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Professor Cornelius Van Til  
Westminster Theological Seminary  
1528 Pine Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

My dear Professor Van Til

I have read all but twenty pages of your Apologetics. I could not quite finish the book before reaching home last night, but shall probably read the last twenty pages tomorrow. I think I understood your position in reading the first part of the work, but your reaction toward various historical schools of thought clarifies the whole question in my mind. I shall write up my notes which I made as I went along and send them to you sometime next week if possible, but in the meantime may I ask for just a word to clarify certain general matters?

(1) By what logic can you include the ad hominem destructive argument with an unbeliever without including the direct constructive argument? If your oft-repeated statement is true in regard to the futility of the type of apologetics represented by Dr. Wilson, then knowledge and reason fall to pieces instantly when we begin to talk with an unbeliever. We cannot argue destructively any more than we can constructively. It takes the theistic assumption to prove to an unsaved man that his system is inconsistent or to prove anything for that matter.

(2) In excluding the underlying assumptions of Orr, Hodge, and Wilson, do you also exclude the underlying assumptions of Machen's two books "The Origin of Paul's Religion" and "The Virgin Birth"? Would you not have to say that it would be futile to present the arguments of those two books to an unbeliever? I know that Dr. Machen in the last years of his life was deeply affected by and frequently referred to what he learned from men younger than himself on the Westminster faculty. But would you not have to consider it illogical to present those two books, independent of Dr. Machen's more recent opinions, to an unbelieving student in the University of Chicago?

(3) The third question is one which I have mentioned before, namely, do not your many admissions of the light of intelligence by common grace in lost humanity give plenty of ground for the apologetic method which you exclude?

(4) Several of your terms I wish might be more specifically defined. Your use of the word "interpretation" is not familiar to me and is not one which I have found in any other writer. I think I know what you mean, but I feel that the usage would be misleading to a student. You seem to include explanation, definition, decree, providence, and creation, at times all in this one word interpretation. Sometimes the fundamental idea of interpretation, viz. explanation, seems to be absent from your use of the word.

Other terms which I wish might be more specifically defined are time, temporal, eternity, and eternal.

Your entire system, viewed constructively, is so excellent, your emphasis upon the doctrine of the trinity and the doctrine of creation is so wholesome, and the barrier by which you exclude the methods of Orr, Hodge, and Wilson, seems to me so flimsy and so non-essential to your own philosophy, that I am led to pursue the argument if you care to do so.

I do not mean to set myself up as a critic but only as an interested friend. I have learned much from reading your works. My criticism really centers about only one negative emphasis in your teaching. I shall write up my notes on details as soon as possible.

Yours in Christian fellowship

JOB/B

(signed) J. Oliver Buswell, Jr.