

There is a difference between "the order of knowing" and "the order of being"

The map is first in the order of knowing.

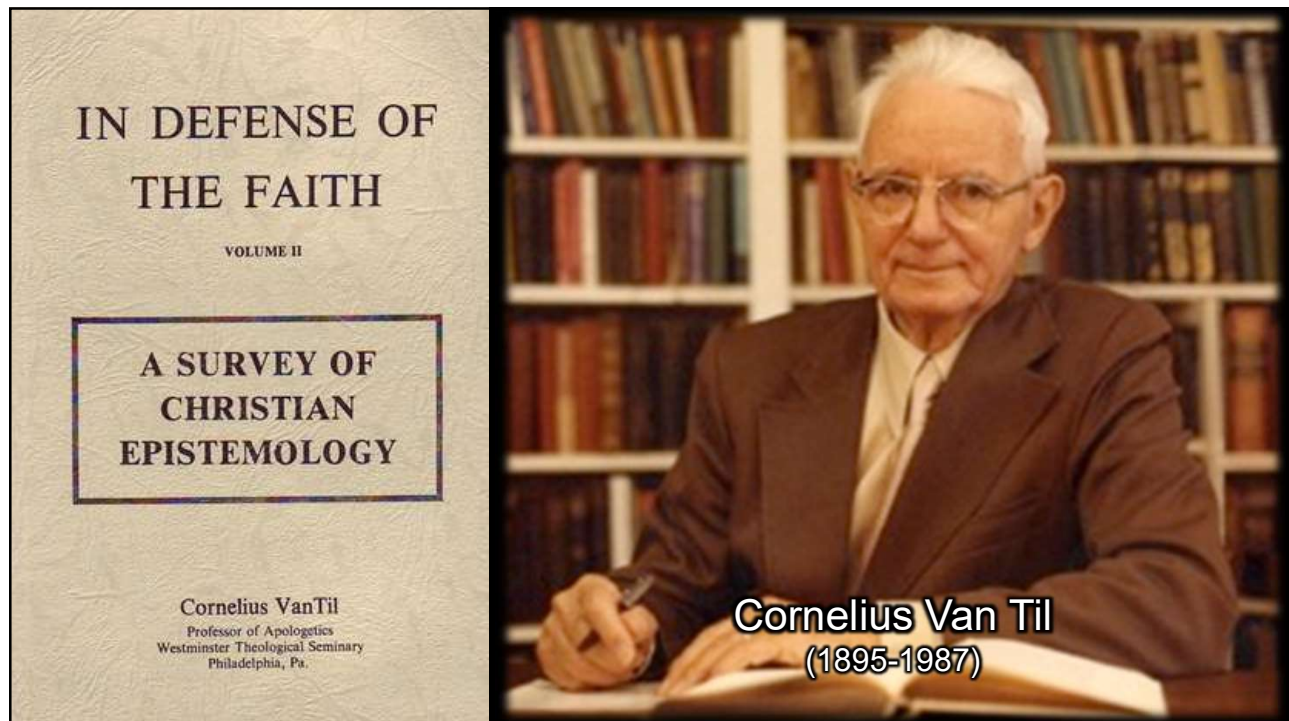
SES is first in the order of being.

**There is a difference between "the order of knowing" and "the order of being"**

**When it comes to the arguments for God's existence:**

**The creation is first in the order of knowing.**

**God is first in the order of being.**



**"We must seek to determine what *presuppositions* are necessary to any object of knowledge in order that it may be intelligible to us."**

[In Defense of the Faith, Vol. II: A Survey of Christian Epistemology, p. 201]

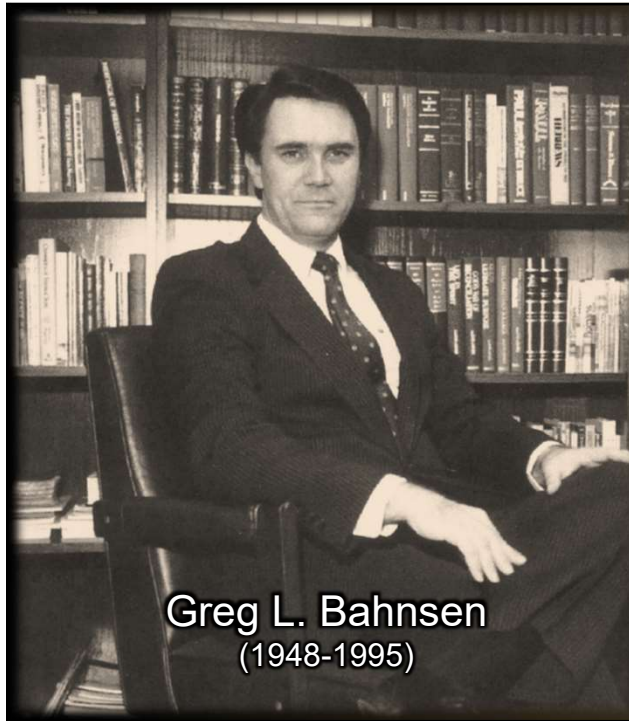
*Taken at face value, this would be like saying that we would have to know how our sensory faculties operate before the physical world could be "intelligible to us."*

**"If we begin the course of spiral reasoning at any point in the finite universe, *as we must because that is the approximate starting point of all reasoning*, we can call the method of implication into the truth of God the transcendental method."**

[In Defense of the Faith, Vol. II: A Survey of Christian Epistemology, p. 201]

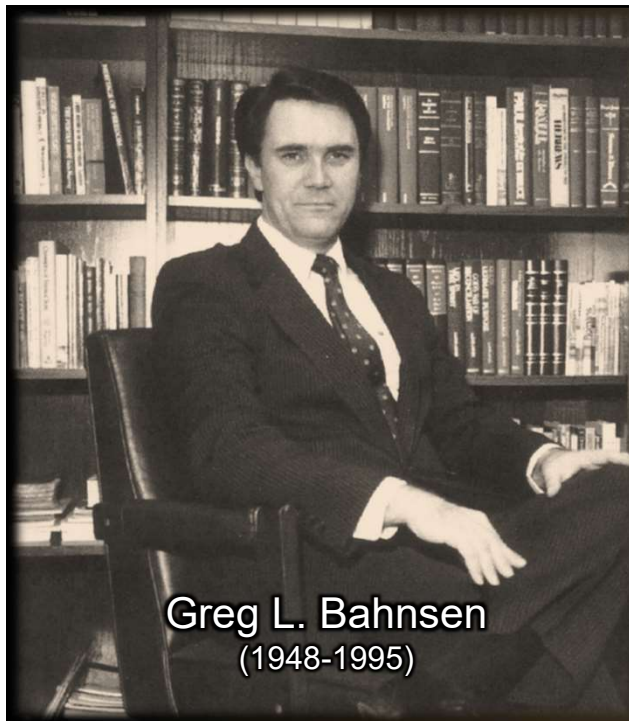
*What he goes on to say seemingly indicates that Van Til understands this. However, the very nature of this "transcendental method" will end up overlooking this distinction and its implications for apologetics.*





Greg L. Bahnsen  
(1948-1995)

*"Now RC is saying that he wants to start with epistemology and move to ontology, or metaphysics. Let's just start with the law of non-contradiction, the basic reliability of sense perception and the law of causality. And from those epistemological platforms, from that platform, move to the existence of God."*



Greg L. Bahnsen  
(1948-1995)

*"What I want to say is you can't begin even with that platform if you don't already have the existence of God. And that's not an ontological statement because we would agree ontologically that there wouldn't be any logic or sense experience if God hadn't created the world and was a coherent God."*



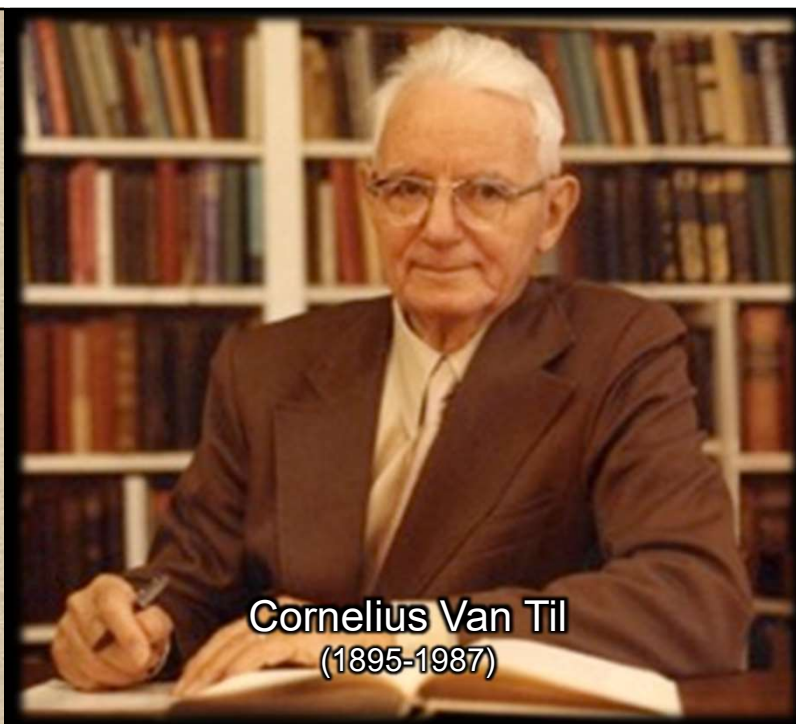
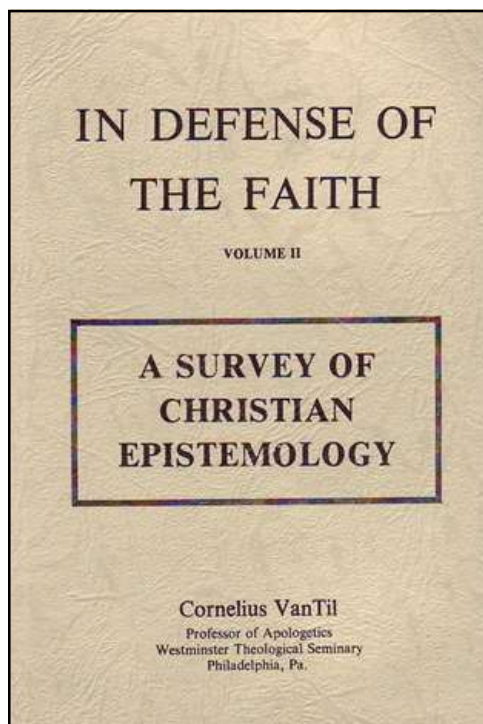
epistemology

ontology

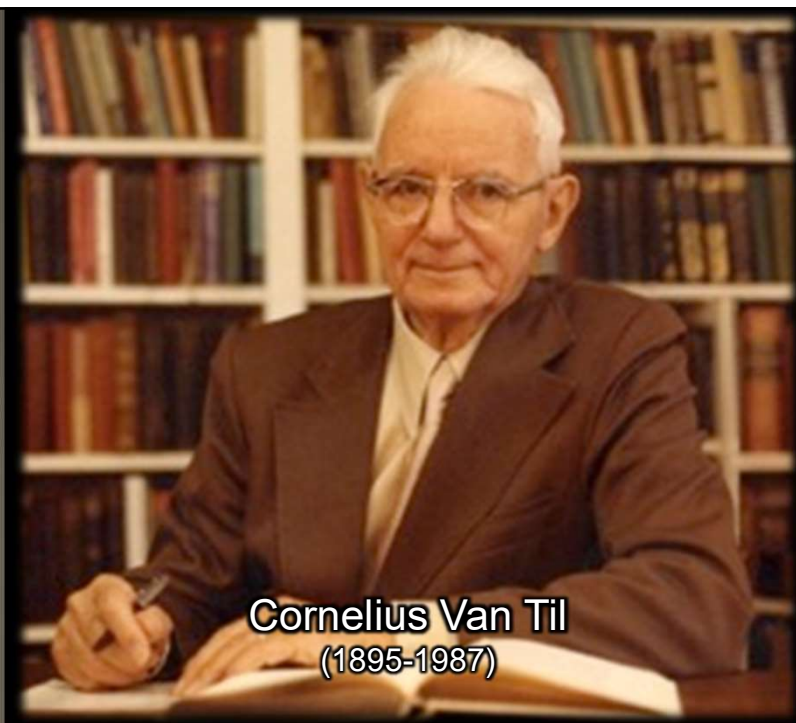
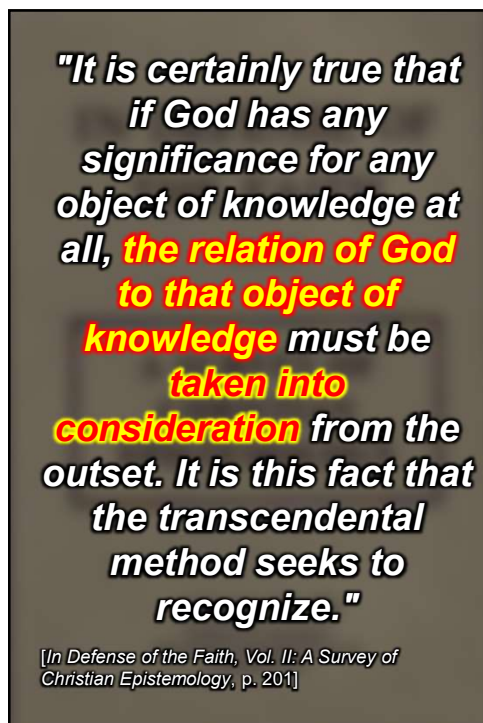
"I am making an epistemological point— that it doesn't even make sense to use mathematics or empiricism or natural science of any sort **without already knowing that there is a God** that is the context in which interpretation and predication is possible. That's the transcendental argument, saying that **the precondition of intelligibility and knowledge is already the existence of God**. And that does not purport to be a probable argument for God's existence but a certain argument, a necessary argument, an inescapable argument."

**"And that's not an ontological statement because we would agree ontologically that there wouldn't be any logic or sense experience if God hadn't created the world and was a coherent God."**

"I am making an epistemological point— that it doesn't even make sense to use mathematics or empiricism or natural science of any sort **without already knowing that there is a God** that is the context in which interpretation and predication is possible. That's the transcendental argument, saying that **the precondition of intelligibility and knowledge is already the existence of God**. And that does not purport to be a probable argument for God's existence but a certain argument, a necessary argument, an inescapable argument."



Cornelius Van Til  
(1895-1987)



Cornelius Van Til  
(1895-1987)



"It is certainly true that if God has any significance for any object of knowledge at all, **the relation of God**

**ontological** ← *the relation of God to that object of knowledge*

**epistemological** ← *the consideration of that relation.*

...from the outset. It is this fact that recognize"

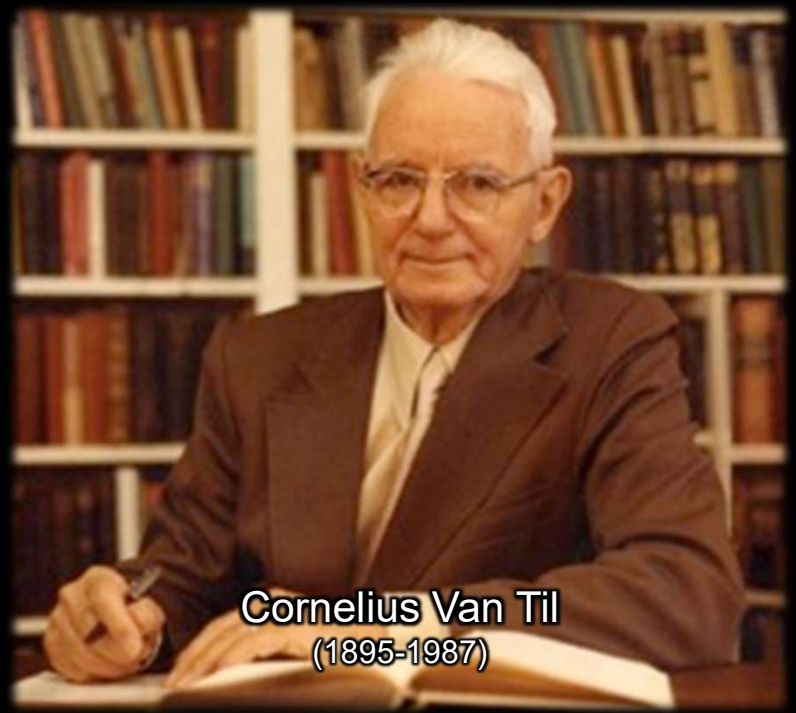
*It should be noted that there is a difference between*

*and*

**JERUSALEM and ATHENS**

CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS ON THE PHILOSOPHY AND APOLOGETICS OF CORNELIUS VAN TIL

EDITED BY E. R. GEEHAN



Cornelius Van Til  
(1895-1987)

"The only 'proof' of the Christian position is that **unless its truth is presupposed there is no possibility of 'proving' anything at all.**

The **actual state of affairs** as preached by Christianity is the necessary foundation of 'proof' itself."

["My Credo" in *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), 21]

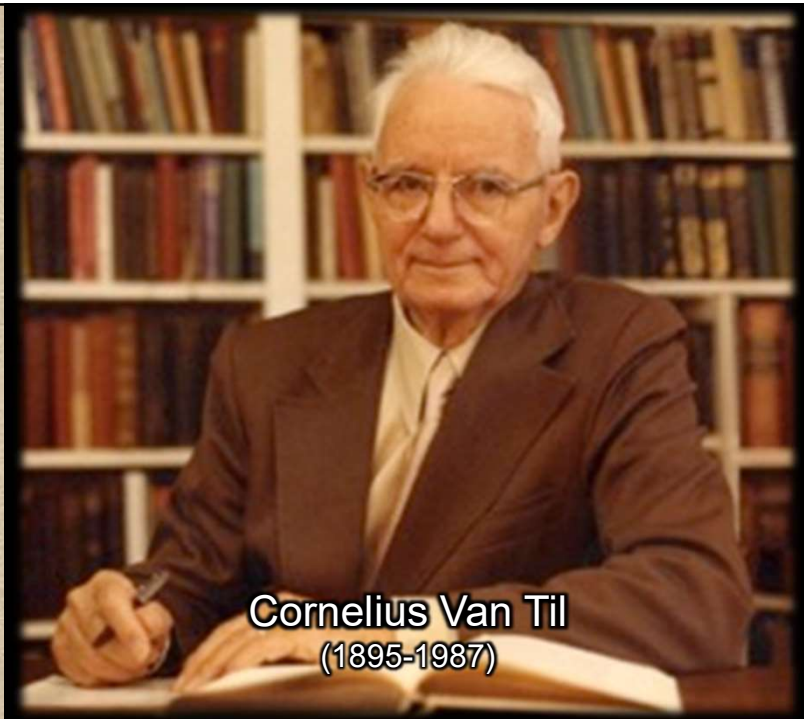
The difference is between "the truth" (ontological) and "presupposing the truth" (epistemological).

IN DEFENSE OF  
THE FAITH

VOLUME II

A SURVEY OF  
CHRISTIAN  
EPISTEMOLOGY

Cornelius VanTil  
Professor of Apologetics  
Westminster Theological Seminary  
Philadelphia, Pa.



Cornelius Van Til  
(1895-1987)

*"The charge is made that we engage in circular reasoning. Now if it be called circular reasoning when we hold it necessary to presuppose the existence of God, we are not ashamed of it because we are firmly convinced that all forms of reasoning that leave God out of account will end in ruin."*

[In Defense of the Faith, Vol. II: A Survey of Christian Epistemology, p. 201]



*"The charge is made that we engage in circular reasoning. Now if it be called circular reasoning when we hold it necessary to presuppose the existence of God, we are not ashamed of it because we are firmly convinced that all forms of reasoning that leave the presupposition of God out of account will end in ruin."*

[In Defense of the Faith, Vol. II: A Survey of Christian Epistemology, p. 201]



# THE DEFENSE OF THE FAITH

CORNELIUS VAN TIL



Cornelius Van Til  
(1895-1987)

**"The existence of the God of Christian theism and the conception of his counsel as controlling all things in the universe is the only presupposition which can account for the uniformity of nature which the scientist needs. But the best and only possible proof for the existence of such a God is that his existence is required for the uniformity of nature and for the coherence of all things in the world."**

[*The Defense of the Faith* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 103]



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[*The Defense of the Faith* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 103]

Epistemological

Ontological

# Revelation and Reason

New Essays in

REFORMED

APOLOGETICS

EDITED BY

K. SCOTT OLIPHINT

LANE G. TIPTON

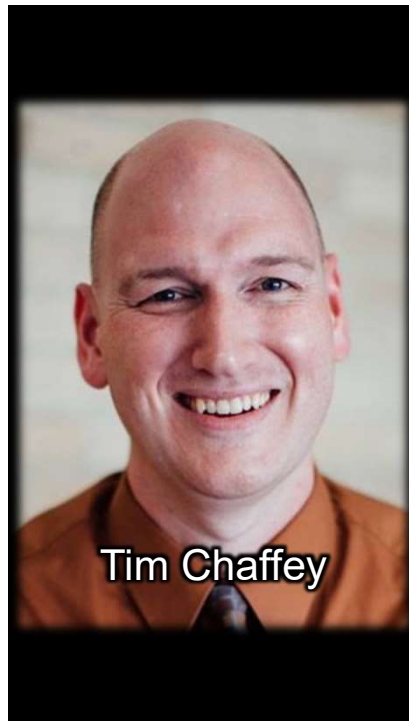
Don Collett

"The transcendental argument preserves the logically primitive and absolute character of God's existence by **starting with the premise that God's existence is a necessary precondition for argument itself**. In this way argument is made to depend upon God, rather than vice versa, **since argument is possible if and only if God's existence is true** from the outset of the argument itself."

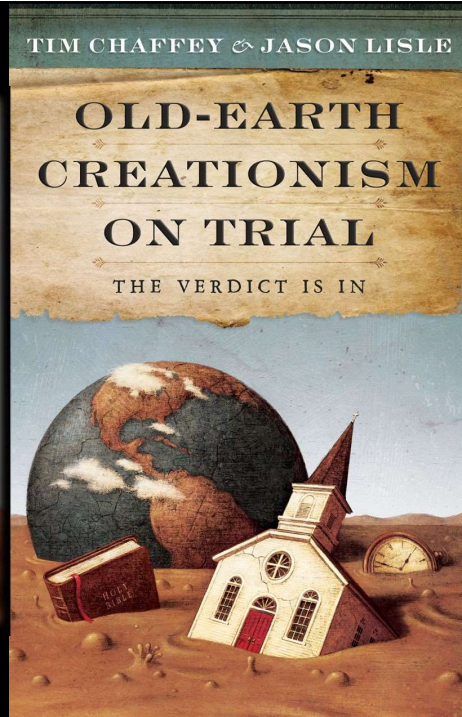
[Don Collett, "Van Til and Transcendental Argument," in *Revelation and Reason: New Essays in Reformed Apologetics*, eds. K. Scott Oliphint and Lane G. Tipton (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2007): 261]

epistemology

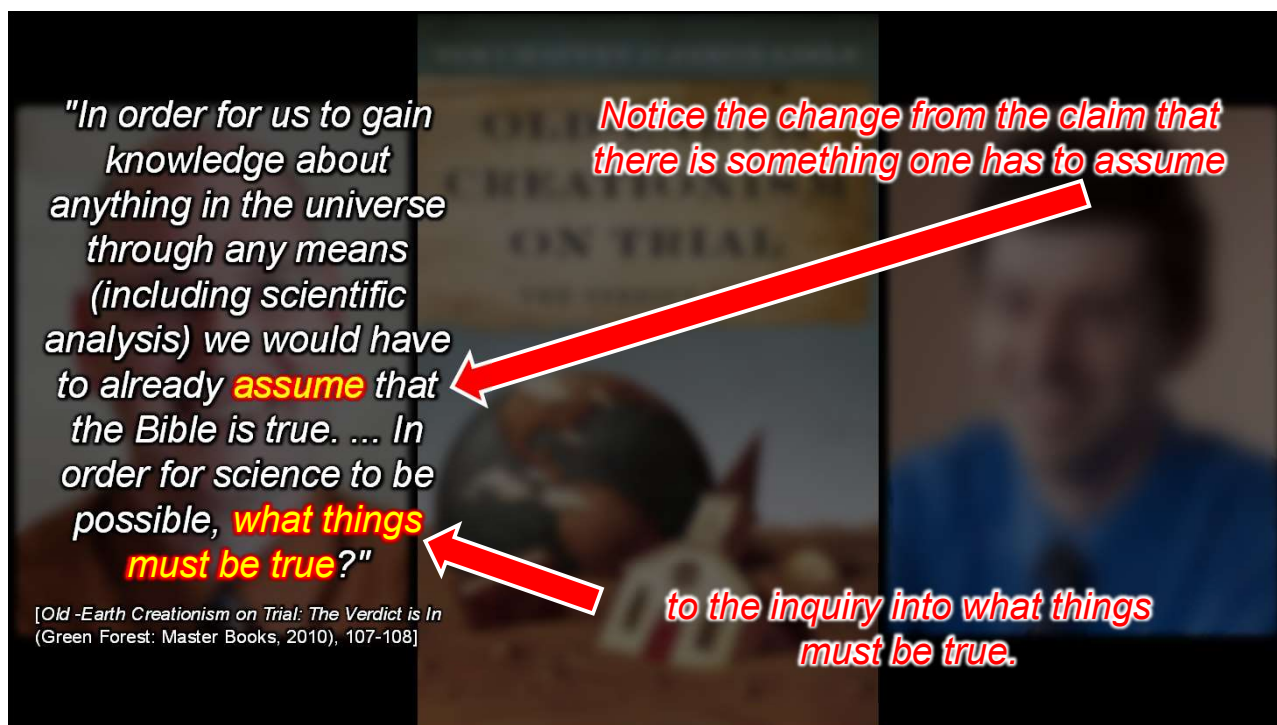
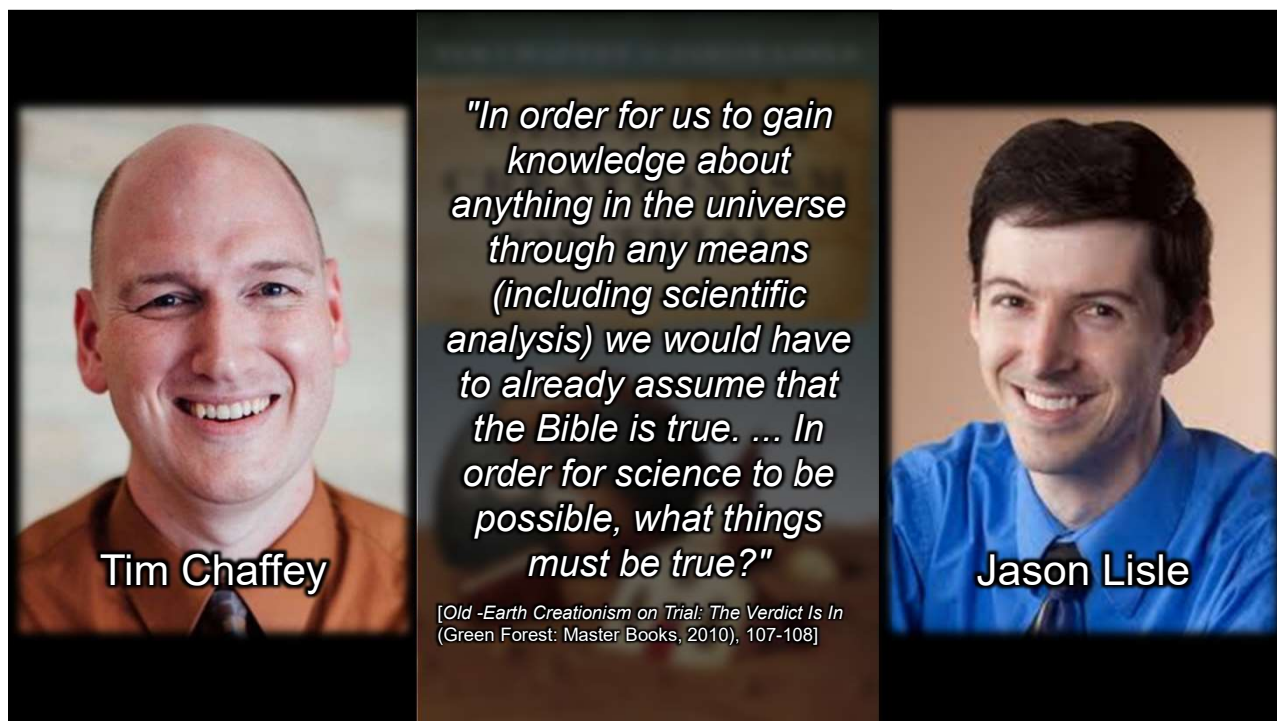
ontology



Tim Chaffey



Jason Lisle



*"In order for us to gain knowledge about anything in the universe through any means (including scientific analysis) we would have to already **assume** that the Bible is true. ... In order for science to be possible, **what things must be true?**"*

*Whether one has to assume something to is an epistemological matter.*

*Whether some thing is true is an ontological matter.*

[Old -Earth Creationism on Trial: The Verdict is In (Green Forest: Master Books, 2010), 107-108]

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VOLUME II

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Cornelius Van Til  
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**"It is not as though we already know some facts and laws to begin with, **irrespective of the existence of God**, in order then to reason from such a beginning to further conclusions.."**

[In Defense of the Faith, Vol. II: A Survey of Christian Epistemology, p. 201]

**No apologetic system of which I am aware thinks there are facts and laws that are irrespective of the existence of God.**

**"It is not as though we already know some facts and laws to begin with, **irrespective of the existence of God**, in order then to reason from such a beginning to further conclusions.."**

[In Defense of the Faith, Vol. II: A Survey of Christian Epistemology, p. 201]

**Given that the question of the existence of God is a metaphysical (ontological) one, Van Til's statement here is not Presuppositionalism.**

**"It is not as though we already know some facts and laws to begin with, **irrespective of the existence of God**, in order then to reason from such a beginning to further conclusions.."**

[In *Defense of the Faith, Vol. II: A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, p. 201]

**To be a presuppositional argument, Van Till should have said:**

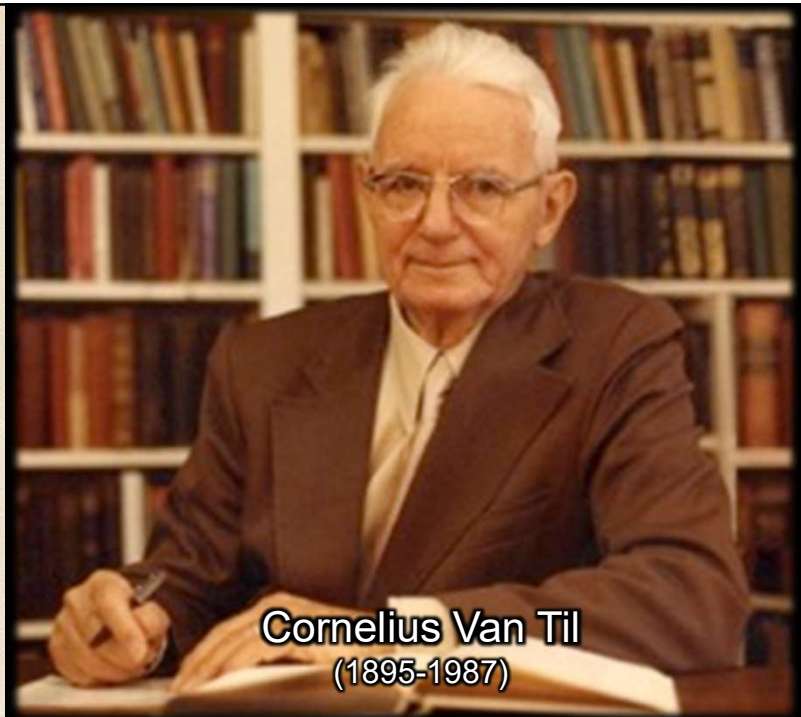
**"It is not as though we already know some facts and laws to begin with, **irrespective of the presupposition of the existence of God**, in order then to reason from such a beginning to further conclusions.."**

IN DEFENSE OF  
THE FAITH

VOLUME V

AN INTRODUCTION  
TO  
SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Cornelius VanTil  
Professor of Apologetics  
Westminster Theological Seminary  
Philadelphia, Pa.



**Cornelius Van Til**  
(1895-1987)

**"We must avoid the idea that human reason exists as a known and definable entity **apart from God** so that we may begin from it as from an ultimate starting point."**

[In *Defense of the Faith, Vol. V: An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, p. 21]

***This is an ontological point, not an epistemological one.***

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[In *Defense of the Faith, Vol. V: An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, p. 21]

***It is a point about being, not about knowing.***

*"We must avoid the idea that human reason exists as a known and definable entity **apart from God** so that we may begin from it as from an ultimate starting point."*

[In *Defense of the Faith, Vol. V: An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, p. 21]

***Because of this, Van Til is not making a presuppositional argument at all. Instead, his argument collapses into the classical cosmological argument.***

*"We must avoid the idea that human reason exists as a known and definable entity **apart from God** so that we may begin from it as from an ultimate starting point."*

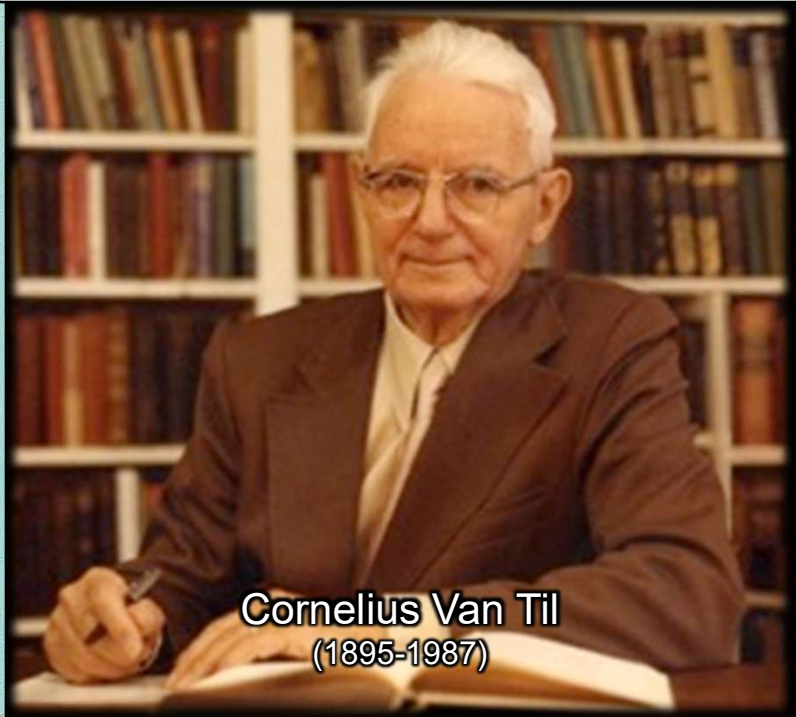
[In *Defense of the Faith, Vol. V: An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, p. 21]

*To be a presuppositional argument, Van Til should have said:*

*"We must avoid the idea that human reason exists as a known and definable entity **apart from the presupposition of God** so that we may begin from it as from an ultimate starting point."*

**THE DEFENSE OF  
THE FAITH**

**CORNELIUS VAN TIL**



**Cornelius Van Til**  
(1895-1987)

***"The Reformed apologist assumes that nothing can be known by man about himself or the universe unless **God exists** and Christianity is true."***

[The Defense of the Faith, (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 223]

***Again, this is an ontological point, not an epistemological one.***

***As with the previous examples, because this is an ontological point, Van Til is not making a Presuppositional argument at all, but, instead, is making a classical cosmological argument.***

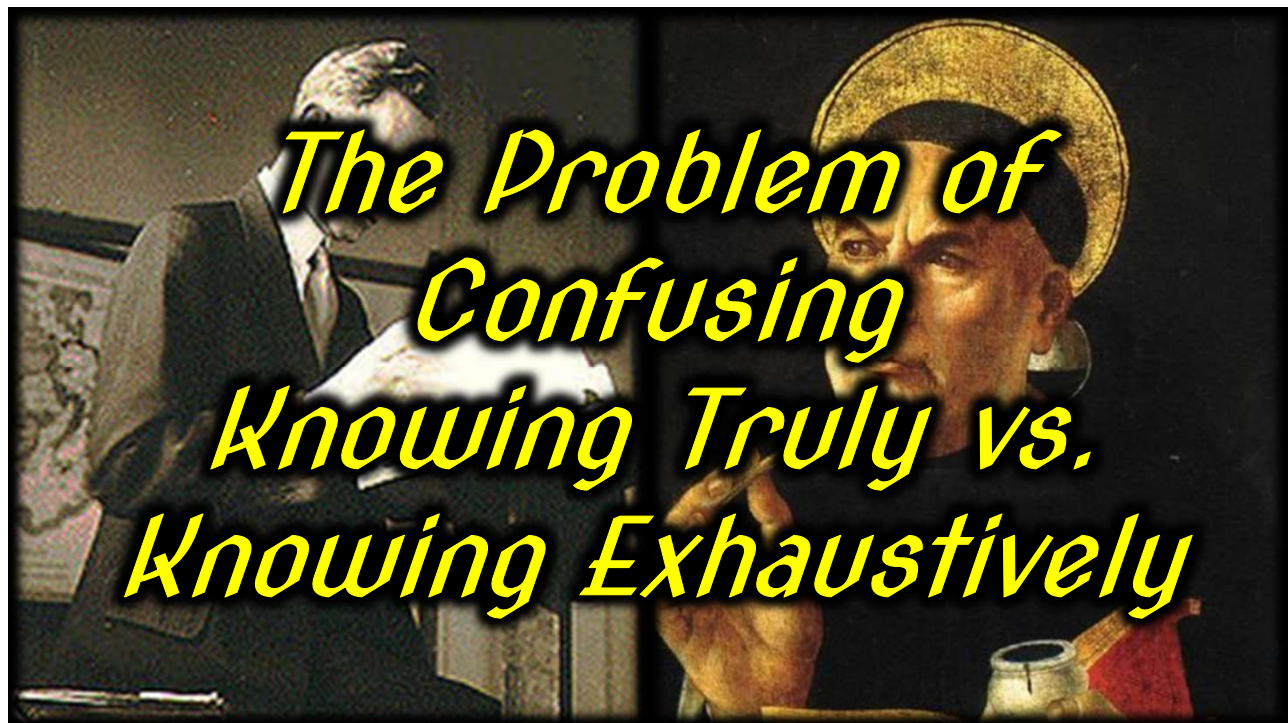
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**To be a presuppositional argument, Van Till should have said:**

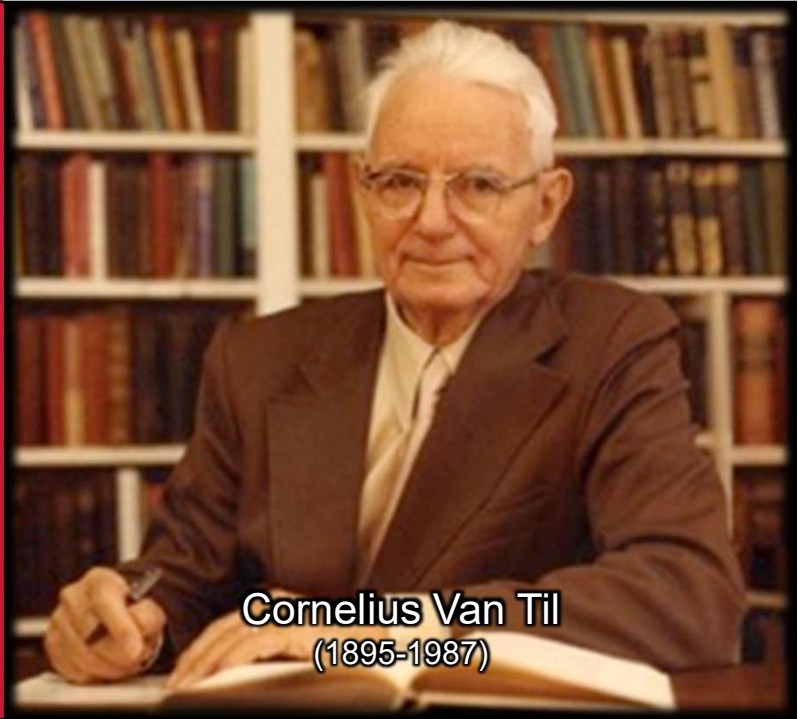
**"The Reformed apologist assumes that nothing can be known by man about himself or the universe unless **he presupposes that God exists** and Christianity is true."**

[The *Defense of the Faith*, (Phillipsburgh: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 223]



# WHY I BELIEVE IN GOD

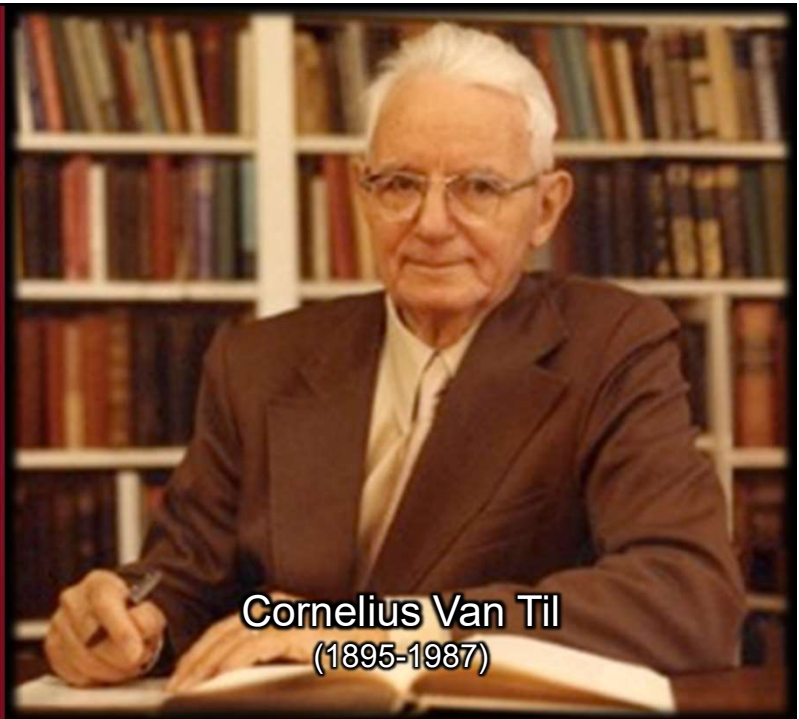
CORNELIUS  
VAN TIL



Cornelius Van Til  
(1895-1987)

***"But we really do not grant that you see **any fact in any dimension of life truly**. We really think you have colored glasses on your nose when you talk about chickens and cows, as well as when you talk about the life hereafter."***

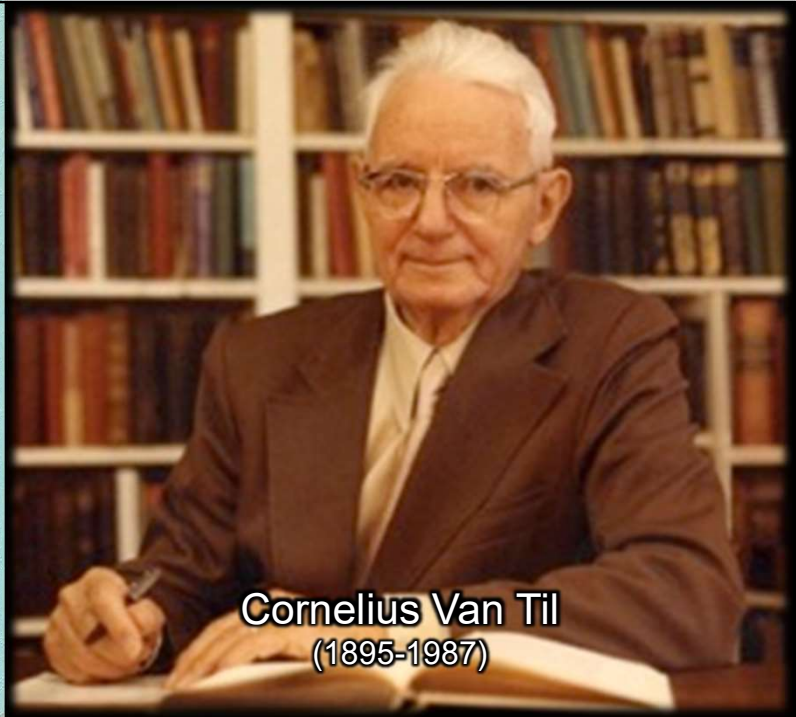
[Why I Believe in God (Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, n.d.), 9]



Cornelius Van Til  
(1895-1987)

# THE DEFENSE OF THE FAITH

CORNELIUS VAN TIL



Cornelius Van Til  
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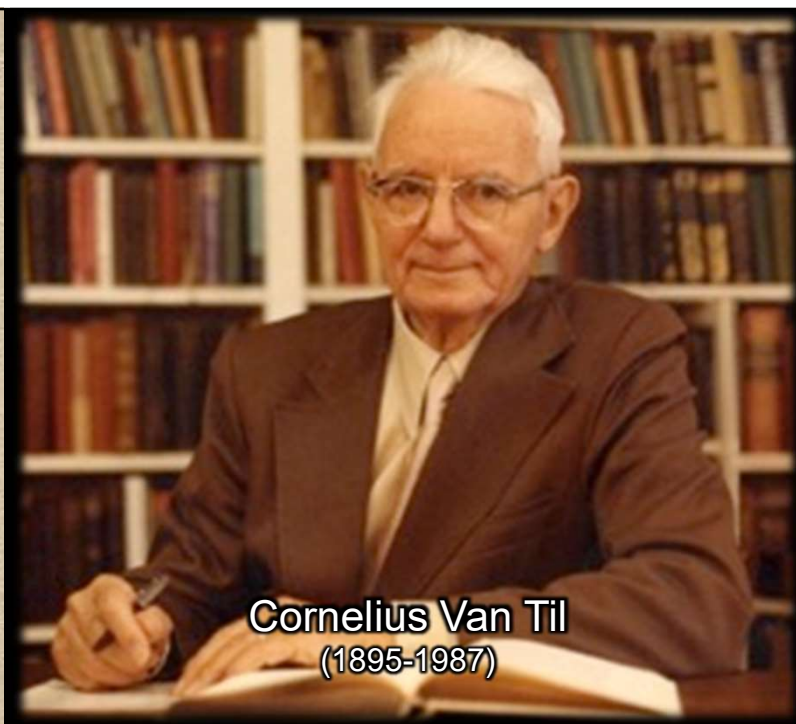
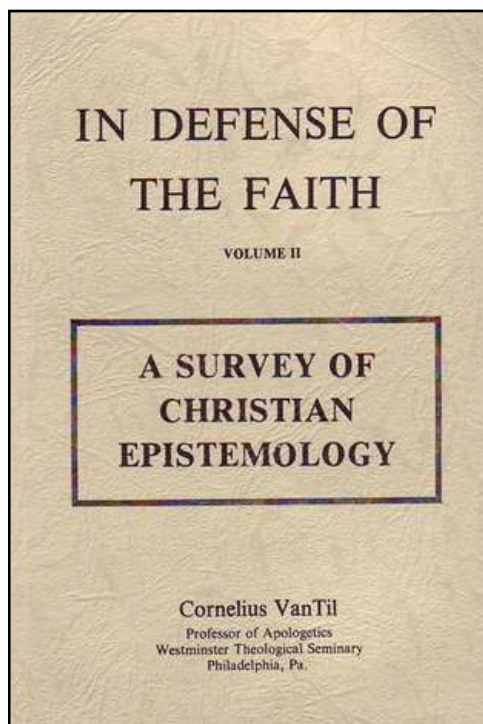
*"A Reformed method of apologetics must seek to vindicate the Reformed life and world view as Christianity come to its own. ... This implies a refusal to grant that any area or aspect of reality, any fact or any law of nature or of history can be **correctly interpreted** except it be seen in the light of the main doctrines of Christianity."*

[The Defense of the Faith (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 96]

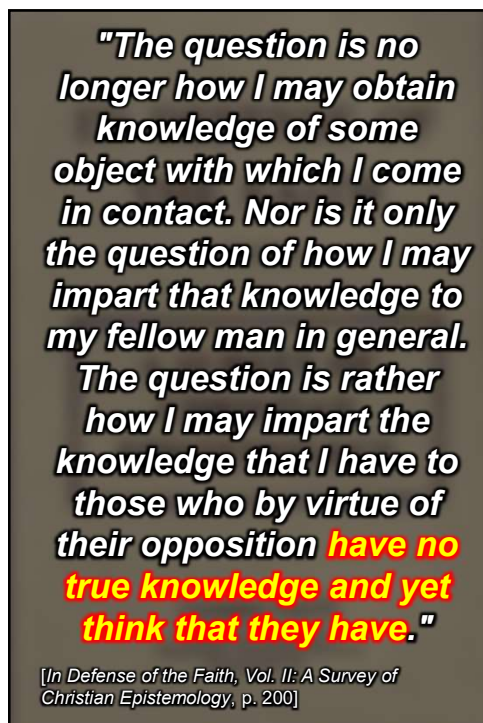
**One must ask:**

- (1) What is it to be "correctly interpreted?"**
- (2) Must this correct interpretation be a presupposition or can it be a conclusion?**



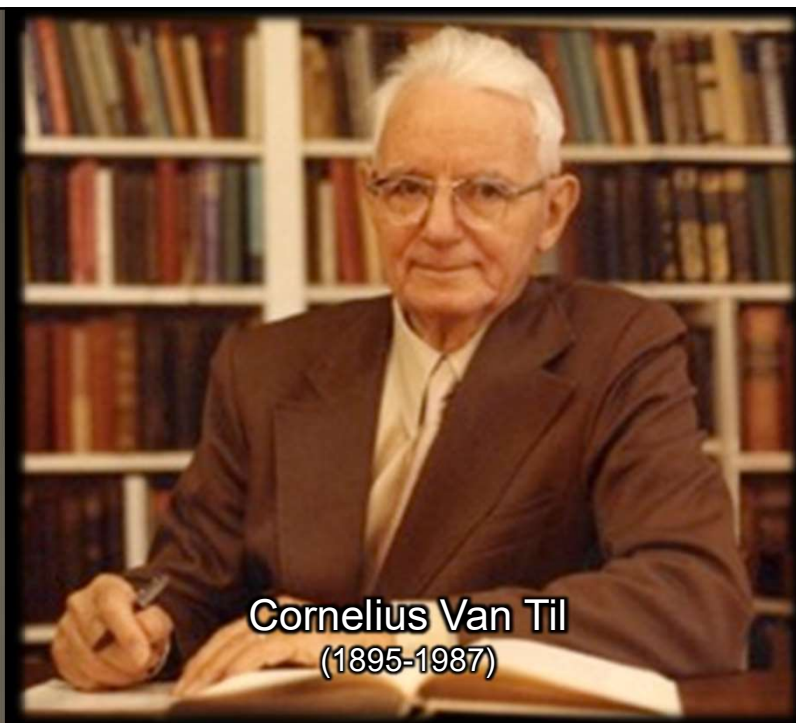


Cornelius Van Til  
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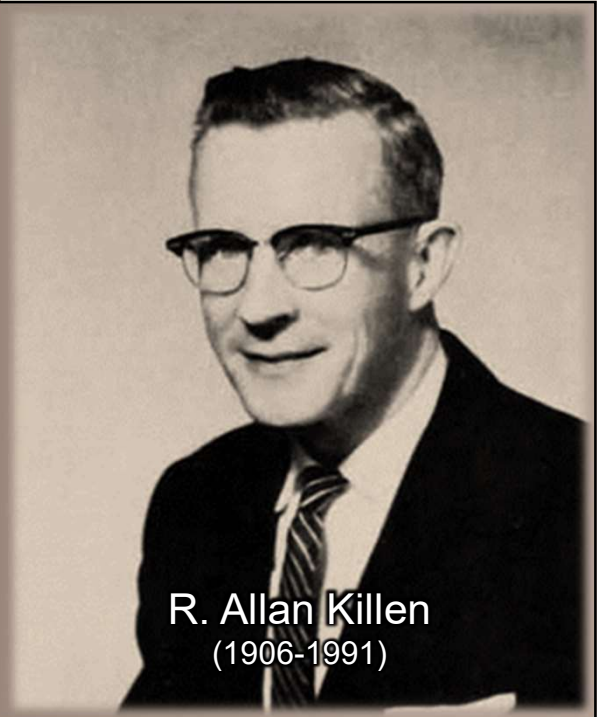
*"The question is no longer how I may obtain knowledge of some object with which I come in contact. Nor is it only the question of how I may impart that knowledge to my fellow man in general. The question is rather how I may impart the knowledge that I have to those who by virtue of their opposition **have no true knowledge and yet think that they have.**"*

[In Defense of the Faith, Vol. II: A Survey of Christian Epistemology, p. 200]



Cornelius Van Til  
(1895-1987)

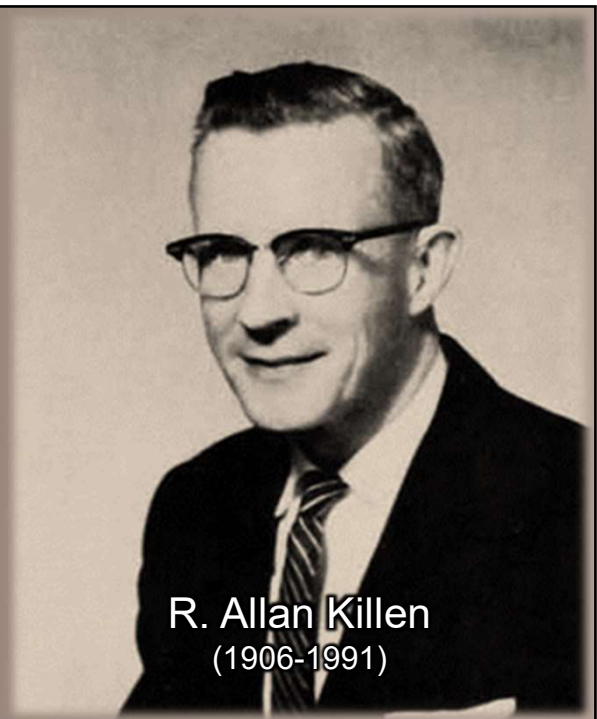
*"The heart of Van Til's argument centers around the word fact. The word has two specific meanings. It can be used to express an event in history or a phenomenon in science ... [or] to express the meaning of an event or phenomenon. For example, the historical event of the Exodus can be seen as a fact in both senses: 1) the Exodus from Egypt 2) ... the freeing of the Children of Israel from the oppression of Pharaoh by the hand of God. ..."*



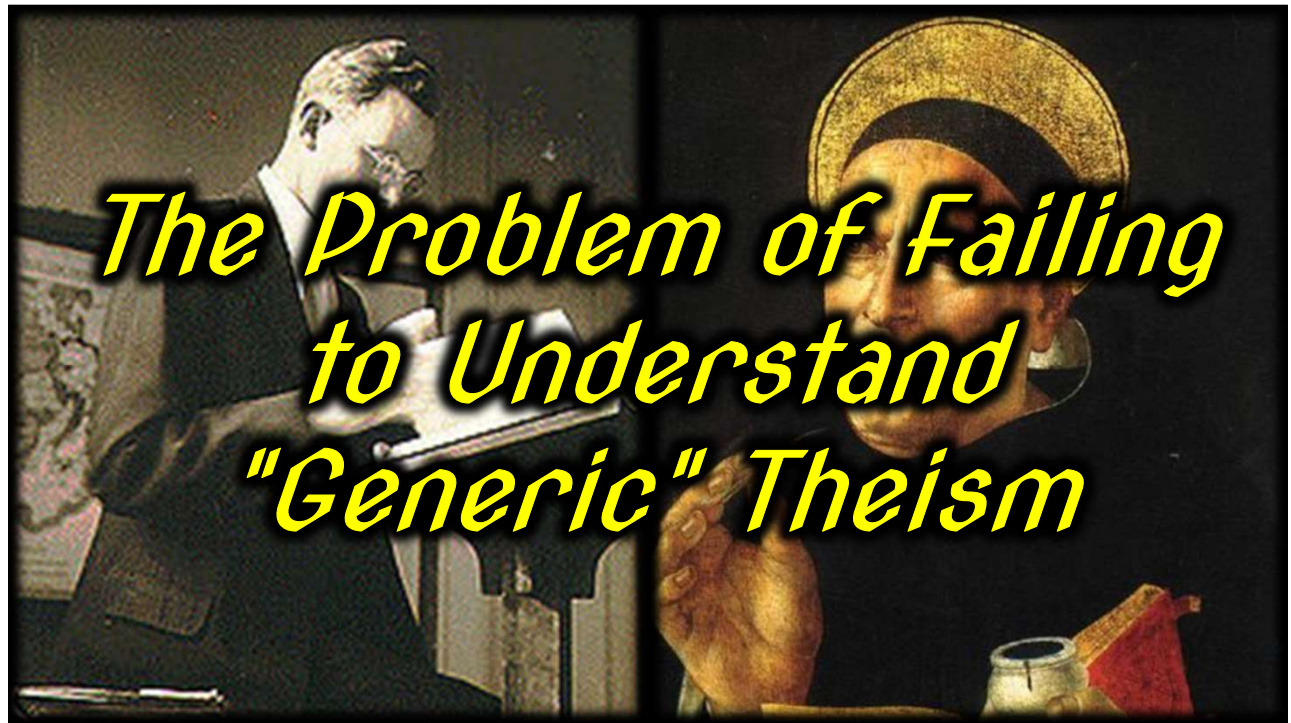
R. Allan Killen  
(1906-1991)

*"It is necessary, if we are going to speak clearly and unequivocally, to distinguish between the secular use of the word fact and the spiritual use of the same, that is between its use in a mere time-space secular sense and dimension and its use in a theological transcendent sense or dimension. Van Til has not done this."*

[R. Allan Killen, *Apologetics and Evangelism: A Study of Two Modern Apologetic Systems* (Jackson: Reformed Theological Seminary, 1978), 48]

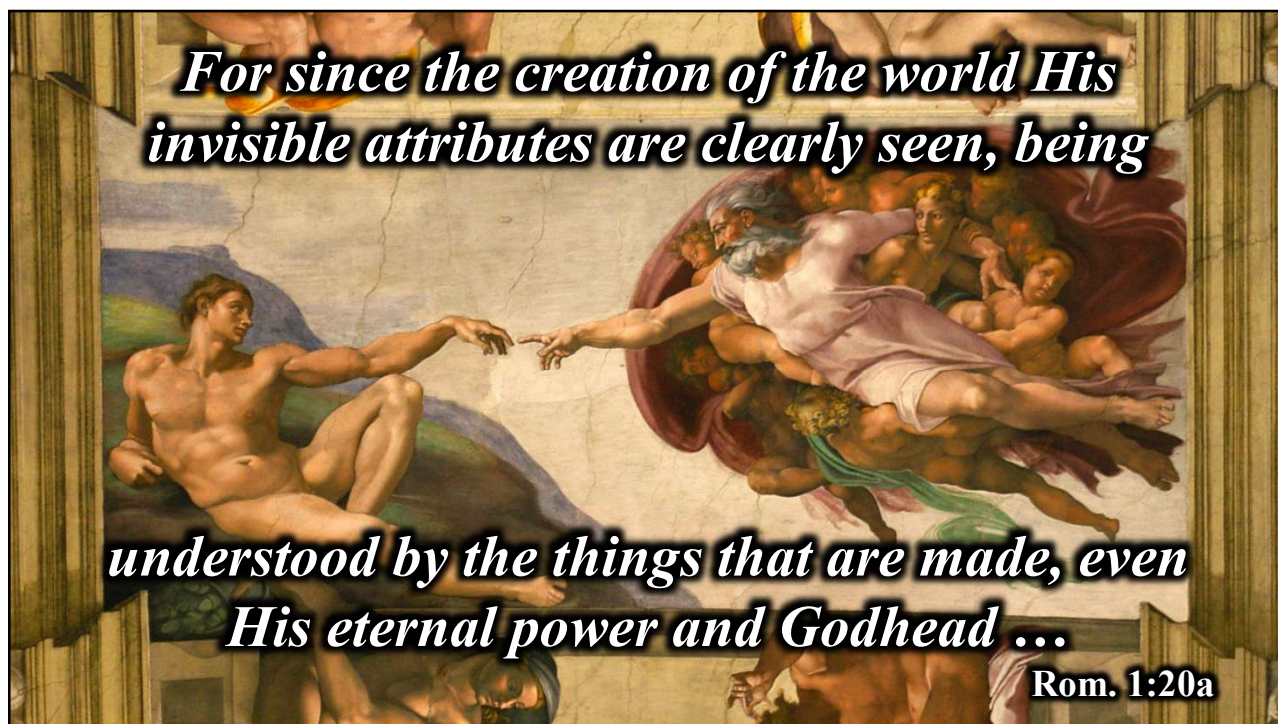


R. Allan Killen  
(1906-1991)



***The heavens declare  
the glory of God; and  
the firmament shows  
His handiwork.***

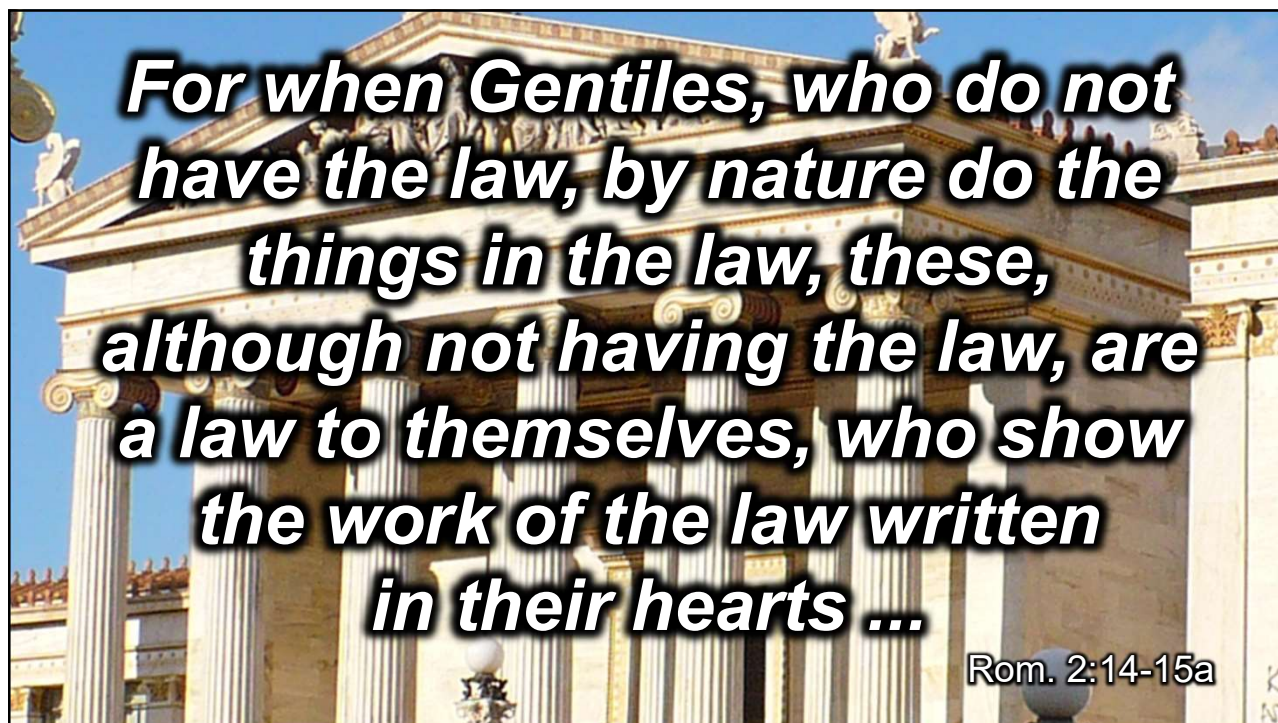
Psalm 19:1



***For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being***

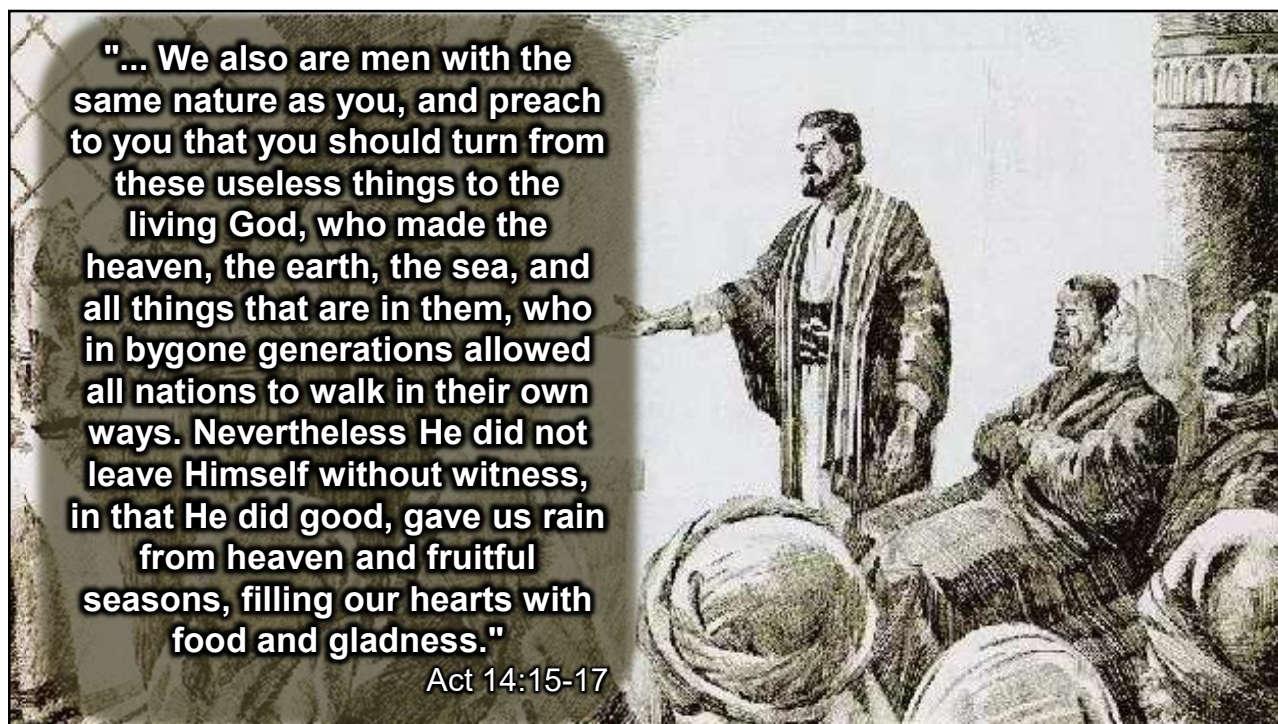
***understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead ...***

**Rom. 1:20a**



***For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts ...***

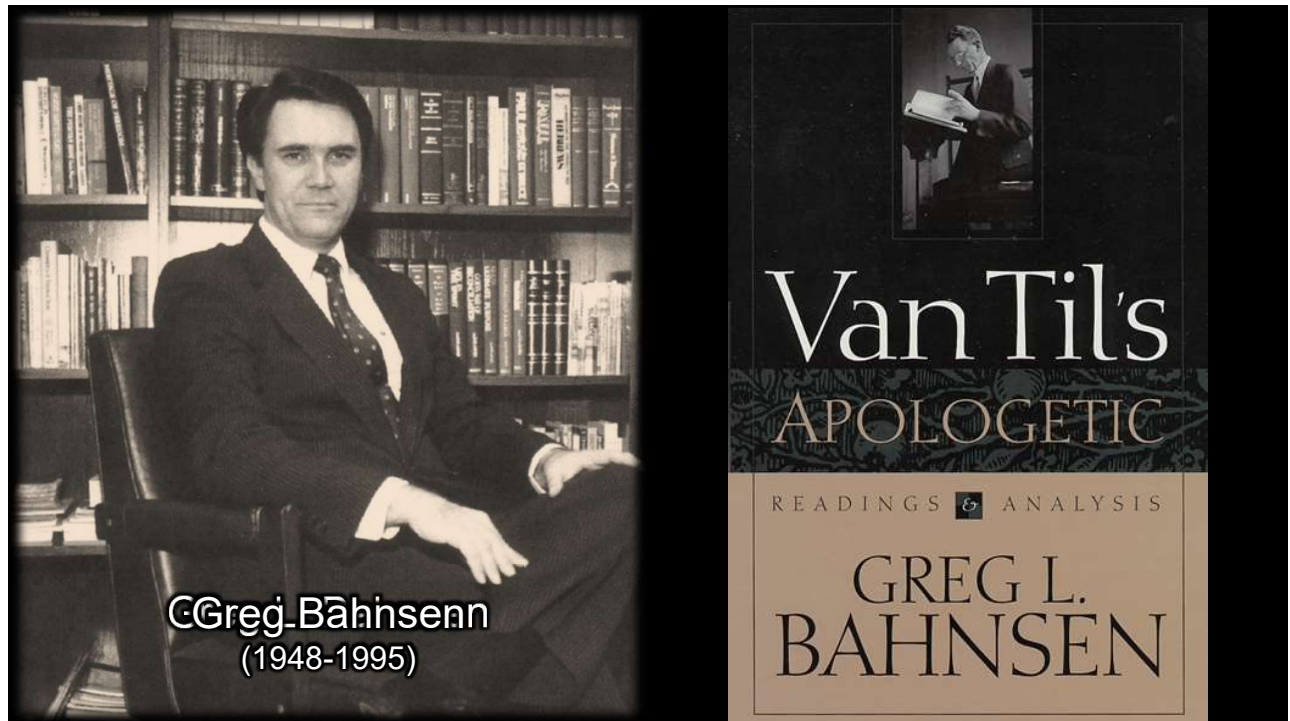
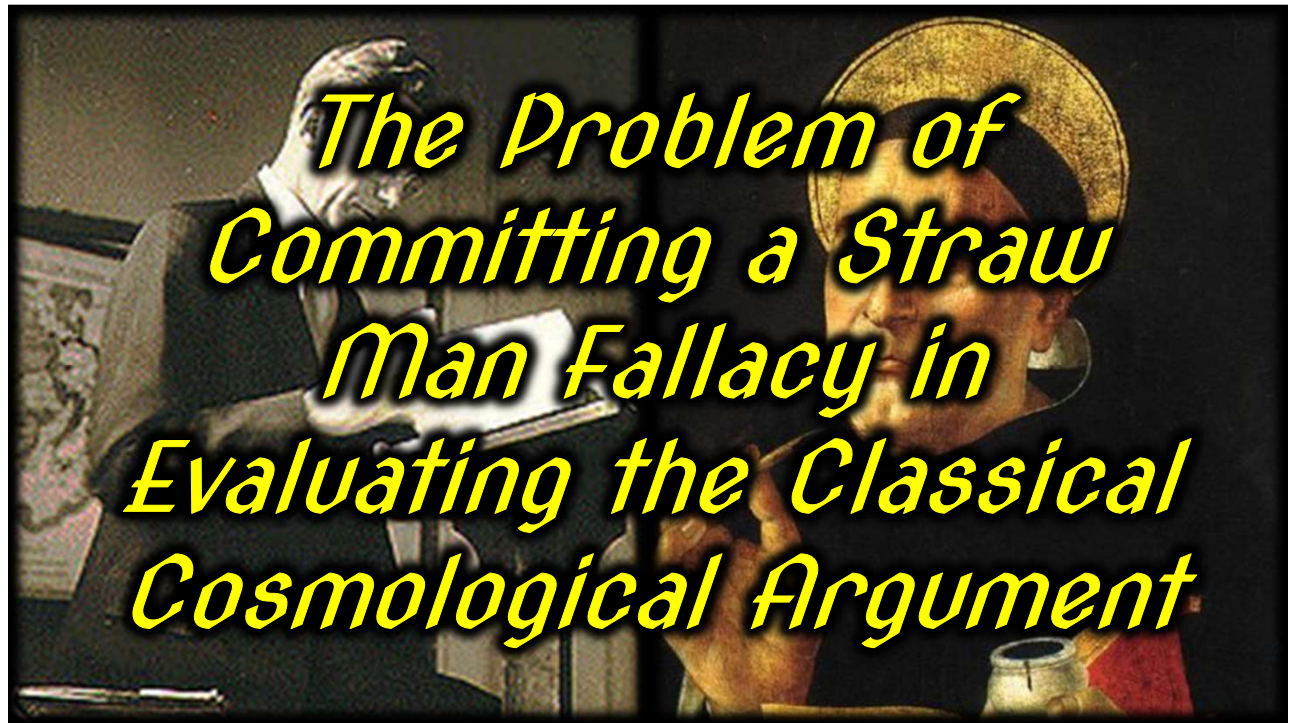
**Rom. 2:14-15a**

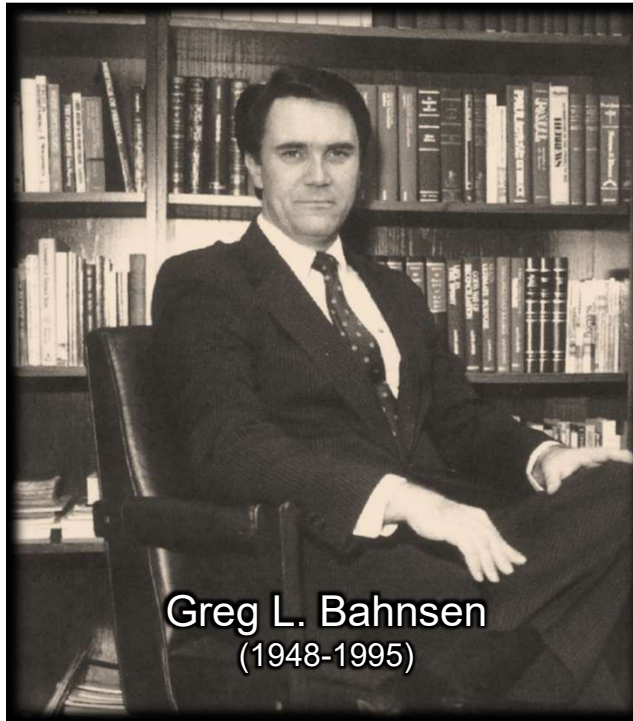


**"... We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."**

Act 14:15-17

<b>General Revelation</b>	<b>Special Revelation</b>
<p><i>God making known to mankind through His creation His existence, attributes, and goodness which enable us to distinguish in Scripture proper vs. figurative language of God</i></p>	<p><i>God making known to mankind through His prophets, apostles, and His Son His nature and will that could not necessarily be known through General Revelation</i></p>
<p><i>☞ Romans 1:20a ☞</i></p> <p><i>For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.</i></p>	<p><i>☞ 2 Timothy 3:16-17 ☞</i></p> <p><i>All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.</i></p>
<p><i>Book of Nature</i></p>	<p><i>Book of Scripture</i></p>
<p><i>Natural Theology</i></p>	<p><i>Biblical Theology</i></p>
<p><b><i>Systematic Theology</i></b></p>	

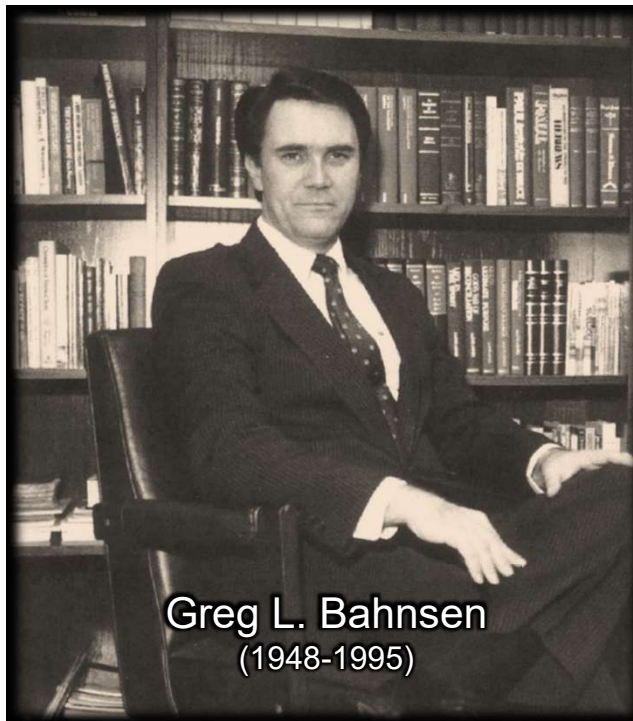




Greg L. Bahnsen  
(1948-1995)

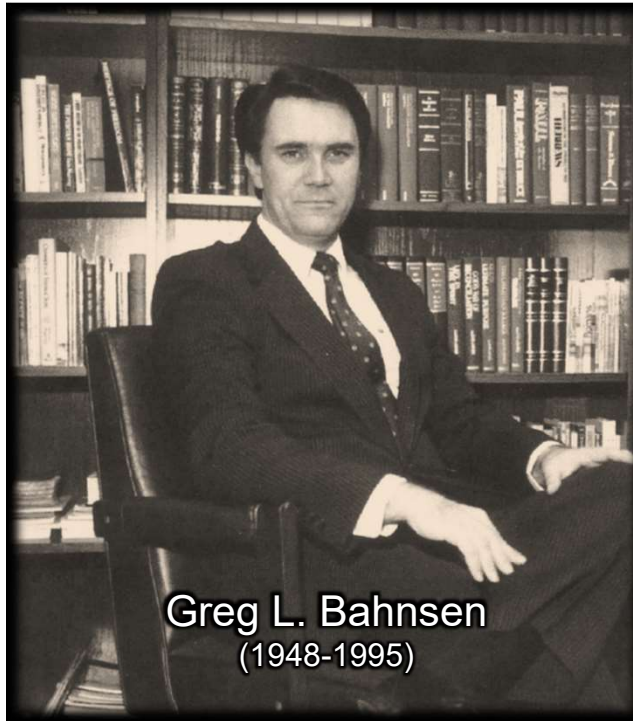
**The traditional approach** does not challenge the autonomy of the natural man's thinking, but naively assumes that his experience and understanding of causal relations is intelligible. If **everything has a cause**, it is argued, then he should admit that this world also has a cause—which can only be God."

[Van Till's *Apologetic: Readings and Analysis*  
(Phillipsburg: P&R, 1998), 617, 618]



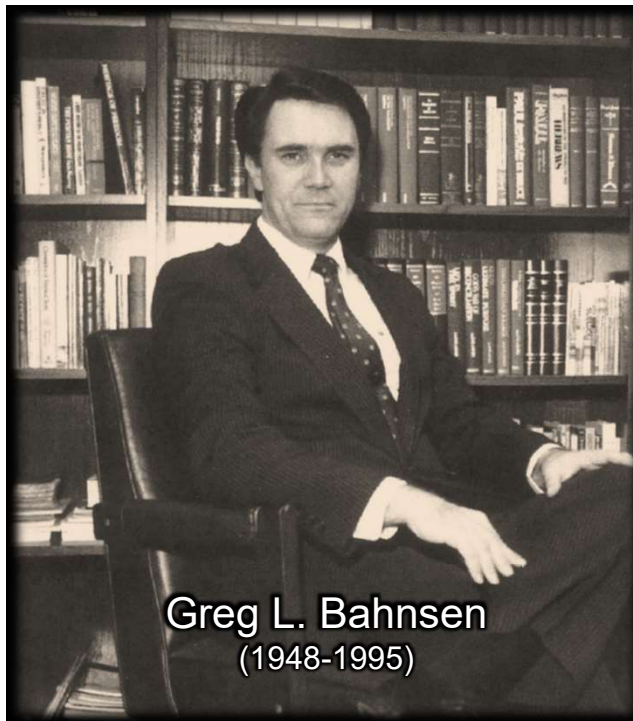
Greg L. Bahnsen  
(1948-1995)

**Traditional formulations** of the cosmological proof for God's existence have always been, as autonomously conceived and interpreted, philosophically embarrassing.



Greg L. Bahnsen  
(1948-1995)

*How should we understand the fundamental premise in the cosmological argument, **'Everything has a cause'** (or 'Every object has an origin,' or, better 'Every even has a cause')?*



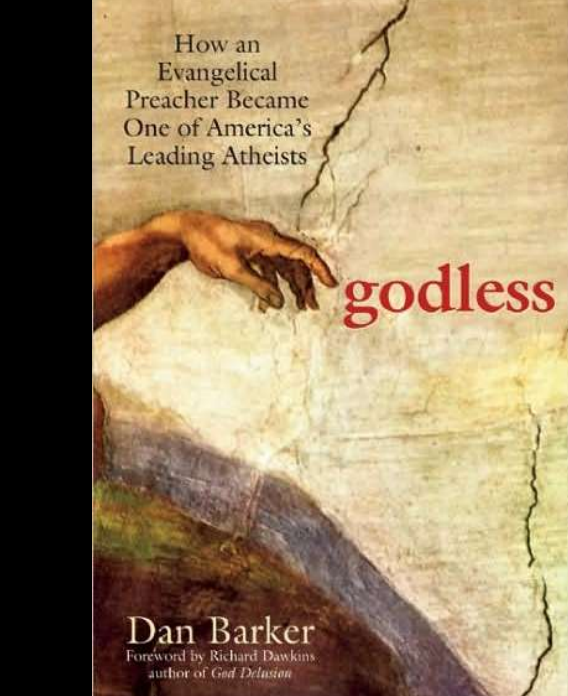
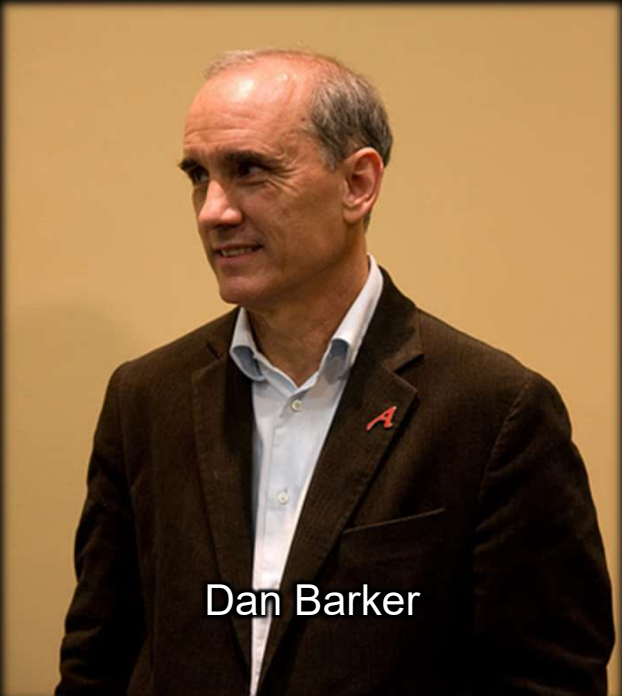
Greg L. Bahnsen  
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*If this is taken as a universal metaphysical principle ... then the embarrassing conclusion reached by the apologist would be that God too has a cause or origin."*

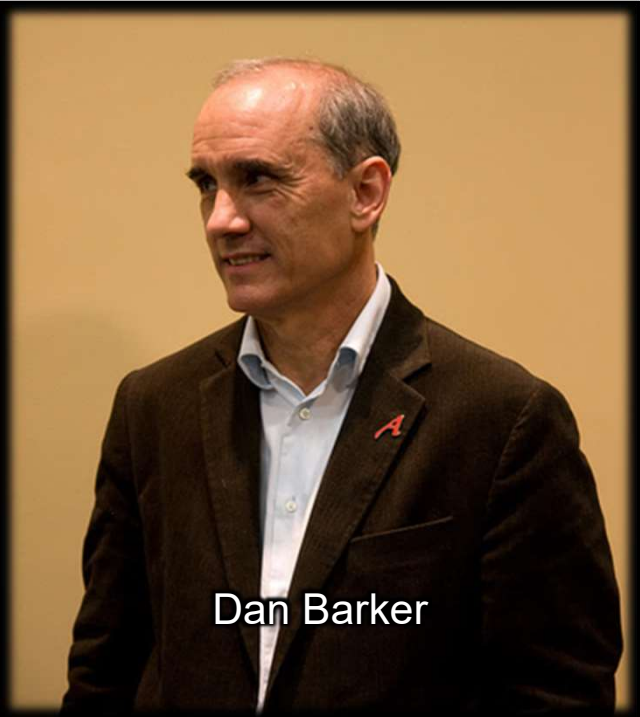
[Van Till's *Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1998), 617, 618]



 <p>Greg Bahnsen (1948-1995)</p>	<p><b>The traditional approach</b> does not challenge the autonomy of the natural man's thinking, but naively assumes that his experience and understanding of causal relations is intelligible. If everything has a cause, it is argued, then he should admit that this world also has a cause—which can only be God."</p> <p><small>[Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis (Phillipsburg: R&amp;R, 1998), 617-618]</small></p>	 <p>Greg Bahnsen (1948-1995)</p>	<p><b>Traditional formulations</b> of the cosmological proof for God's existence have always been, as autonomously conceived and interpreted, philosophically embarrassing.</p>
 <p>Greg Bahnsen (1948-1995)</p>	<p>The traditional approach does not challenge the autonomy of the natural man's thinking, but naively assumes that his experience and understanding of causal relations is intelligible. <b>If everything has a cause</b>, it is argued, then he should admit that this world also has a cause—which can only be God."</p> <p><small>[Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis (Phillipsburg: R&amp;R, 1998), 617-618]</small></p>	 <p>Greg Bahnsen (1948-1995)</p>	<p>How should we understand the fundamental premise in the cosmological argument, <b>'Everything has a cause'</b> (or 'Every object has an origin,' or, better 'Every even has a cause')?</p>

 <p>How an Evangelical Preacher Became One of America's Leading Atheists</p> <p><b>godless</b></p> <p>Dan Barker Foreword by Richard Dawkins author of <i>God Delusion</i></p>	 <p>Dan Barker</p>
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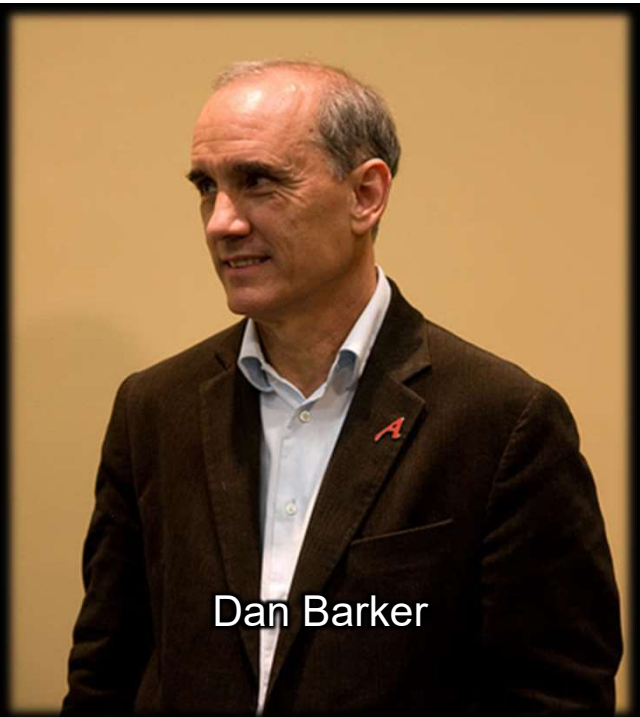
**"Everything had a cause, and every cause is the effect of a previous cause. Something must have started it all. God ... is the eternal first cause ... the creator and sustainer of the universe.**




Dan Barker

**"The major premise of this argument 'everything had a cause,' is contradicted by the conclusion that 'God did not have a cause.' You can't have it both ways. If everything had to have a cause, then there could not be a first cause."**

[Dan Barker, *Godless: How an Evangelical Preacher Became One of America's Leading Atheists* (Berkeley: Ulysses Press, 2008), 113-114]



Dan Barker



George H. Smith

# ATHEISM


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## THE CASE AGAINST GOD

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BY GEORGE H. SMITH

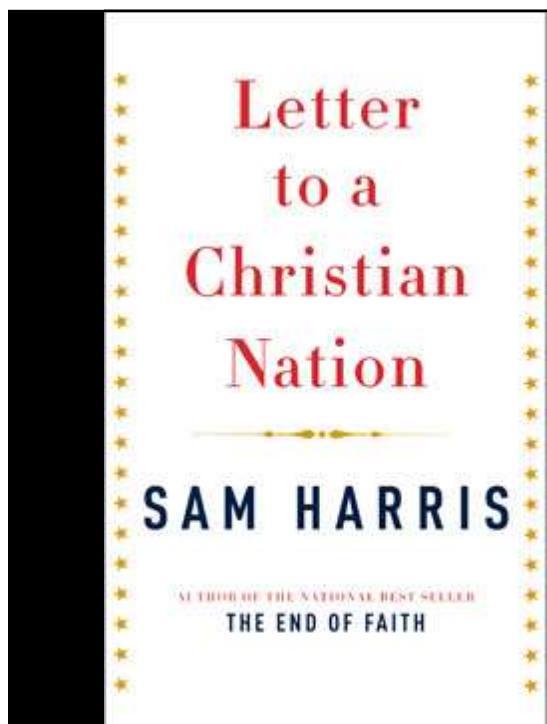
The Skeptic's Bookshelf



George H. Smith

***“Every existing thing has a cause, and every cause must be caused by a prior cause, which in turn must be caused by a still prior cause, and so on, until we reach one of two conclusions: (a) either we have an endless chain of causes—an infinite regress, or (b) there exists a first cause, a being that does not require a causal explanation.*”**

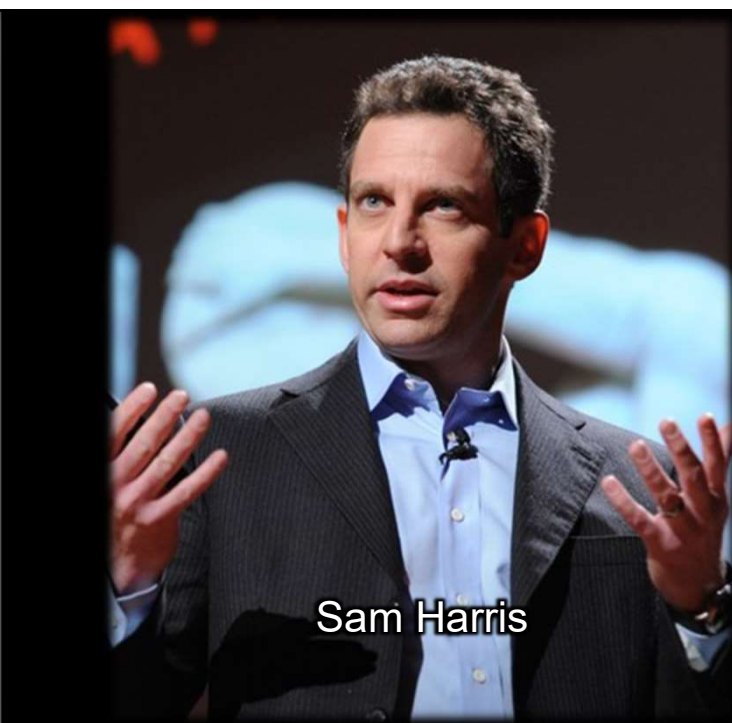
[George H. Smith, *Atheism: The Case Against God*, (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1979), 236]



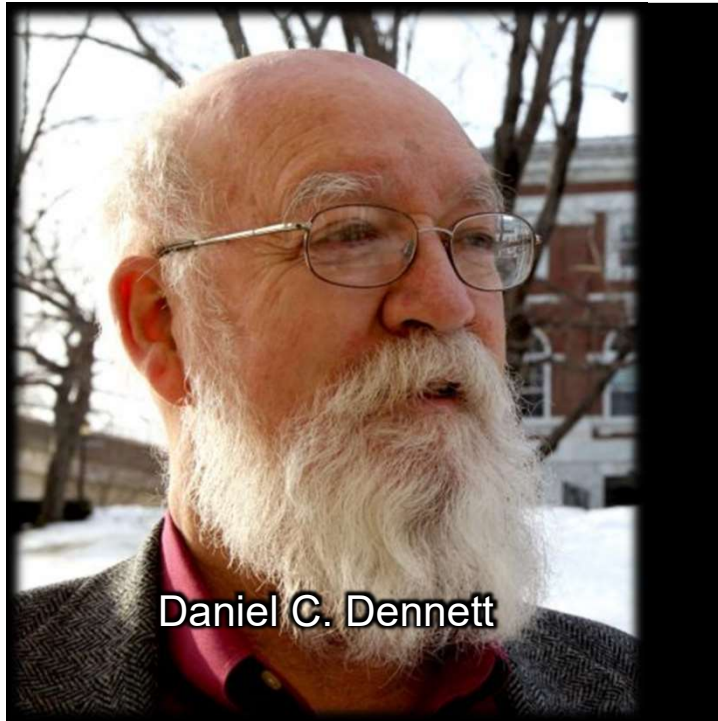
Sam Harris

***"Everything that exists has a cause; space and time exist; space and time must, therefore, have been caused by something that stands outside of space and time, and the only thing that transcends space and time, and yet retains the power to create, is God."***

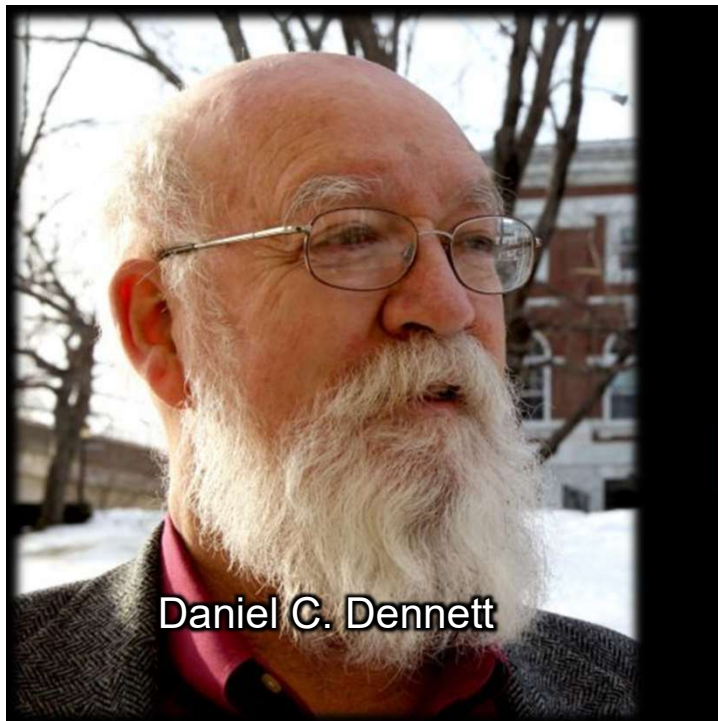
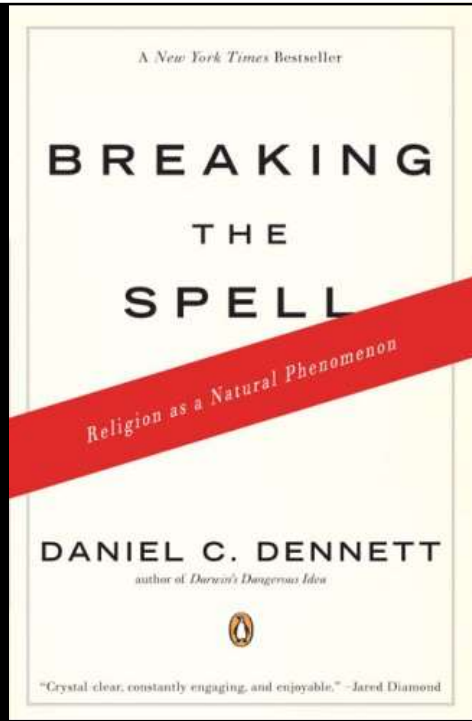
[Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), 72]



Sam Harris



Daniel C. Dennett



Daniel C. Dennett

***"The Cosmological Argument, which in its simplest form states that since everything must have a cause the universe must have a cause—namely, God—doesn't stay simple for long."***

[Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell*, (New York: Penguin Group, 2006), 242]

