

Presuppositional Apologetics

— Its Source, Nature and Methodology

(An abstract)

Chun Ming FONG

Professor of Systematic Theology

Oversea Theological Seminary

San Jose, CA

U. S. A.

This article explains how presuppositional apologetics defends the credibility of the gospel. Presuppositional apologetics is developed by Cornelius Van Til, who gets his insight from Immanuel Kant's "transcendental method." It argues that it is appropriate to reason based upon one's own presuppositions, since every thinking method is based on its presuppositions of rationality. There are two interrelated assumptions in presuppositional apologetics. First, the Scripture is regarded as the highest authority. Second, the God of Christianity is the ultimate reference point of all thinking.

Presuppositional apologetics argues that since non-believers will not accept these two assumptions, the Christian worldview and the various worldviews of non-believers do not have common ground. Nevertheless, there is still a contact point. Presuppositional apologetics makes use of this contact point to explain how the truth of the gospel is meaningful for non-believer. It is an indirect method. In the dialogue between a Christian and a non-believer, it starts with any theme suggested by and relevant to the non-believer (for example: 'There is no God.'). It

attempts to understand the non-believers' worldview according to his own unique background. It tries to convince him that the non-believer's worldview is inconsistent and insufficient for the understanding of the totality of reality. Then it demonstrates that the Christian understanding of reality is more reasonable.

During this dialogue, presuppositional apologetics does not oppose using "natural and historical evidences" to demonstrate God's existence. It merely emphasizes that, in order to convince non-believers effectively, one has to use Christian presuppositions (worldview) to explain all these evidences. Since man is deeply affected by sin, he will suppress the knowledge of God. No matter how convincing the "natural and historical evidences" of God's existence are, man will still criticize them. It follows that one has to use the presuppositional apologetics to reveal this fact. Besides, there is an inseparable relationship between evidences and their reference point. Non-believers will only use their own reference point (worldview) to explain these evidences. They will not discover their limitation. Accordingly, presuppositional apologetics argues that one has to explain the "natural and historical evidences" in light of the presuppositions of Christianity. Then these evidences can demonstrate effectively the credibility of the truth of gospel.