, that a document is the Word of God, regardless of the nature of that document's theology, would ultimately have to be considered the Word of God. And the synthesis of how the document's theology was to be harmonized, with the rest of so-called scripture, would be the task of theology and not the reason for exclusion. In short, there is no way to examine the integrity of any statement if the statement must be taken as true.<sup>16</sup> All presuppositional apologetics are reduced to this assertion: "This statement is true."<sup>17</sup>

*"We see, then, that the self-referential statements are and must be primary in our approach to the nature of Scripture and the question of its authority. The question of Biblical inerrancy must be resolved presuppositionally. ...If intelligibility in our doctrinal affirmation of inerrancy depends on the intelligibility of the presuppositionally pure inductive theory of apologetics, then the doctrine has been scuttled for sure."*

Ibid. Bahnsen

And yet how can inductive science be escaped when it comes to the content of scripture? If you choose Bahnsen's solution, then one must "assume" the truth of specific statements on the basis of the statements themselves. Indeed, the situation is worse than this: one must allow these

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<sup>14</sup> "Inductivism, Inerrancy, and Presuppositionalism" By Dr. Greg Bahnsen, Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 20:4 (December, 1977) [Reprinted in Evangelicals and Innerancy, ed. Ronald Youngblood (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984)]

<sup>15</sup> The reference here is to councils, such as the council of Trent. That because a council affirmed a specific set of books, therefore those books must be true, but this would logically require the presupposition of the infallibility of the council.

<sup>16</sup> Unless of course, the statement is transcendentally affirmed (which is reference to experience) which means that it ultimately could not be denied.

<sup>17</sup> Syllogism: A is true, and A claims X, therefore X is true.

statements to inform, or dictate everything else in the content of one's worldview<sup>18</sup>. That is, statements which contradict these principles are considered false because they contradict these principles. This is fideism!<sup>19</sup> Thus, as mentioned earlier there would be no way to discern whether or not the last twelve verse of the Gospel of Mark belong in the text or were added by the "uninspired autonomy" of a scribe! And if you think to argue the necessity of specific Biblical statements, I'm afraid you will quickly learn they can easily be denied.

To deny the law of non-contradiction, for example, at least in a local sense, is impossible, but to deny the statements of scripture, is not. Further, to argue that without the Protestant Canon one cannot defend universal aspects of logic is absurd! No one can defend the idea that the law of non-contradiction is universal! How could we possibly know this? Saying that the Koran, for example, "provides this or that explanation," does not **prove** that the Koran's explanation is the right explanation! When asked if the law applies to every chamber of the universe, the only rational answer is to admit that one lacks sufficient knowledge of the universe. But this need not dissuade us from utilizing the principle in the here and now.

## VAN TIL

*"This view of scripture, therefore, involves the idea that there is nothing in this universe on which human beings can have full and true information unless they take the Bible into account. We do not mean, of course, that one must go to the Bible rather than to the laboratory if one wishes to study the anatomy of the snake. But if one goes only to the laboratory and not also to the Bible, one will not have a full or even true interpretation of the snake."*<sup>20</sup>

And what exactly is it about scripture which is necessary to understand the anatomy of a snake?

Certainly we are not supposed to assume the identity [and content] of scripture with Van til?

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<sup>18</sup> At this point Frame will attempt to argue that I must do the same thing, which is only a powerful objection if my particular presuppositions are not 1) also his presuppositions and 2) unnecessary presuppositions. In other words, where Frame seeks justification for a specific set of Biblical propositions he overlooks the fact that those presuppositions must presuppose even more primitive and essential presuppositions, namely, human autonomy, reason and the method of science.

<sup>19</sup> Another instance of Bahnsen's Fideism: "What the apologist must endeavor to do is to demonstrate that without Christian presuppositions there is no intelligible use of facts and logic- that human knowledge and interpretation fail instantly. Therefore, to be reasonable at all, men must submit to the ultimate standard of God's self-attesting word; to refuse this is to insist upon intellectual foolishness and damnation." Presuppositional Apologetics, Greg Bahnsen pg.14, published, American Vision Press 2008

<sup>20</sup> Christian Apologetics, Second Edition, Van til pg.20, P&R Publishing 2003

Is it fair to say that no matter what we discover, it will always be the case, on the basis of such logic, that our information will be declared insufficient? Does Van til prove this, or does he not, even as all presuppositionalists do (even as he is the father of this darkness) merely assert it?

Point: if no interpretation can be considered true without presupposing the Bible, *by which is meant the 66 books of the Protestant Canon*, then there is no possible way to have a true conclusion without the Bible, even, and this is the vital point— if the interpretation was true! This smacks of fideism; one could equally assert the opposite conclusion: *no interpretation, which includes propositions from the Bible, can ever be true!*

To one fanatic we must ask the question, is it possible for the earth to be round; to another we must ask, is it possible to understand the anatomy of a snake without interpreting it through the Bible?

*“So we cannot subject the authoritative pronouncements of Scripture about reality to the scrutiny of reason because it is reason itself that learns of its proper function from Scripture.”*<sup>21</sup>

Behold the lingering madness of Van til!

**FRAME:** *“Is Christian thought also autonomous? Only in the sense that we think our own thoughts, see with our own eyes, hear with our own ears. But not in the sense that we accept our own thoughts, visual, and aural impressions without correction. We all know what it is like to discover that we have been wrong and that we should have deferred to a higher authority. The Christian is one who always defers to a particular higher authority, insofar as he is consistent with his presupposition. In that sense he is not autonomous.”*

**FLIGHT:** That you refer to a higher authority is true, but that your authority is the Protestant Canon, from which you deduce your God, is not. If science corrects the Bible then what does that say about the authority of the Bible? If at any point one appeals to science outside the Bible, as a means to better understand, or contextualize the Bible, then they have indirectly affirmed the authority of science above that of the Bible. Is this not true?

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<sup>21</sup> “The Defense of the Faith, Van til pg.130, Fourth Edition, P&R Publishing 2008

*“To accept an interpretation of life upon authority is permissible only if we have looked into the foundations of the authority we accept. But if we must determine the foundations of the authority, we no longer accept authority on authority.”*<sup>22</sup>

*“If it is first assumed to be working without God, it cannot after that be shown to be working only in dependence upon God. The same point is to be made about the ideas of order, purpose, and morality. If any of them can function independently of God at the beginning, why do they need God at all?”*<sup>23</sup>

**FRAME:** *“May God enable you to see the truth of his word?”*

**FLIGHT:** Translation: *“May God (by which is mean the Trinity) enable you to see (feeling, intuition) the truth (impossibility of the contrary by assuming that everything else contrary is impossible) of his word (66 book of the Protestant Canon)? In short, and as I have said before, unless one assumes that presuppositionalism is true one will never believe it is.*

All that is offered by the Christian presuppositionalist is the “assertion” that we “must” presuppose his worldview. But we have offered something more, not an “assertion,” but “transcendental proof,” that in order to argue for the authority of Christianity, the Christian must first presuppose our worldview; for without the authority of inductive science there would be no such thing as scripture. And contrary to their authoritarian claims, no Christian can escape the ramifications of autonomy.

*“I try to call men back to the recognition of the fact that they are creatures of God by challenging their false assumption of their non-createdness, their autonomy or ultimacy.”*  
Van Til <sup>24</sup>

[I try to call men back to reason, out of this darkness, by the recognition of the fact that they are inescapably autonomous by challenging their false assumption that the Bible does not presuppose human autonomy.]

How I do hope you will write back Mr. Frame, for I have not yet been able to expound the end of

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<sup>22</sup> Van til goes on to state: *“Authority could be authority to us only if we already knew that it had the right to claim authority. Such could be the case only if we knew in advance the nature of that authority.”* The question of course, is how we “know” that something has authority? And the answer is not, as Van til would like it to be, because it claims to have authority, but because it is presupposed by existence. If this is true of scripture then scripture has authority. The Defense of the Faith, Van til pg.56, Fourth Edition, P&R Publishing 2008

<sup>23</sup> “The Defense of the Faith, Van til pg.364, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition

<sup>24</sup> “The Defense of the Faith, Van til pg.248, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition

Christianity as originated in the arguments of Presuppositionalism<sup>25</sup>.

Confidently Yours,  
Jersey Flight

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<sup>25</sup> This is because Presuppositionalism presupposes the defeat of evidentialism. Once Presuppositionalism has been defeated there is no going back to evidentialism: the presuppositional apologist has already deconstructed the evidential model of Christianity. For an example of this see Robert L. Reymond, "Faith's Reasons for Rejecting Evidentialism, in "Faith's Reasons for Believing" pg.243-292, Mentor Imprint 2008, Christian Focus Publications.

## FRAME REPLY:

Dear Jersey,

I meant it when I said that I didn't have time for a long exchange. So this is my last reply to you. You have chosen not to respect my lack of time, but to barrage me with a huge amount of text which would take me months to interact with fully. Below just a few comments:

**FLIGHT:** "I think you have gravely misunderstood and underestimated the force and relevance of my position. You speak of more pressing things... of having no time for analysis or exchange, but in this you fail to comprehend the weight of my objection."

**FRAME:** No doubt I have a different evaluation of the weight of your objection than you do. Is that scandalous?

**FLIGHT:** "When you say, "everybody does the same thing," you are somewhat mistaken. Does everybody assume the 66 books of the Protestant Canon? Does everybody assume the same Confession by which to interpret that Canon?"

**FRAME:** You seem to have no appreciation of the concept of a universe of discourse. I was obviously talking about fundamental presuppositions, our general views of what constitutes truth, rationality, etc. A presupposition in this sense is not a particular view, such as the extent of the canon or the price of eggs. It is a fundamental criterion of truth. On that question I remain constant. Everybody has such a presupposition, and nobody can defend it other than by an appeal to that presupposition itself. On the Canon, see the attached.

**FLIGHT:** "As I say, you are mistaken- the forced axiom of mankind, whether we like it or not, is a position of autonomy."

**FRAME:** How do you define this? I distinguished one sense in which I could agree with you, that we are all autonomous. But I also distinguished another sense in which we are not autonomous. You here ignore the ambiguity of the term, which you should not do if you want to carry on a serious discussion.

**FLIGHT:** "The problem is that you, like every other presuppositional Christian, would like to think you can escape it, even as you pretend, that by confessing not to use it, you are logically exempted from it. But breaking away from autonomy is not as easy as denying it.

What then is the difference?



It is only this: the object of the conclusion which “must” be assumed. You see, it is entirely possible to reject the Protestant Canon, and the Confession which must accompany it, but it is not possible to reject the necessity of autonomy, or more specifically, the human sciences. One can argue the fallibility of induction, but this will not allow one to escape it. The fact is that induction, as well as reason, must be assumed, even as they remain necessary assumptions.”

**FRAME:** Christians accept these, even presuppose them, at a secondary level. But the question remains, what is the criterion of rationality? How do we know when we have rightly carried out an induction? Here Christians and nonchristians diverge.

**FLIGHT:** “What I put before you is the end of Presuppositional apologetics in all its varied forms...”

**FRAME:** Oh, come on! Can’t you muster a bit of humility? You’re not the sharpest knife in the drawer. You’ve already said a number of ignorant things. Of course I’ve also made a number of mistakes over the years. It’s very dangerous, on any assumptions, to develop an exalted opinion of yourself. And you’re not likely to find people to discuss these matters seriously if you pretend that you know all the answers and that everyone who disagrees is an idiot.

**FLIGHT:** “It is “asserted” by the Presuppositionalist that every objection against his position presupposes the truth of his position. But this is only an “assertion,” a faint light unable to penetrate the fog.”

**FRAME:** Presuppositionalists have offered a number of arguments for and examples of this assertion. Clearly you wouldn’t say this if you had any understanding of the literature.

**FLIGHT:** “Here then is not the opposite “assertion,” but the opposite “transcendental proof” that all forms of Christianity presuppose the autonomy of human reason: If you would be so kind as to tell me how you “know” whether or not the last twelve verses of the Gospel of Mark (16:9-20) belong in the text?”

**FRAME:** I don’t know for sure. There are lots of things I don’t know for sure. Do you think that Presuppositionalism teaches that we have absolute assurance about everything? None of us has ever claimed that. For what I think is a balanced position, see [http://www.frame-poythress.org/frame\\_articles/2005Certainty.htm](http://www.frame-poythress.org/frame_articles/2005Certainty.htm).

**FLIGHT:** “The answer of course, has to do with method; that is, you must utilize a specific science by which to discern the nature of the content, and on the basis of this science, decide your conclusion?”

**FRAME:** OK. But that science must be done consistently with a biblical worldview.

**FLIGHT:** “And what is the method of this science Mr. Frame? Is it revelation? Or is it not rather, transcendental, rational and empirical? The choice of content is determined on the basis of human reason... of God forbid, induction and human autonomy!”

**FRAME:** And human reason and induction is evaluated on the basis of divine revelation. That does not deserve to be called autonomy.

**FLIGHT:** “What then is the conclusion? Not something asserted, as is the case with Christian presuppositions, but something transcendently confirmed, for which we have already given a concrete example.”

**FRAME:** It’s developed by a scientific/rational process that proceeds on principles compatible with divine revelation.

**FLIGHT:** “No Mr. Frame, if I were to presuppose your worldview I would first have to presuppose mine! Thus, the very fact that you argue from the Bible is proof that my autonomous, rational worldview is essential, necessary and inescapable! Like it or not, we are forced to accept it with all its fallibility. The error is that Christians seem to think they can escape it by simply asserting against it.”

**FRAME:** Van Til, Bahnsen, and I do not merely assert. We argue, in considerable detail. If you don’t know this, you don’t know the literature.

**FLIGHT:** “That we all do the “same thing” needs qualification...

That we all reason from “assumption” does not mean that every “assumption” is equal, by which we mean, authoritatively the same? While “knowledge” is transcendental by nature, pointing out that every axiom is circular is not an argument for the equalization of axioms, unless of course, and this is the vital point, every axiom is transcendently affirmed by experience? And in your case, the case of the Protestant Canon, this cannot be said to be true. One can easily reject the axiom of the Protestant Canon, which must also presume an axiom of Confession, but one cannot easily reject the axiom of human reason or induction, in that they are transcendently affirmed by experience.”

**FRAME:** See my earlier comment on the universe of discourse.

**FLIGHT:** “If to assume autonomy is to self-destruct then how do you escape autonomy when it comes to discerning the content of your axiom?”

**FRAME:** Choice of my axiom is not autonomous in my sense of the term, but is subject to the criterion of divine revelation.

**FLIGHT:** “And is this not the most vital point in your system, the point from which all your other premises are deduced?”

**FRAME:** Yes, but you have misunderstood it.

**FLIGHT:** “To pretend we have escaped the universe, because we refuse to recognize its existence, does not mean we have actually escaped the universe, does it not?”

**FRAME:** None of us pretends to have escaped the universe. See the article I’ve mentioned above at the link provided, and my Doctrine of the Knowledge of God, which discusses epistemology at length.

**FLIGHT:** [Quoting Van til] “The whole idea of the revelation of the self-sufficient God of Scripture drops to the ground if man himself is autonomous or self-sufficient. ...if man is in any sense autonomous, he is not in need of revelation.”

**FRAME:** Right.

Sorry, but that has to be the end for me. I cannot take the time to correct your comments about Bahnsen and Van Til, or to carry on further correspondence with you. You have “refuted” only simplistic caricatures of our position, while thinking that you have come up with some kind of comprehensive demolition of it. That is nonsense. Still, I do pray that you will lose the know-it-all spirit and engage in a serious study of our epistemology, which may turn out to be more valuable to you than you can imagine now.

## FLIGHT REPLY: The Assertion of Christian Nonsense

*“...theology is not purely objective truth... there is no such thing as purely objective truth...”* John Frame<sup>26</sup>

What needs to be apparent is that I have decimated the position of Dr. Frame:

1) Frame says I fail to understand, or am not familiar with the literature because I ignore the rational/irrational distinction made by Van til.<sup>27</sup> However, the rational/irrational distinction

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<sup>26</sup> *“Objectivism continues to be a danger in orthodox Christian circles. It is all too easy for us to imagine that we have a higher task than merely that of helping people. Our pride constantly opposes the servant model. And it is all too easy for us to think of theological formulations as something more than truth-for-people, as a kind of special insight into God himself (which the biblical writers would have written about, had they known as much as we). But no, theology is not ‘purely objective truth’; as we saw earlier, there is no such thing as purely objective truth, or ‘brute fact.’ Our theologies are not even the best formulation of truth-for-people for all times and places; Scripture is that.”* The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God pg.80, P&R Publishing 1987.

Lest I be charged with taking Frame out of context I have reproduced the quote in its entirety. Please note, if Frame tries to argue that there is such a thing as, purely object truth, contrary to what he said, then we have to ask: if Scripture, by which he means the Protestant Canon, is purely objective truth? If so, then Frame’s statement, that there is no such thing as purely objective truth must clearly be false? So which one is it; is the Protestant Canon “purely objective truth” or is there no such thing as “purely objective truth?” Even if Frame was seeking to make a contrast between a Christian worldview, and a non-Christian worldview, the statement is still absurd because Frame believes that his worldview is true! And in the last place, for Frame to argue that his theology is not the best formulation of truth, but that Scripture is the best formulation is absurd. This assumes, among other things, that Scripture requires no interpretation, further presupposing its contingency, wax nose, subjectivity. That is, Frame is admitting that the objective nature of Scripture doesn’t matter because everything deduced from it will never rise higher than subjectivity. But take it further, what does this mean regarding the objectivity of Scripture itself? If Frame’s formulation of what he believes about scripture is theological, then his idea that scripture is objective, is also, theologically subjective. And inasmuch as knowledge is theological for Frame, there is no such thing as objectivity, not even for Frame’s idea about Scripture. Thus, the statement, “Scripture is objective truth, for all people and all time,” is false.

*“...all information we receive about God, through nature, Scripture, or whatever source, comes to us through our eyes, ears, minds, and brains- through ourselves. Sometimes we dream fondly of a “purely objective” knowledge of God- a knowledge of God freed from the limitations of our senses, minds, experiences, preparation, and so forth. But nothing of this sort is possible...”* Ibid. pg.65

<sup>27</sup> See Greg Bahnsen, Van til’s Apologetic Readings & Analysis, P&R Publishing 1998 pg. 311-402

*“The modern man is in the first place a rationalist. All non-Christians are rationalists. As descendents of Adam, their covenant-breaking representative (Rom. 5:12), every man refuses to submit his mind in the way of obedience to the mind of God. He undertakes to interpret the nature of reality in terms of himself as the final reference point. But to be a rationalist man must also be an irrationalist. Man obviously cannot legislate by logic for reality. Unwilling to admit that God has determined the laws of reality, man, by implication, attributes all power to chance. As a rationalist he says that only that is possible which he logically grasp in exhaustive fashion. As an irrationalist he says that since he cannot logically grasp the whole of reality, and really cannot legislate for existence by logic at*

ultimately has nothing to do with the justification of scripture, neither is it the point at which the system must rise or fall, but serves as a criticism against the limits of knowledge.<sup>28</sup> To argue the inevitability of the rational/irrational distinction as a justification for scripture is to argue that scripture must be true because one doesn't like the *consequences* of the rational/irrational distinction.<sup>29</sup> This fallacy is commonly known as *argumentum ad consequentiam* (or Latin for argument to the consequences). Further it relies on the *perfect solution fallacy* as a means by which to transmit the propositions of scripture. The bottom line is that it simply doesn't matter if Frame has stated obvious problems in the formation of rational knowledge, we can still know that his position is a contradiction of its own standards.<sup>30</sup>

2) Contrary to this, my approach has *consciously* centered on the most vital aspect of the

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*all, it is chance that rules supreme. It is to this rationalist-irrationalist man that the gospel comes with its doctrine of creation and revelation, its doctrine of redemption through grace in Christ.*" Ibid. Pg.317

*"...every variation of unregenerate philosophy evidences the tendencies of both rationalism and irrationalism in one form or another, taking the autonomous mind of man as the ultimate standard of authority regarding truth and knowledge, and yet admitting its unsuitability or inability to function as the final judge."* Ibid. Pg. 316

<sup>28</sup> Further, to point out that rationalism is limited is merely to state the obvious. Such a point is only a problem for a position which claims infallibility or exhaustive knowledge. Further, Van til is confined to the same logic he rejects: *"...modern man therefore cannot allow for the idea of a Bible that testifies to itself by identifying itself as alone the Word of God."* Van til's Apologetic Readings & Analysis, P&R Publishing 1998 pg. 402 This is false because Van til, of necessity, and like all other men, must decide the content of scripture on the basis of textual science, which is external to scripture! Why, for example, given Van til's above principle, would he reject the divine claims of The Shepherd of Hermas: *"I enquired of her, saying, "Lady, I could wish to know concerning the end of the stones, and their power, of what kind it is." She answered and said unto me, "It is not that thou of all men art especially worthy that it should be revealed to thee; for there are others before thee, and better than thou art, unto whom these visions ought to have been revealed. But that the name of God may be glorified, it hath been revealed to thee, all shall be revealed, for the sake of the doubtful-minded, who question in their hearts whether these things are so or not. Tell them that all these things are true, and that there is nothing beside the truth, but that all are steadfast, and valid, and established on a firm foundation."* Vision 3: 4[12]:3 translated by, J. B. Lightfoot. Or for that matter, how would he decide whether or not the last twelve verse of the Gospel of Mark belong in the text? The answer is simple; he would employ the external methods of science. Thus, Van til, much like the autonomous, modern man, cannot allow for the idea of a Bible that testifies to itself by identifying itself as the Word of God, but must of necessity, and for reasons of safety, as well as accuracy, employ the external methods of science. To reason from scripture is to presuppose the authority of science!

<sup>29</sup> "Although we cannot formally demonstrate the *complete* coherence of the Christian system, at least we can show that systems that reject the biblical God are not able to maintain intelligibility, let alone coherence." Frame, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* pg.134 [emphasis his] And yet, this is exactly what Presuppositionalists can't do. In as much as they criticize the methods of reason and science they criticize the foundation of their own, contingent worldview!

<sup>30</sup> For Frame's articulation of the rational/irrational distinction see "The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God," pg.60-61, published by P&R. But what's the point; the argument runs thus, "if you don't assume the Protestant Canon then you will not be able to affirm certain aspects of knowledge i.e. comprehensive universalism." So what, we are limited in what we know? Does this mean that science or rationalism is useless? I hardly doubt it in that Mr. Frame has to use them in order to produce the contents of scripture. And yet not only this, the claim that assuming scripture can actually provide the foundation for universal aspects of knowledge is absurd. There is no way a Presuppositionalist could sustain this idea, given the fact that his system is contingent on the probabilities of science.

system, the point from which all other premises are deduced, the concept of scripture<sup>31</sup>. If this point fails then the entire system fails! My argument legitimately bypasses all other aspects of presuppositional apologetics in that all other aspects of presuppositional apologetics are “secondary issues” when compared to scripture<sup>32</sup>. The presuppositional perspective is entirely contingent upon the concept of scripture<sup>33</sup>. It would be foolish to deal with the ethics of scripture when those ethics are contingent on the concept of scripture<sup>34</sup>.

3) My argument, which demonstrates that scripture always presupposes autonomous principles, needs to be answered before presuppositional apologetics can move forward. If it cannot escape the charge then it cannot argue a system contrary to human autonomy. In effect, the Christian is in the same position as the non-believer, and that, regardless of what he or she claims on the basis of assertion, or points out, regarding the limits of knowledge<sup>35</sup>!

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<sup>31</sup> “We trust Jesus Christ as a matter of eternal life or death. We trust his wisdom beyond all other wisdom... Since we believe him more certainly than we believe anything else, he (and hence his Word) is the very *criterion*, the ultimate *standard* of truth.” [emphasis his] John Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, pg.7 “The position we have briefly sought to outline is frankly taken from the Bible. And this applies especially to the central concept of the whole position, viz., the concept of an absolute God.” Van til from, *Van til’s Apologetic Readings & Analysis*, Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998 Pg.517 “Our reasoning frankly depends upon the revelation of God, whose “reasoning” is within the internal-eternal circularity of the three persons of the Trinity.” Ibid. Van til Pg.520

<sup>32</sup> Here is an prime example of such reasoning: “...*not only is the Lord authoritative and in control but He is also covenantally present. Because He perfectly controls our interpretive work, all our thinking is a revelation of Him and a manifestation of His presence.*” *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, pg.29. But how would Frame claim to know this if not by his concept and interpretation of scripture? The same can be said for every other proposition Frame claims to know, the question of “how” will lead back to the authority of scripture. Thus, why should I attack the issues of scripture when those issues rise or fall by the authority of scripture?

<sup>33</sup> “*The Bible is taken so seriously that we have not even left any area of known reality by which the revelation that comes to us in the Bible may be compared, or to which it may be referred as to a standard. We have taken the final standard of truth to be the Bible itself.*” Van til from, *Van til’s Apologetic Readings & Analysis*, Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998, pg.95

“*The first and most basic point on which my approach differs from the traditional one is therefore that: I start more frankly from the Bible as the source from which as an absolutely authoritative revelation I take my whole interpretation of life.*” Ibid. Van til, Pg.558- **Also see footnotes 6 and 10.**

<sup>34</sup> “*We may therefore call a Christian epistemology a revelational epistemology... Pantheistic thinkers also speak of God revealing himself, and might therefore also speak of a revelational epistemology if they desired. But for the sake of clearness, the term revelation should really be reserved for biblical thought.*” Van til from, *Van til’s Apologetic Readings & Analysis*, Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998 Pg.167

“*The Bible shows us the proper place of reasoning, whether philosophical or theological.*” Ibid. Van til Pg.571- **Also see footnotes 6 and 10.**

<sup>35</sup> Please note: Mr. Frame literally affirms the necessity of my premise, that is, he must use the science of textual criticism to determine the contents of scripture:

4) Frame has not interacted with the argument he has merely tried to dismiss it by claiming that it remains irrelevant to his position. Nonsense! What could possibly be more relevant than scripture seeing scripture is the source of his reason? Every question, "how do you know," reverts the Christian back to the premise, "because of scripture."<sup>36</sup>

5) Ask yourself: If Frame admits that he *must* presuppose human autonomy as a first principle<sup>37</sup>, then how can he logically say he escapes it by assuming a secondary principle (namely the Protestant Canon)?<sup>38</sup> Further, if scripture is only a "secondary principle," then how can

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*"Though we don't have the actual autographs, we have access to the original text through the science of textual criticism, which compares various manuscript readings to determine the original."* Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord*, P&R publishing 2006 pg.66

*"People sometimes say it doesn't make sense for God to inspire a book and then require us to determine its original content by textual criticism, by human means. When you think of transmission as a process carrying the word from God's lips to our hearts, eventually there will have to be a role for human thought, reason, even science."* Ibid. pg.67 Not just "eventually," that role is necessary at the very beginning! And note, the further glaring contradiction: *"...our understanding of Scripture is fallible and may sometimes need to be corrected. But those corrections may be made only on the basis of a deeper understanding of Scripture, not on the basis of some other kind of knowledge."* Frame, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, pg.45. Really? Is this what Mr. Frame would refer to as, the role of "human thought, reason and science?" Nonsense, Frame can't have it both ways; scripture always presupposes the supremacy of human thought, reason and science above that of itself.

<sup>36</sup> This is even true in the case of those who try to claim an epistemology of the so-called, "Holy Spirit," meaning, the subject is directly, intuitively enlightened by God. However, even this idea is itself contingent on scripture. "Theologically expressed, we say that the validity of human knowledge in general rests upon the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti* (testimony of the Holy Spirit). In addition to this, Christian theism maintains that since sin has come into the world, no subject of knowledge can really come into contact with any object of knowledge, in the sense of interpreting it properly, unless the Scripture give the required light and unless the regeneration by the Spirit give a new power of sight." Van til, from "Van til's Apologetic Readings & Analysis," Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998, Pg.206- **Also see footnotes 6 and 10.**

<sup>37</sup> It doesn't matter if Frame has not admitted this word for word, what matters is whether or not his first principle is the autonomy of man or the assertions of scripture? For Frame to admit that scripture "must correct" autonomous knowledge is for Frame to admit that scripture is not first! Even further, for Frame to admit the necessity of textual science, which he has done, is for Frame to admit the authority of science above that of scripture!

<sup>38</sup> Not only did Frame admit this in his first response, but it is also the position of his epistemology: *"...all information we receive about God, through nature, Scripture, or whatever source, comes to us through our eyes, ears, minds, and brains- through ourselves. Sometimes we dream fondly of a "purely objective" knowledge of God- a knowledge of God freed from the limitations of our senses, minds, experiences, preparation, and so forth. But nothing of this sort is possible..."* The *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, pg. 65

What is interesting is how Frame tries to deal with this contradiction. That is, how can scripture be the ultimate standard and yet there is a standard which must come before it? Solution: *"We are merely affirming that human knowledge is servant-knowledge, that in seeking to know anything our first concern is to discover what our Lord thinks about it and to agree with His judgment, to think His thoughts after Him. What alternative could there possibly be?"* Ibid. pg.45

Frame argue it has more authority than autonomy if autonomy remains his first principle?  
Surely the philosopher is entitled to the same solution as the theologian?

**6) THE NO BULLSHIT LINE:** Frame uses the same principles he criticizes, on the basis of scripture, in order to affirm scripture<sup>39</sup>! If this is true, and it is, then the idea of the authority of Christian presuppositions is dead, powerless and mute; and even as they collapse, the only hope for rational Christianity must collapse<sup>40</sup>.

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*“We come to know Scripture through our senses and minds (self) and through Scripture’s relations with the rest of the world. But then what we read in scripture must be allowed to correct the ideas we have formed about these other areas.”* Ibid. pg.89. And what of this discovery; is this something objective?

*“To be sure, we are fallible in determining the proper applications; but we are also fallible in translating, exegeting, and understanding the explicit statements of scripture.”* Ibid. pg. 84

<sup>39</sup> Take for example Frame’s insistence on the necessity of textual science contrasted with Frame’s rejection of science. See John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, pg.116-121

*“...the type of verification that logical positivists demand uses the methods of autonomous science, which the Christian cannot accept.”* Ibid. pg.116

*“Empiricism also rules out claims to know God, if God is thought to be invisible or otherwise resistant to empirical ‘checking procedures.’ For some empiricists, that fact rules out the knowledge of God. For Christians, it rules out empiricism as a general theory of knowledge.”* Ibid. pg. 118

And yet Frame admits that he must use science in order to establish the content of his most important principle, scripture: *“Though we don’t have the actual autographs, we have access to the original text through the science of textual criticism, which compares various manuscript readings to determine the original.”* Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord*, P&R publishing 2006 pg.66

*“People sometimes say it doesn’t make sense for God to inspire a book and then require us to determine its original content by textual criticism, by human means. When you think of transmission as a process carrying the word from God’s lips to our hearts, eventually there will have to be a role for human thought, reason, even science.”* Ibid. pg.67

<sup>40</sup> This is true because presuppositional apologetics ultimately rejects all non-presuppositional systems of apologetics, demonstrating that they are inconsistent and unsustainable; proving that without the assumption of revelation the system is never able to arrive at a certain conclusion of God. Or to put it another way; non-revelatory presuppositions are a contradiction of revelatory presuppositions; which is to say, they are not consistent with the claims of revelation. To understand what Presuppositionalism means is to understand what the refutation of Presuppositionalism means. “The traditional method does not challenge the presumed autonomy of the unbeliever’s thinking and assumes that he has made his experience intelligible, as far as it goes. ‘*He only needs to accept something additional to what he has always believed.*’ The presuppositionalist replies that it is then ‘too late to ask him to accept Christianity,’ for if the legitimacy and epistemological cogency of his autonomy have been granted, then God’s revelation and grace are not fundamentally necessary. The absolute demand of the gospel is lost, since all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are not, after all, deposited in Christ (cf. Col. 2:3)...” Greg Bahnsen from “*Van til’s Apologetic Readings & Analysis*,” P&R Publishing 1998 pg.536  
It was this kind of reasoning which led Bahnsen to claim: “how easy it is for the would-be-autonomous man...to deflect and destroy the arguments of the traditional apologist.” Ibid. pg. 551

*“The traditional method had explicitly built into it the right and ability of the natural man, apart from the work of the Spirit of God, to be the judge of the claim of the authoritative Word of God. It is man who, by means of his self-*



7) Frame failed to discern the weight of the criticism I leveled against his system, he wagered that I was "not familiar with the literature," and as such, stood idly by and allowed the collapse of Christian presuppositions. His urgency was only directed towards the further propagation of his teaching, and not, as it should have been, towards the defense of his system.

## **THE DIALOGUE**

**FRAME:** *"I meant it when I said that I didn't have time for a long exchange. So this is my last reply to you. You have chosen not to respect my lack of time, but to barrage me with a huge amount of text which would take me months to interact with fully."*

**FLIGHT:** It is important to note, when Frame complains, *that he doesn't have time to engage in a long exchange*, that his complaint is based on his desire to propagate his message to other minds. But is his message true, or for that matter, even probable? I believe we have shown that it is not; so what possible reason could we have for not disrupting the propagation of his message? I answer; we should not feel sorry for Frame because he is spreading a false message. And if the current dialogue has in anyway distracted, or served as a disruption of his purpose, then it has done well; for here is another man that teaches children about the ideological terrors of hell.

**FRAME:** *"No doubt I have a different evaluation of the weight of your objection than you do. Is that scandalous?"*

**FLIGHT:** It is possible to misunderstand another thinker even as it is possible to miscalculate the weight of specific objections, but the act of scandal is the act of purposely ignoring or minimizing the signification of a position; in that this has not been done no scandal has been achieved.<sup>41</sup> However, to dismiss those who question, without considering the ramifications of their objections is itself a kind of scandal. Either the objector knows his place or he has missed the point? But the only way to determine the matter is to logically consider the matter; what are the basic tenets of the philosophy in question? Or perhaps the greater point is that

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*established intellectual tools, puts his 'stamp of approval' on the Word of God... God's Word must first pass man's test of good and evil, truth and falsity. But once you tell a non-Christian this, why should he be worried by anything else that you say? You have already told him he is quite all right just the way he is!"* Ibid. Van til, pg.552

*"If the natural man is given permission to draw the floor-plan for a house and is allowed to build the first story of the house in accordance with his own blueprint, the Christian cannot escape being controlled in a large measure by the same blueprint when he wants to take over the building of the second story of the house."* Ibid. Van til, Pg.563

<sup>41</sup> It is also scandalous to misrepresent a position.

Frame's evaluation of my objection is actually a failure to understand his own system, as in, the authority and place of scripture?<sup>42</sup>

**FRAME:** *"You seem to have no appreciation of the concept of a universe of discourse. I was obviously talking about fundamental presuppositions, our general views of what constitutes truth, rationality, etc. A presupposition in this sense is not a particular view, such as the extent of the canon or the price of eggs. It is a fundamental criterion of truth. On that question I remain constant. Everybody has such a presupposition, and nobody can defend it other than by an appeal to that presupposition itself."*

**FLIGHT:** To speak of "universal discourse," is to speak of common presuppositions, but these transcendental entities have nothing to do with Christianity, but are, in fact, the same presuppositions utilized by Christianity as a means by which to deduce Christianity. Or we might say; Christianity is not a premise by which we deduce conclusions, but is a conclusion which has been deduced by a premise.<sup>43</sup>

To speak of "fundamental presuppositions," at least in the Christian sense, is to speak of the 66 books of the Protestant Canon, unless of course, the Canon is not a "fundamental presupposition?"

To take Frame at his word we must come to believe that scripture, by which he means the 66 books of the Protestant Canon, is not "a general view of what constitutes truth," or "a fundamental criterion of truth?" Surely this is backwards?<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> "We trust Jesus Christ as a matter of eternal life or death. We trust his wisdom beyond all other wisdom... Since we believe him more certainly than we believe anything else, he (and hence his Word) is the very *critterion*, the ultimate *standard* of truth." [emphasis his] Apologetics to the Glory of God, pg.7 "A person cannot have it both ways regarding his final standard or ultimate reference point. He presupposes and reasons either according to the authority of God or according to some other authority." Greg Bahnsen, from, Van til's Apologetic Readings & Analysis, Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998, pg.92

<sup>43</sup> Of course, Van til would completely reject this idea, even as he must, considering what it would mean to the stability of his system:  
"...the presuppositional argument does not first debate the formal possibility of a book from God, but rather begins the argument from the outset with the actuality of the Bible..." Greg Bahnsen, Van til's Apologetic Readings & Analysis, Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998 Pg.508

"We must begin with the actuality of the book. We must not pretend that we have established the possibility of the book and the necessity of it in terms of a philosophy that we did not get from the book." Ibid. Van til Pg.509  
"Faith in the self-attesting Christ of Scriptures is the beginning, not the conclusion, of wisdom!" Ibid. Van til pg.552

If Christianity is a conclusion, deduced by a premise, then that premise would have more authority than Christianity, even as Christianity would then be contingent on that premise.

<sup>44</sup> Presuppositionalism is just another fancy term for fundamentalism. "The Bible is taken so seriously that we have not even left any area of known reality by which the revelation that comes to us in the Bible may be compared, or to which it may be referred as to a standard. We have taken the final standard of truth to be the Bible itself." Cornelius

Again, that everybody has presuppositions is true, but that all presuppositions are equal, is not.<sup>45</sup> The question is one of transcendence; can we live without presupposing the principle? While the Christian might claim to justify scripture by an appeal to scripture, this claim is false because scripture always presupposes a principle more primitive than scripture itself.

**FRAME:** *“I distinguished one sense in which I could agree with you, that we are all autonomous.”*

**FLIGHT:** Well then, to use the logic of Van til: *“To the extent that [Frame] admits the type of coherence, founded upon autonomous human experience, he has no argument against autonomous modernist thought. To the extent that [Frame] admits this type of coherence... to be valid, he has to give up the uniqueness of the events of Christianity as he himself holds them. On the other hand, to the extent that [Frame] holds to the uniqueness of events the way an autonomous modernist holds to them, to that extent he has to give up the coherence to which he himself as an orthodox Christian should hold.”*<sup>46</sup>

**FRAME:** *“...I also distinguished another sense in which we are not autonomous. You here ignore the ambiguity of the term, which you should not do if you want to carry on a serious discussion.”*

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Van til from, Van til's Apologetic Readings & Analysis, Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998, pg.95

“...Often the search for “foundations” and “justifications” is precisely the result of an ungodly *dissatisfaction* with Scripture. Occasionally, some Christians feel that the Bible is not sufficient to serve as the *ultimate* standard of judgment, and so they believe they need something else to serve as such a standard.” [emphasis his] Frame, Doctrine of the Knowledge of God pg.106

<sup>45</sup> I already addressed this point in my first reply to Frame, ‘pointing out that every axiom is circular is not an argument for the equalization of axioms.’

<sup>46</sup> Van til speaking of E. J. Carnell: “To the extent that he admits the type of coherence [founded upon autonomous human experience] he has no argument against [autonomous modernist thought]. To the extent that he admits [this] type of coherence... to be valid, he has to give up the uniqueness of the events of Christianity as he himself holds them. On the other hand, to the extent that he holds to the uniqueness of events the way [an autonomous modernist] holds to them, to that extent he has to give up the coherence to which he himself as an orthodox Christian should hold.” Cornelius Van til from, Van til's Apologetic Readings & Analysis, Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998 Pg.548“...we cannot accept the mind of man as furnishing in any way the ultimate reference point for predication...” Ibid. Van til pg.630

“The Christian worldview maintains the indelibly revelational character of every fact of the created universe... In defending the faith, the Christian cannot allow the sustainability or legitimacy of using such autonomous presuppositions with respect to *any aspect of knowledge*, as though they can make sense of the natural world but must then be set aside when one thinks about the supernatural aspects of God's revelation in Scripture.” Ibid. Bahnsen, Pg.110 [Emphasis mine].

**FLIGHT:** Ambiguity of the term? Very well, to speak of autonomy<sup>47</sup> is to speak of inevitability, or to quote Frame: “*To the degree that we lack certainty, all we have is probability.*”<sup>48</sup> But what is the source or object of this probability if not the vessel of autonomy? To speak of probability is to speak of authority, not only the authority of probability, but also the authority of the methods which make probability possible.<sup>49</sup>

To be asked to define the concept of autonomy is to speak of the personal choice of induction and reason.<sup>50</sup> To be asked to define the concept of induction is to speak of conclusions on the basis of observation. To be asked to define the concept of reason is to speak of conclusions on the basis of non-contradiction. And, are any of these concepts infallible? Most certainly not! But that is not the question; the question is whether or not they are transcendentally affirmed by existence, or whether or not they can logically be denied; or in the most important case, whether we have a superior method to replace them? That everybody has presuppositions is true, but that we cannot defend presuppositions on the basis of experience is false. Existence presupposes necessary concepts in order for existence to engage in the act of experience. Some men would like to claim that these presuppositions are contained in a subjective set of scriptures, while other men recognize that there are presuppositions, which logically precede the existence of any subjective set of scriptures. And

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<sup>47</sup> Autonomy is simple, in our sense it means, the inevitability and supremacy of personal choice. But one must also realize that there are methods by which this authority is legitimately put in place or balanced. That is, we use the methods of reason and science. All that needs to be cited to refute Frame is that the choice of science is superior to the authority of scripture, in that Frame must use it to determine the contents of scripture. The point is that Frame cannot escape autonomy, but is in the same position as those he criticizes for using autonomy.

<sup>48</sup> Doctrine of the Knowledge of God, pg.136, for a refutation of Frame’s probability see, Van til’s Apologetic Readings and Analysis, Greg Bahnsen pg. 81-82n.104 1998 “*We cannot resort to possibilities and probabilities. The Bible requires absolute faith in its trustfulness.*” Ibid. Van til pg.496

<sup>49</sup> Frame would like to argue that these methods are exclusive to Scripture, but his desire remains impossible in that scripture remains contingent on scientific probability.

<sup>50</sup> Of course, Dr. Frame would like to argue that there should be no objection because “we all do the same thing” from the basis of autonomy. That is, we make a personal choice for an authority anterior to autonomy. In Frame’s case this means the 66 books of the Protestant Canon, as well as a hermeneutic or Confession by which to interpret that Canon. Of course, Fame would also like to argue that his personal choice is equal or superior to any nonbelievers personal choice, in that the object of his personal choice has more authority than the object of any non-believer’s personal choice; but the problem is that saying it’s so doesn’t make it so. That Frame is forced to make the same move from the basis of his autonomy is true, but that Frame’s object of personal choice has more authority than science is not. This is a vital point to make: it doesn’t matter if the non-believer can’t escape autonomy because he makes no claims against it, but the fact that the Christian can’t escape it is problematic because of what autonomy means for the authority of his system. To make a choice from autonomy is not the problem; the problem is the nature of the authority of the object we claim on the basis of autonomy. Hence, for Frame to say that the Protestant Canon has the authority to correct the errors of his autonomy, is false, and this is because the Protestant Canon does not have the transcendental authority Frame claims it has. If something will correct or guide autonomy then it must have transcendental warrant above that of autonomy, or at least above that of all other personal choices. And from Frame’s worldview this can only be said of reason and science, even as Frame’s Protestant Canon is proof of the authority of reason and science.

if this is true, then according to Van til, who is the father of Presuppositionalism, “*if man is in any sense autonomous, he is not in need of revelation.*”<sup>51</sup>

“*If we claim that we are independent in our knowledge, and think we can do without God at any point, we may as well assert that we are ready to do without him at every point.*”<sup>52</sup>

“*...any measure of autonomy ascribed to man implies a detraction from the self-sufficiency of God. It implies that God can no longer be taken as the final reference point in human predication.*”<sup>53</sup>

“*If one does not make human knowledge wholly dependent upon the original self-knowledge and consequent revelation of God to man, then man will have to seek knowledge within himself as the final reference point.*”<sup>54</sup>

**FRAME:** “*Christians accept these, even presuppose them, at a secondary level. But the question remains, what is the criterion of rationality? How do we know when we have rightly carried out an induction?*”

**FLIGHT:** “*What is the criterion of rationality?*” [being facetious] The Protestant Canon! Isn't this the right answer Mr. Frame? Or have we gotten it wrong? Perhaps it's the Trinity? Surely it cannot be something else?<sup>55</sup>

The “assertion” of presupposing induction at a secondary level is false. Induction is the foundation of the science which seeks to compile the contents of scripture. And if science comes before scripture then scripture is logically subject to the authority of science.<sup>56</sup> The

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<sup>51</sup> Christian Apologetics, Second Edition, Van til pg.114, P&R Publishing 2003- or in another place: “*...any measure of autonomy ascribed to man implies a detraction from the self-sufficiency of God. It implies that God can no longer be taken as the final reference point in human predication.*” Cornelius Van til from “Van til's Apologetic Readings & Analysis,” Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998 Pg.554

<sup>52</sup> Van til, Van til's Apologetic Readings & Analysis, Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998 Pg.110

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. Pg.554

<sup>54</sup> Indeed, it would possible to add, “as the final reference point of *all* knowledge.” Van til Ibid.Pg.554

<sup>55</sup> This is futile for the Presuppositionalist because to argue something else is to evoke the question of the standard of something else, which ultimately means that the Presuppositionalist will have to appeal to the Bible or the Trinity. There is no escape; the Presuppositionalist is trapped by his own logic.

<sup>56</sup> “It is quite commonly held that we cannot accept anything that is not the result of a sound scientific methodology. With this we can as Christians heartily agree...” Van til from “Van til's Apologetic Readings & Analysis, Greg Bahnsen,” P&R Publishing 1998 Pg.637

criteria of rationality, is the only criteria it can be, that which is transcendental. In other words, the law of non-contradiction is transcendently affirmed on the basis of experience. Even asking the question presupposes the presence, or necessity of the law, it does not however, as Frame would like to assert, presuppose the necessity of the Protestant Canon!

*“... Reasoning not subject to scriptural authority, is forbidden to us, even at the “preliminary” stage. (One should say, rather, especially at the “preliminary” stage, for it is at that stage that the framework is established to which all subsequent conclusions must conform.)”<sup>57</sup>*

*“Everyone has a scale of values in which one loyalty takes precedence over another until we reach one that takes precedence over all the rest. That value is that person’s presupposition, his basic commitment, his ultimate criterion.”<sup>58</sup>*

How do we know we have rightly carried out an induction? If possible, the Christian would answer the question exclusively on the basis of scripture. That is, *to carry out a right induction is to arrive at the conclusions of scripture*. Nonsense! Quite the reverse, to carry

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“Naturally the human mind must concentrate on one aspect of reality; when he studies nature, a man must not read his Bible...” Ibid. Van til Pg.638

These statements by Van til are misleading because at first glance they appear to affirm the authority of science above that of scripture, however, when Van til uses the word “sound” he is referring to theological propositions subjectively deduced from scripture. But this is problematic because scripture itself is contingent on a science prior to the conclusion of scripture. So in seeking to qualify his definition of what constitutes a “sound scientific methodology,” Van til is forced to appeal to scripture, by which he means, the Protestant Canon/ which transcendently affirms a method of science prior to that of scripture. More needs to be said on this point because this is precisely the place critics will seek to attack my argument. However, they don’t look beneath the assertions of Van til’s statements! For example, when he tries to claim that he can use arguments in “corroboration” with scripture, but “that such corroboration is not an independent power” (Ibid. pg.640). This is merely an assertion on the part of Van til. In order to prove it he would have to show that every so-called, “independent corroboration,” was not actually independent of scripture, and that scripture itself was not dependent upon anything other than scripture. Frame falls into the same erroneous thinking: “...we need knowledge outside of Scripture, too. That’s even true of theology. Theologians need, for example, to know the rules of Hebrew grammar, but Scripture doesn’t give these to us. They need to know the history of the ancient world, but Scripture only gives us part of that history. So, in order to use the Bible, we need to know things outside the Bible.” Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord*, pg.70 And how would Frame argue that this “outside knowledge” was not an “independent power;” the same way Van til would argue that “corroborations are not independent powers;” by merely asserting that that they are not independent of scripture! Van til’s claim that the arguments for the existence of God, *when properly construed*, are objectively valid, is false (Ibid. pg.622). In translation this means, *arguments for the existence of the Trinity, when filtered through the assumption of the authority of the Protestant Canon, are objectively valid*. But the problem is that in order to declare such arguments valid, one must assume the authority of the Protestant Canon, which presupposes the authority of science, which actually means that one has proved nothing. Hence, this so-called “objective validity” is nothing more than the assertion of objectivity, on the basis of the assumption of the authority of the Bible.

<sup>57</sup> Frame, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, pg.87

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. pg.126

out a proper induction is to arrive at something useful,<sup>59</sup> dare we say, verifiable?<sup>60</sup> Does this mean infallibility? Does this mean the question is not pushed back, even as we seek to define the concept of useful? Most certainly not; but for my part, I know that I have carried out a proper induction when I am not poisoned by the mushrooms I picked in the forest. For the Christian to pretend that he can escape the problems associated with induction by merely citing scripture is absurd; for scripture is itself the product of induction!

Let these men tell us that they presuppose our worldview at a secondary level and we will prove that they presuppose it first!

**FRAME:** *“It’s very dangerous, on any assumptions, to develop an exalted opinion of yourself. And you’re not likely to find people to discuss these matters seriously if you pretend that you know all the answers and that everyone who disagrees is an idiot.”*

**FLIGHT:** I am not entirely certain at which point I have done this? Perhaps I should make it clear: I am vastly limited in what I claim to know, and further, I don’t believe that my opponent is an idiot. I do however; believe that his statement, concerning human judgment, being subject to the Protestant Canon, is something which qualifies as idiotic.<sup>61</sup> It is also my contention that the system of Christian presuppositions has been collapsed precisely because of what the system claims, and what the system must actually do. In one sense the Christian claims the authority and supremacy of scripture as the ultimate axiomatic principle, and in another sense, this claim is contradicted by the reality that the Christian *must* appeal to the methods of science as a means by which to justify scripture. Surely this implies a contradiction of the ultimate axiomatic nature of scripture?

**FRAME:** *“Presuppositionalists have offered a number of arguments for and examples of this assertion. Clearly you wouldn’t say this if you had any understanding of the literature.”*

**FLIGHT:** Here Frame is referring to the arguments for the uniformity of nature, the laws of

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<sup>59</sup> The Christian apologist Gordon Clark used the word “useful” when referring to the methods of science, because he knew, regardless of the problems associated with science, the one thing he could never do, was to deny that science was useful. But this confession is problematic for the Christian presuppositionalist because it admits to an authority superior to that of scripture. “Science is always false, but often useful,” Gordon Clark, *The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God*, published by the Trinity Foundation 1996, pg.113,

<sup>60</sup> Please note that the same problem remains for Frame, but the very existence of what he calls, the Word of God, presupposes the answer to his question. That is, in order for Frame to conclude the negation of any portion of the apographs of scripture, Frame must be able to “rightly carry out an induction.” So, if Frame can know this to determine scripture, then why can’t non-believers know it without scripture?

<sup>61</sup> *“God, as sovereign Lord, is the standard of his own actions. He is not subject to human judgment; on the contrary, our judgment is subject to his word.”* Apologetics to the Glory of God, John Frame, pg.178

logic and the relation of object to subject.<sup>62</sup> It is argued by the presuppositionalist that the non-believer cannot account for, or reconcile these things without the aid of Christianity, and as such, must presupposes the Protestant worldview, in that the Protestant worldview is taken to be the only system which can account for them.<sup>63</sup> Nonsense!!! The assumption here is the fallacy of *saying it's so makes it so!*<sup>64</sup> That is, because one extrapolates an explanation from scripture, the explanation of scripture must therefore be true! It is said to be “the only thing” which can make sense of the world? Rubbish! One merely needs to posit the reality that scripture presupposes an even more primitive authority by which scripture itself must be explained.

**FRAME:** *“I don't know for sure. There are lots of things I don't know for sure. Do you think that Presuppositionalism teaches that we have absolute assurance about everything?”*<sup>65</sup>

**FLIGHT:** This is a fraudulent lie! Frame knows damn well that the integrity of Mark 16 is a matter of textual science,<sup>66</sup> but he doesn't want to admit it because he would be forced to concede the point, which would ultimately result in the collapse of his entire system! There is of

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<sup>62</sup> See John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, pg.69-7; Bahnsen, *Van til's Apologetic Readings & Analysis*, pg.311-404, 528-529

<sup>63</sup> *“Christianity is the only reasonable position to hold. It is not merely as reasonable as other positions; it alone is the natural and reasonable position for man to take.”* Van til from, *Van til's Apologetic Readings & Analysis*, Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998, pg.74

*“The Christian's position is not merely just as good as the non-Christian's position. Christianity is the only position that does not per se take away the very foundation for intelligible scientific and philosophical procedure. Christianity is the only rational faith.”* Ibid. Van til, Pg.116

*“The non-Christian is not philosophically self-sufficient and cannot make sense out of experience apart from God...”* Ibid. Bahnsen, pg.109

*“Only Christianity can account for or make sense of the intellectual accomplishments of the unbeliever.”* Ibid. Bahnsen, pg.515

<sup>64</sup> Greg Bahnsen also made this same point about Transcendental arguments: *“...not all claims that a belief or idea is transcendental are in fact true. Saying so does not make it so.”* Van til's *Apologetic Readings & Analysis*, Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998, Pg.499n.59

<sup>65</sup> We might also note that this is a regress in confidence: *“The evidence for Christian theism, therefore is absolutely certain. Or to put it in moral terms, there is no excuse for disbelief. The evidence obligates belief.”* *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, John Frame Pg.78

*“An argument, therefore, is absolutely certain in the objective sense insofar as it is a clear communication of God's revelation.”* Ibid. Pg.80

*“...the evidence for Christian theism is absolutely compelling; it may not be described as merely probable.”* Ibid. Pg.81

<sup>66</sup> See footnote 10 and 42



course, something far more damning here, if Frame “doesn’t know,” then he “doesn’t know” that Mark, or any other verse in the Bible for that matter, has authority? Frame cannot argue ignorance and then seek to maintain a position of authority regarding the nature of scripture. Either Frame “knows” the content of scripture, and as such, argues for the supremacy of certain conclusions, or Frame “doesn’t know” the content of scripture, and as such, chooses propositions on the basis of intuition and feeling? To reduce Christianity to a subjective act of intuition is to destroy the content of meaningful Christianity.<sup>67</sup> And as I contend, this is precisely what the present argument does!

The question is how Frame knows? What method does he use to determine whether or not the last twelve verses of Mark belong in the Bible? If Frame appeals to textual science, even as he must, then he will have indirectly argued the supremacy of science above that of scripture, and as such, the transcendental argument against Christianity is complete in that scripture must be informed by science. The question is how Frame determines the content of scripture; and

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<sup>67</sup> And yet, the ultimate criterion, in the epistemology of Van til, is nothing other than the intuition or feeling given by the so-called Holy Spirit: “...intellectual argument will not, as such, convince and convert the non-Christian. It takes the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit to do that.” Van til from, Van til’s *Apologetic Readings & Analysis*, Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998 Pg.33 “As for the question whether the natural man will accept the truth of such an argument, we answer that he will if God pleases by his Spirit to take the scales from his eyes and the mask from his face.” Ibid. Van til pg.80

“...the Scriptures have on their face the appearance of divinity while yet none will accept its self-attestation unless the Holy Spirit... witness to the Word which he has inspired the prophets and apostles to write.” Ibid. Van til pg.216 “We have already seen that apologetics cannot be successful apart from a supernatural element, namely, the testimony of the Holy Spirit. In that sense, apologetics is a sovereign work of God. It is he who persuades the unbelieving mind and heart.” John Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God* Pg.15-16

“Is its [scripture’s] credibility absolutely certain? Ultimately, yes, for it is the Word of God himself and therefore deserves to be presupposed as the highest standard of credibility. How can we be persuaded of that certainty? By the Holy Spirit’s witness to us, reinforcing the credibility inherent in the text itself.” Ibid. Frame pg.147

Please note: “credibility inherent in the text itself,” is misleading. Much like another statement made by Frame: “...an argument by itself can never produce faith; that is the work of the Spirit... the argument does not produce faith, it *warrants and justifies it.*” [emphasis his] Frame, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, pg.148

If the argument “by itself” can “never” produce faith, and yet the argument is rationally warranted and justified, then how can Christian faith ever be considered rational? Is this not a form of Fideism or Intuitionism? That is, it doesn’t matter how warranted, justified or compelling the evidence is because it will never be enough to convince a person of its truth? So what is the conclusion? Rationality simply doesn’t matter; the only thing that matters is the emotional persuasion of the Holy Spirit? And yet, if the evidence is so certain why is there need for the Spirit? Does the Spirit produce faith by other means than the warrant and justification of argument? In saying, “I am persuaded by the Spirit,” what exactly am I suppose to appeal to as the object of my persuasion if not the warrant and justification of the argument or evidence? If the argument is warranted and justified why speak of needing the Spirit, which is itself a vague idea? Perhaps because the argument is not warranted and justified; perhaps because, there is a total lack of evidence? Could this be the reason behind inserting the Spirit, as a means by which to fill the gap? Thus, if any man refutes the argument (*all the Christian apologist needs to do*) as part of his convenience, is to claim that such a man doesn’t have the Spirit. Nonsense! Frame is simply trying to avoid the conclusion of a pure subjectivity on the basis of intuition. Surely, “what is objectively valid ought to be proof and witness for both unbeliever and believer, and what is not objectively valid ought to be neither for either [?]” Ibid. Van til, pg. 631

the answer is that he determines the content of scripture *on the basis of textual science*.<sup>68</sup>

**FRAME:** “...science must be done consistently with a biblical worldview.”

**FLIGHT:** Then how is it possible to do science prior to the Bible, or outside the context of the Bible? And here Frame will seek to assert that the existence of science presupposes the truth of Christianity.<sup>69</sup> That is, every occurrence of science indirectly proves the truth of the Protestant Canon.<sup>70</sup> Nonsense! And how does Frame profess to know this; because of the

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<sup>68</sup> “*Though we don’t have the actual autographs, we have access to the original text through the science of textual criticism, which compares various manuscript readings to determine the original.*” Salvation Belongs to the Lord John Frame, P&R publishing 2006 pg.66

“The question might now arise as to whether we actually can be sure of possessing the genuine Word of God in our present copies and translations of the Bible. After all, the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture is reserved for the original text and applies to the current text only to the extent that it reflects the original. How can we know that our extant copies are substantially correct transcriptions of the autographa? The answer here is twofold: we know it from the providence of God and *from the results of textual science.*” [emphasis mine], The Inerrancy of the Autographa, by Greg Bahnsen, in Inerrancy, ed. By Norman Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979)

And yet Van til refused to use the word “textual science” because he knew it was inconsistent with his system: “Perhaps you will now see that to face such a problem, in a manner such as you suggest, would be, already, to give the wrong answer. Such a question, as well as any man-made method devised to answer it [**textual science**], would be blasphemous. I remind you of Carnell’s... words... ‘*if the Word required something more certain than itself to give it validity, it would no longer be God’s Word.*’ Van til from, Van til’s Apologetic Readings & Analysis, Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998 Pg.572

Unless Frame can prove that the authority of “textual science” is not presupposed by the existence of the Protestant Canon, or that presupposing it would not undermine the authority of scripture, then what is there to prevent us from concluding the superiority and sufficiency of science above that of scripture? According to Van til Frame’s answer is blasphemous, in that he admits to something more certain than the authority of scripture!

“...the presuppositional argument does not first debate the formal possibility of a book from God, but rather begins the argument from the outset with the actuality of the Bible...” Ibid. Bahnsen, Pg.508

“We must begin with the actuality of the book. We must not pretend that we have established the possibility of the book and the necessity of it in terms of a philosophy that we did not get from the book.” Ibid. Van til Pg.509

<sup>69</sup> “The scientist who is a Christian therefore has the task of pointing out to his friend and colleague, who is not a Christian, that unless he is willing to stand upon the Christian story with respect to the world which has been redeemed through Christ, there is nothing but failure for him. Scientific effort is utterly unintelligible unless it is frankly based upon the order placed in the universe of created facts by Christ the Redeemer... To those who are committed to the position which interprets man in terms of a supposedly intelligent procedure not based on biblical principles... the answer to this must be that the procedure of science and the procedure of philosophy cannot be shown to be intelligible unless they are carried on on the presupposition of the God who speaks to man in Scripture.” Van til from, Van til’s Apologetic Readings & Analysis, Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998 Pg.112

<sup>70</sup> Of course, Frame would not use the term “Protestant Canon” because it would be too obvious, he would instead, rely on the ambiguity of the term, “scripture,” or “biblical worldview.”

Bible, of course. And how does Frame know which portions of the so-called *apographs*<sup>71</sup> to put in the Bible; because of textual science, of course. Then how can Frame have the science of discerning the content of scripture, before he has the product of scripture, if the science of textual criticism is contingent on the biblical worldview?

*“Either one thinks in terms of the authority of Scripture, making reason and all its activities subject to this authority, or else one acts and thinks on one’s ultimate authority.”*<sup>72</sup>

Also, “biblical worldview” is a bit ambiguous; *for here Frame ignores the ambiguity of the term, which he should not do if he wants to carry on a serious conversation.*

**FRAME:** *“...human reason and induction is evaluated on the basis of divine revelation. That does not deserve to be called autonomy.”*

**FLIGHT:** In great jeopardy to your system the argument is actually the other way around.

And let us pay close attention to the question: if human reason and induction is, as you say, *evaluated on the basis of divine revelation*, then on what basis do you discern the content of divine revelation, if not on the basis of human reason and induction? Follow the logic: *human reason precedes divine revelation, and as such, divine revelation cannot logically be said to inform human reason.* If that were the case then there should be no primitive point at which reason and induction, uniformed by revelation, inform revelation.<sup>73</sup>

**FRAME:** *“...developed by a scientific/rational process that proceeds on principles compatible with divine revelation.”*

**FLIGHT:** Compatible with divine revelation, or revelation which is anterior and superior to these scientific/rational principles? If such revelation is merely *compatible* with science, then science is anterior and superior to divine revelation.<sup>74</sup> Of course, Mr. Frame will claim this is absurd; very well then, let him answer the following question: *must divine revelation seek compatibility with reason and science, or must reason and science seek compatibility with*

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<sup>71</sup> Apographs are considered to be copies of the Autographa of Christian texts, the Autographa meaning, the originals.

<sup>72</sup> Cornelius Van til from, Van til’s Apologetic Readings & Analysis, Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998, pg.92

<sup>73</sup> It is clear to me that Mr. Frame will seek to argue that just because human reason precedes divine revelation, “does not mean that it cannot be informed by divine revelation.” Very well, but what is the point; the presuppositional authority resides with human reason and not that of divine revelation!

<sup>74</sup> This would be the invention of a kind of dualism; for implicit in the idea of seeking compatibility with science is that science has its own legitimate authority apart from scripture.

*divine revelation?*

**FRAME:** “...my axiom is not autonomous in my sense of the term, but is subject to the criterion of divine revelation.”<sup>75</sup>

**FLIGHT:** The affirmation of fideism is that everything is subject to a subjective criterion of revelation, which is itself a subjective concept. To follow the logic is to argue that “my sense” of the term is always right against any prospects of transcendental reason [always right against every objection]. The question asked has been ignored: *if the criteria of divine revelation, is divine revelation itself, then on what basis can mankind possibly object to the assertion of divine revelation?*<sup>76</sup> Appealing to a universal circle<sup>77</sup> will not resolve the issue; the determination of

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<sup>75</sup> This is also misleading. Frame’s axiom is not merely subject to the Protestant Canon, but it is the Protestant Canon! Of course, Van til was also greatly confused on this point, seeking to argue that his starting point was the Trinity at the same it was Scripture. Is the Trinity the same object as the Protestant Canon, are they one in the same? And how can one start with God when the word, God, requires content in order to possess meaning? “If we begin thus with the ontological trinity as our concrete universal, we frankly differ from every school of philosophy... not merely in our conclusions, but in our starting-point and in our method as well. For us the facts are what they are, and the universals are what they are, because of their common dependence upon the ontological trinity.” Van til from, Van til’s Apologetic Readings & Analysis, Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998 Pg.240

“...it makes very little difference whether we begin with the notion of an absolute God or with the notion of an absolute Bible.” Ibid. Van til Pg.517-518

The reality is that it *does* make a difference whether one begins with the notion of God or the notion of the Bible. On what basis does one call God “absolute” if not on the basis of the Bible? In that God must always be defined, the Christian will not be able to start with him but must ultimately start with the Bible. And of course, we have already pointed out the errors of claiming that one’s presupposition is the Bible.

<sup>76</sup> See Footnote 3.

<sup>77</sup> “Yet we hold that our reasoning cannot fairly be called circular reasoning, because we are not reasoning about and seeking to explain facts by assuming the existence and meaning of certain other facts on the same level of being with facts we are investigating, and then explaining these facts in turn by the facts with which we begin. We are presupposing God, not merely another fact of the universe...” Van til from, Van til’s Apologetic Readings & Analysis, Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998 Pg.519

Allow me to expose the error. What Van til says he doesn’t do is exactly what he must do! If Van til is presupposing “God,” then what exactly does he mean by “God,” and how does he know that what he means is true? The answer is; because of the Bible!

“The position we have briefly sought to outline is frankly taken from the Bible. And this applies especially to the central concept of the whole position, viz., the concept of an absolute God.” Ibid. Van til Pg.517

Now then, how does Van til know that the Bible is true? The answer is; because of the Bible? Not quite. My question to Frame regarding Mark 16 was vital because the answer proves that the presuppositional apologist is assuming the authority of inductive science above that of Scripture. So, contrary to Van til’s assertion that he presupposes “God,” the truth is that he presupposes something prior to God and something prior to scripture. Thus, *he is reasoning about and seeking to explain facts by assuming the existence and meaning of certain other facts, on the same level of being with facts he is investigating, and then explaining these facts in turn by the facts with which*

the contents of scripture is decided on the basis of inductive science, which means that any occurrence of scripture will always presupposes the authority of science. Hence, to argue the truth of scripture is to first argue the truth of science. Nevertheless the system is a system of fideism in that it sets up the impossibility of its refutation on the basis of fideism itself.

**FRAME:** *“None of us pretends to have escaped the universe.”*

**FLIGHT:** Clearly, the point has been missed: the Christian cannot escape the necessity of autonomy when it comes to determining the content of scripture. Thus, to pretend to escape autonomy will not mean that one has actually escaped autonomy. At present, the only escape from autonomy is when the Christian pretends to escape autonomy. The analogy was not literal, but metaphorical, meaning, *one cannot escape autonomy*; the universe only served as an example to make the point that one cannot escape autonomy.

**FRAME:** *“You have “refuted” only simplistic caricatures of our position, while thinking that you have come up with some kind of comprehensive demolition of it. That is nonsense.”*

**FLIGHT:** My dear sir, great champion of the Christian faith; scholar of many books, by all means, refute what I say, prove that my argument is a deviation from the material?

There are some men who are determined to argue that their position can never be collapsed; to argue that those who claim to refute it have simply misunderstood it. But whether or not we have collapsed the system, or misunderstood the system, depends upon the specific claims of the system.<sup>78</sup> To argue that reason is conditioned on the basis of the subjective preference of

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*he begins. He is not, as he claims, presupposing God, but scripture; not presupposing scripture, but the science which allows him to account for scripture, and as such, is mere working with another fact of the universe. Van til starts not where he claims, but exactly where he claims not to start!*

<sup>78</sup> “At some point, the message claiming to be from God would have to be its own authority, and there is no reason, then, why that should not be at the first point. Thus, only God is adequate to bear witness to Himself or to authorize His own words. As Heb. 6:13 teaches, God can swear by nothing greater than Himself, in which case His word can be truly authorized only by His own word. God’s word is the ultimate authority, and as such it can be authorized only by itself.” Greg Bahnsen, *Van til’s Apologetic Readings & Analysis*, Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998, Pg.199-200

Surely, we must appreciate Bahnsen’s consistency. Either Heb. 6:13 is a true statement, or it is a false statement; and if false, then either Heb. 6:13 is not the word of God, or God has lied? If there is an authority above God’s word, as we have proven, to which God’s word is subjected, then that would mean that God’s word was false, in that it was not the highest standard. Contrary to Frame’s assertion, that I have only dealt with weak caricatures, this quote by Bahnsen demonstrates the vital necessity of the authority of scripture, which is of course, something scripture doesn’t have because scripture always presupposes the authority (in that it is necessary) of textual science. “Though we don’t have the actual autographs, we have access to the original text through the science of textual criticism, which compares various manuscript readings to determine the original.” Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord*, P&R publishing 2006 pg.66

the “Word of God,” is ultimately to argue that there is no possible objection against the system on the basis of reason, science or evidence. Hence, one defines their position, at least in their own mind, as that which is immune to any criticism, thus, a kind of invincible fideism.

It is my personal opinion that the argument has taken Mr. Frame by surprise, as if he were to say, “Surely this simple argument, insignificant and small, has not refuted all I believe; for I have known the system to be more complicated, who is this man that troubles me with his little words; for by God he doesn’t know the material!” And yet my dear reader, I have quoted his exact words! I have spoken within the historical and theoretical context of Presuppositionalism.

Surely, it is fair to say that our opponent is confused about the nature of his own system? Indeed, do we not see him as a man attempting to walk two lines; in one case to be consistent, in another, to recognize that such consistency would destroy his system? But surely he cannot have it both ways? Either scripture is the presupposition behind all experience or experience stands behind scripture?

*“A person cannot have it both ways regarding his final standard or ultimate reference point. He presupposes and reasons either according to the authority of God or according to some other authority.”<sup>79</sup>*

All fundamentalism rests on a certain point, and to collapse this point, even as this is the only logical point to collapse, is to collapse the entire system.

[Frame declined final reply.]

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“People sometimes say it doesn’t make sense for God to inspire a book and then require us to determine its original content by textual criticism, by human means. When you think of transmission as a process carrying the word from God’s lips to our hearts, eventually there will have to be a role for human thought, reason, even science.” Ibid. pg.67

<sup>79</sup> Greg Bahnsen, from, Van til’s Apologetic Readings & Analysis, Greg Bahnsen P&R Publishing 1998, pg.92