

entire apologetic enterprise.

Just how important is this dispute between evidentialism and presuppositionalism? That is a hard question to answer in a short space. I approach the question of importance this way. In my estimation, presuppositionalism (of the Van Tillian sort) makes a very confused contribution to Christian apologetics; even on its own terms it can be *shown* to be incoherent, hence not a viable intellectual foundation on which to build a defense of the Christian faith. Though I do not attempt it in the pages to follow, I think it can also be *shown* that Van Til's key idea—*analogical knowledge*, which is the very *linchpin* of Van Til's presuppositionalism—is a way of solving a "problem" that was itself *shaped* by a seriously flawed conception of perception and knowledge—a conception of perception and knowledge that exercised the minds of the philosophers of the early scientific era (e.g., Hume, Kant, and Bradley). If I am right about this, Van Tillian presuppositionalism is, to put it impolitely perhaps, a tilting at 18th and 19th century windmills. Van Til, in effect, allowed his *epistemological problem space* to be defined by those who profoundly got it wrong. (If you allow your enemy to shape and formulate your basic problem, you might get stuck with a pretty bizarre solution!) Van Til was quite correct in his estimation of the enormous influence of Kant, for example, upon the rise of modern liberalism and 20th century neo-orthodoxy, but he was seriously mistaken in his *tacit acceptance* of the Hume-to-Kant problematic regarding the *perceptual discernibility* of the external world and its causal order.

To the philosopher and historian of ideas, these observations have their special interest and are worth exploring; but it seems to me that these considerations by themselves do not make the evidentialist/presuppositionalist dispute important. Its importance, rather, lies in presuppositionalism's contemporary *influence* to convince additional generations of evangelical Christian college students and seminarians that straightforward *evidential* resistance to unbelief suffers a kind of inherent impiety and that evidential reasoning is somehow philosophically unsound. Van Til is gone, however, and I am hard put to evaluate his ongoing influence. Perhaps a resounding critique of his thought has only the relevance today that a resounding critique of phlogiston theory would have. But I doubt it. At any rate, in my story Van Til's style of thought profoundly exercised the minds of Charlie Brown and Linus Van Pelt. In so