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Does Logic Presuppose the Christian God? Part I: Examining the Presuppositionalist Viewpoint

Anyone who is at all familiar with presuppositionalist apologetics has heard it before: no one can “account for” the laws of logic without “presupposing” the existence of the Christian god. For instance, in his [debate with the atheist Dr. Gordon Stein](#), Christian apologist Greg Bahnsen exclaims:

The atheist world view is irrational and cannot consistently provide the preconditions of intelligible experience, science, logic, or morality. The atheist world view cannot allow for laws of logic, the uniformity of nature, the ability for the mind to understand the world, and moral absolutes.

If we look beyond Bahnsen’s tendentious habit of referring to something he calls “the atheist worldview” (as if there were a single worldview to which all atheists ascribe, which is simply not true), we see that the gist of Bahnsen’s point here is consistent with his claim that “logic, the laws of nature, and the laws of morality make no sense unless God is presupposed” (John Frame, [Bahnsen at the Stein Debate](#)). While it is noteworthy how much power such a position grants to mere human conscious activity (e.g., simply *presupposing* - a conscious action - the existence of the Christian god is sufficient to “make sense” of “logic, the laws of nature, and the laws of morality”; one presumably only needs to assume the existence of god, not study logic, nature and morality, to understand these), much ink has been spilled by Christian apologists repeating such claims. But simply repeating these claims is not the same as proving their assumed truth, and an examination of presuppositional treatments of the case for logic presupposing the Christian god and various statements made in the literature, may reveal why uncritical repetition of such claims is preferred to full-blown analysis of the relevant issues.

In the present paper I will examine statements made by presuppositionalists on behalf of their claim that logic somehow presupposes the existence of the Christian god, and in a follow-up entry (Part II) I will provide several key reasons why logic does not and *cannot* presuppose any gods (Christian or otherwise) or have any fundamental association with the mystical teachings of any religion (including Christianity).

Obviously presuppositionalists think that logic has some important relationship to the Christian god. But getting a clear understanding of just what this relationship is supposed to be, is not very easy. First of all, it is noteworthy to point out that, while Christians claim that everything which exists other than their god was created by their god, presuppositionalists typically resist saying that their god *created* logic. This is probably because such a position would be too overtly subjective for PR purposes, and too problematic to defend. But in spite of such reservations, they are anxious to associate logic fundamentally with their god, as if logic could not exist unless their god also exists. Consider the following statement, again from Greg Bahnsen:

We are not saying God *created* the laws of logic by His volitional self-determination. Were this so, then He could alter or discard them as well... Rather, we are saying that the laws of logic reflect His *nature*, the way He is in Himself. They are, therefore, *eternal* expressions of the *unchanging* character of God (Numb. 23:19; Mal. 3:6; James 1:17). God’s unchanging character is just that, unchanging. Therefore the laws of logic (which reflect that character) are unchanging and unchangeable, in that God “cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:13). (*Pushing the Antithesis: The Apologetic Methodology of Greg L. Bahnsen*, p. 210)

Bahnsen’s chief concern here in regard to the nature of the laws of logic itself, is that they are “unchanging and unchangeable.” The law of identity, for instance, is not something one can bend out of shape to suit illegitimate purposes, and begging the question will always be a fallacy, here and everywhere. This “unchanging and unchangeable” nature of the laws of logic presumably requires something behind them which is also “unchanging and unchangeable,” and for Bahnsen that could only be the Christian god: the Christian god is supposed to be unchanging - Bahnsen cites Mal. 3:6 (“For I, the LORD, do not change”) as support - and (in some way whose mechanics do not seem to be explained) “the laws of logic reflect” the unchanging nature of this deity. Indeed, for Bahnsen, the laws of logic are “*eternal* expressions of the *unchanging* character of God.”

Now it seems to me that anyone can imagine an invisible magic being, claim that its nature does not change, and

insist that the laws of logic “reflect” its unchanging nature. I could, for example, fantasize that the laws of logic reflect the nature of Blarko the Wonderbeing, whose nature is “unchanging and unchangeable.” Of course, this would be mere fantasy at this point, completely baseless, and utterly at odds with reality. And while it seems that presuppositionalists provide essentially nothing better than this, they insist that their god is not imaginary and that logic in fact requires (“demands” as [one apologist](#) puts it) the existence of an “immaterial” being which could only be the Christian god. Unfortunately, however, the apologists have given no substantial reason to suppose that their god is something other than a fantasy. Instead of TAG - i.e., the “transcendental argument for the existence of God” - apologists have in fact served up a rendition of FAG - i.e., the *fantastical assertion* of the existence of God. For in the final analysis, it is fundamental to Christianity that the distinction between reality and imagination be blurred, and if you scratch the chest-pounding surface of presuppositionalism, you’ll find that there is ultimately no argument here to begin with.

But make no mistake about it, presuppositionalists want us to take their claim that the laws of logic reflect their god’s nature seriously, and to accept it as truth. Yet it remains unclear what exactly this claim is supposed to mean, let alone why anyone should believe it. In fact, one would be hard pressed to find this claim in the bible itself, which according to Christianity is supposed to be the Christian god’s own self-revelation to man. If one does not learn that the laws of logic reflect the Christian god’s nature from the bible, how would one discover this? Or is it something one *discovers* in the first place, or is it something that apologists have *stipulated* as a core element in their debating strategy (such as FAG)? After examining the matter, it seems to me that the apologists have attempted to shoplift logic expressly for apologetic purposes, in spite of the fact that their god is really only [imaginary](#) and the actual basis of logic points unmistakably to non-Christian fundamentals (as I will show in my follow-up entry).

But I’m getting ahead of myself here. Let’s take a closer look at what presuppositionalists say about the relationship between logic and their god.

Bahnsen tells us that

One’s use of and account of logic is [sic] not something religiously neutral, but indicates [sic] something about one’s fundamental view of reality. (*Van Til’s Apologetic: Readings & Analysis*, p. 236.)

Of course, I would agree with this. I don’t think a thinker’s understanding and application of logic are “religiously neutral” in any way. Rather, I think that these point to a fundamental truth which is in fact *incompatible* with the religious view of the world (including Bahnsen’s Christianity). Again, I will elaborate on this point for my follow-up paper. For our present purposes, we are concerned to get a fuller understanding of how presuppositionalism characterizes the relationship between logic and the Christian god. It is because logic allegedly implies the Christian god, that presuppositionalists would hold that any human being’s “use and account of logic is [sic] not something religiously neutral.” Bahnsen is essentially trying to say that, since logic presupposes the reality of the Christian god (an assertion in bad need of both explanation and support), the non-Christian’s use of logic proves the absurdity of his non-Christian beliefs and confirms the truth of Christianity. This is, in essence, what the presuppositional strategy seems to amount to.

But with each iteration of this position, it seems to twist out of shape, making it all the more difficult to pin down exactly what this intimate relationship the Christian god allegedly has with logic.

For instance, consider the following statement which Bahnsen quotes from Van Til:

the Christian views logic as a reflection of God’s own thinking, rather than as laws or principles that are “higher” than God or that exist “in independence of God and man.” (*Van Til’s Apologetic: Readings & Analysis*, p. 236; quoting *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, p. 11.)

Where earlier we were told that the laws of logic “reflect” the Christian god’s *nature*, now we’re told that logic is “a reflection of God’s *own thinking*.” While these do not appear to be equivalent statements (a person’s nature is a precondition of its ability to think and anything it actually does think), what is clear is that both views characterize logic as something *dependent* upon the Christian god in some way. How it is supposedly dependent upon the Christian god, again remains unclear.

In the present case, however, by characterizing logic as a “reflection” of someone’s *actual* thinking, presuppositionalism seems to reverse the proper relationship between logic and thought. Generally speaking, thinking

is considered to require a standard to guide its path of identifications and inferences. When someone says that an individual's thinking is logical on a given matter, he is essentially saying that it *conforms* to certain criteria which obtain *independent* of that thinking. Christians themselves imply agreement with this understanding of what it is to be logical, when they apply the concept 'logical' to any particular individual human being's thinking. If a certain apologist's argument is said by his peers to be logical, they essentially mean that the thinking behind it complies with logical norms.

Of course, an individual human being's thinking is not what presuppositionalists have in mind when they intimate that logic reflects the actual thinking of a particular personality. While the reversal here remains unexplained, the thinking which they have in mind belongs to a being which their religion describes as omniscient and infallible. But this only complicates things further: an omniscient and infallible being wouldn't need to make any inferences. Since it would presumably already know everything in the first place, how could it make sense to say it thinks? The task of thinking is to integrate facts and details one learns from reality in order to make specific identifications, assessments, evaluations, judgments, etc. Such a task seems to presuppose that its products are something which yet need to be achieved. Indeed, why would an omniscient and infallible being think, and what would it think about? For what [purpose](#) would it think? Such questions seem not to be considered by presuppositionalists who want to defend the view that logic presupposes the Christian god.

Returning to the claim that logic "reflects" the Christian god's *nature*, this suggests that logic would be *co-eternal* with said god, since its nature is said to be eternally unchanging, and the laws of logic "are, therefore, *eternal* expressions of the *unchanging* character of God." What, then, are we to make of the following statement by James J. Tyne, a student with Bahnsen Theological Seminary and contributor to *The Standard Bearer: A Festschrift for Greg L. Bahnsen*, Tyne writes emphatically:

There is nothing co-eternal with God or bigger than God; there are no over-arching realities, such as creaturely concepts of time, space, existence, logic, or possibility, alongside or supporting God or against which He could be measured. He transcends everything other than Himself. ("Putting Contexts in Their Place: God's Transcendence in Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book One," *The Standard Bearer*, ed. S. M. Schlissel, p. 371)

This statement seems to completely contradict what Bahnsen himself has affirmed when he tells us that the laws of logic are "*eternal* expressions of the *unchanging* character of God." Tyne insists that "there is nothing co-eternal with God" - so that means that logic is not "co-eternal with God," that "there are no over-arching realities" - among them Tyne specifically mentions logic - and nothing "against which He could be measured" - which would render the claim that "God's *thinking* is logical" impossible (since its thinking would hereby be measured according to the norms of logic).

So a controversy seems to be gnawing away within presuppositionalism here: is logic an "eternal expression" of the Christian god's nature, or is it the case that "there is nothing co-eternal with God"? Both positions seem to cancel each other out.

One thing that all presuppositionalists seem to agree on, is that the Christian god is somehow "above" logic. For instance, in a paper titled [Logic Proves the Existence of God: Part II](#), apologist Peter Pike insists that something "must be viewed in a hierarchical sense as being above logic" because "logic *demand*s this in order for it to be valid," and since "logic itself demands the existence of" this something that is "above logic," this something "can only be described as 'God'." Apparently what is being affirmed here is not only that the Christian god's existence is required for logic to be valid, but also that the Christian god itself is not bound to logical norms in its own choices and actions. This latter point seems to be what results from the view that the Christian god is "above logic." Pike himself seems to resist this implication. For instance, he insists that whatever it is which

logic *demand*s... in order for it to be valid... [it] will behave in a manner that is logical, because we have seen how rigid and steadfast logic is. Whatever causes logic must be rigid and steadfast likewise, or else it would not cause logic to behave in that manner.

Pike seems to equate "rigid and steadfast" with the nature of logic, but logic is surely much more than this. The qualities of "rigid and steadfast" do not in and of themselves imply a consciousness which thinks (and to which, consequently, the norms of logic could apply). If something that is "rigid and steadfast" is all that is needed to provide logic with an unchanging and therefore reliable metaphysical basis, I see no reason why this requirement can only be

fulfilled by the Christian god.

Moreover, my interpretation that being “above logic” suggests that the Christian god is not bound to logical norms in its own choices and actions is supported by a statement by Van Til, who writes that:

there is ‘no impersonal law of logic’ that dictates to God what He can or cannot say: the logical constraints of God’s thinking are the constraints of His own personal nature, which man is to emulate. Man’s logical reasoning, then, must always be pursued as a servant, subordinating his thoughts to the thinking of his Lord. (*Van Til’s Apologetic: Readings & Analysis*, p. 236; quoting *The Defense of the Faith*, 1st ed., p. 247.)

But even here we have mixed messages being thrown at us. It is clear that, on the one hand, the apologist wants to say that what his god “can or cannot say” is not dictated by logical laws which are “impersonal” - i.e., which obtain independent of its consciousness. This would mean that any laws of logic which may be said to guide what it “can or cannot say” would be “personal.” Since this does not seem to mean that the laws of logic are themselves conscious beings, by characterizing the laws of logic as “personal” the apologist apparently means that they are in some way dependent upon a personal being - i.e., on a *conscious* being, and since the *conscious* being in question is thought to be absolutely sovereign and also the “cause” of logic (per Pike above), the laws of logic in question must somehow conform to its intentions (as Van Til says, they are “a reflection of God’s own thinking”), and consequently the implication that logic somehow depends on the desires of said god seems unavoidable. On the other hand, however, by saying that “the logical constraints of God’s thinking are the constraints of his own personal nature,” Van Til apparently wants to give the impression that his god’s thinking conforms to a logical standard (since they are subject to “logical constraints”), implying that this logical standard obtains independent of its desires, that it somehow results from its “nature,” which presumably it did not choose for itself. In such a way, the apologist is here trying to argue two horns of a contradiction: one horn characterizes logic as something dependent on an absolutely sovereign personal being, and in so doing it subjugates logic to its volitional determinations, while the other horn insinuates that its thinking conforms to logical norms which implicitly obtain independent of its choices and actions. In fact, that the more we analyze the presuppositionalist’s view of logic and the relationship he claims it has with his god, the more it seems that the apologist cannot decide whether the nature of logic is objective or subjective, for both positions are implied in his statements.

Furthermore, the very notion that “the logical constraints of God’s thinking are the constraints of His own personal nature” seems rather baffling, if not completely vacuous. Since the “constraints” in question here are said to be the Christian god’s *nature*, those constraints would be *metaphysical* constraints which obtain *independently* of the Christian god’s choices, actions and thinking. In fact, if the Christian god is said to be able to choose, act and think, its nature would be a *precondition* of these performances, and therefore could not be a *result* or *product* of any of them. So to call the constraints of its nature “logical” is inappropriate, for it commits the [fallacy of the stolen concept](#). Since one’s nature is not the result of his own conscious intentions, to call it “logical” fails to recognize that the genetic roots of the concept ‘logical’ have no part in what is being called “logical.” The problems seem to just get worse the more we probe presuppositionalism’s view of logic. But we’re not through yet.

Since Van Til invokes the “constraints” of the Christian god’s “nature,” let us ask: What exactly are those “constraints”? How do they vouchsafe the claim that its thinking is logical? A [critical examination of the bible](#) does not suggest that the god(s) it describes is (are) at all logical. But this should not surprise us, since logic has a teleological aspect to it, in that its application is always goal-oriented: one thinks or acts logically in the interest of achieving some end. But what goals could the Christian god logically be said to pursue? Could the “constraints” of the Christian god’s nature incline its choices and actions to comply with logical norms? It seems not. The Christian god is supposed to be eternal, immortal, impervious to harm, completely invincible. It does not face the fundamental alternative which biological organisms (of which man is a species) face. Given these points, the Christian god would have no objective basis for pursuing any goals or striving to achieve any aim. So what “constraints” of the Christian god’s nature compel us to suppose its thinking is at all logical? Blank out.

Moreover, isn’t man supposed according to Christianity to have been created in the image of this god? Would the Christian then say that “the logical constraints of [man’s] thinking are the constraints of [man’s] own personal nature”? I somehow doubt it. We’re always being told by Christians how depraved man is, how prone he is to deceiving and being deceived, how at odds he is with “the Truth.” This malady is, according to Christianity, not simply a result of an individual’s incidental choices and actions, but an *inherent* part of the nature with which he was born. According to this view, man is (apparently in spite of being created *by* an allegedly morally perfect creator in its *own image*) “

inherently depraved". And in spite of allegedly having been created by a perfect creator, it is because of this flaw with which he was created that man's thinking is not automatically logical, as his creator's thinking allegedly is. Man possesses a mere *finite* nature, a nature which is constrained to certain specifics with which he was, according to the Christian view, originally created. But apparently even this is not enough to constrain his thinking to logical norms. How much more would the thinking of a being whose nature is said to be *infinite* and unencumbered with creative limits, be "constrained" to some set of criteria (such as logic) which man (being inherently depraved) can comprehend? Questions such as these, which arise given Christianity's stipulation that man is finite, inherently depraved and yet "created in the image" of the Christian god, apparently couldn't be further from the presuppositionalist's considerations.

Now in regard to what Van Til does affirm in the above quote, he seems to miss an important point. The question is not whether or not logic "dictates" or *compels* a thinker to think logically. Thinking itself is a *volitional* activity, and any given thinker *chooses* whether or not to adhere to logic as a norm. So the question for the Christian in this respect is whether or not he thinks his god *chooses* to think logically, or if logic is said to mirror its thinking *regardless of what may think*. Van Til's statement suggests that logic is *not* a norm to which the Christian god volitionally conforms its thinking, as man should his own thinking. To do so would presume that logic is a norm independent of the Christian god's actual thinking, just as it is in the case of man's thinking. And this would not bode well for the relationship which presuppositionalists want to claim between their god and the nature of logic.

Quizzically, Van Til essentially says that "God's thinking" conforms to "His own personal nature," but this is not at all the same thing as saying that its thinking is *logical*, especially if the Christian god's nature is supposed to be "infinite," which would make its nature very broad indeed. If it is the case that man's thinking can be both *illogical* and still be compatible with his nature as a *finite* being (and thus *reflect* the finitude of his nature), then presuppositionalists need to offer a better reason to suppose their god's actual thinking is logical. In fact, what presuppositionalists offer in this regard seems to be a rather empty statement. A man's thoughts could be said to conform to "his own personal nature," regardless of whether or not they are logical. That one's thoughts are in line with "the constraints of his own personal nature" in no way informs us whether or not those thoughts conform to the standards of logic. Since conformity to one's own nature does not guarantee logical thinking in the case of *finite* beings, why suppose that conformity to one's own nature in the case of an *infinite* being would guarantee logical thinking? Again, we have another blank-out here.

It would be helpful if the presuppositionalist could clarify whether or not his god has a *choice* in the matter of its thinking being logical. As I pointed out above, a human thinker must *choose* to govern his thinking according to logical norms; his thinking is not *automatically* logical, he has a choice in the matter. But statements by presuppositionalists imply that their god's thinking is *automatically* logical, which could only suggest that it has *no choice* in the matter. Such a position could only trivialize the Christian god's relationship to logic, making it the inevitable outcome of an impersonal set of causes. But this is precisely what presuppositionalists have been at pains to claim is *not* the case, and yet certain stipulations of theirs seem to require this assessment.

Van Til also makes the curious statement that "man is to emulate" this "personal nature" which he attributes to his god. The New Testament makes a similar injunction in Matthew 5:48: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Did Van Til think that he successfully did this? His god is described as being omniscient, omnipotent, infallible, infinite, able to manipulate facts (cf. Van Til, who claims: "God may at any time take one *fact* and set it into a new relation to created law" [*The Defense of the Faith*, 3rd ed., p. 27]), able to forgive sins at will, etc. But Christians are constantly reminding us of the profound fundamental differences between man's nature (he is finite, fallible, non-omniscient, "totally depraved," etc.) and the nature they ascribe to their god. All this suggests that Christianity holds man to an unrealistic standard which fundamentally contradicts his nature (since, as we are repeatedly told, man is "not God"). Why not simply recognize that we are human beings, and govern our worldview according to this fact? And why not simply recognize that the purpose of logic is to guide the thinking process of specifically *non-omniscient*, *fallible* minds? Should man deny the finitude, fallibility and non-omniscience of his mind, and in its place pretend that he thinks the thoughts of an invisible magic being rather than own thoughts? How far would that get anyone?

Part of the problem with the presuppositional account of logic thus far, is its tendency to logic to a *descriptive* artifice rather than a *normative* set of cognitive guidelines. On a rational understanding, logic is normative in that it identifies the *proper* conceptual hierarchy among one's identifications and integrations as a standard to which one should strive to conform his thinking (if in fact he wants his thinking to have logical integrity). Presuppositionalist

John Frame seems to understand this to some degree, but considers this quality of logic itself as an indicator of the Christian god's reality. Frame writes:

...the power of logic is normative and ethical. It tells us what we ought to confess as a conclusion, granting our confession of premises. And if it is ethical, it is covenantal; like moral values, it rests on the dependable word of a trustworthy person, a Lord, our absolute divine personality. Thus, when unbelievers use logic to raise objections against Christianity, they are using something which, manipulate it how they may, points in the opposite direction. (*Apologetics to the Glory of God*, p. 104)

Now of course, it is not at all clear how Frame concludes that something ethical is therefore also "covenantal," unless of course this premise is built into his notion of ethics. Nor is it clear how moral values "rest on the dependable word of a trustworthy person" or "absolute divine personality." I have pointed out before that, according to the *objective* theory of values (a theory which one will not learn from reading the bible), values not only find their metaphysical basis in the *biological conditionality* of man's nature as a living organism, but also that an immortal and eternally indestructible being would have no need for values to being with, and that supposing moral values point to such a being involves a profound misunderstanding of what moral values are and why man needs them. (See for instance [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).) Indeed, what would "the dependable word of a trustworthy person" have to do with man's need for values and the types of values he needs? Similarly with logic, what would "the dependable word of a trustworthy person" have to do with logic's normative nature? Is the assumption here that a "person" is required to *command* logic into some normative capacity for it to be useful to man? That would make logic both subjective and arbitrary. If not, why suppose that a "divine person" has anything to do with the nature and applicability of logic in the cognitive activity of non-omniscient, fallible minds?

Moreover, if the Christian god has no choice in the matter of whether or not its thinking is logical (as Van Til's statement above suggests), then the ethical parameters which Frame grants to logic all the more miss the point. For ethical norms are only possible where there is choice in a given matter. If one has no choice in certain context, then there's no use for a code of values whose purpose is to guide choices.

Presuppositionalism does seek to overcome its tendency to treat logic as simply descriptively by stating that man should "think God's thoughts after Him," which is a most baffling notion. An honest thinker thinks his own thoughts, not someone else's. An honest man recognizes that he cannot, for instance, substitute someone else's inferences and judgments in place of his own, and still call any mental operation he performs "thinking." It would be *fantasy* instead of *thinking* at that point. Consider: how would someone *know* what a god thinks about anything? Of course, he could pretend, and I suspect that this is what believers making such preposterous claims are really doing. But of course they will not admit this. They really want to prop up the pretense that they truly are thinking their god's thoughts after it. But to do this, they would have to *know* what those thoughts are, and in order to *know* what those thoughts are, he would have to be equipped with some cognitive ability by which he could access the thoughts of his god. What is this apparatus by which he claims to do this, how does it work, and how does he ensure (without thinking his *own* thoughts!) that it's really working properly? Why not simply recognize that each of us thinks his own thoughts, and be willing to learn when mistakes are discovered? One would need an entire epistemology just to gain awareness of what his "God" thinks, but that would be self-defeating, given the ideal that is being endorsed here, since epistemology guides how one governs his *own* thinking.

Now apologists might say, in response to my points above, that there is in fact an argument which seals the case on behalf of the presuppositionalist's claim that logic presupposes the existence of the Christian god. For instance, he might point to Michael Butler's clarification of how "transcendental arguments" work on behalf of such claims:

Transcendental arguments attempt to discover the preconditions of human experience. They do so by taking some aspect of human experience and investigating what must be true in order for that experience to be possible. Transcendental arguments typically have the following form. For x (some aspect of human experience) to be the case, y must also be the case since y is the precondition of x. Since x is the case, y is the case. ("The Transcendental Argument for God's Existence," *The Standard Bearer*, p. 79)

Butler does provide an example of how this argument scheme would work in the case of proving that causality presupposes the existence of the Christian god. He writes:

For causality to be possible, God has to exist since the existence of God is the precondition of causality. Since there is causality, God exists. A corollary of this is that whenever non-believers employ the concept of

causation, they are borrowing from the Christian worldview since only on a Christian worldview does causation make sense. (Ibid.)

So presumably, according to the argumentative scheme which Butler proposes, the presuppositionalist argument for logic presupposing the existence of the Christian god might go as follows:

Premise 1: For *logic* to be the case, *the Christian god* must also be the case for *the Christian god* is the precondition of *logic*.

Premise 2: *Logic* is the case.

Conclusion: Therefore, *the Christian god* is the case.

Of course, there is in fact such a thing as logic, so it is an “aspect of human experience” which most people should agree on. But as for the argument we have here, it’s hard to see how it avoids the frivolity of presuppositionalism’s fondness for arbitrary stipulation cast in the form of a syllogism. The argument simply pulls the premise that “the Christian god is the precondition of logic” out of thin air, which is what the argument is supposedly supposed to defend in the first place. Contrary to what Butler tells us, there is no evidence here of an “attempt to *discover* the preconditions” of what is in question (whether it be causality or logic), or any sign of “*investigating* what must be true for [the phenomenon in question] to be possible.” There’s simply no research here to speak of. It’s not even clear how one could soberly make the inference which such arguments are supposedly displaying. Rather, what we seem to have here is another case of mere assertion pressed into the guise of argument, which we can rightly call “argument falsely so-called.”

And notice how easily Butler’s proposed scheme lends itself to “establishing” positions which no one takes seriously:

Premise 1: For *logic* to be the case, *Blarko the Wonderbeing* must also be the case for *Blarko the Wonderbeing* is the precondition of *logic*.

Premise 2: *Logic* is the case.

Conclusion: Therefore, *Blarko the Wonderbeing* is the case.

I strongly doubt that presuppositionalists would be persuaded by arguments such as this. But if this argument scheme works on behalf of proving the existence of the Christian god, why can it not work on behalf of proving the existence of Blarko the Wonderbeing? There must be other reasons for why presuppositionalists would suppose that logic might presuppose the existence of the Christian god, and these might vary from apologist to apologist. What is clear is that the argumentative scheme which Butler proposes is simply not up to the task it is touted to meet. It is also clear from statements examined above that presuppositionalism seems lost in its own muddle when it comes to explaining the relationship which the Christian god supposedly enjoys with logic’s foundations.

So in spite of all this mess, could there still be reasons why logic might presuppose the existence of the Christian god? In Part II, I will lay out some important reasons why logic could *not* presuppose the Christian god, and in so doing I will raise several objections to the presuppositional thesis which the apologetic literature unfortunately does not anticipate, let alone address.

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: [Christian god](#), [Logic](#), [Presuppositional Gimmickry](#), [stolen concepts](#)

posted by Bahnsen Burner at [8:00 AM](#)

3 Comments:

[Dr Funkenstein](#) said...

What I find interesting is that the presuppers will insist that their God is the basis for logic, the laws of which they maintain are immutable (usually they mean the 3 main laws of Aristotelian logic ie the Law of Identity, Law of Excluded Middle and Law of Non-Contradiction), then in the same breath make statements such as this one you quote from Van Til:

“God may at any time take one fact and set it into a new relation to created law”

How on Earth would the Law of Identity obtain under this view of the world? How could it be declared immutable if the identity of objects can change on the whim of a supernatural being? I'm fairly sure it wouldn't exactly work wonders for the reliability of the LoNC or LoEM either.

I think it's also worth pointing out that belief in supernatural beings, particularly ones able to perform miracles (ie disrupt the uniformity apparent in nature), would rule out any claim to being able to use TAG to defend Christian theism as the basis of the uniformity of nature, since unless a person actually knew when and where these miracles would happen and the nature of what the miracle would entail (which they wouldn't be able to know, of course), at any potential point in the future in any potential locality the world could become chaotic (even if only briefly and in a limited fashion) - ie there's no way you could commit to theism and uniformity of nature at the same time without adhering to a contradiction.

It's not especially surprising that theists try to ignore this dilemma and start wailing about God's providence, since even if we were to grant that most of the time God does maintain things on an even keel they could still have no way of knowing how long for or in which localities this would continue to be the case (and despite these claims to providence, it's hardly unheard of for God as described in the bible to turn his wrath on his own followers if they get him a bit worked up never mind unbelievers!).

[June 30, 2009 11:20 AM](#)

[Justin Hall](#) said...

Dr Funkenstein, I used essentially the same argument once with some orthodox jews, there response was you just have to have faith. I took this to be a admission on their part that there was no reason to take them seriously and explained as much at which point they seemed eager to end the discussion. Move along, no easy mark here I guess.

[June 30, 2009 1:07 PM](#)

[atimetorend](#) said...

I realized that while for the most part these posts are too far over my head for me to comment intelligently, I can still comment and say thanks for writing these.

Presupposition apologetics seem to get sprinkled in from time to time with any other number of apologetic styles by the semi/reformed circles I have been involved in. Kind of special pleading for any case they are making, they can always throw in the argument that they have special logical ability because they are Christians. I have appreciated being able to learn some of the logic, or lack thereof, that goes them.

[July 08, 2009 9:07 AM](#)