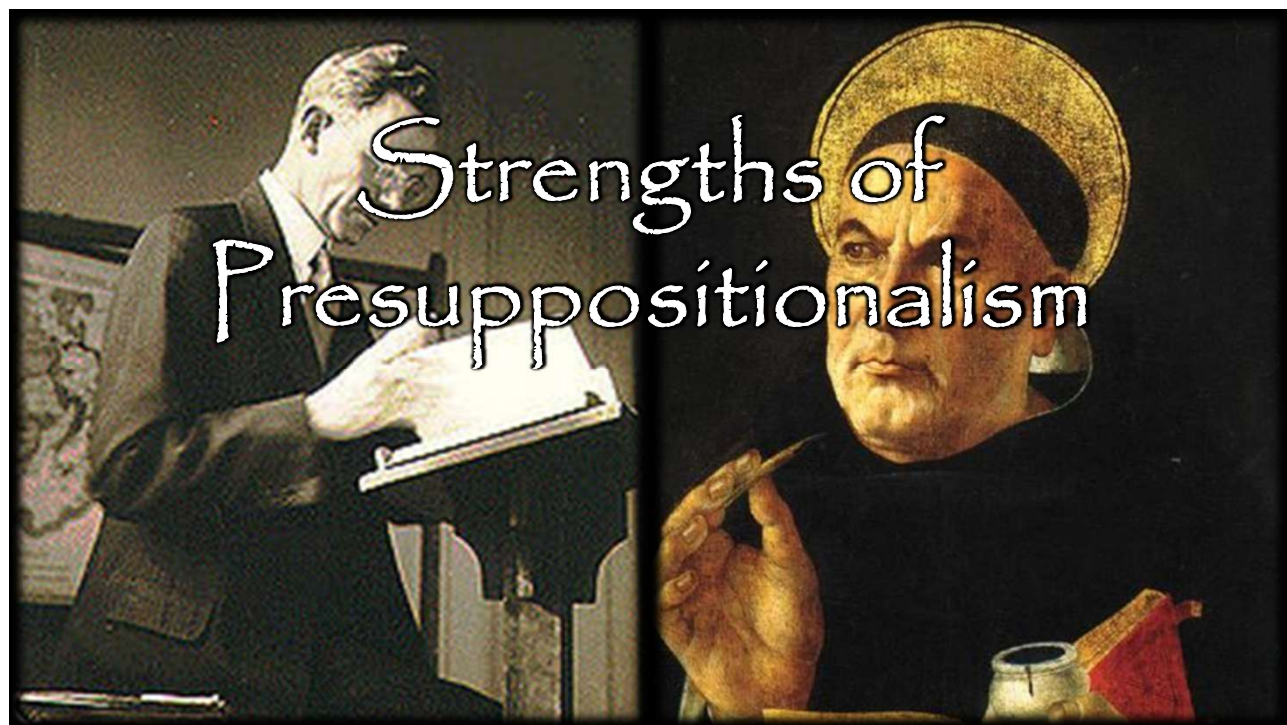
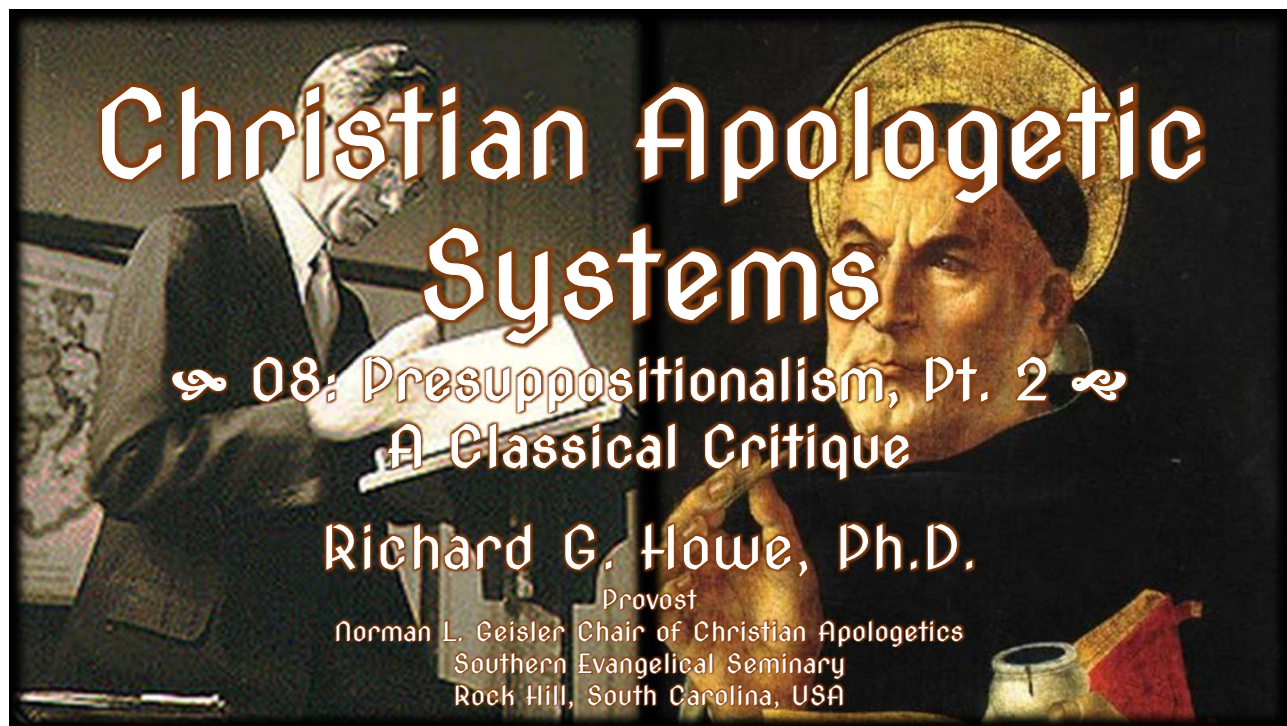
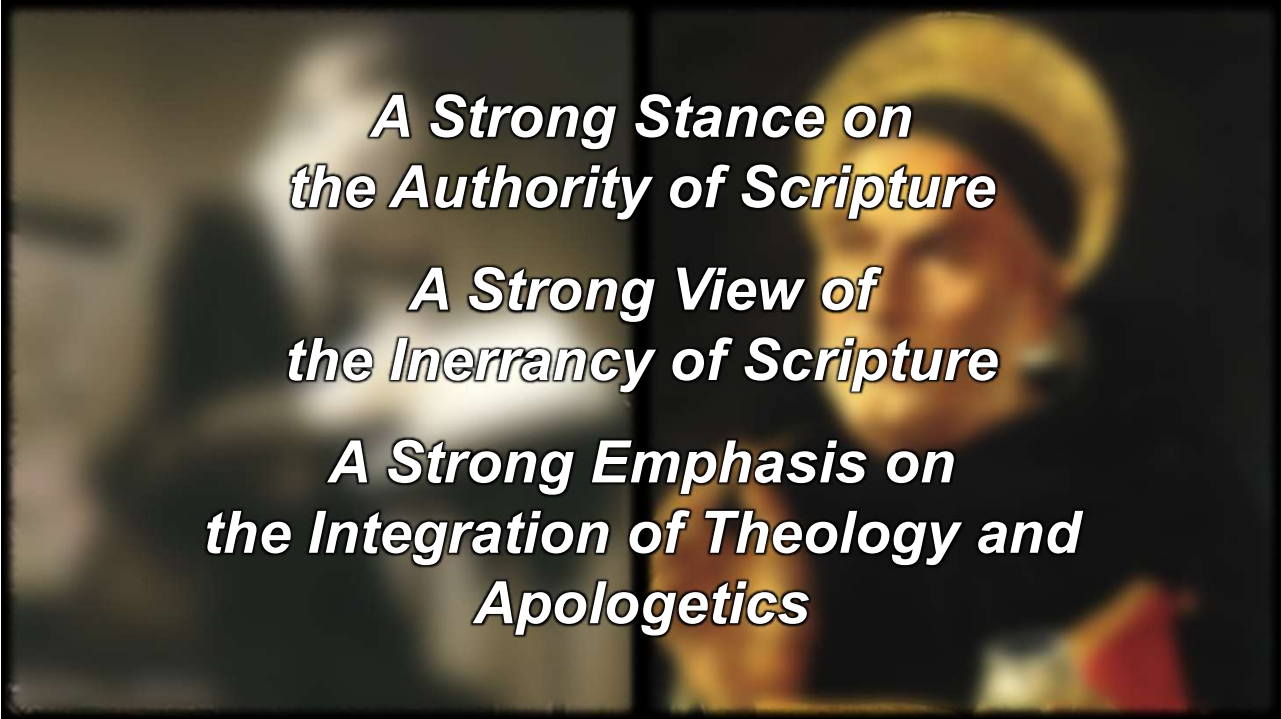






***A Strong Stance on
the Authority of Scripture***

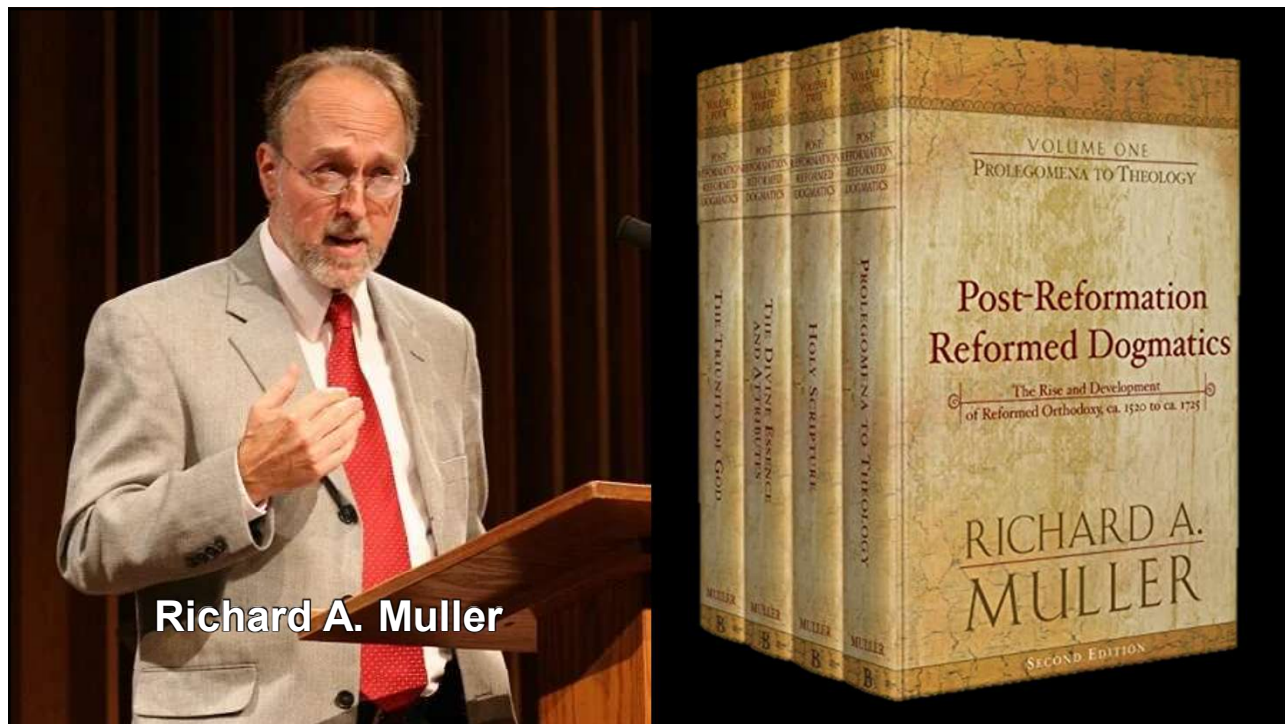
***A Strong View of
the Inerrancy of Scripture***

***A Strong Emphasis on
the Integration of Theology and
Apologetics***



***A Strong
Emphasis on
the Integration of
Theology and
Apologetics***

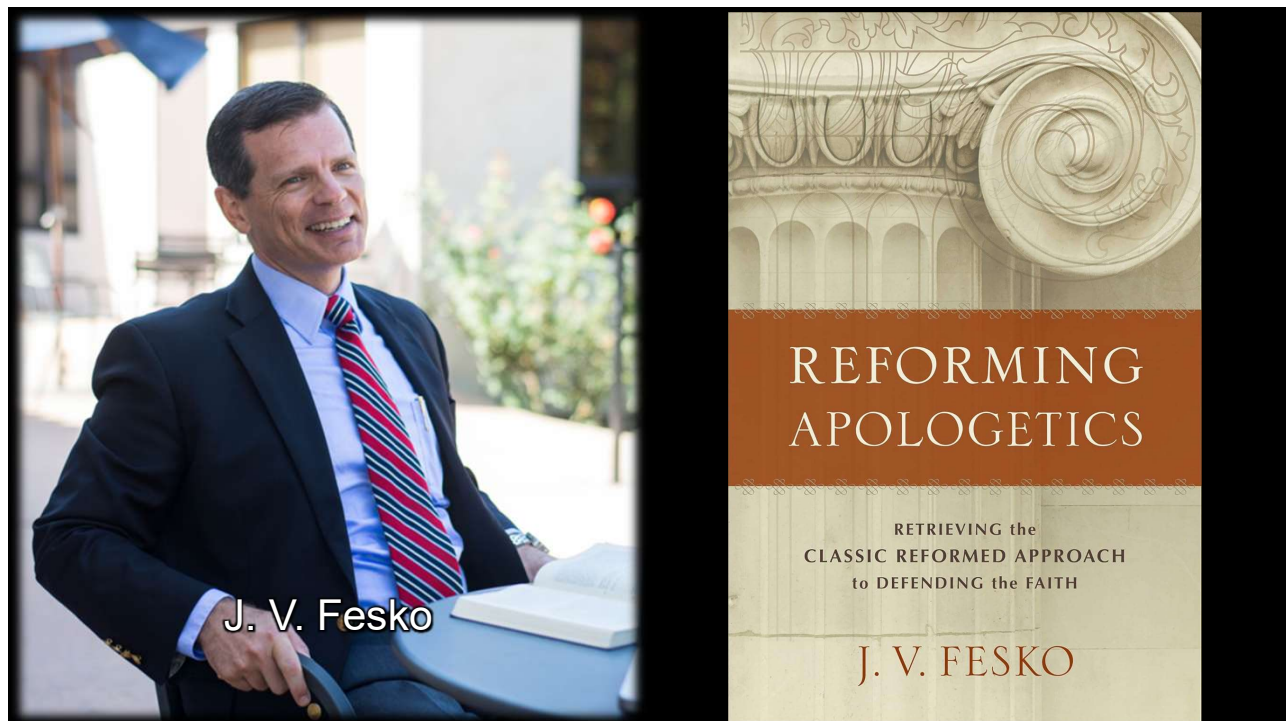
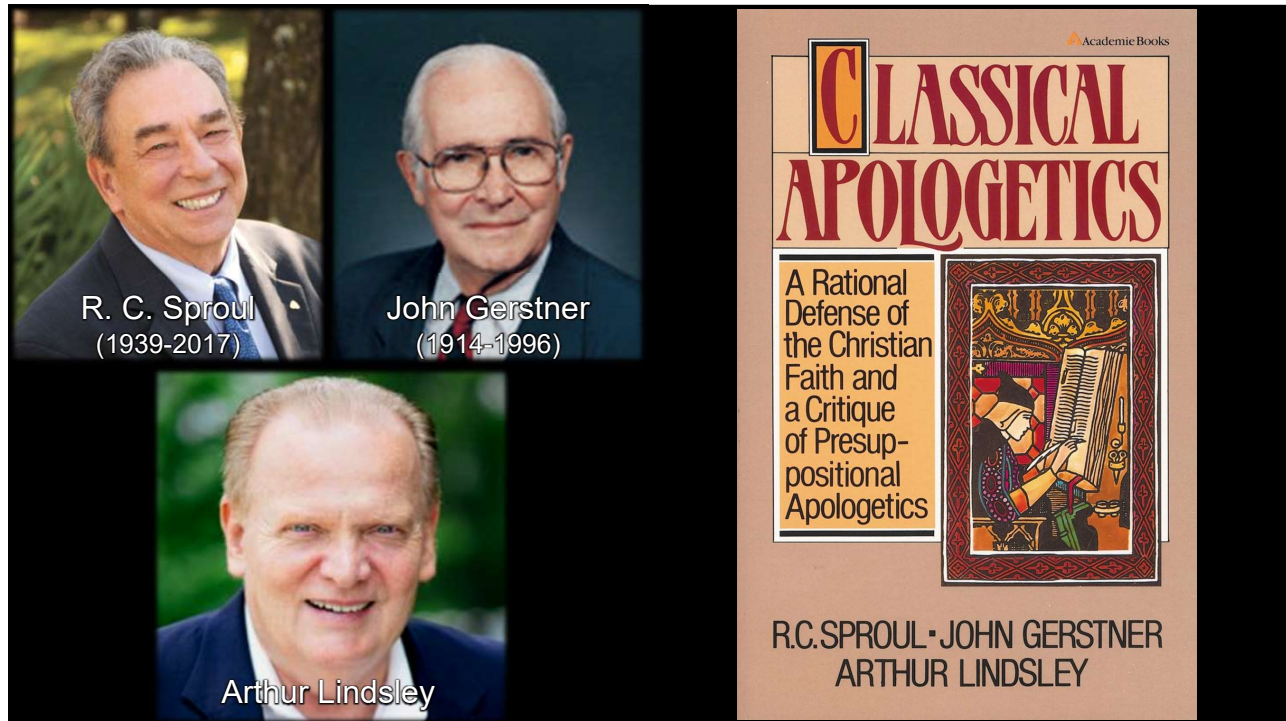
The role the
Presuppositionalist's
Reformed Theology (i.e.,
**Calvinism, as they
understand it**) plays in
formulating and
defending their
Presuppositional
Apologetics cannot be
overemphasized.

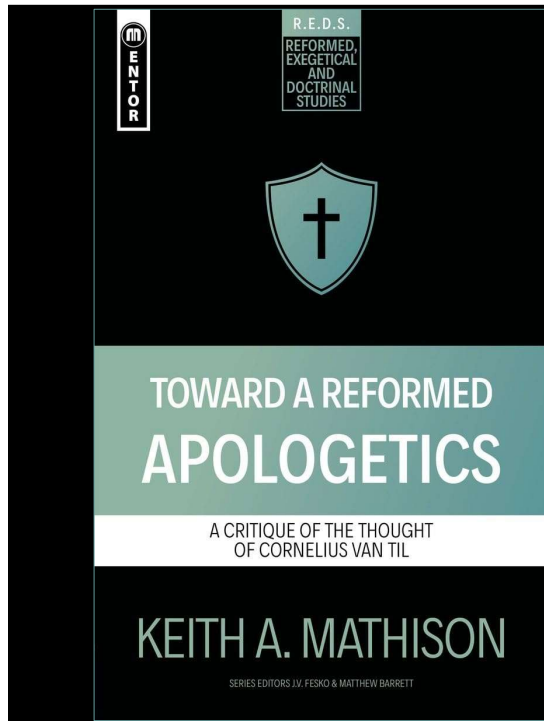


Richard A. Muller

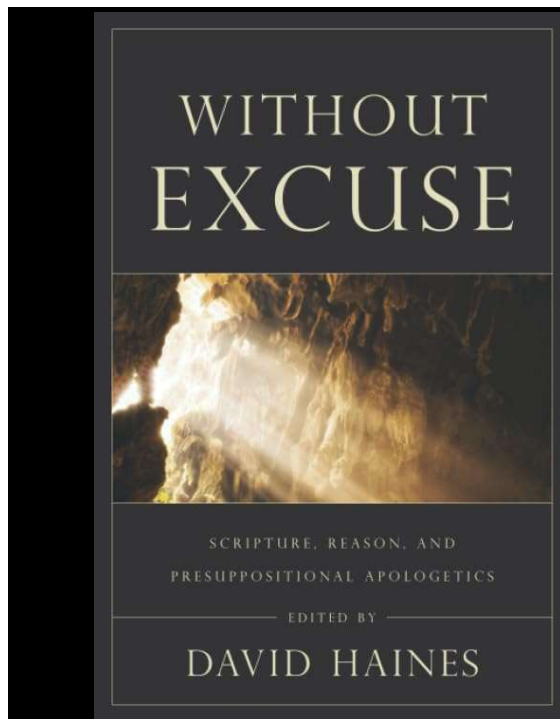
***A Strong
Emphasis on
the Integration of
Theology and
Apologetics***

In light of this, it is telling that some of the biggest detractors of Presuppositionalism today are also in the Reformed Theology camp.





Keith A. Mathison



David Haines

Travis James Campbell (PhD, Westminster Theological Seminary)

Winfried Corduan (PhD, Rice University)

John DePoe (PhD, University of Iowa)

John R. Gilhooly (PhD, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary)

Nathan Greeley (PhD, Claremont Graduate University)

David Haines (PhD, Université Laval)

Kurt Jaros (PhD in progress, University of Aberdeen)

M. Dan Kemp (PhD in progress, Baylor University)

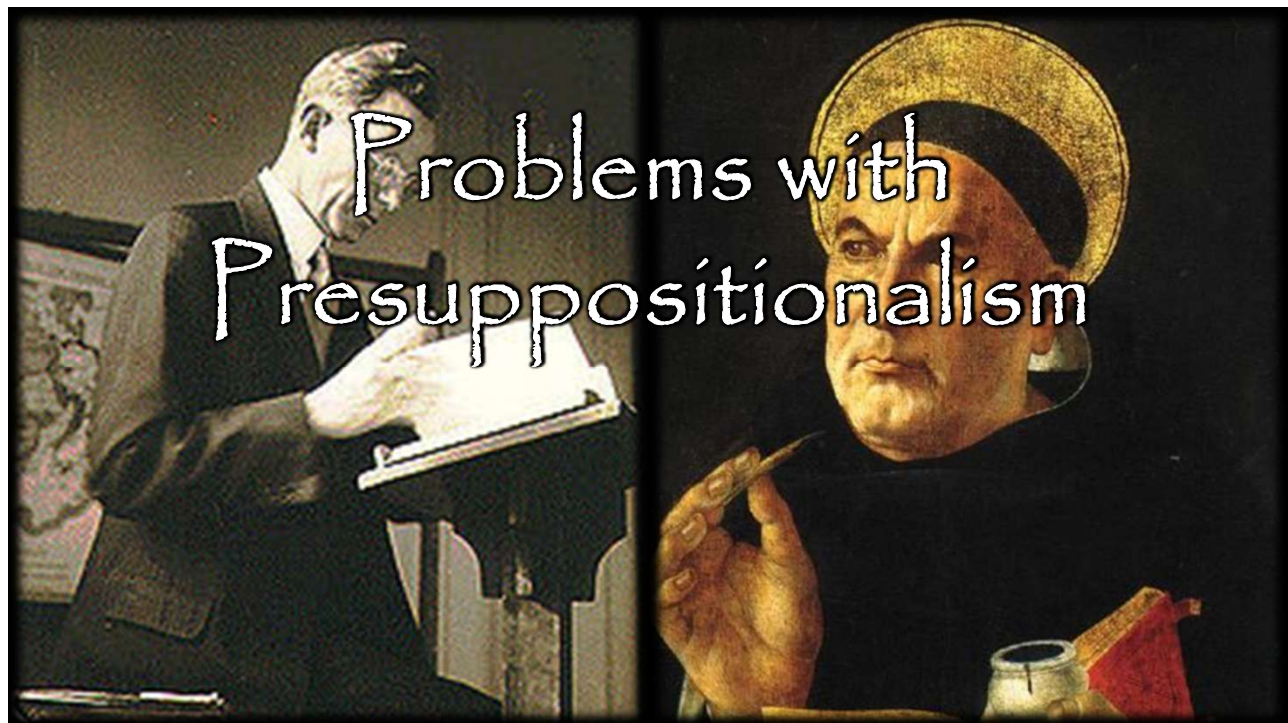
Bernard James Mauser (PhD, Marquette University)

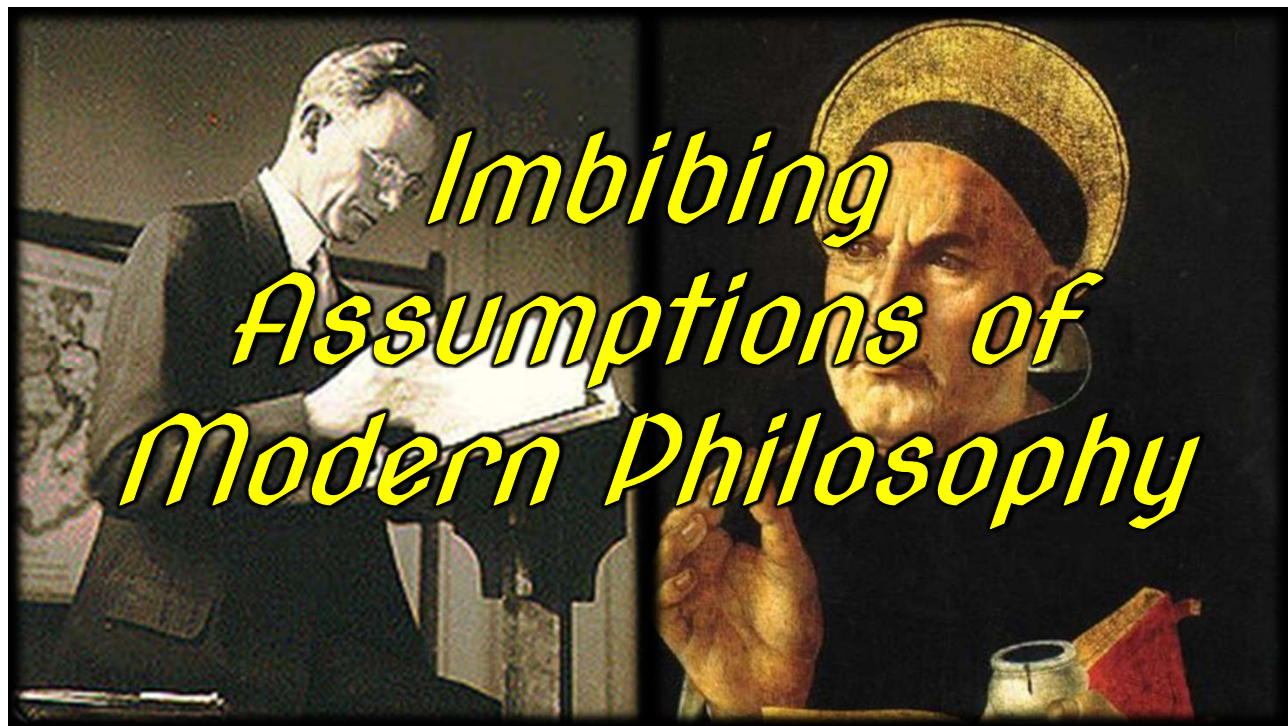
Joseph Minich (PhD, The University of Texas at Dallas)

Andrew Payne (PhD in progress, Southern Evangelical Seminary)

Thomas Schultz (PhD ABD, Saint Louis University)

Manfred Svensson (PhD, University of Munich)



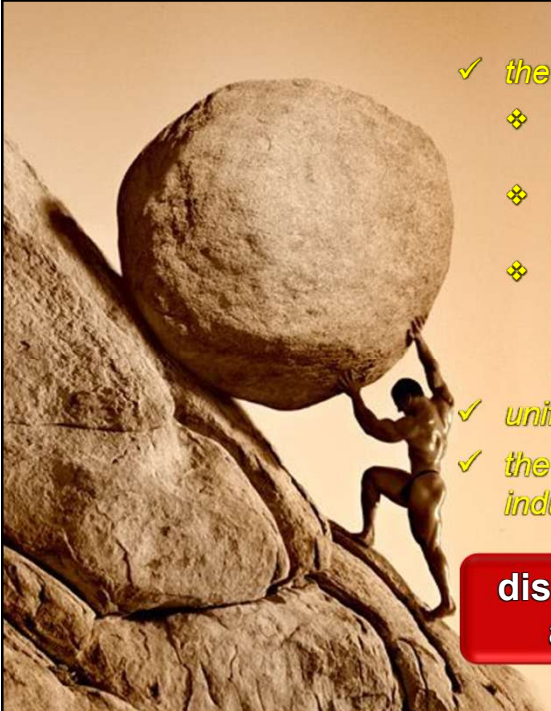


Much of modern philosophy frames human knowing along the categories of:

- ❖ "qualities" or "properties" (Locke), or
- ❖ "ideas" and "perceiving" (Berkeley), or
- ❖ "sensations" or "phenomena" (Hume).

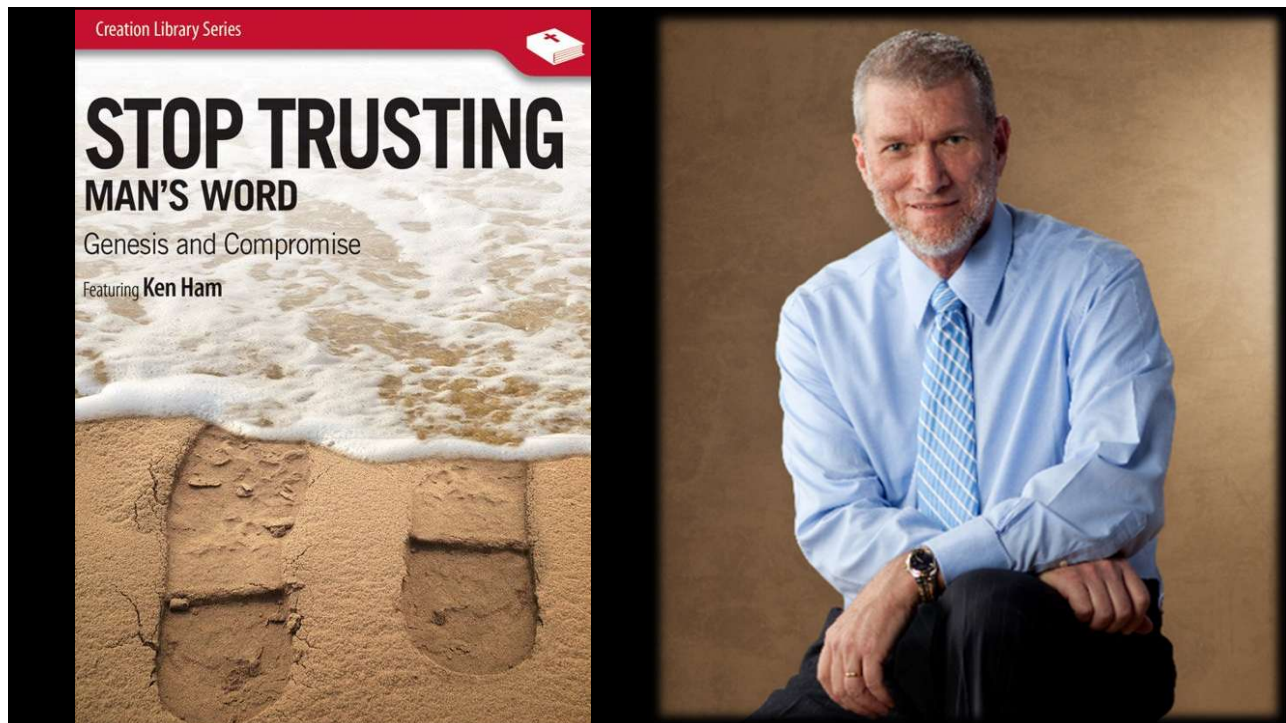
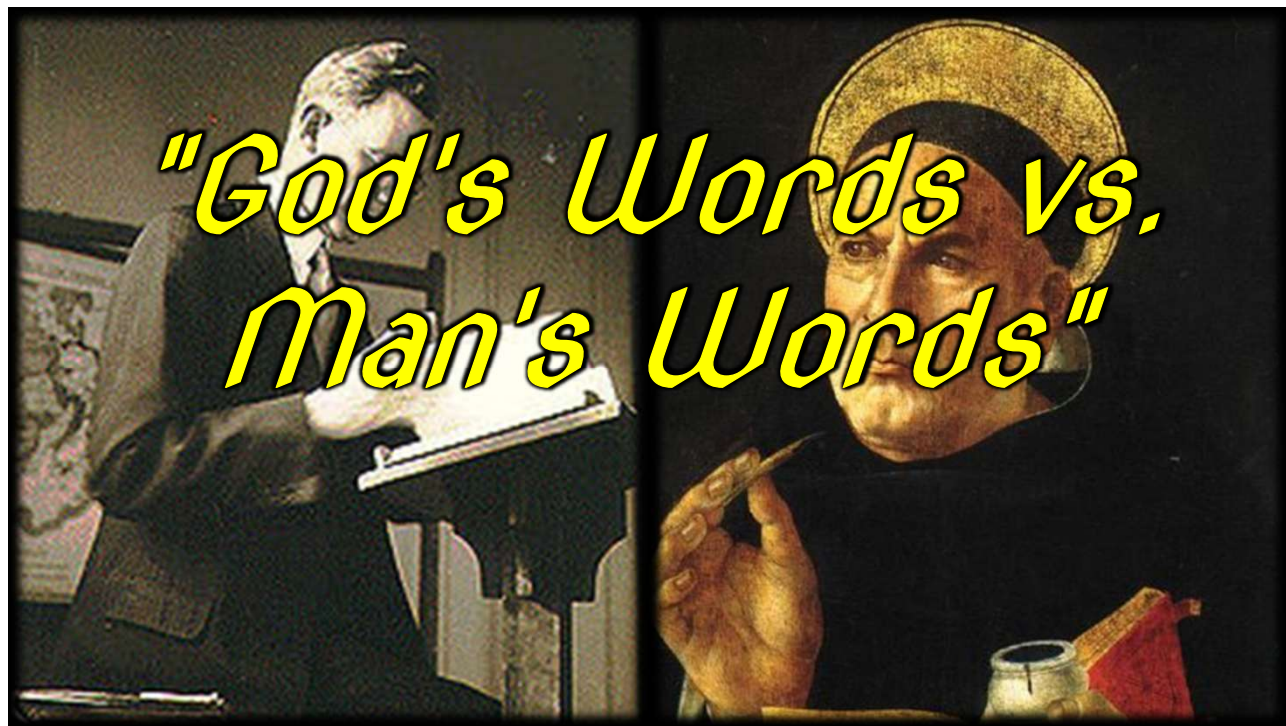
Presuppositionalists offer their apologetic system as the only solution to various philosophical problems.

By offering their Presuppositionalism as the "answer" to these problems, they show their unwitting commitment to the assumptions of the very philosophies that created the problems in the first place.



- ✓ *the Matrix problem*
 - ❖ *how we can know our senses are reliable*
 - ❖ *the egocentric predicament*
 - ❖ *the problem of the correspondence of thoughts to external reality*
- ✓ *uniformity of nature*
- ✓ *the problem of induction*
- ✓ *Hume's skepticism of our knowledge of causality*
- ✓ *the fact/value dichotomy*
- ✓ *is/ought fallacy*
- ✓ *the specter of brute facts*
- ✓ *knowledge as justified, true, belief*
- ✓ *the problem of the one and the many*

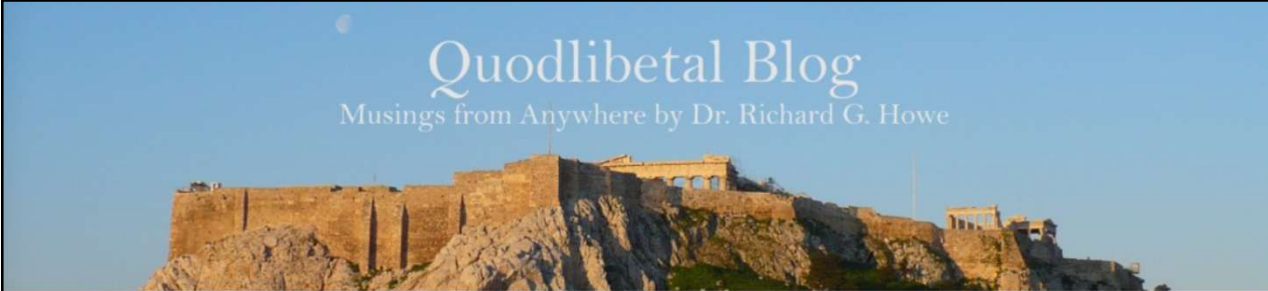
discussed in Plato and Aristotle





Quodlibetal Blog

Musings from Anywhere by Dr. Richard G. Howe



Home About

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It's Worse Than I Thought

by quodlibetalblog

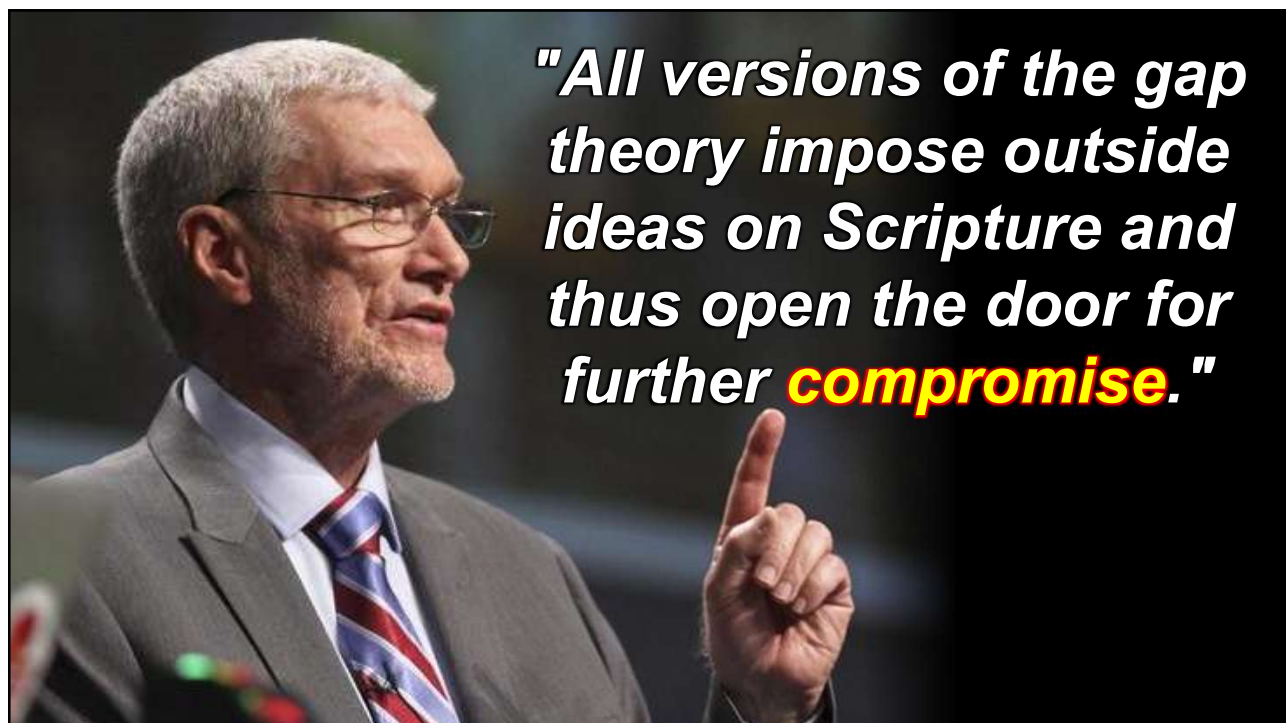
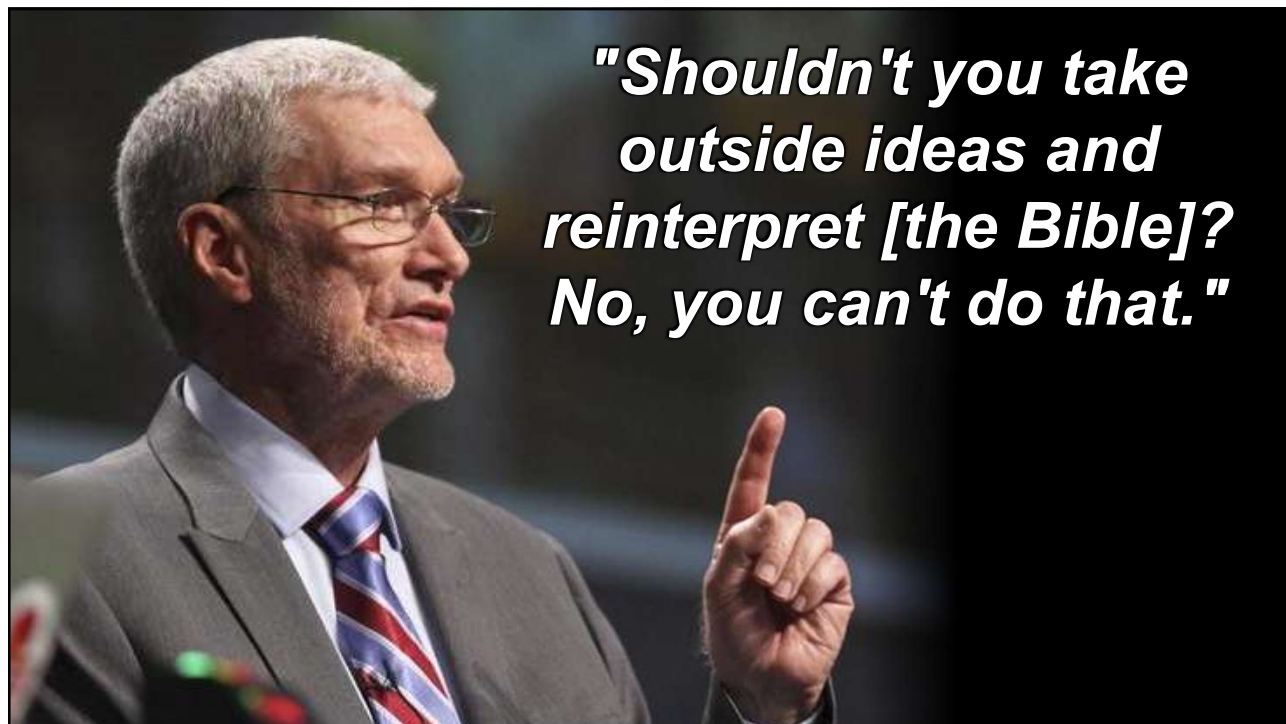
Over the past year or so, a colleague of mine has been telling me of his concerns about how Presuppositionalism (or some watered-down version thereof) infuses the thinking of certain popular Young-Earth Creationists if not Young-Earth Creationism in general. Though he himself is an Old-Earth creationist, he came to me with his concerns because, being a Classical Apologist, he knows that I am both a classical apologist and a Young-Earth Creationist. Apparently we are a small group.

Pages

- About

Categories

- Archived
- Uncategorized





Defended by a Bible Teacher

It is good to see Bible teachers who defend Answers in Genesis against those in the church who **compromise God's Holy Word** with man's fallible religion of millions of years. A Bible teacher from the Grace To You ministry in California recently wrote a blog stating the following:

“During the course of my various exchanges with a classic apologist commenter, he directed me to an article written last July by **Dr. Richard Howe**, a professor at Southern Evangelical Seminary.

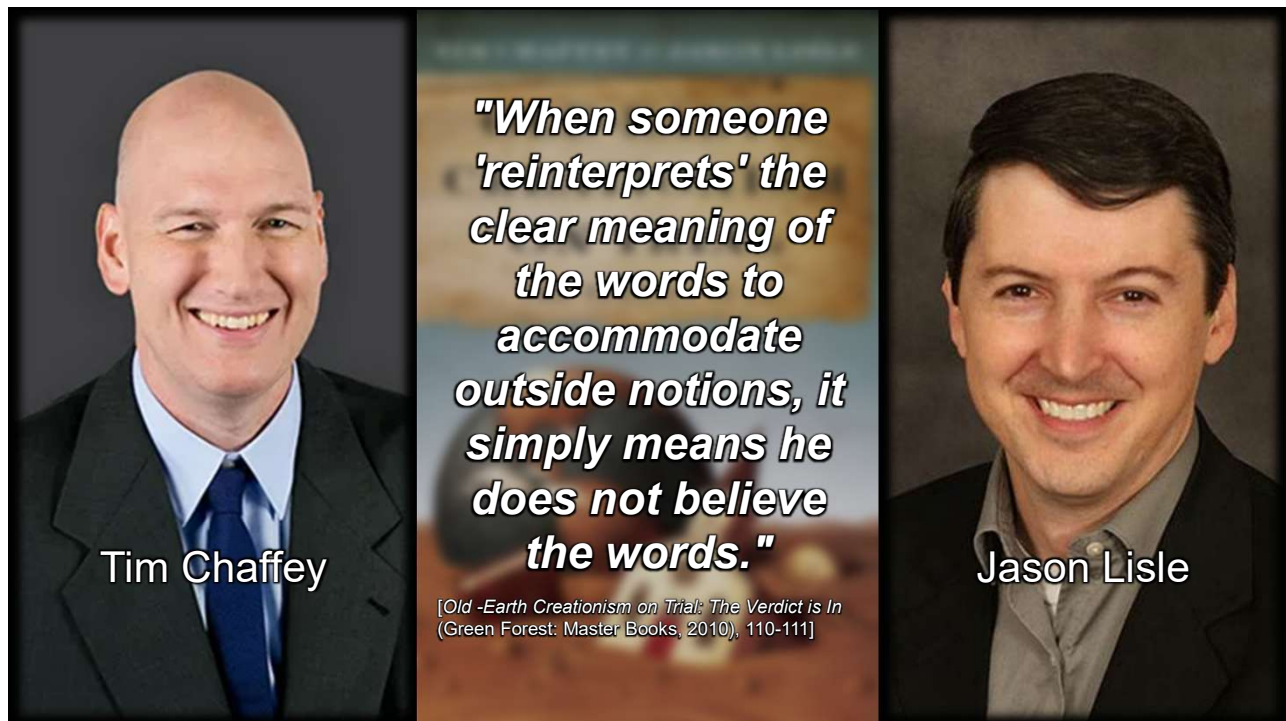
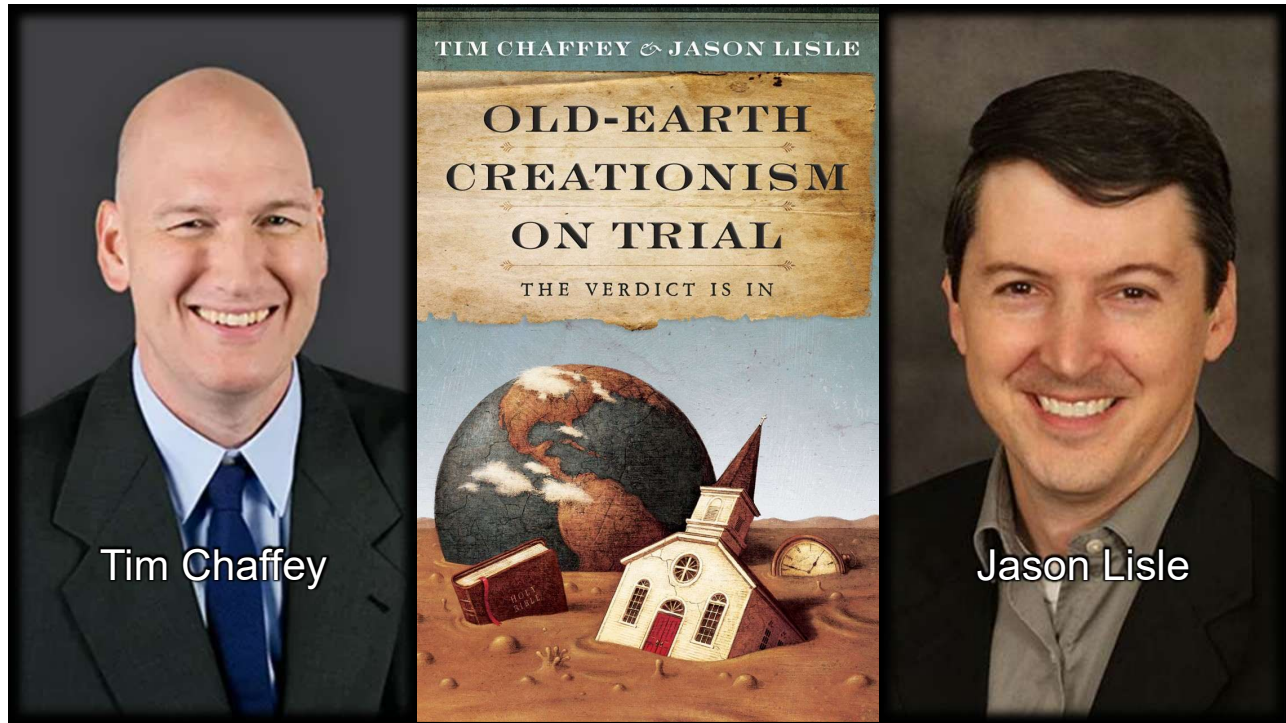
In that article Dr. Howe expresses his concern with the apologetic enterprise of Ken Ham in defending the Genesis narrative and ultimately the historic, Christian faith. He claims Ham's water-downed presuppositionalism utilized to make his presentations is bankrupt, fraught with problems, and is self-refuting. ...

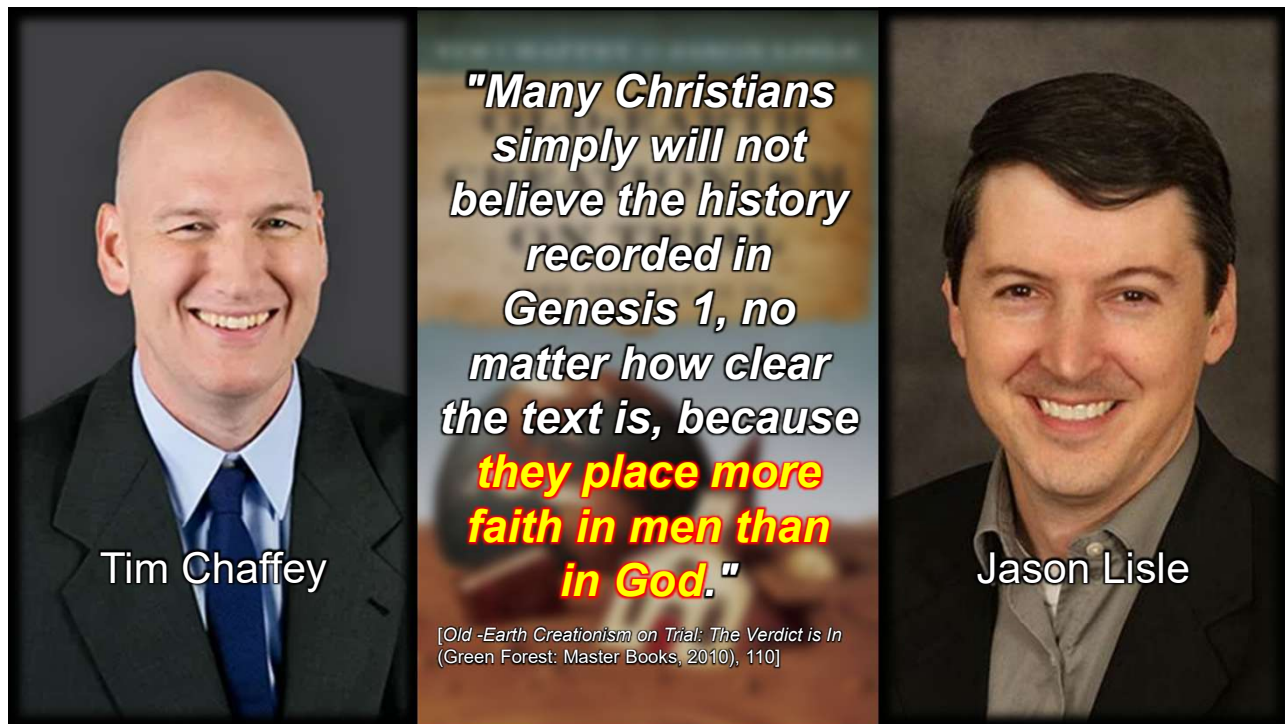
His critique, however, provides for us some practical insight into how woefully inconsistent and compromised classic apologists can be. I'll work my way through his main arguments and offer a rebuttal.

It is encouraging to see solid Bible teachers coming to the defense of those who stand on the authority of God's Word, while around us is a sea of compromise in the church today. I encourage you to read the rest of his **well-written blog post**.

Thanks for stopping by and thanks for praying,

Ken

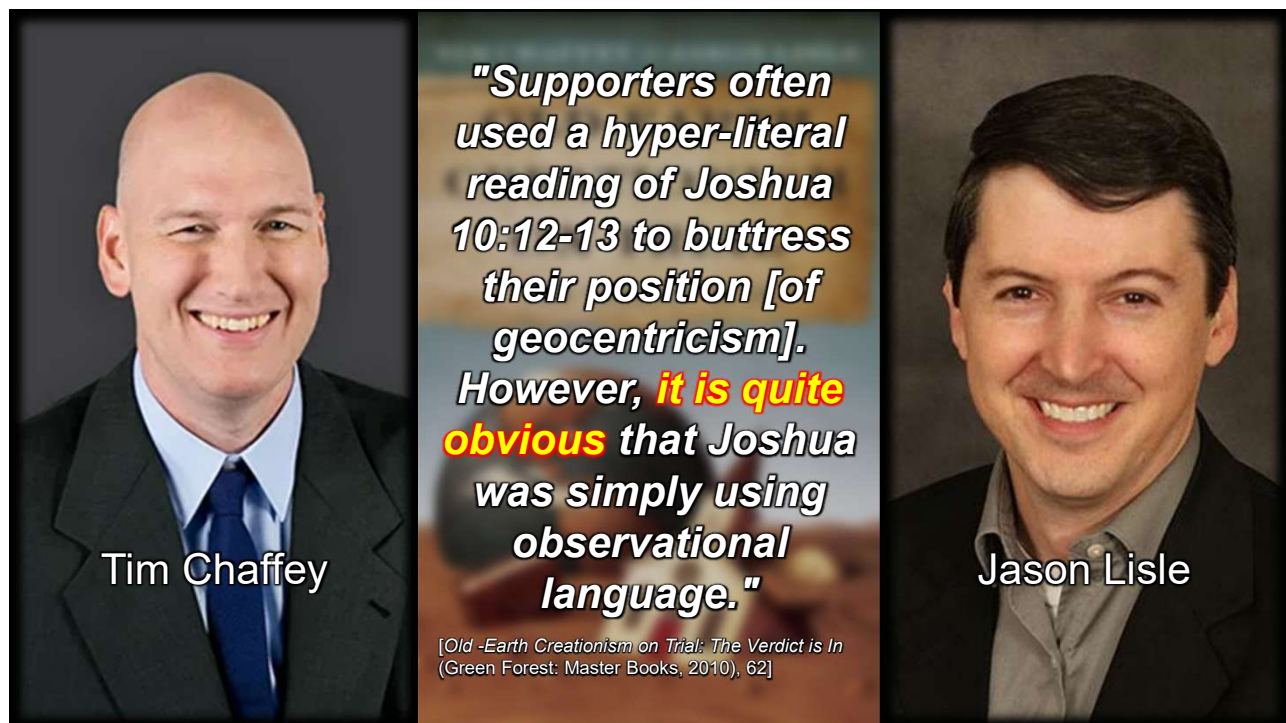
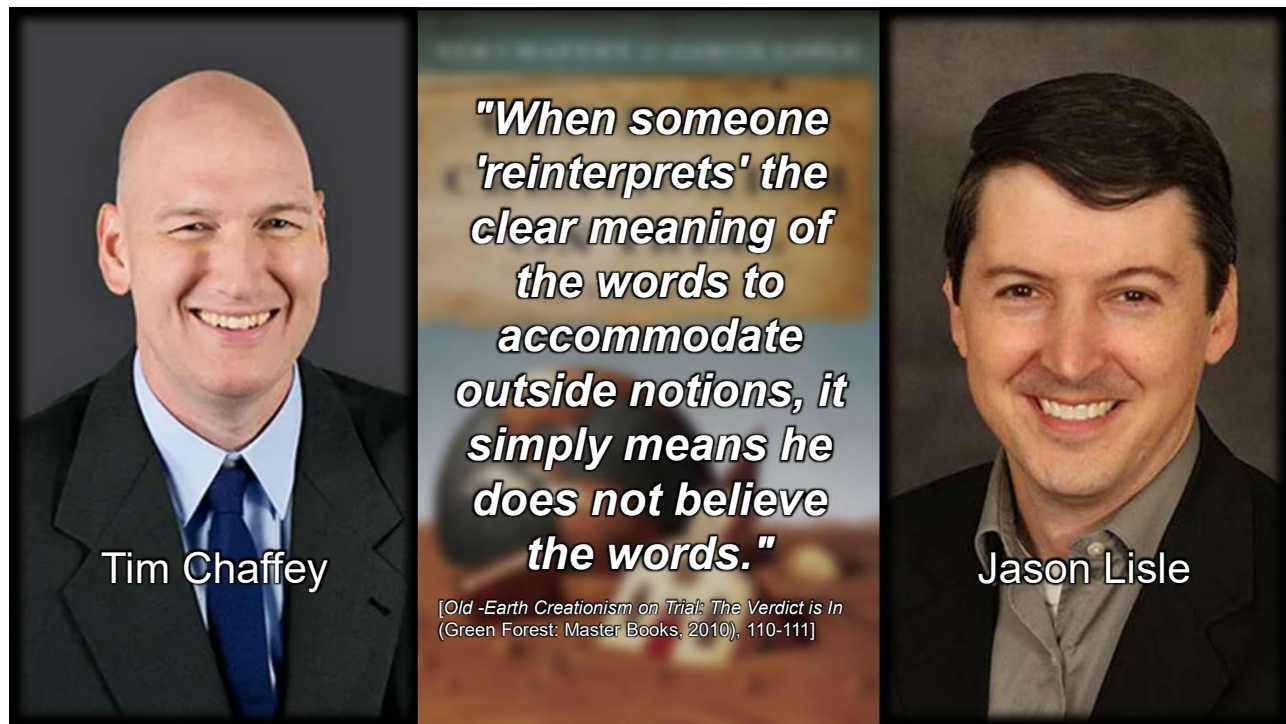






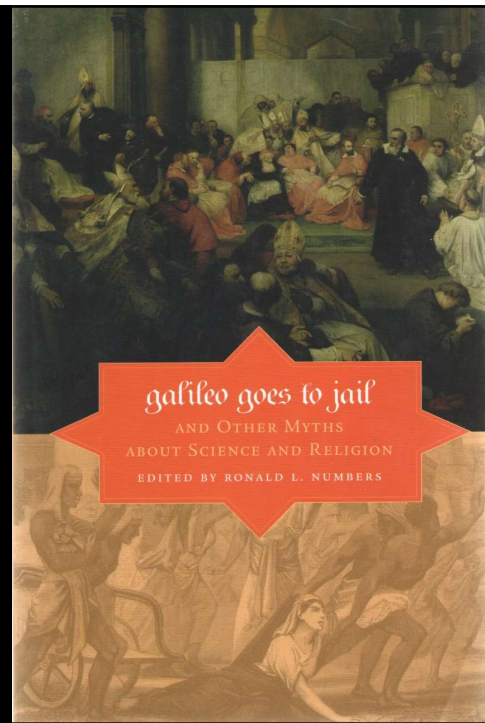
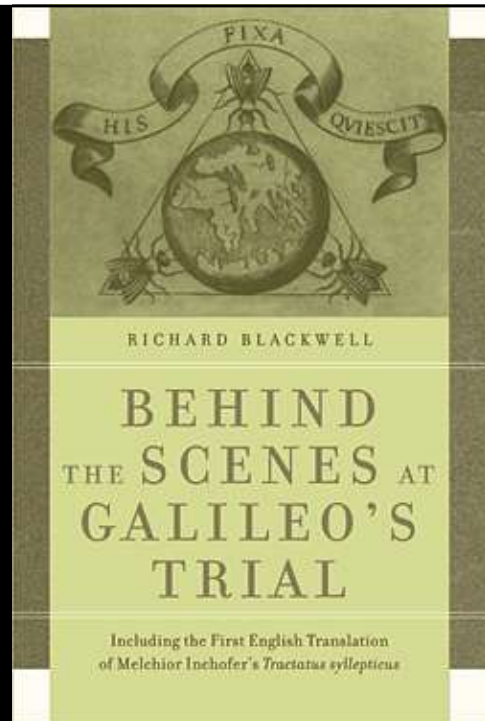
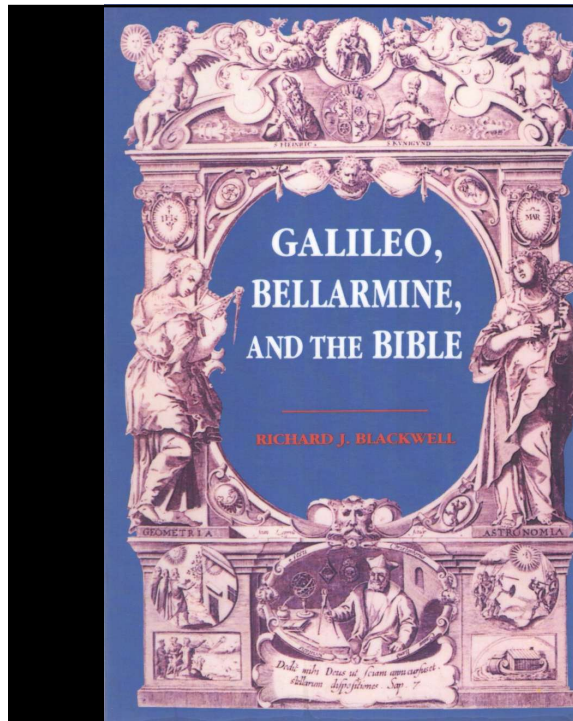
*"Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel: 'Sun, stand still over Gibeon; And Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.' **So the sun stood still**, and the moon stopped, till the people had revenge upon their enemies."*

Joshua 10:12-13 NKJV



 Tim Chaffey	"When someone 'reinterprets' the clear meaning of the words to accommodate outside notions, it simply means he does not believe the words." [Old Earth Creationists on Trial: The Verdict is In (Green Forest: Master Books, 2010), 110-111]	 Jason Lisle	<i>It is only "quite obvious" to us today precisely because of the development of the science since the 17th Century.</i>
 Tim Chaffey	"Supporters often used a hyper-literal reading of Joshua 10:12-13 to buttress their position [of geocentrism]. However, <i>it is quite obvious</i> that Joshua was simply using observational language." [Old Earth Creationists on Trial: The Verdict is In (Green Forest: Master Books, 2010), 62]	 Jason Lisle	<i>Thus, it is because of the science since the 17th Century that we "reinterpret" the "clear meaning of the words" "accommodate" the "outside notions".</i>

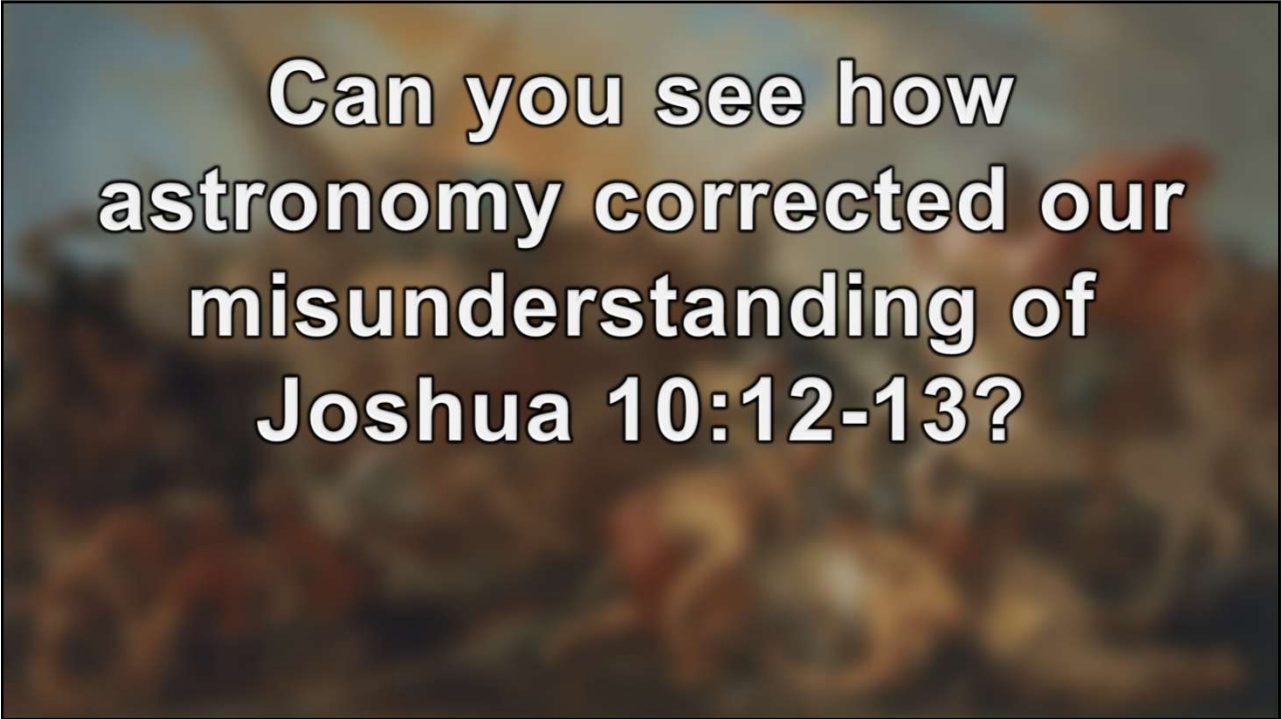




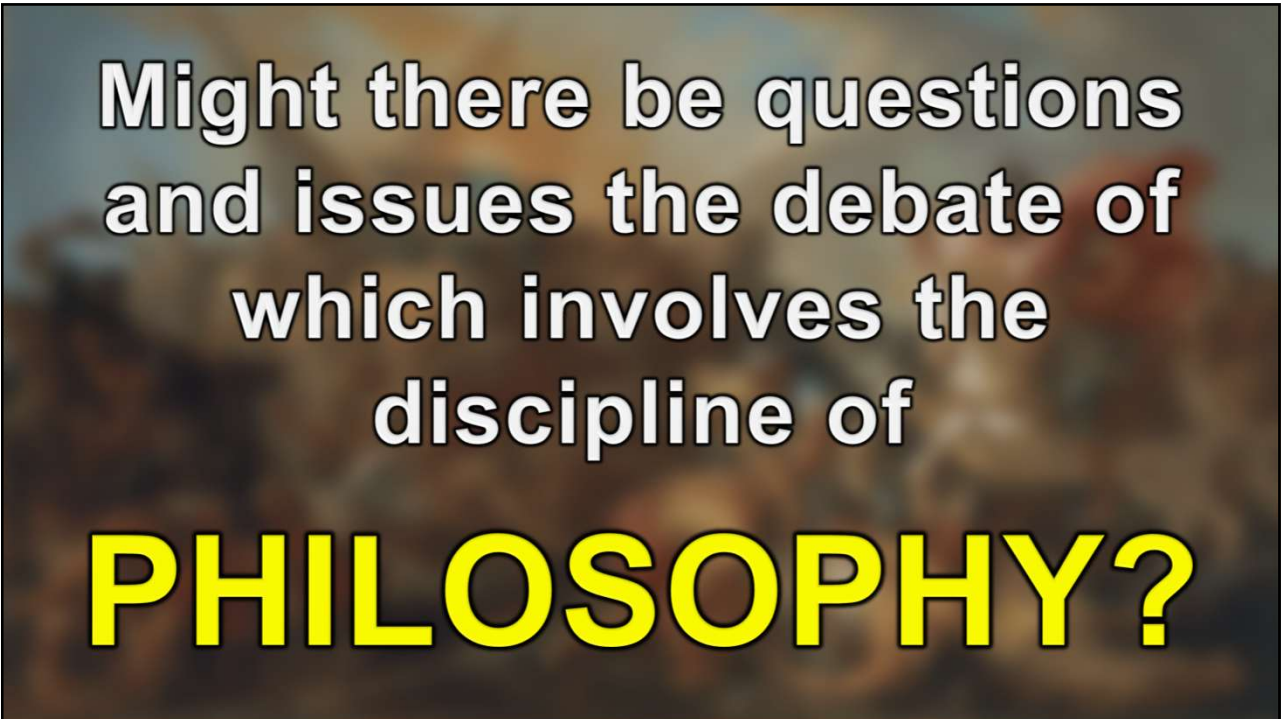
***Phenomenological
Language
a.k.a.,
Language of
Appearance***



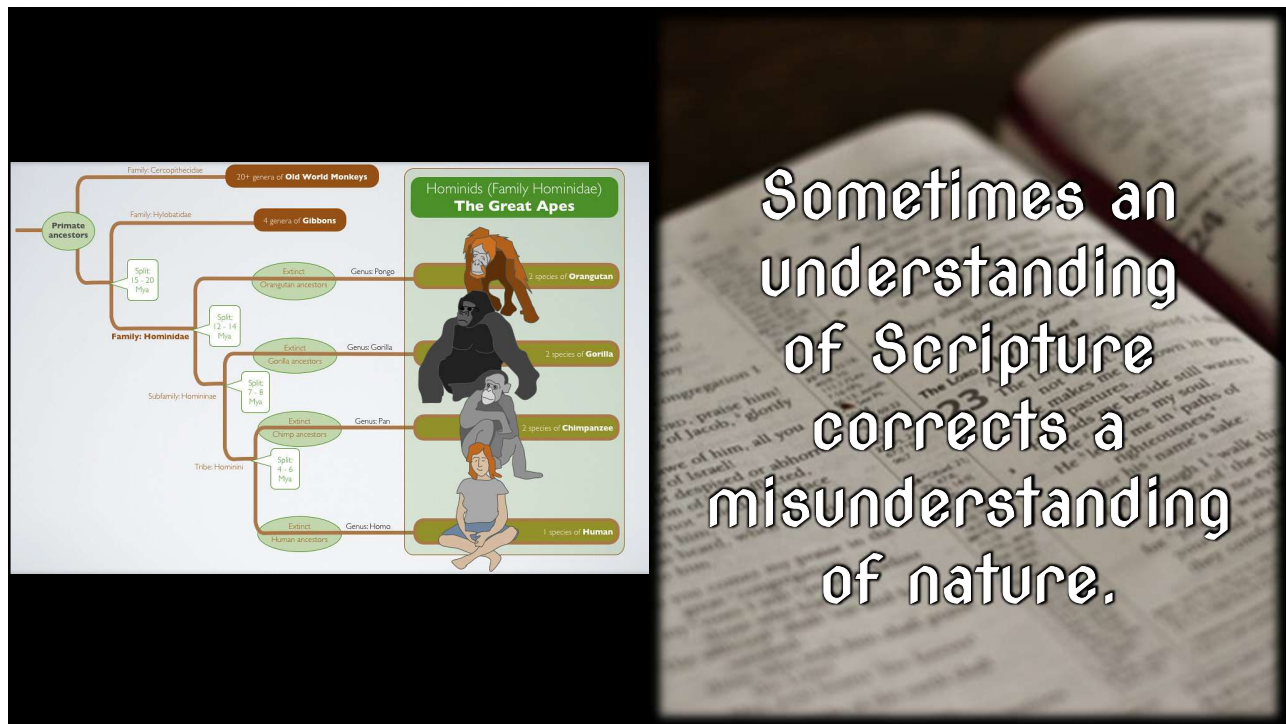
"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and **the moon into blood**, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD." Joel 2:31



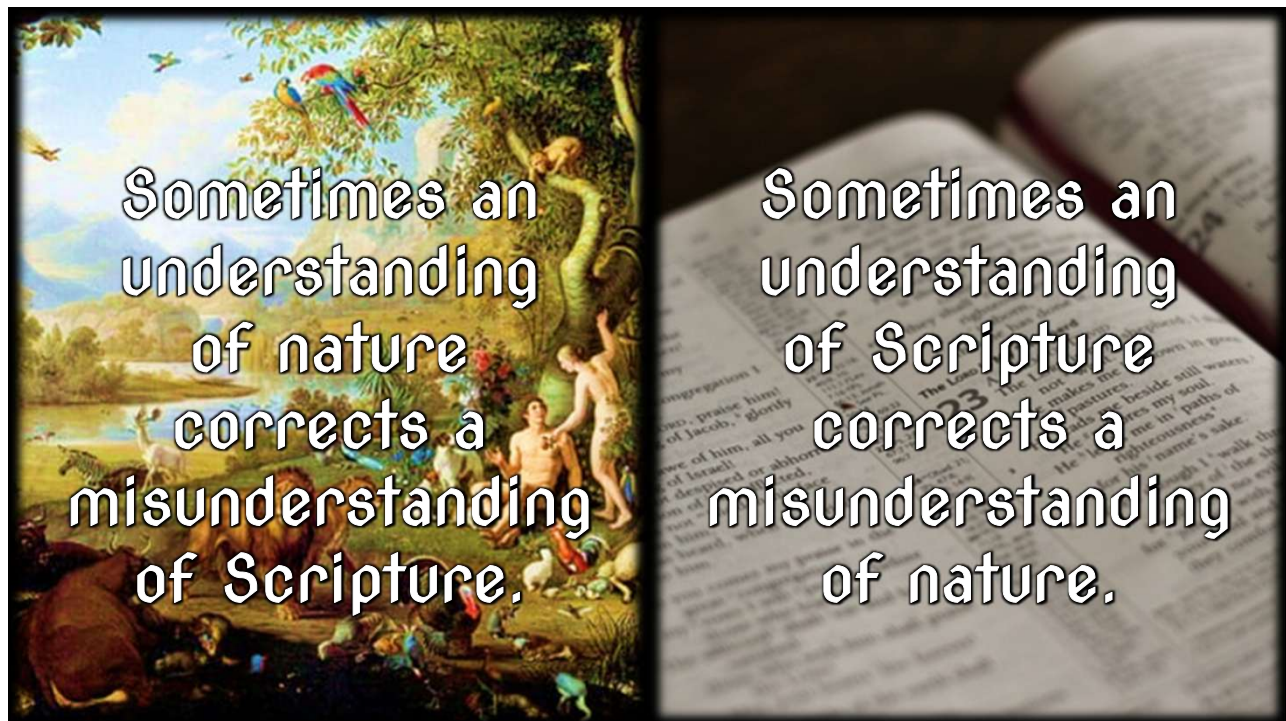
Can you see how
astronomy corrected our
misunderstanding of
Joshua 10:12-13?

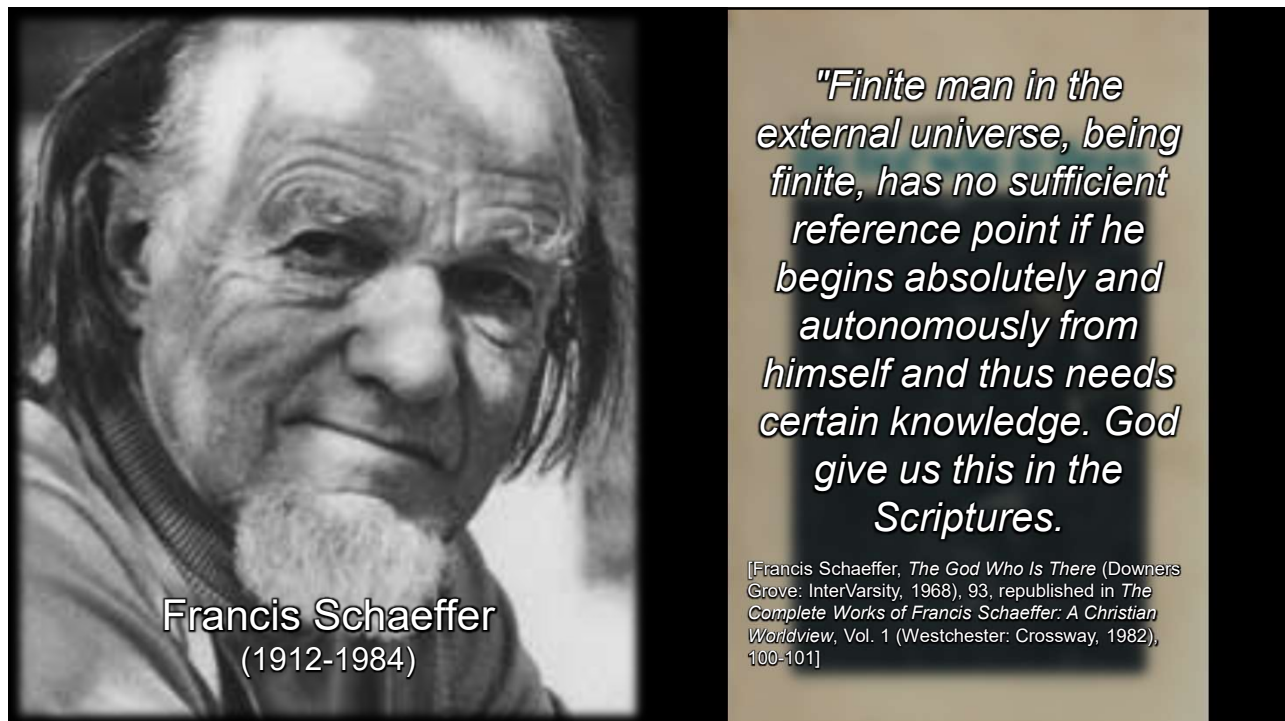
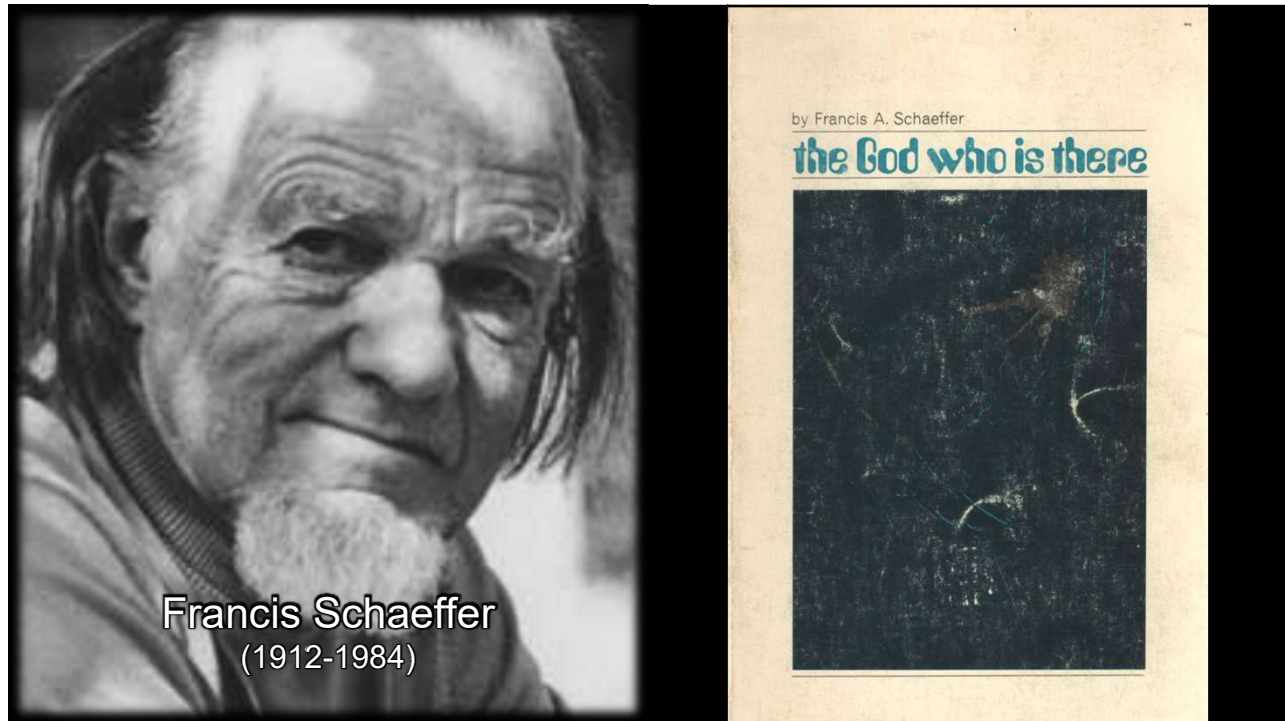


Might there be questions
and issues the debate of
which involves the
discipline of
PHILOSOPHY?



Sometimes an understanding of Scripture corrects a misunderstanding of nature.





Schaeffer illicitly assumes that human finitude precludes certain knowledge.

*"Finite man in the external universe, being finite, has no sufficient reference point if he begins absolutely and autonomously from himself and thus **needs certain knowledge**. God give us this in the Scriptures.*

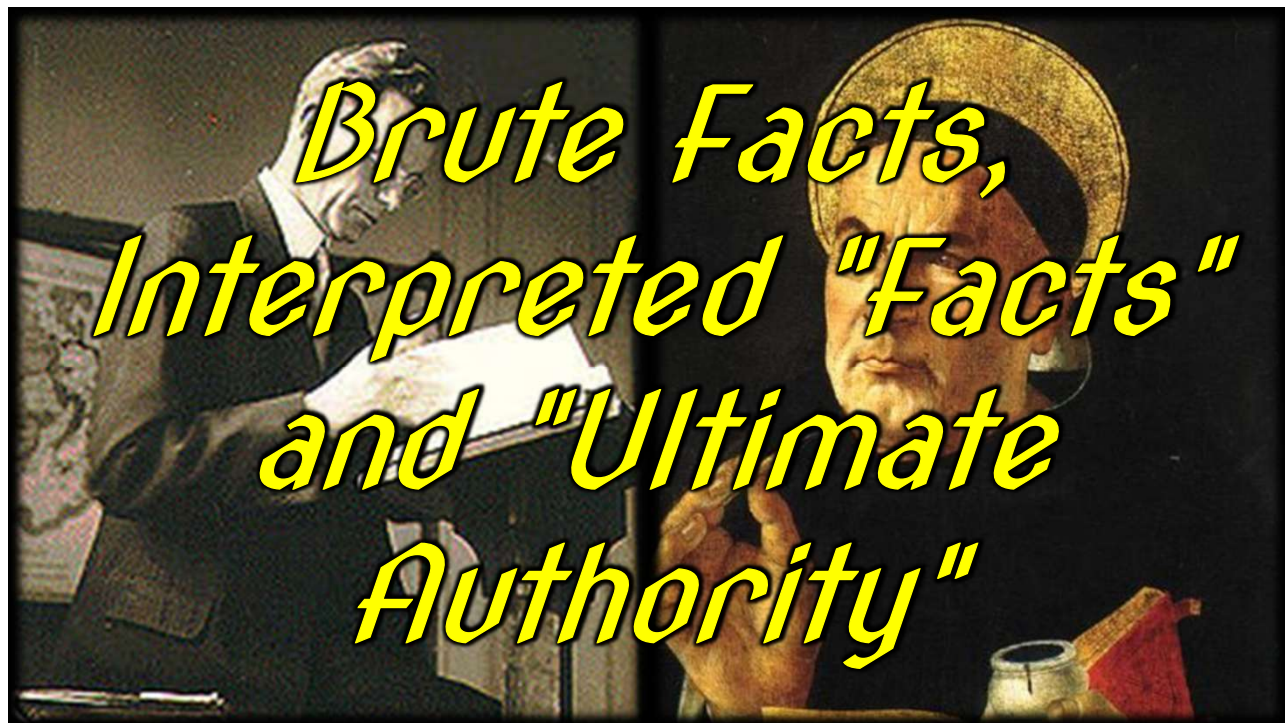
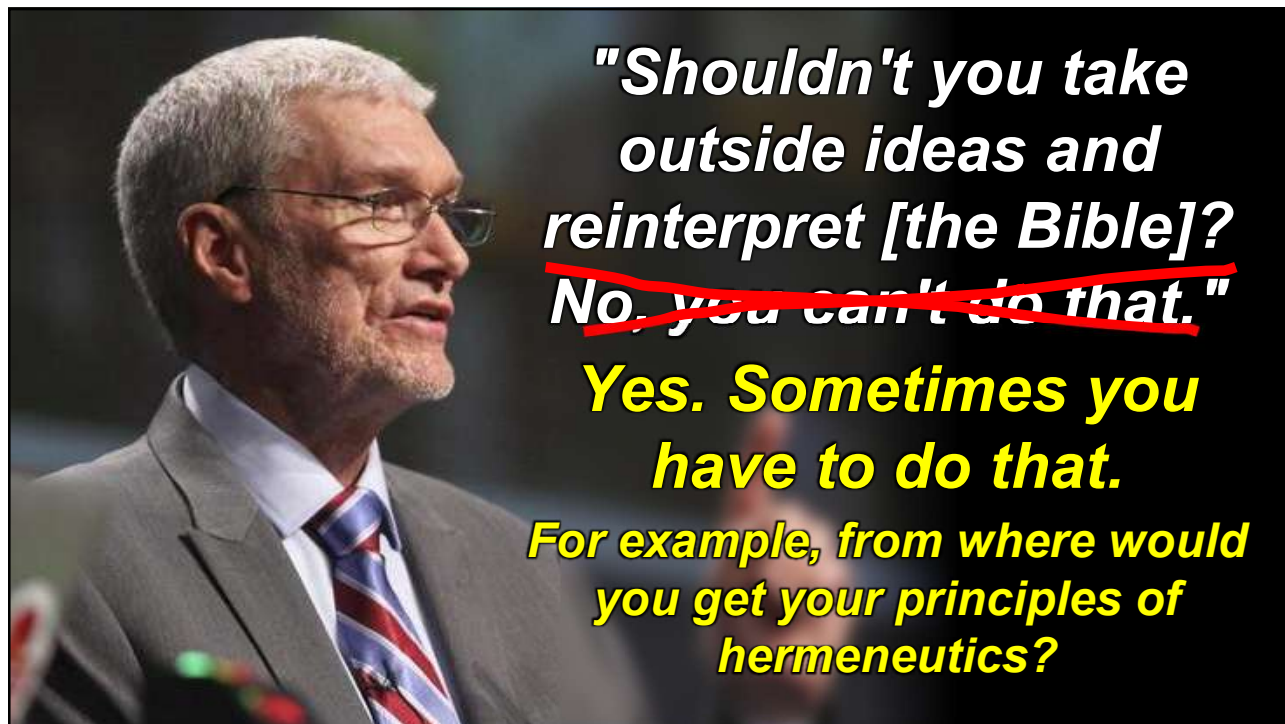
[Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1968), 93, republished in *The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview*, Vol. 1 (Westchester: Crossway, 1982), 100-101]

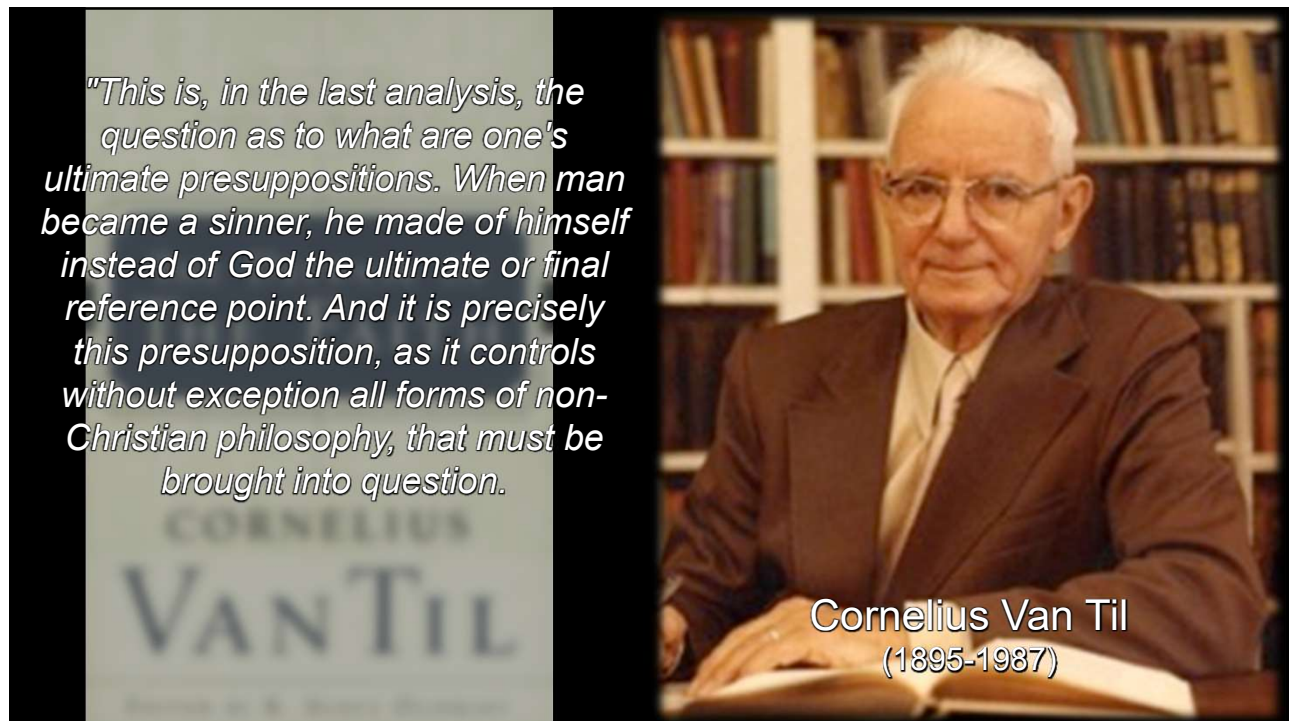
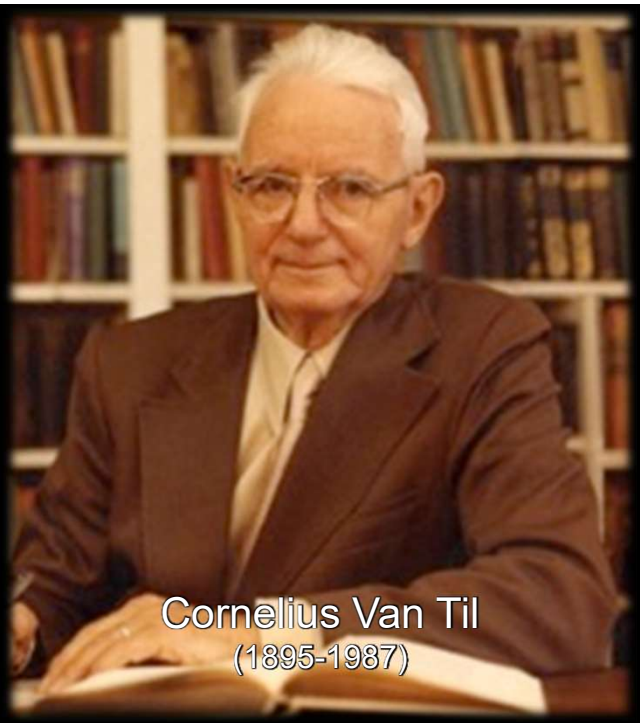
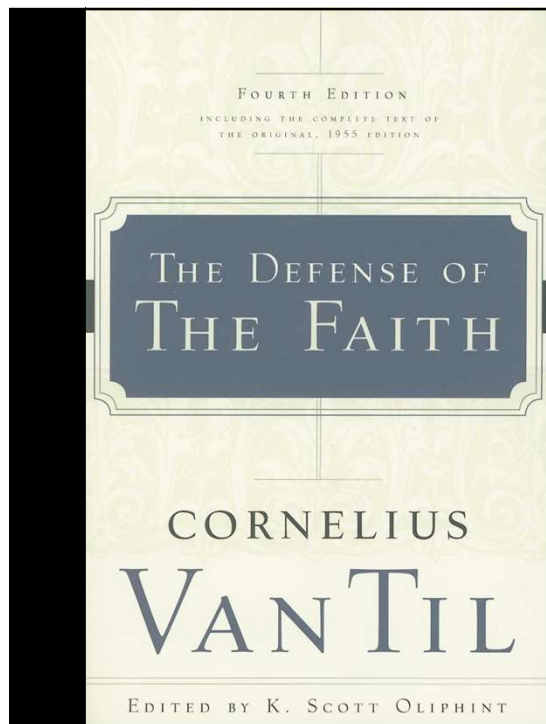
Schaeffer commits the fallacy of false dilemma between:

finite man beginning absolutely and autonomously from himself
or
the Scriptures.

*"Finite man in the external universe, being finite, has no sufficient reference point if he **begins absolutely and autonomously from himself** and thus needs certain knowledge. God give us this in **the Scriptures**.*

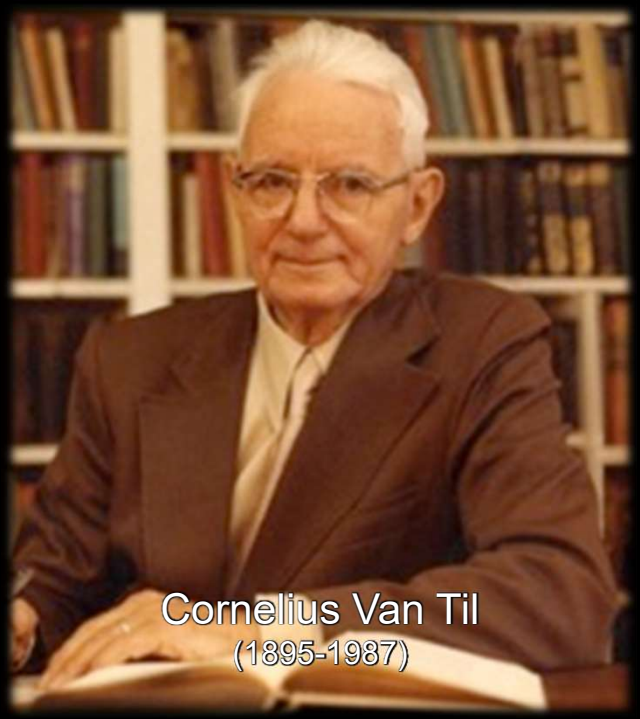
[Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1968), 93, republished in *The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview*, Vol. 1 (Westchester: Crossway, 1982), 100-101]





"If this presupposition is left unquestioned in any field, all the facts and arguments presented to the unbeliever will be made over by him according to his pattern. The sinner has cemented colored glasses to his eyes which he cannot remove. And all is yellow to the jaundiced eye. There can be no intelligible reasoning unless those who reason together understand what they mean by their words.

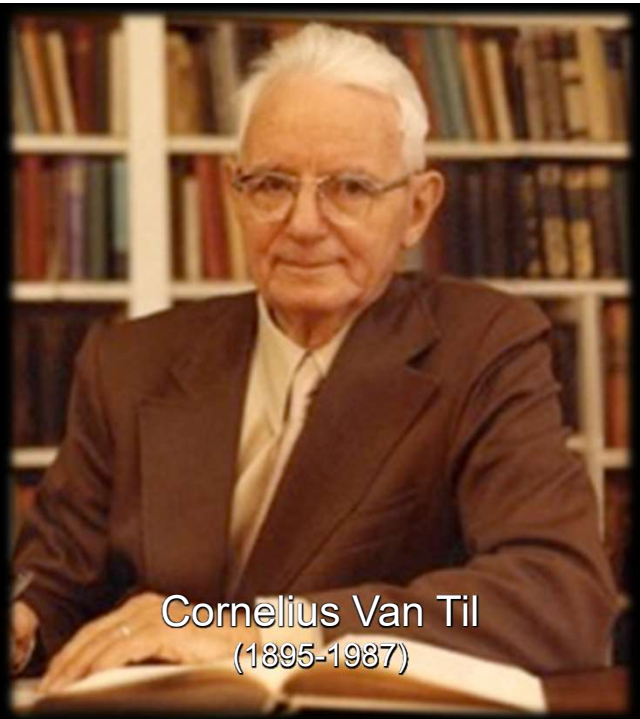
[Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, 4th ed., edited by K. Scott Oliphint (P&R Publishing, 2008), 101]



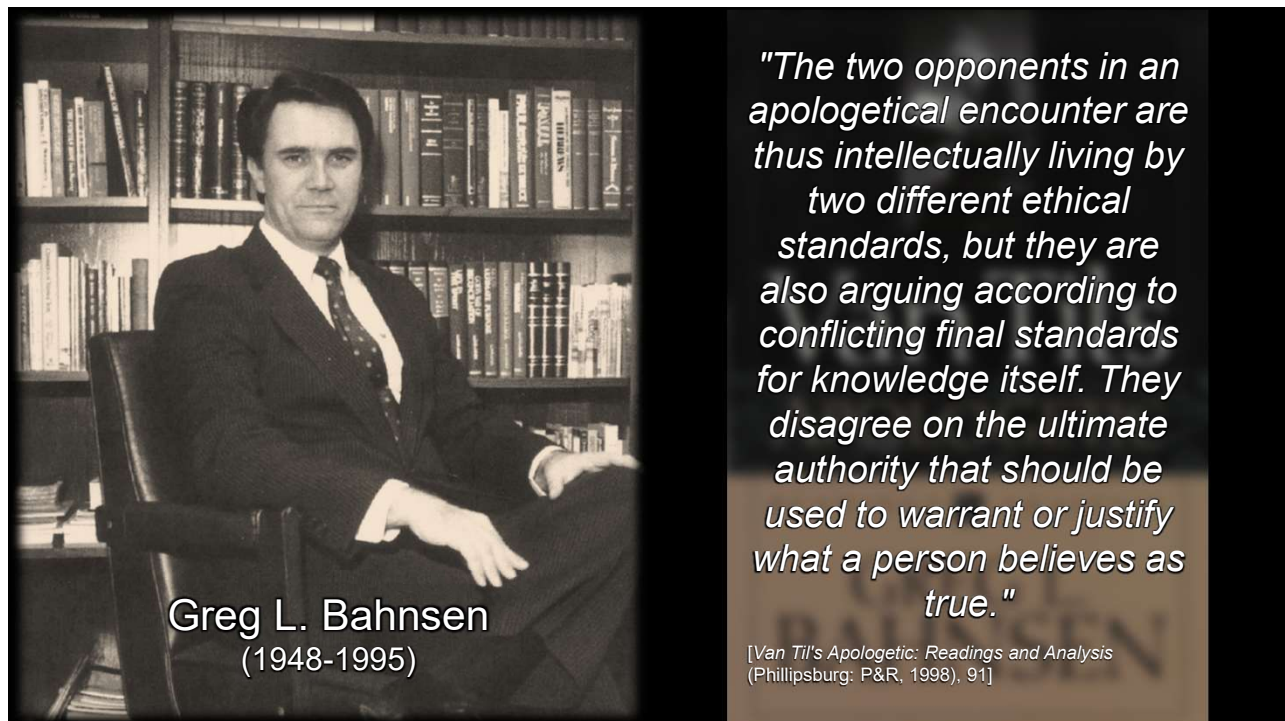
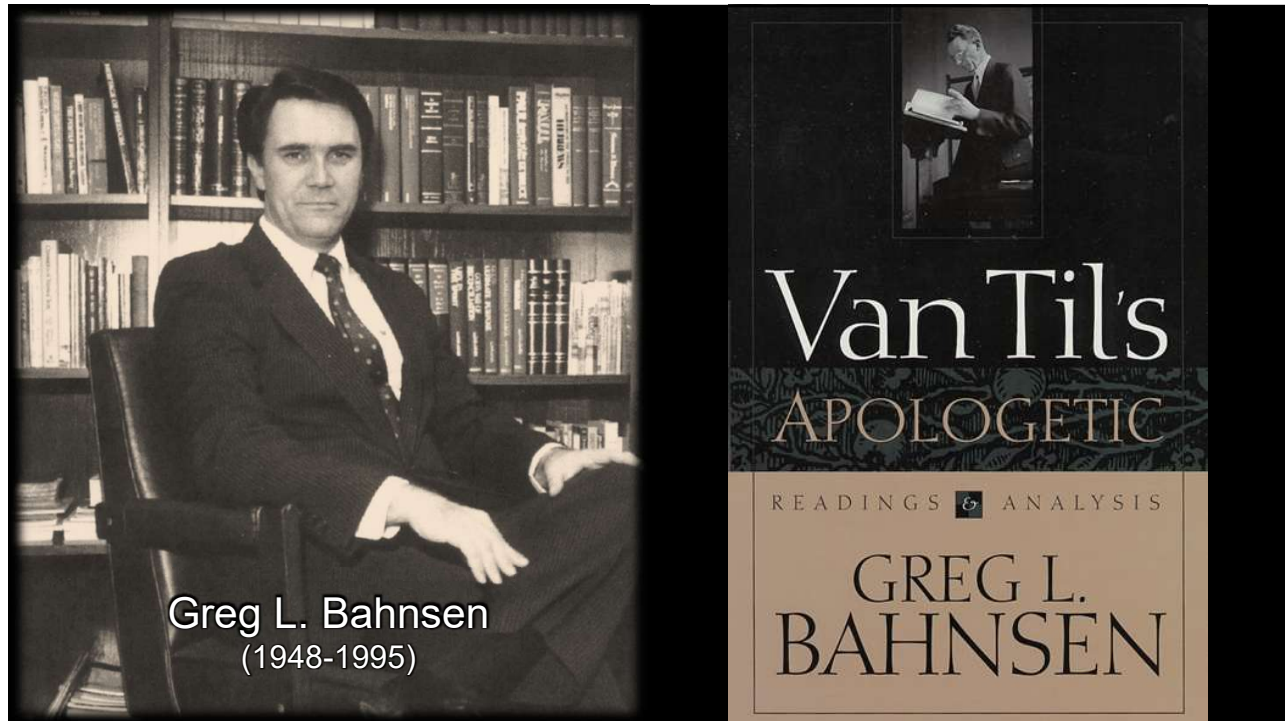
Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

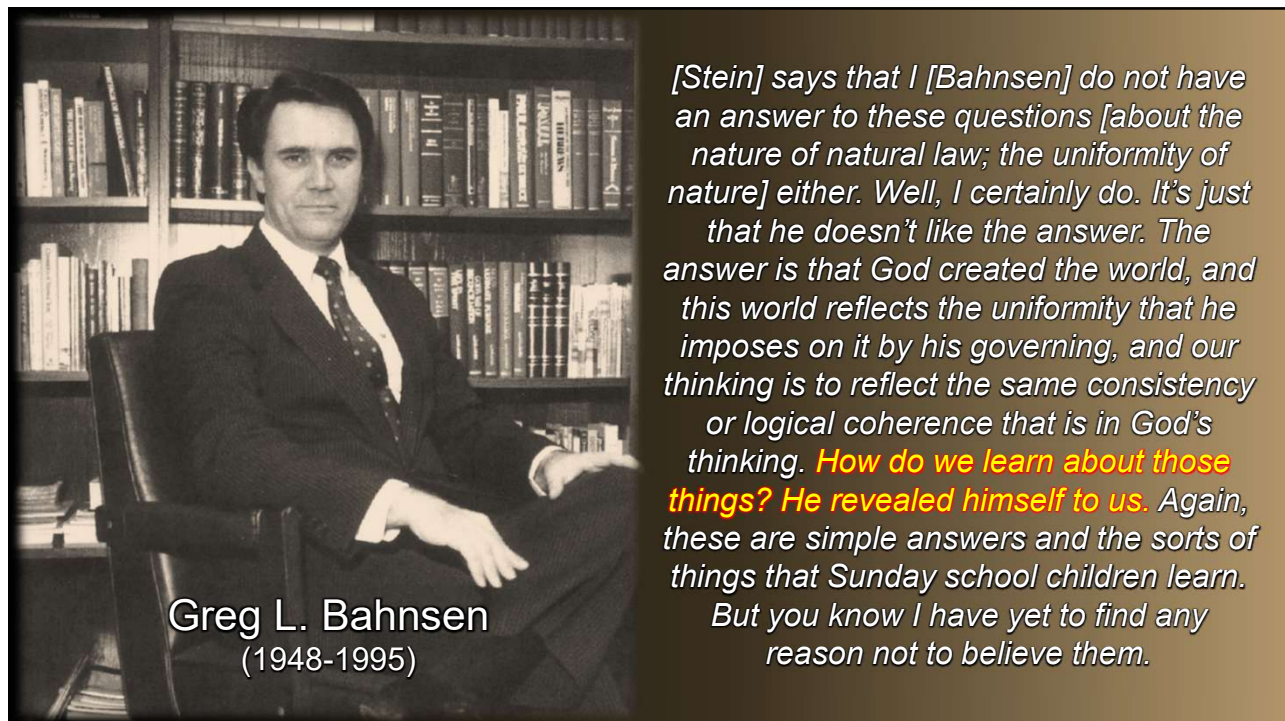
"In not challenging this basic presupposition with respect to himself as the final reference point in predication, the natural man may accept the 'theistic proofs' as fully valid. He may construct such proofs. he has constructed such proofs. But the God whose existence he proves to himself in this way is always a god who is something other than the self-contained ontological Trinity of Scripture.

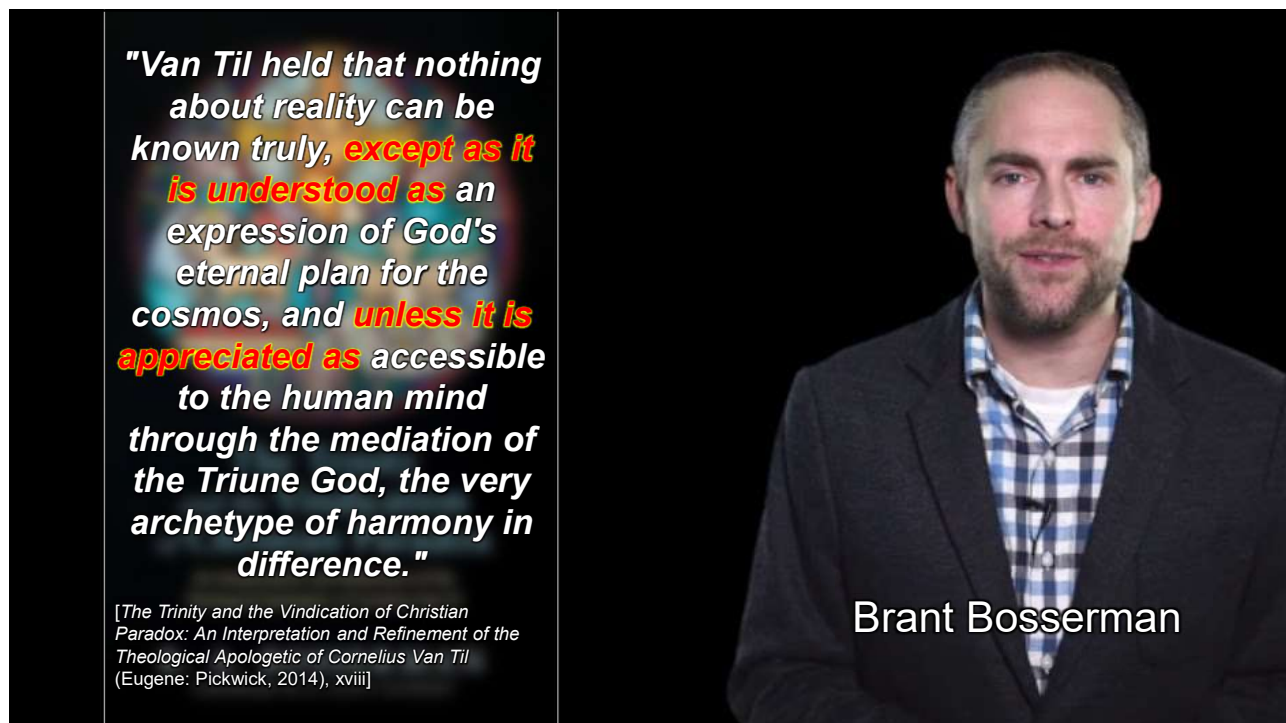
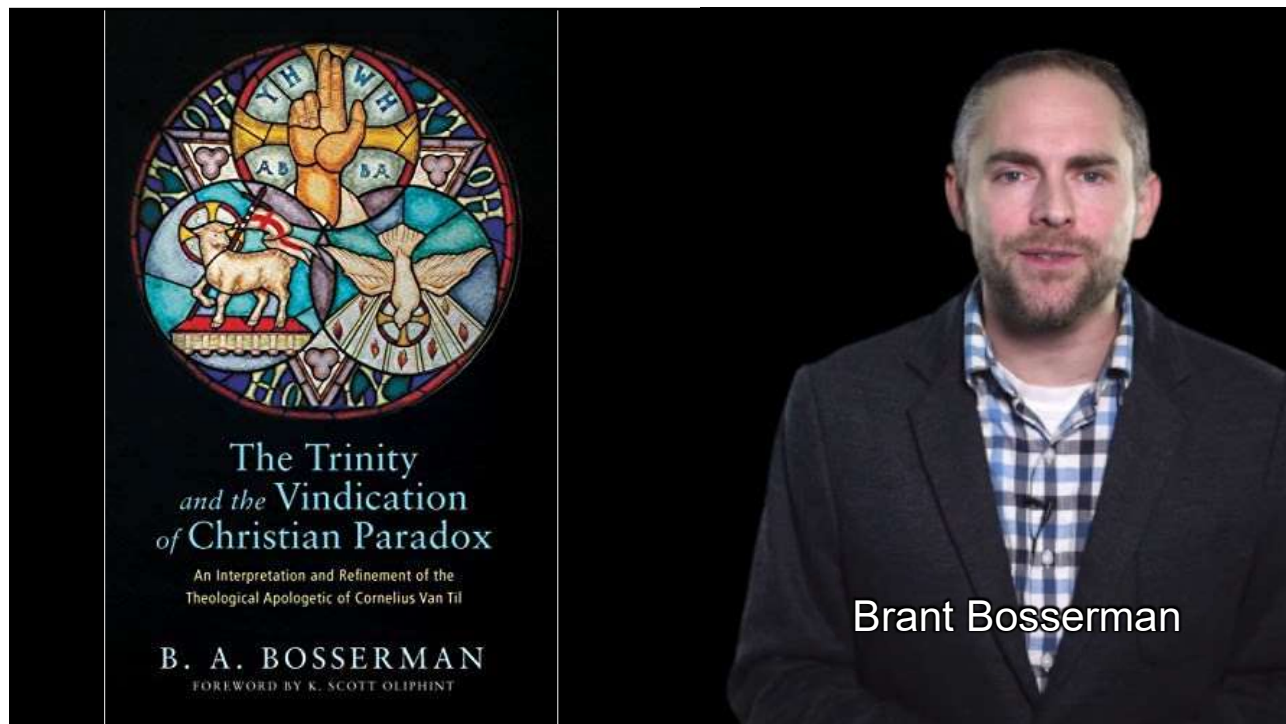
[Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, 4th ed., edited by K. Scott Oliphint (P&R Publishing, 2008), 101]



Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)







*"Van Til held that nothing about reality can be known truly, **except as it is understood as** an expression of God's eternal plan for the cosmos, and **unless it is appreciated as** accessible to the human mind through the mediation of the Triune God, the very archetype of harmony in difference."*

[The Trinity and the Vindication of Christian Paradox: An Interpretation and Refinement of the Theological Apologetic of Cornelius Van Til (Eugene: Pickwick, 2014), xviii]

I submit that these expressions are code for 'presupposed': hence "Presuppositionalism."

*"Van Til held that **nothing about reality can be known truly**, except as it is understood as an expression of God's eternal plan for the cosmos, and unless it is appreciated as accessible to the human mind through the mediation of the Triune God, the very archetype of harmony in difference."*

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Note that they are necessary to know reality truly.

"Van Til held that nothing about reality can be known truly, except as it is understood as an expression of God's eternal plan for the cosmos, and unless it is appreciated as accessible to the human mind through the mediation of the Triune God, the very archetype of harmony in difference."

[The Trinity and the Vindication of Christian Paradox: An Interpretation and Refinement of the Theological Apologetic of Cornelius Van Til (Eugene: Pickwick, 2014), xviii]

This is a reference to the "the problem of the one and the many."

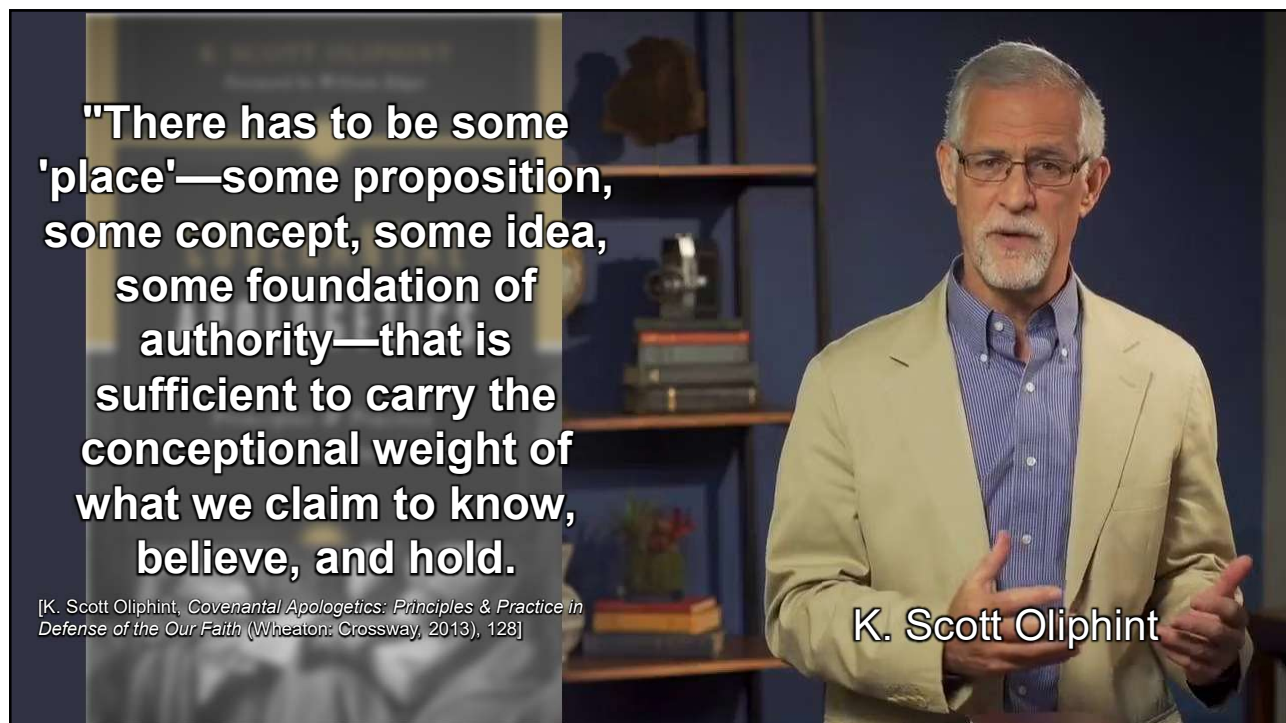
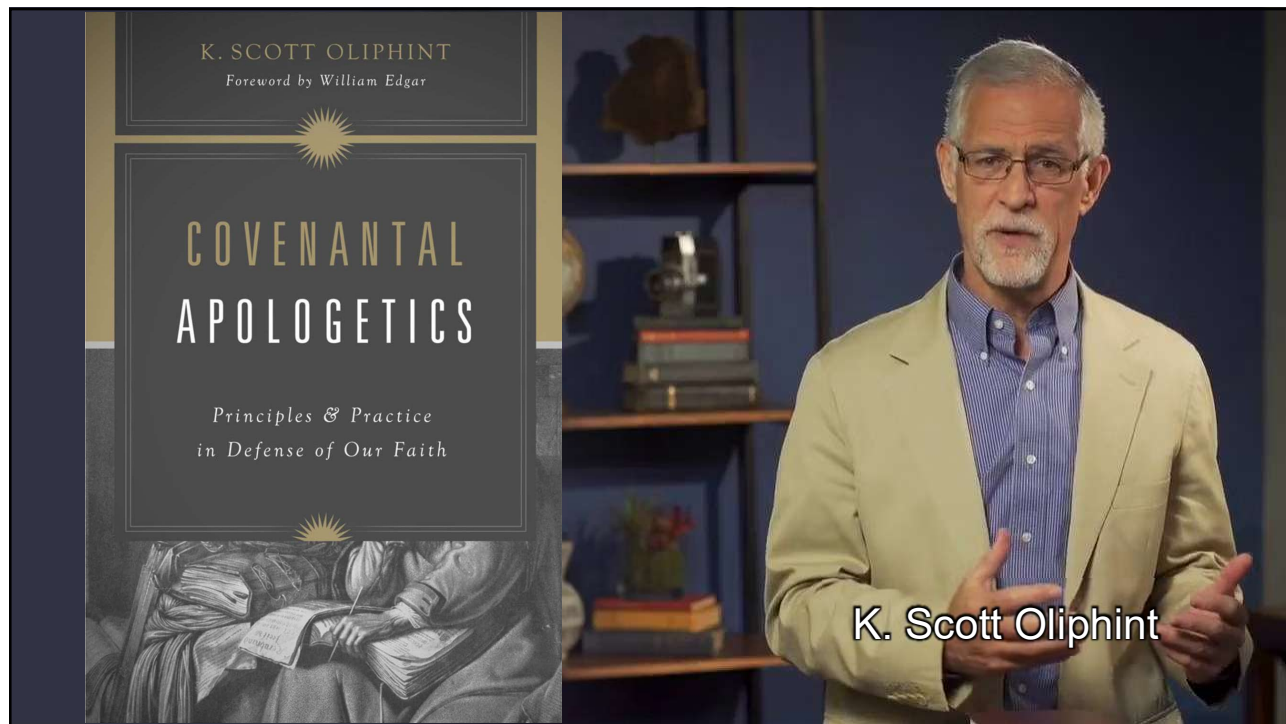
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This is a reference to the "the problem of the one and the many."

Presuppositionalists maintain that only their Presuppositionalism can "solve" the problem.

I have yet to find any Presuppositionalist who can tell me what they find lacking in Aristotle's solution.

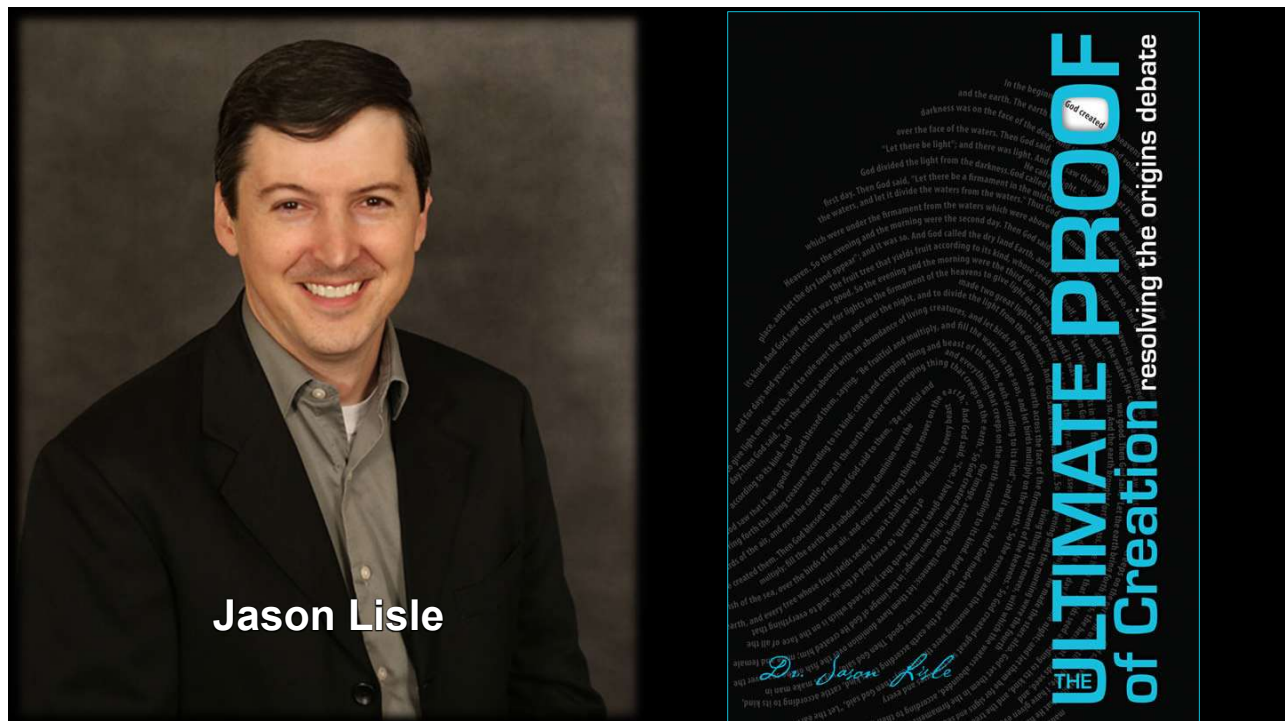


"There has to be some 'place'—some **proposition**, some **concept**, some **idea**, some **foundation of authority**—that is sufficient to carry the conceptional weight of what we claim to know, believe, and hold.

[K. Scott Oliphint, *Covenantal Apologetics: Principles & Practice in Defense of the Our Faith* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 128]

Notice how that the options Oliphint suggests are all categories of cognition (epistemology).

Nowhere does Oliphint seek to ground knowledge in being.



A portrait of Jason Lisle, a man with dark hair, smiling, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored button-down shirt. The background is a dark, mottled grey.

Jason Lisle

"The consistent biblical creationist is one whose worldview is based on the Bible, this is his or her ultimate standard."

[Jason Lisle, *The Ultimate Proof: Resolving the Origins Debate* (Green Forest: Master Books, 2009), 32]

A portrait of Jason Lisle, a man with dark hair, smiling, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored button-down shirt. The background is a dark, mottled grey.

Jason Lisle

"Many people feel that they themselves do not have an ultimate authority, or a faith commitment or any kind. Rather, they believe that their perceptions of the world are objective, neutral, and not dependent on any ultimate standard."

[Jason Lisle, *The Ultimate Proof: Resolving the Origins Debate* (Green Forest: Master Books, 2009), 142-143]



Jason Lisle

"For any belief that a person has, we can always ask, 'How do you know that to be true?' ... Ultimately, any such chain of reasoning must come to an end. It must be terminated in an ultimate standard ..."

[Jason Lisle, *The Ultimate Proof: Resolving the Origins Debate* (Green Forest: Master Books, 2009), 143]

"Presuppositional apologetics is the method of defending the Christian faith that relies on the Bible as the supreme authority in all matters. ... I will show below that it is logically inescapable that indeed the Bible must be the ultimate standard even when evaluating its own claims. ... For the presuppositionalist, the Bible is the ultimate standard for all things, even its own defense."

[Jason Lisle, "Young Earth Presuppositionalism," in *Christian Research Journal* 11, No. 2, (Fall 2013): 65, emphasis in original]



Jason Lisle

*"Presuppositional apologetics is the method of defending the Christian faith that relies on the Bible as the supreme authority **in all matters**. ... I will show below that it is logically inescapable that indeed the Bible must be the ultimate standard even when evaluating its own claims. ... For the presuppositionalist, the Bible is the ultimate standard for all things, even its own defense."*

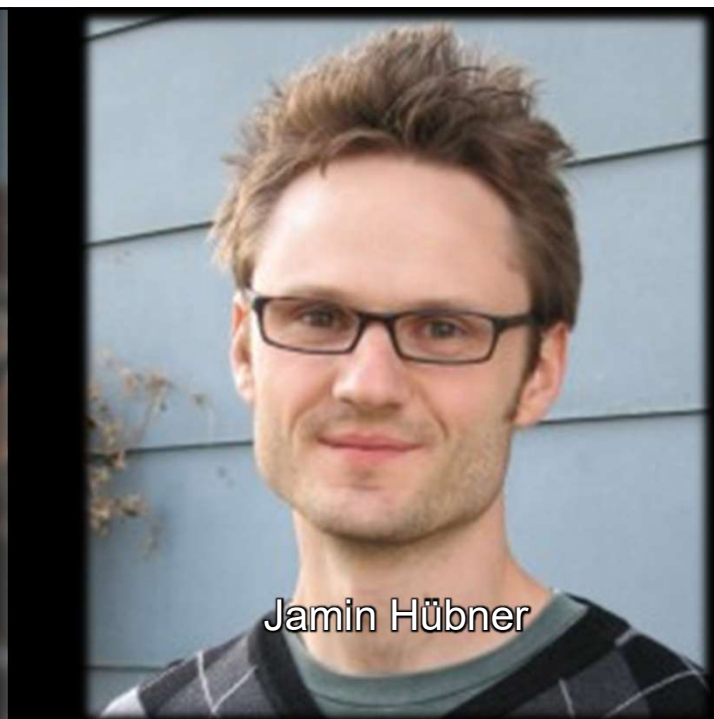
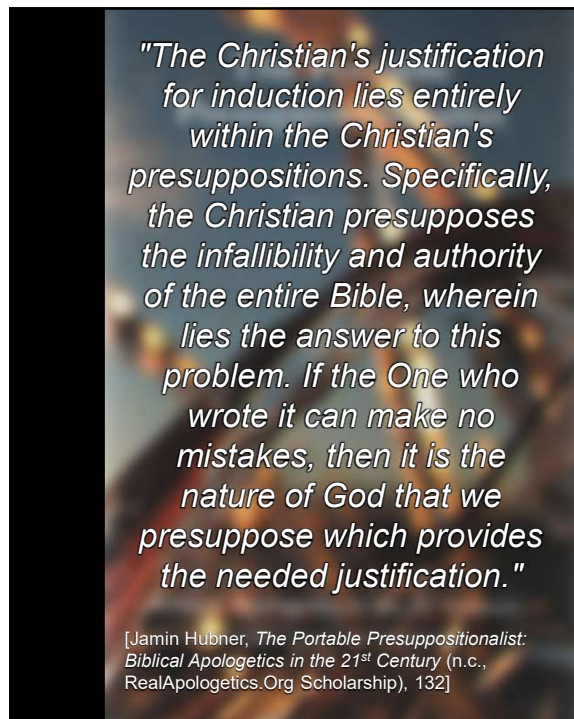
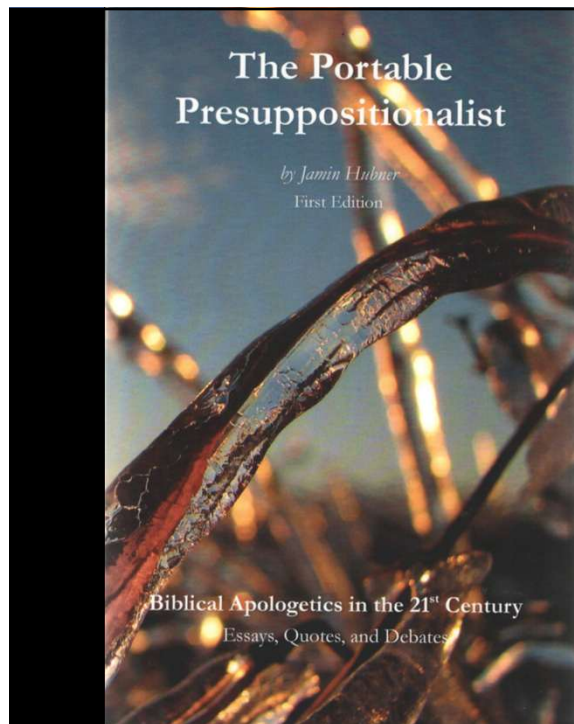
[Jason Lisle, "Young Earth Presuppositionalism," in *Christian Research Journal* 11, No. 2, (Fall 2013): 65, emphasis in original]

Surely Lisle would not insist that only by consulting the Bible could one decide whether moving one control or another would better insure a safe landing of the airplane.

*"Presuppositional apologetics is the method of defending the Christian faith that relies on the Bible as the supreme authority **in all matters**. ... I will show below that it is logically inescapable that indeed the Bible must be the ultimate standard even when evaluating its own claims. ... For the presuppositionalist, the Bible is the ultimate standard for all things, even its own defense."*

[Jason Lisle, "Young Earth Presuppositionalism," in *Christian Research Journal* 11, No. 2, (Fall 2013): 65, emphasis in original]

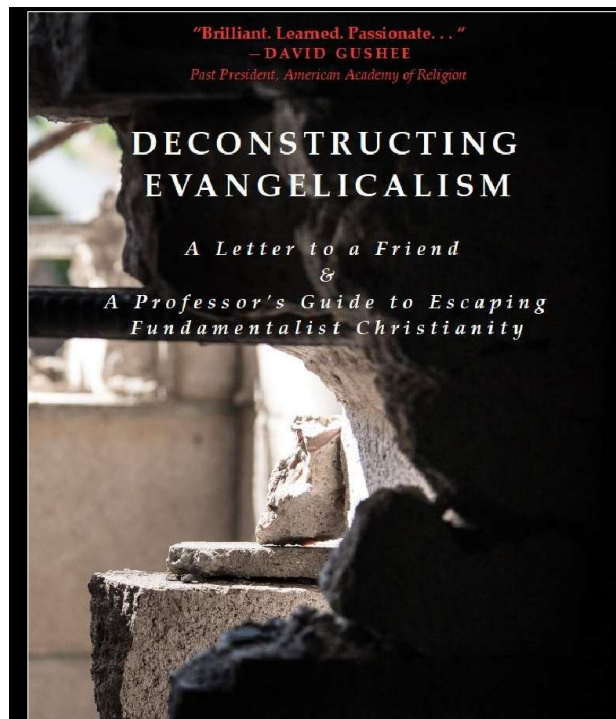
If not, then how is it true that the Bible is the supreme authority
IN ALL MATTERS?

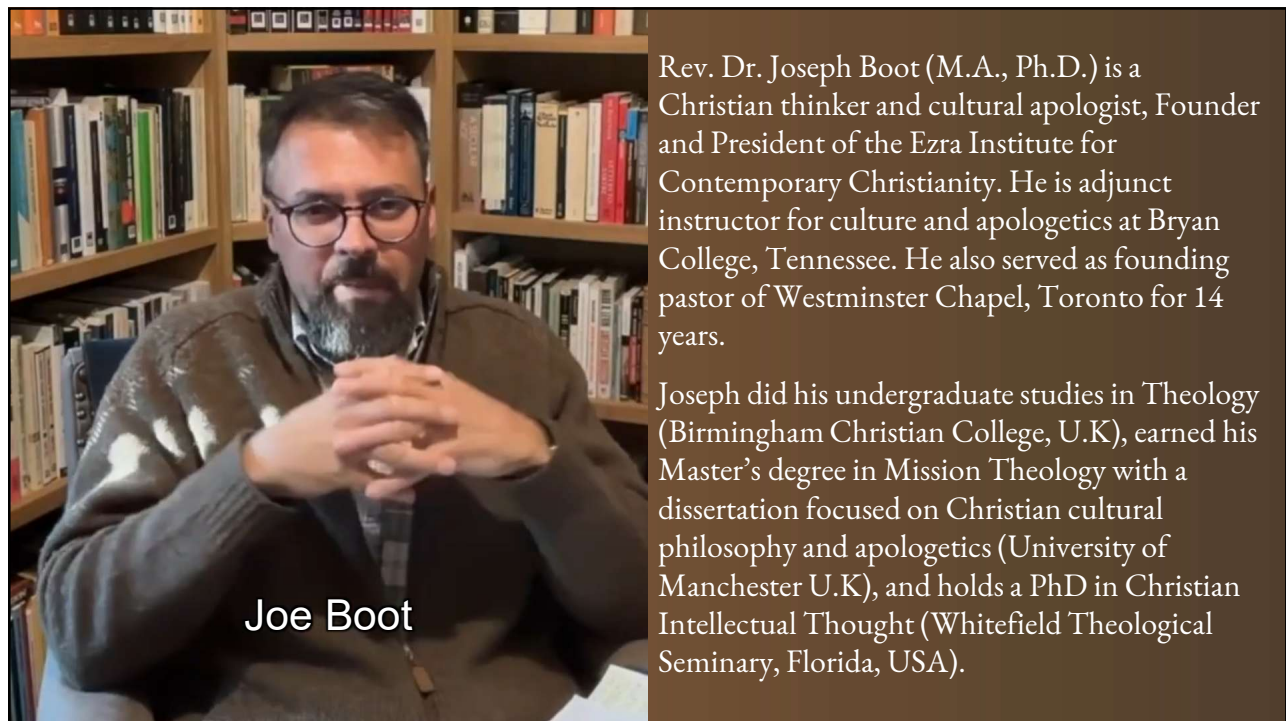
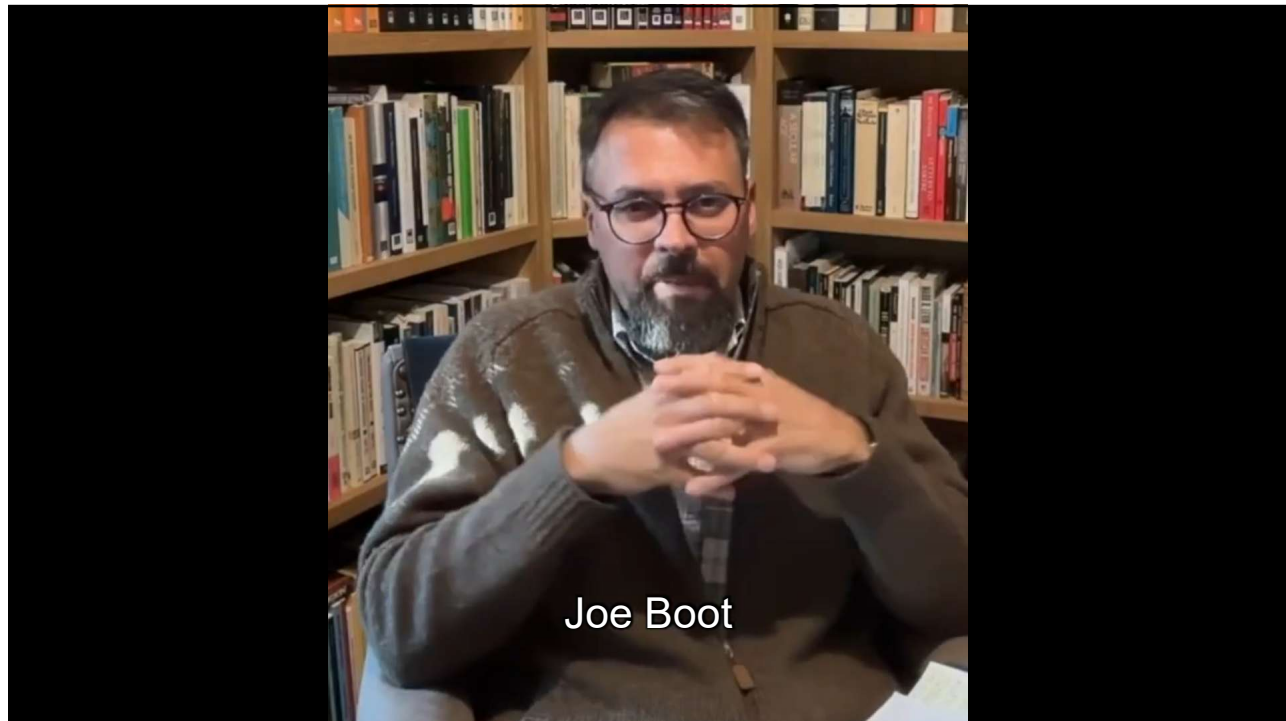


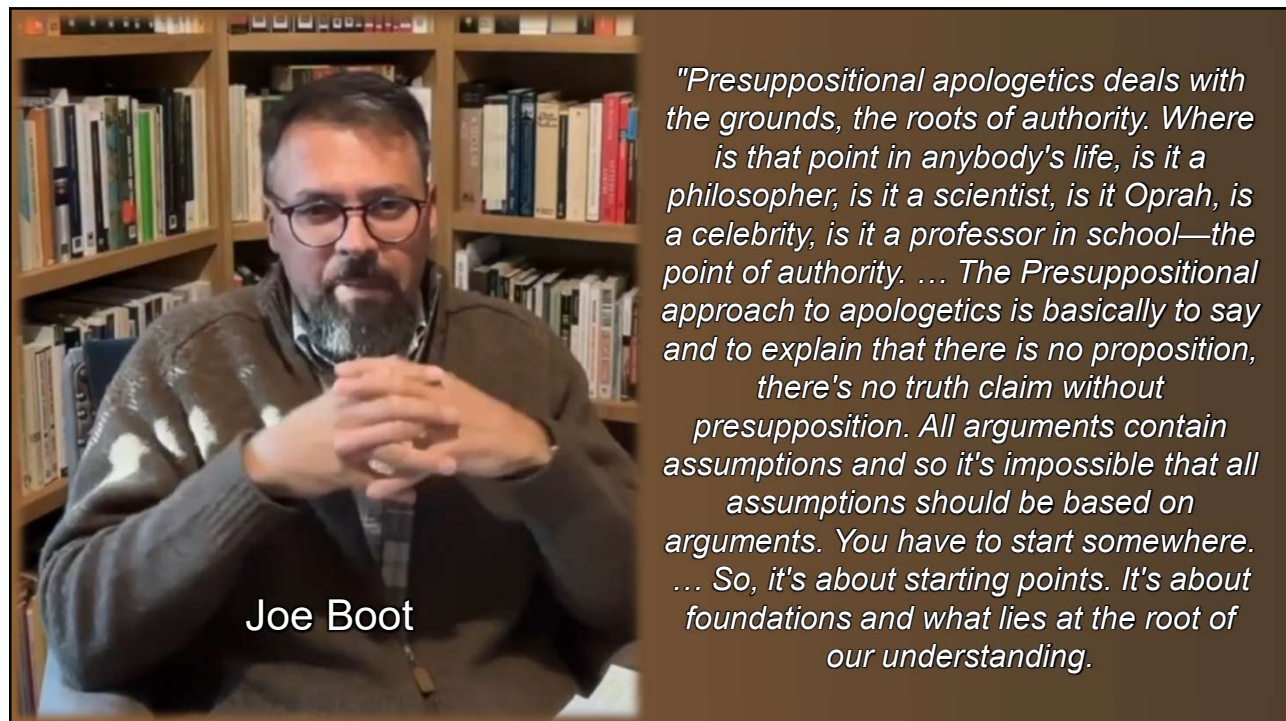
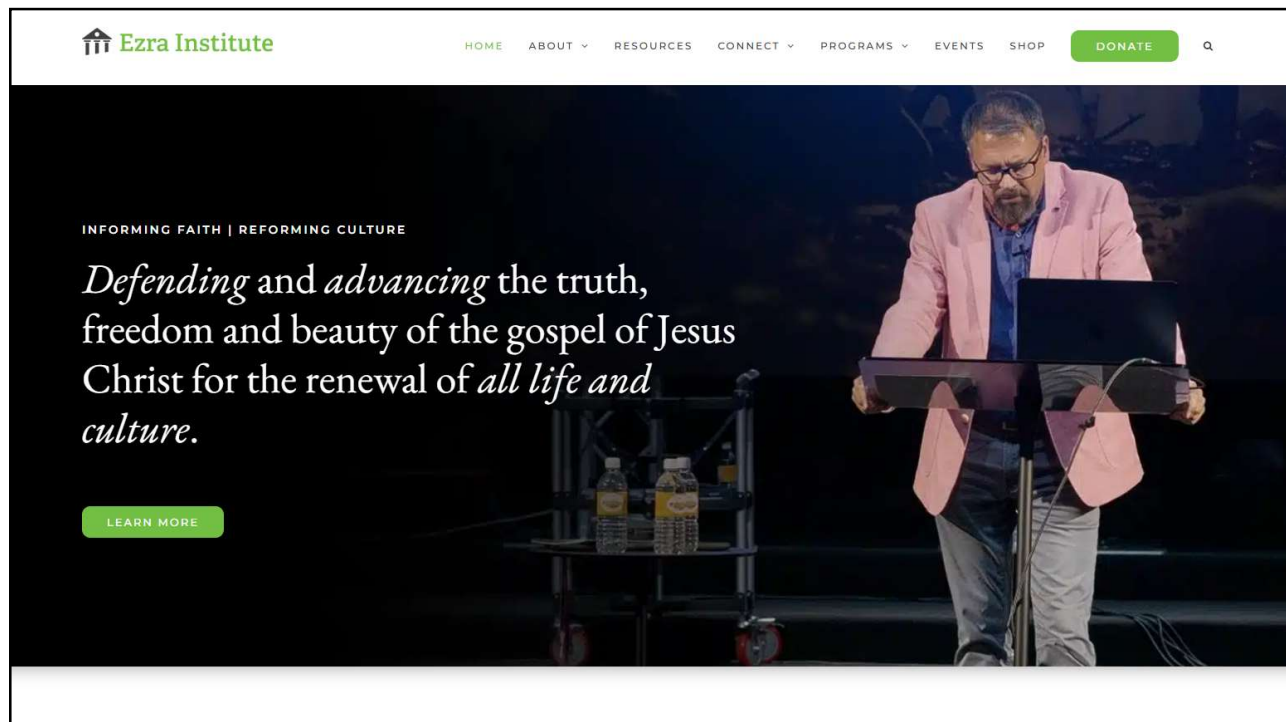
"The Christian's justification for induction lies entirely within the Christian's presuppositions. Specifically, the Christian presupposes the infallibility and authority of the entire Bible, wherein lies the answer to this problem. If the One who wrote it can make no mistakes, then it is the nature of God that we presuppose which provides the needed justification."

[Jamin Hübner, *The Portable Presuppositionalist: Biblical Apologetics in the 21st Century* (n.c., RealApologetics.Org Scholarship), 132]

Here is an example where the Presuppositionalist concedes a philosophical "problem" that arises entirely out of modern philosophy (e.g., Hume's skepticism about induction) and then seeks to show how only Presuppositionalism's appeal to God as the ultimate authority can "solve" the "problem."







Joe Boot

"Presuppositional apologetics deals with the grounds, the roots of authority. Where is that point in anybody's life, is it a philosopher, is it a scientist, is it Oprah, is a celebrity, is it a professor in school—the point of authority. ... The Presuppositional approach to apologetics is basically to say and to explain that there is no proposition, there's no truth claim without presupposition. All arguments contain assumptions and so it's impossible that all assumptions should be based on arguments. You have to start somewhere. ... So, it's about starting points. It's about foundations and what lies at the root of our understanding.

I could not agree more that
"you have to start somewhere."

The questions then will be:

- (1) Where, if anywhere, do we actually start? and (if it's a separate question)
- (2) Where, if anywhere, ought we to start?

It would seem that we would not be able to ask (much less answer) the second question without already granting the answer to the first.

*"Presuppositional apologetics deals with the grounds, the roots of authority. Where is that point in anybody's life, is it a philosopher, is it a scientist, is it Oprah, is a celebrity, is it a professor in school—the point of authority. ... The Presuppositional approach to apologetics is basically to say and to explain that there is no proposition, there's no truth claim without presupposition. All arguments contain assumptions and so it's impossible that all assumptions should be based on arguments. **You have to start somewhere.** ... So, it's about starting points. It's about foundations and what lies at the root of our understanding.*

As we will see in short order, a fundamental mistake that Presuppositionalism makes is that it fails to correctly identify exactly what it is that constitutes that starting point.

*"Presuppositional apologetics deals with the grounds, the roots of authority. Where is that point in anybody's life, is it a philosopher, is it a scientist, is it Oprah, is a celebrity, is it a professor in school—the point of authority. ... The Presuppositional approach to apologetics is basically to say and to explain that there is no proposition, there's no truth claim without presupposition. All arguments contain assumptions and so it's impossible that all assumptions should be based on arguments. **You have to start somewhere.** ... So, it's about starting points. It's about foundations and what lies at the root of our understanding.*



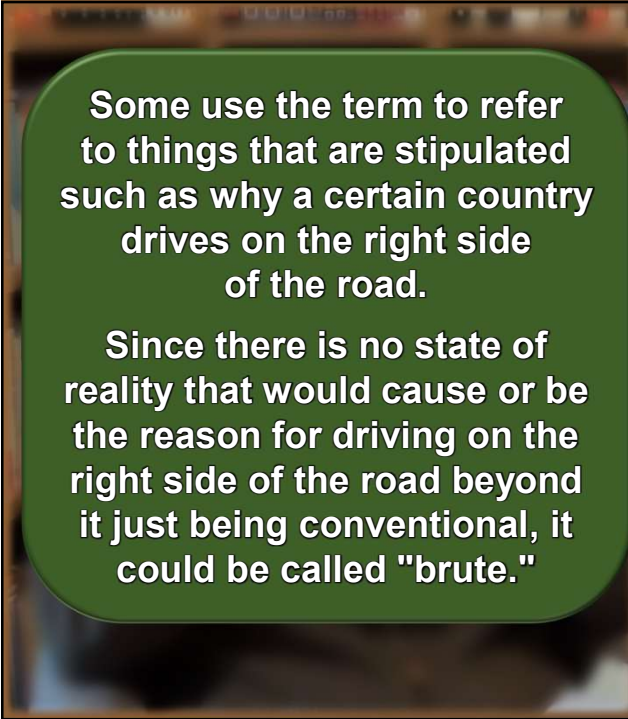
Joe Boot

"The Presuppositional apologist begins, not with saying 'Well, what are the brute facts or what's the brute data out there' and then trying to add those bits of data together to add up to some sort of indubitable, undoubtable starting point. We recognize from revelation that God is, God has spoken and that is our supra-rational, that is our faith, our religious starting point. So we proceed from the starting point of God's revelation of Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ."

The "specter of 'brute facts' " was mentioned (but not explained) at the beginning of our critique of Presuppositionalism.

The expression first appeared in G. E. M. Anscombe, "On Brute Facts," *Analysis* 18, no. 3 (Jan. 1958) and underwent several alterations in its usage in the following decades.

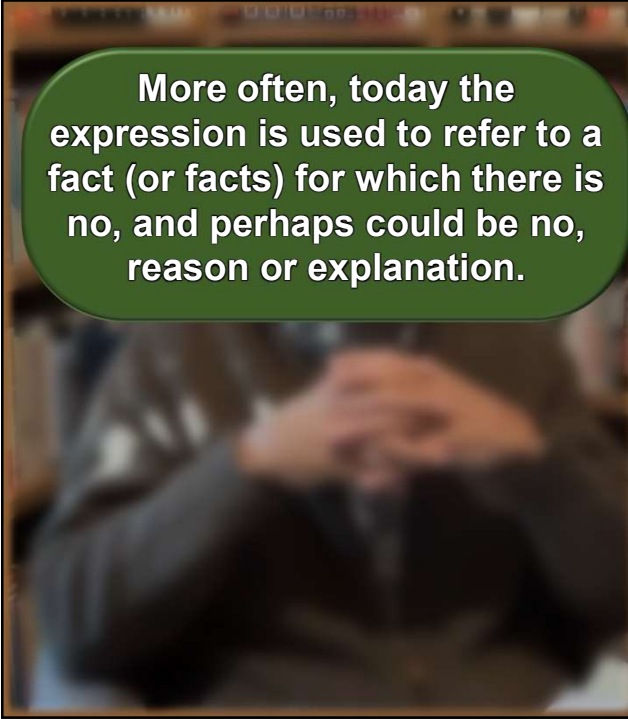
*"The Presuppositional apologist begins, not with saying 'Well, what are the **brute facts** or what's the **brute data** out there' and then trying to add those bits of data together to add up to some sort of indubitable, undoubtable starting point. We recognize from revelation that God is, God has spoken and that is our supra-rational, that is our faith, our religious starting point. So we proceed from the starting point of God's revelation of Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ."*



Some use the term to refer to things that are stipulated such as why a certain country drives on the right side of the road.

Since there is no state of reality that would cause or be the reason for driving on the right side of the road beyond it just being conventional, it could be called "brute."

*"The Presuppositional apologist begins, not with saying 'Well, what are the **brute facts** or what's the **brute data** out there' and then trying to add those bits of data together to add up to some sort of indubitable, undoubtable starting point. We recognize from revelation that God is, God has spoken and that is our supra-rational, that is our faith, our religious starting point. So we proceed from the starting point of God's revelation of Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ."*



More often, today the expression is used to refer to a fact (or facts) for which there is no, and perhaps could be no, reason or explanation.

*"The Presuppositional apologist begins, not with saying 'Well, what are the **brute facts** or what's the **brute data** out there' and then trying to add those bits of data together to add up to some sort of indubitable, undoubtable starting point. We recognize from revelation that God is, God has spoken and that is our supra-rational, that is our faith, our religious starting point. So we proceed from the starting point of God's revelation of Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ."*

It took on this meaning in response to Leibniz and other philosophers who defended the Principle of Sufficient Reason, which maintains that every fact has a cause or a reason for why it is a fact in the way it is rather than not or why it is a fact at all.

*"The Presuppositional apologist begins, not with saying 'Well, what are the **brute facts** or what's the **brute data** out there' and then trying to add those bits of data together to add up to some sort of indubitable, undoubtable starting point. We recognize from revelation that God is, God has spoken and that is our supra-rational, that is our faith, our religious starting point. So we proceed from the starting point of God's revelation of Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ."*

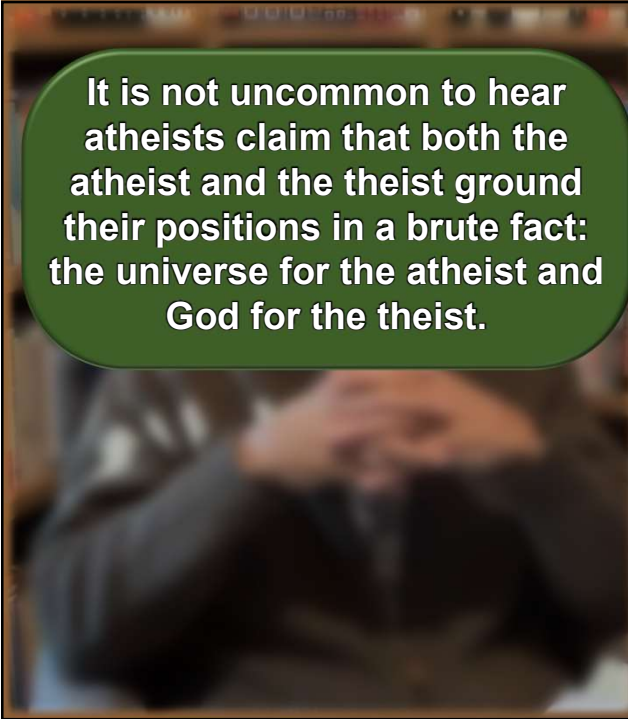


Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz
(1646-1716)

"Our reasonings are based on two great principles, that of contradiction, in virtue of which we judge that which involves a contradiction to be false, and that which is opposed or contradictory to the false to be true.

And that of sufficient reason, by virtue of which we consider that we can find no true or existent fact, no true assertion, without there being a sufficient reason why it is thus and not otherwise, although most of the time these reasons cannot be known to us."

[Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Monadology," in *G. W. Leibniz Philosophical Essays*, trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989), 217]



It is not uncommon to hear atheists claim that both the atheist and the theist ground their positions in a brute fact: the universe for the atheist and God for the theist.

*"The Presuppositional apologist begins, not with saying 'Well, what are the **brute facts** or what's the **brute data** out there' and then trying to add those bits of data together to add up to some sort of indubitable, undoubtable starting point. We recognize from revelation that God is, God has spoken and that is our supra-rational, that is our faith, our religious starting point. So we proceed from the starting point of God's revelation of Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ."*

While some theists might grant this characterization and say that God is the ultimate explanation or reason for everything else while God himself has no explanation or reason for his own existence, the Thomist will deny this and argue that God definitely has a reason or explanation for His existence.

*"The Presuppositional apologist begins, not with saying 'Well, what are the **brute facts** or what's the **brute data** out there' and then trying to add those bits of data together to add up to some sort of indubitable, undoubtable starting point. We recognize from revelation that God is, God has spoken and that is our supra-rational, that is our faith, our religious starting point. So we proceed from the starting point of God's revelation of Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ."*

For the Thomist (at least, for the Existential Thomist in the tradition of Etienne Gilson, Joseph Owens, Norman Geisler, et al.) God is *ispum esse subsistens*: subsisting existence itself.

If anything exists, then there must be something whose very nature is to exist.

*"The Presuppositional apologist begins, not with saying 'Well, what are the **brute facts** or what's the **brute data** out there' and then trying to add those bits of data together to add up to some sort of indubitable, undoubtable starting point. We recognize from revelation that God is, God has spoken and that is our supra-rational, that is our faith, our religious starting point. So we proceed from the starting point of God's revelation of Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ."*

Without any details here, a being whose nature is to exist will have all the superlative attributes of Classical Theism.

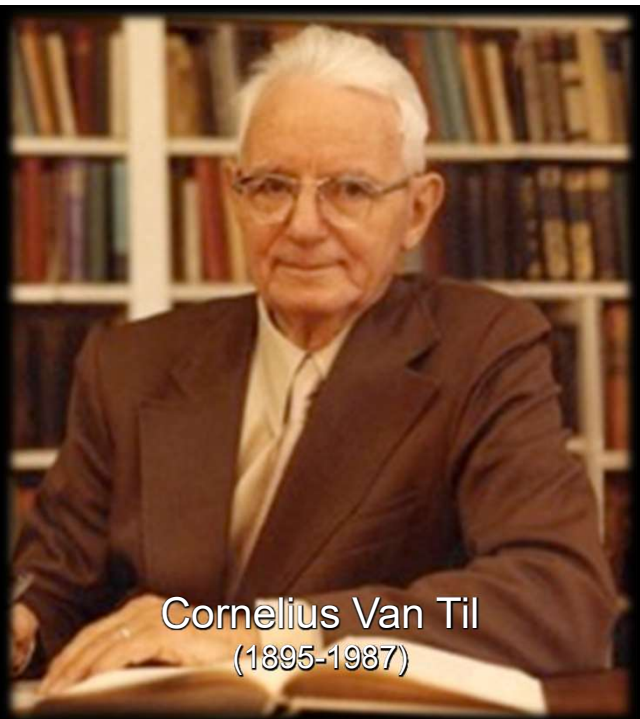
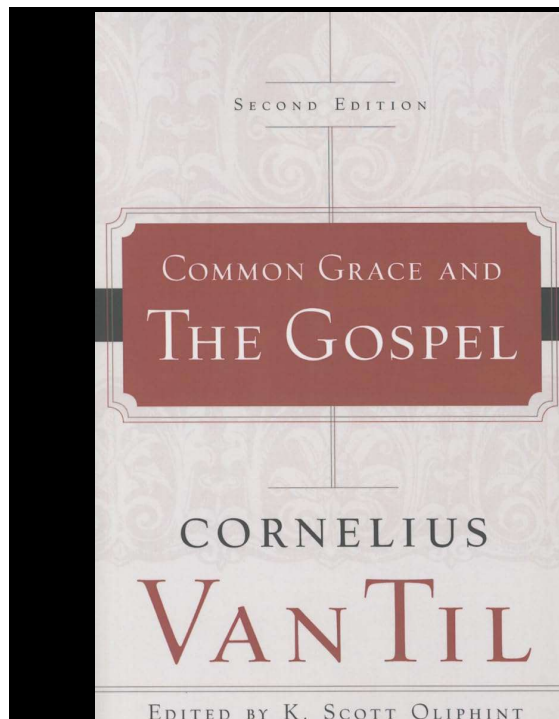
Such a being has the reason or explanation for Himself in Himself.

*"The Presuppositional apologist begins, not with saying 'Well, what are the **brute facts** or what's the **brute data** out there' and then trying to add those bits of data together to add up to some sort of indubitable, undoubtable starting point. We recognize from revelation that God is, God has spoken and that is our supra-rational, that is our faith, our religious starting point. So we proceed from the starting point of God's revelation of Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ."*

Van Til has a somewhat excentric definition of brute facts, viz. brute facts are facts which are "utterly uninterpreted."

An "interpreted fact" is one which is understood in its relation to God as its creator.

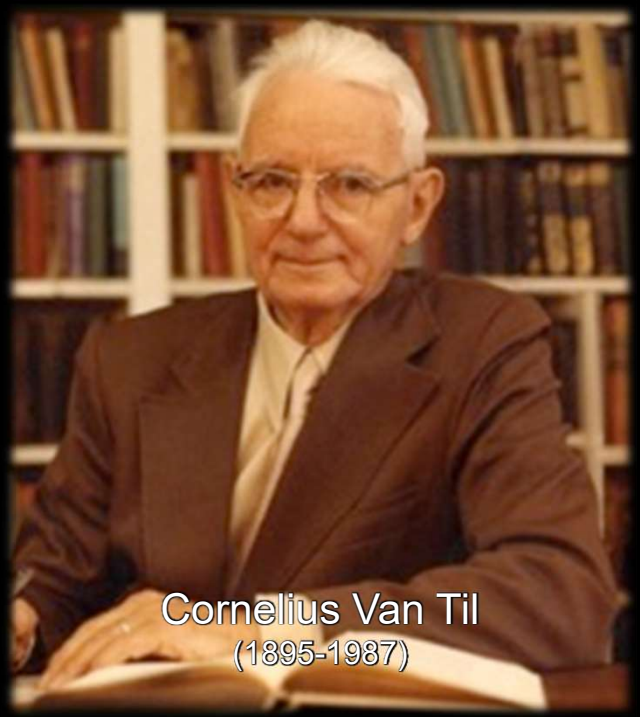
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Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1937)

"The idea of brute, that is utterly uninterpreted, 'fact' is the presupposition to the finding of any fact of scientific standing. A 'fact' does not become a fact, according to the modern scientist's assumptions, till it has been made a fact by the ultimate definitory power of the mind of man. ... According to any consistently Christian position, God, and God only, has ultimate definitory power. God's description or plan of the fact makes the fact what it is."

[Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel*, 2nd ed., edited by K. Scott Oliphint (P&R Publishing, 2015), 8-9]



Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

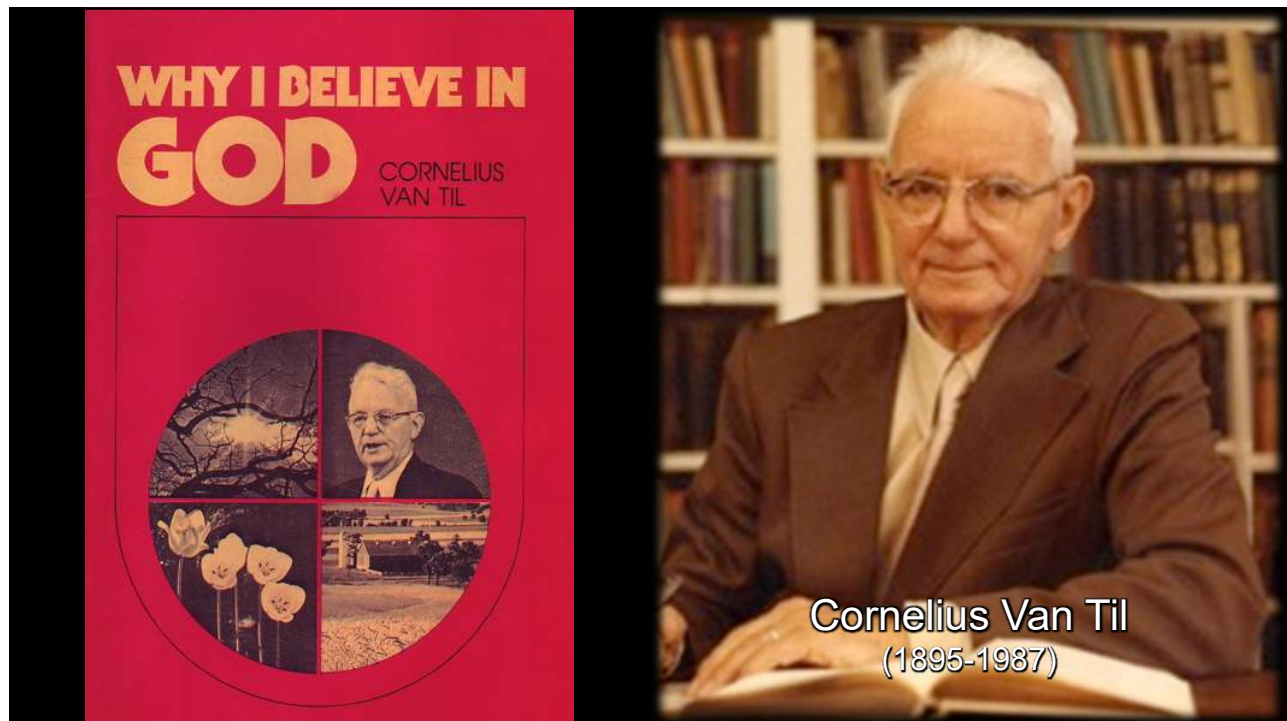
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[Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel*, 2nd ed., edited by K. Scott Oliphint (P&R Publishing, 2015), 8-9]

Again, without any details here, one who is familiar with Immanuel Kant's epistemology regarding the Phenomenal / Noumenal distinction might see the parallel here.

This can clear up a common misunderstanding some critics have of Van Til when Van Til says that the unbeliever knows no fact of reality truly.

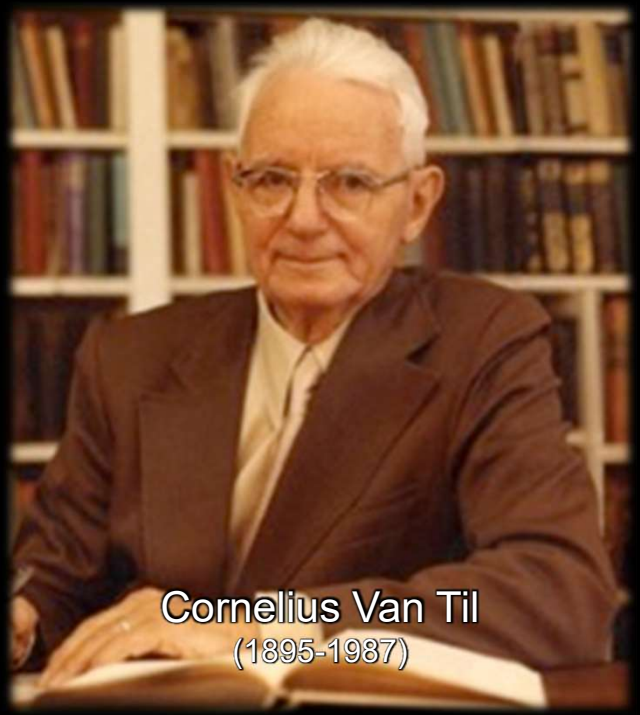
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Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

*"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]

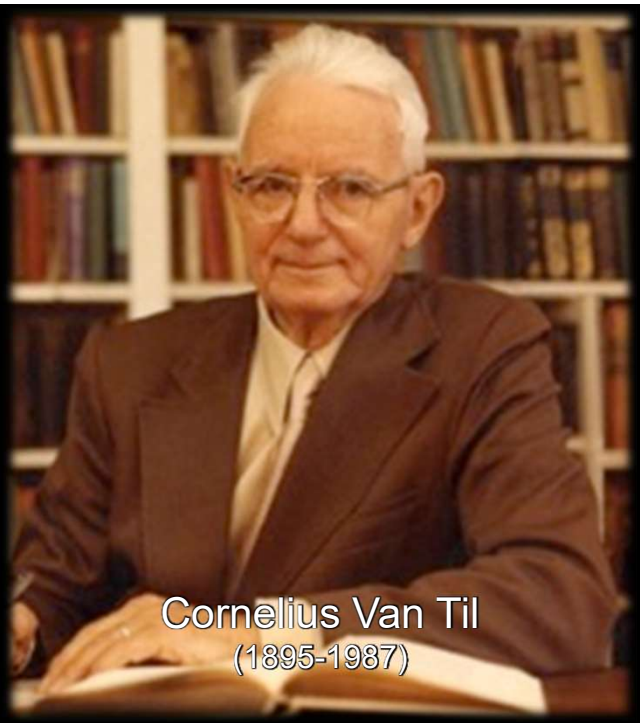
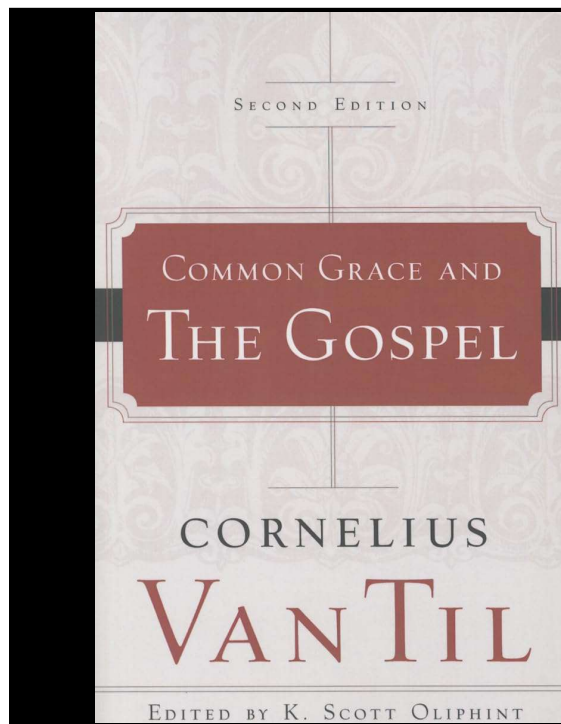


Cornelius Van Til
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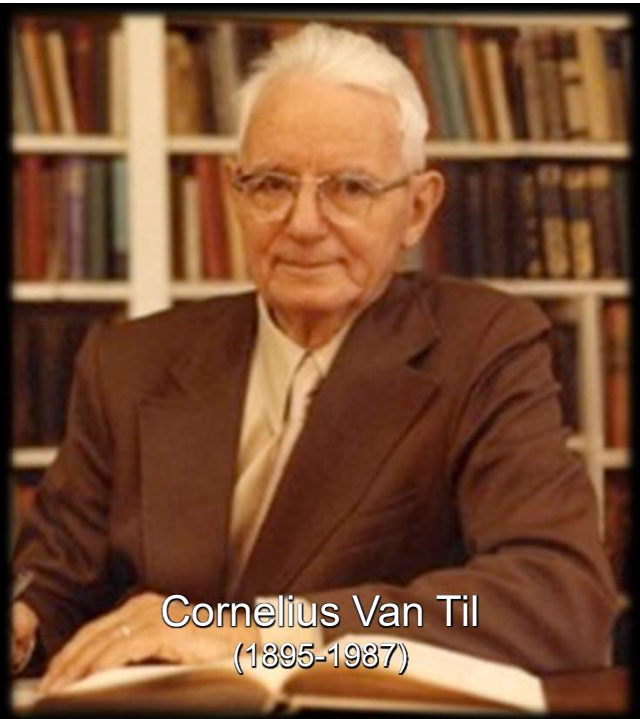
The reason that the lost man fails to see "any fact in any dimension of life truly" is because his rebellion against God prevents him from seeing the relationship of that fact to God.



Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

*"Man by his sinful nature hates the revelation of God. Therefore every concrete expression that any sinner makes about God will have in it the poisoning effect of this hatred of God. His epistemological reaction will invariably be negative, and negative along the whole line of his interpretive endeavor. **There are no general principles or truths about the true God ... which he does not falsify.**"*

[Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel*, 2nd ed., edited by K. Scott Oliphint (P&R Publishing, 2015), 71]

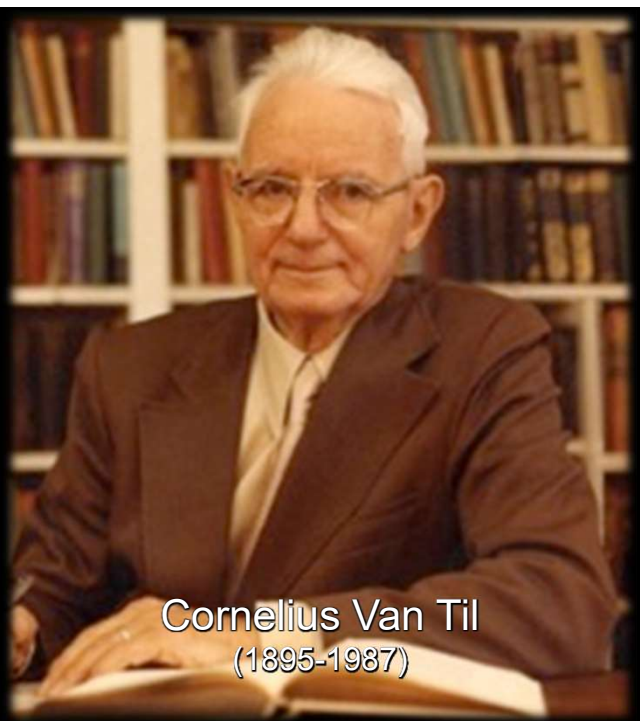
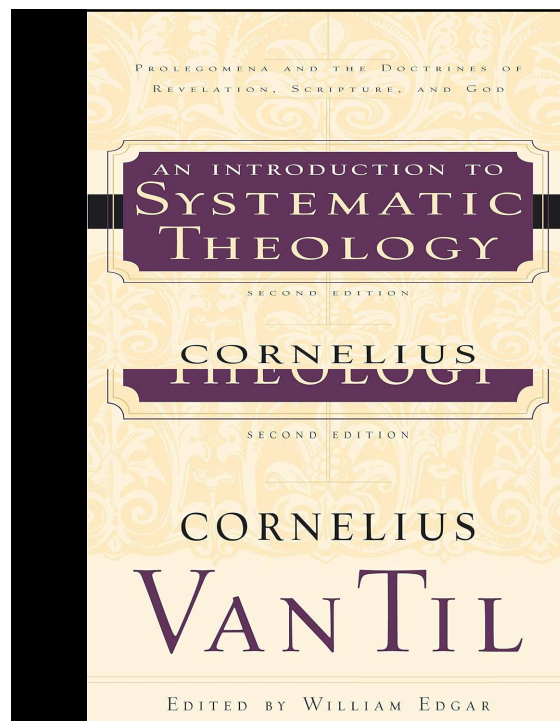


Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

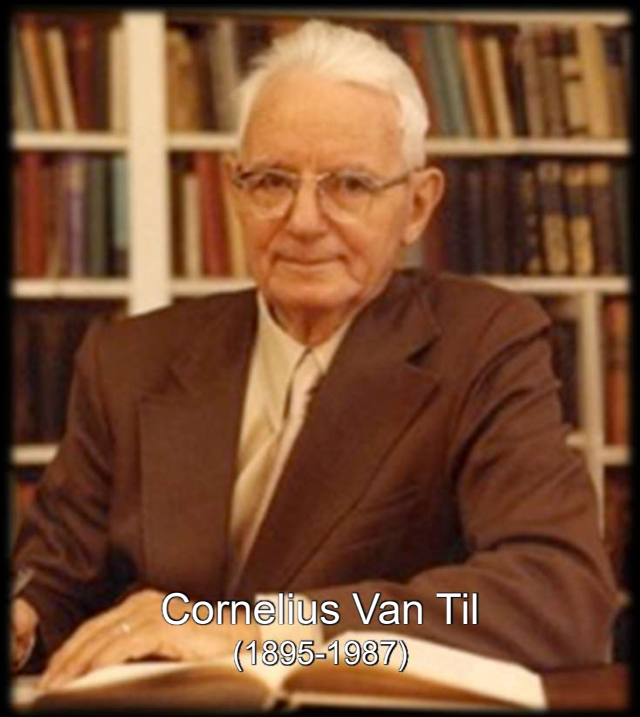
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[Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel*, 2nd ed., edited by K. Scott Oliphint (P&R Publishing, 2015), 71]

There is nonetheless a tension in Van Til's thinking in as much as he, perhaps reluctantly, acknowledges that the unbeliever has knowledge about the world.



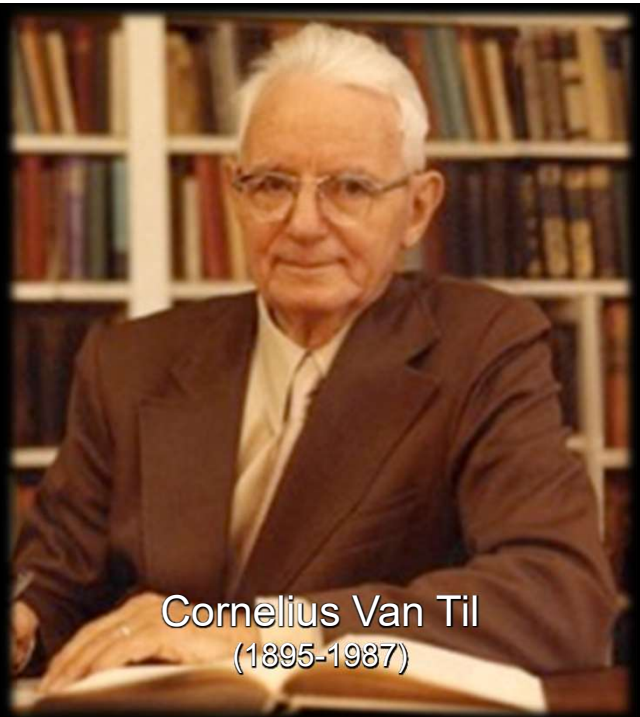
*"We are well aware of the fact that non-Christians have a great deal of knowledge about this world that is true as far as it goes. That is, there is a sense in which we can and must allow for the value of knowledge of non-Christians. **This has always been a difficult point.** It is often the one great source of confusion on the question of faith and its relation to reason.*



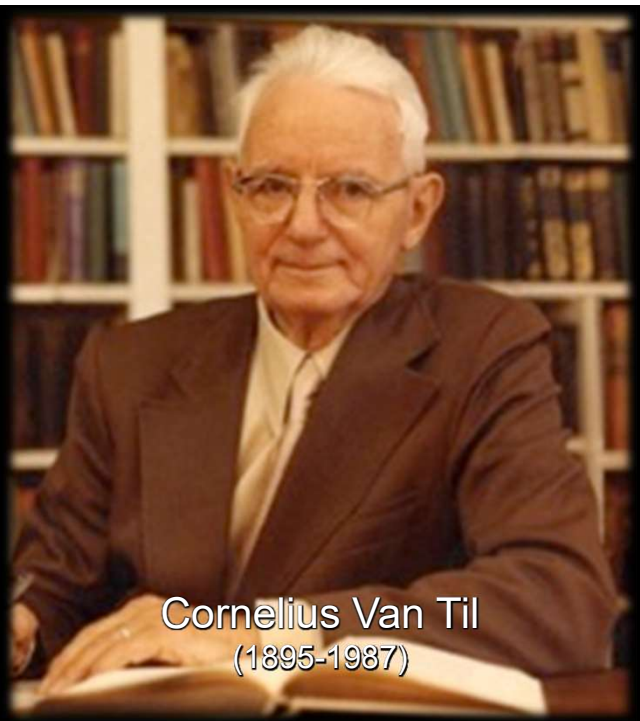
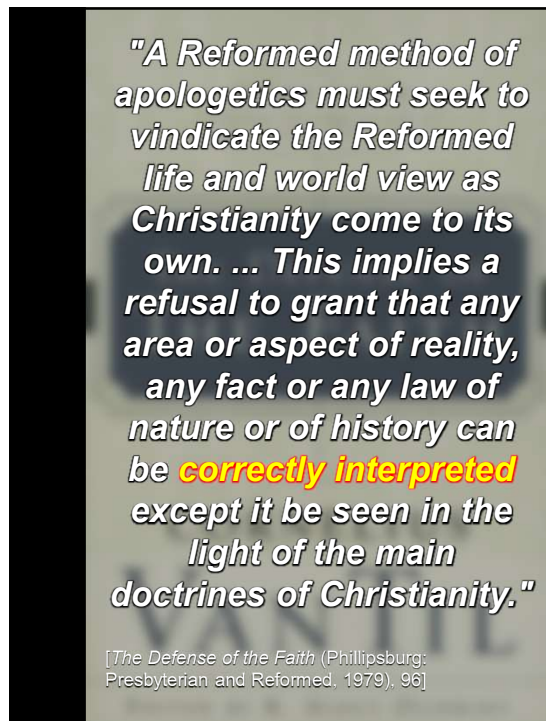
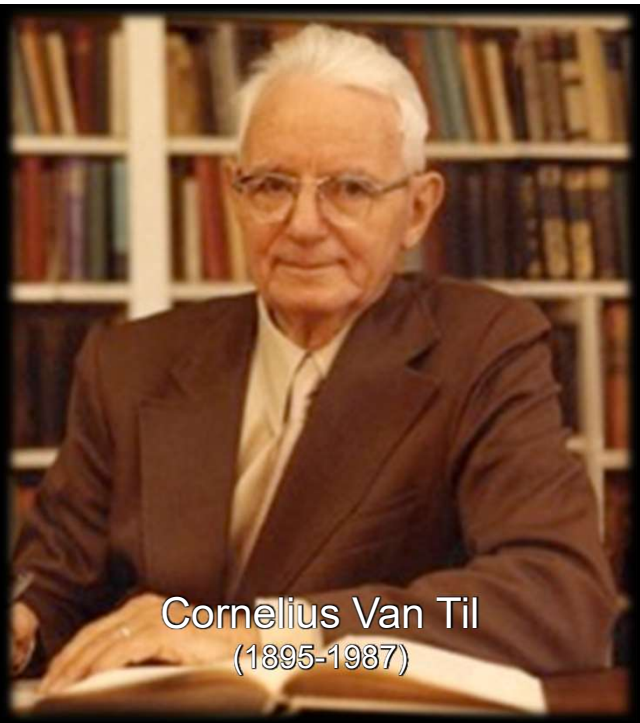
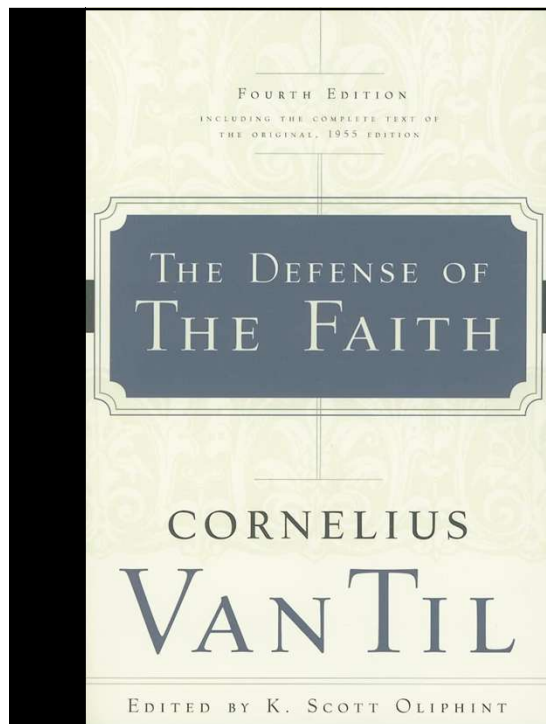
Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

*"We should admit that **we cannot give any wholly satisfactory account of the situation as it actually obtains.** ... All that we can do with this question, as with many other questions in theology, is to hem it in, in order to keep out errors, and to say that truth lies within a certain territory.*

[Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel*, 2nd ed., edited by K. Scott Oliphint (P&R Publishing, 2015), 63-64]



Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)



*"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:

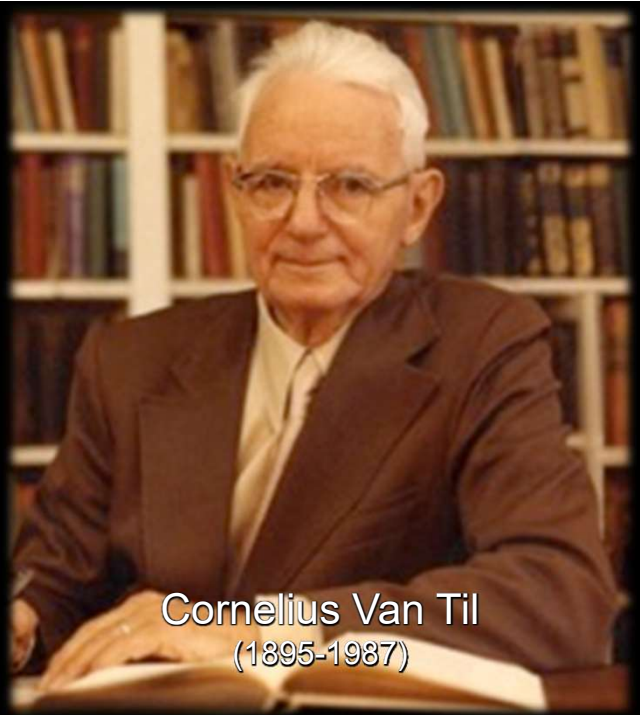
- (1) What is it to be "correctly interpreted"?**
- (2) Must this correct interpretation be a presupposition or can it be a conclusion?**

IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH

VOLUME II

A SURVEY OF CHRISTIAN EPISTEMOLOGY

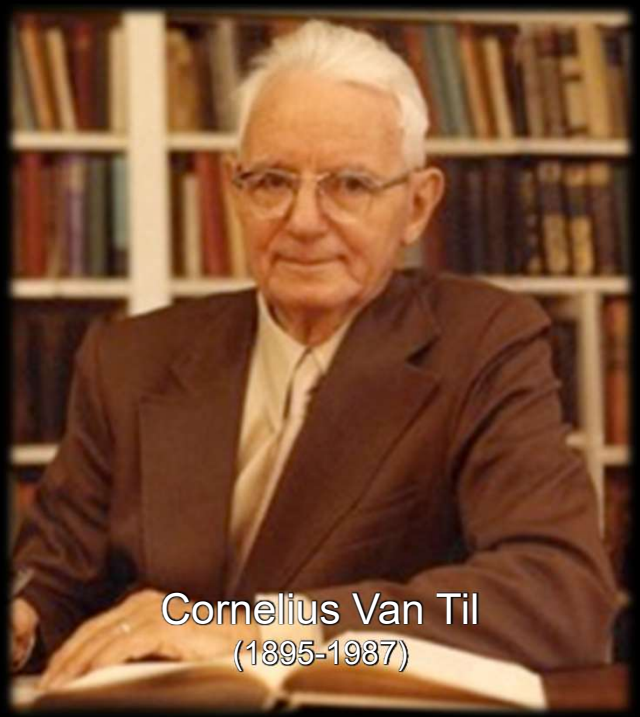
Cornelius VanTil
Professor of Apologetics
Westminster Theological Seminary
Philadelphia, Pa.



Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

*"The 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)



Joe Boot

"The Presuppositional apologist begins, not with saying 'Well, what are the brute facts or what's the brute data out there' and then trying to add those bits of data together to add up to some sort of indubitable, undoubtable starting point. We recognize from revelation that God is, God has spoken and that is our supra-rational, that is our faith, our religious starting point. So we proceed from the starting point of God's revelation of Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ."

What is more, Boot's characterization here that other apologetic methods are in search for an indubitable, undoubtable starting point is manifestly Cartesian philosophy (i.e., the philosophy of René Descartes) .

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To be sure, there are contemporary Christian philosophers who might be more or less sympathetic to Descartes' thinking.

Such thinking, however, is quite removed from the philosophical realism of Thomas Aquinas.

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Thus, Boot's distinguishing Presuppositionalism from Cartesianism says nothing about Presuppositionalism's superiority over the Classical Apologetics of those who are Thomists.

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My point here is not, if Boot only was aware of how Aquinas's philosophy shapes certain Classical Apologetics, then he would retire his Presuppositionalism.

Rather, I am saying that if he was aware and still rejected Classical apologetics, it would be for entirely different reasons than the ones he gives here.

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Joe Boot

*Nobody proves their [sic] most basic foundational assumptions with something else because the **thing** you proved your most basic assumption with **would in fact be your most basic assumption**. So, there's no proposition without presupposition. A Presuppositional apologist says 'My starting point in my reasoning, in my thinking, and in my defense of the faith is the self-attesting revelation of God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ and as revealed in Scripture.' "*

Note that Boot traces assumptions back to a "thing" that would itself be an assumption.

But assumptions are cognitive states of a knower and are "about" things. They are not, strictly speaking, things in and of themselves.

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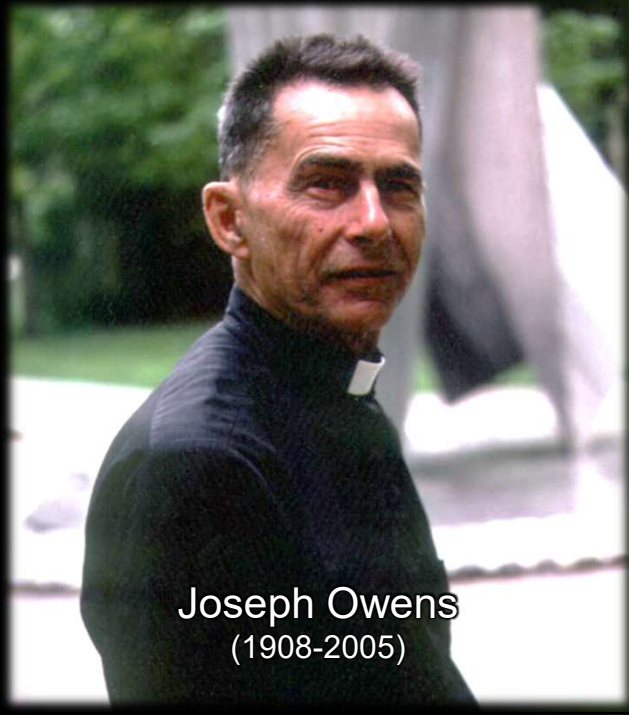
What is happening here is that the Presuppositionalist is "grounding" knowing in the categories of knowing itself rather than grounding it in being or existence.

He fails to consider that what it means to know a thing has to do with the connection between what it is to BE a knower and what it is to BE a known.

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In other words, for the Classical Realist, to know is to become the known in the actuality of cognition.

*Nobody proves their [sic] most basic foundational assumptions with something else because the **thing** you proved your most basic assumption with **would in fact be your most basic assumption**. So, there's no proposition without presupposition. A Presuppositional apologist says 'My starting point in my reasoning, in my thinking, and in my defense of the faith is the self-attesting revelation of God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ and as revealed in Scripture.' "*

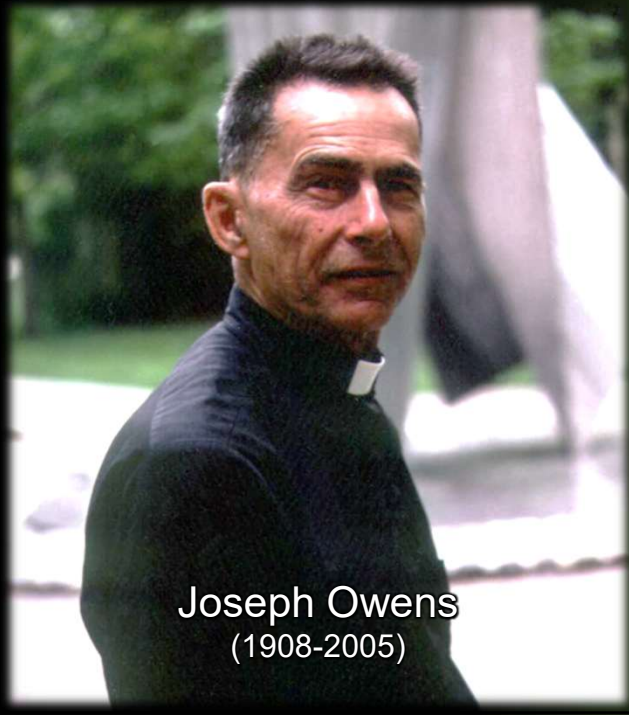


Joseph Owens
(1908-2005)

COGNITION

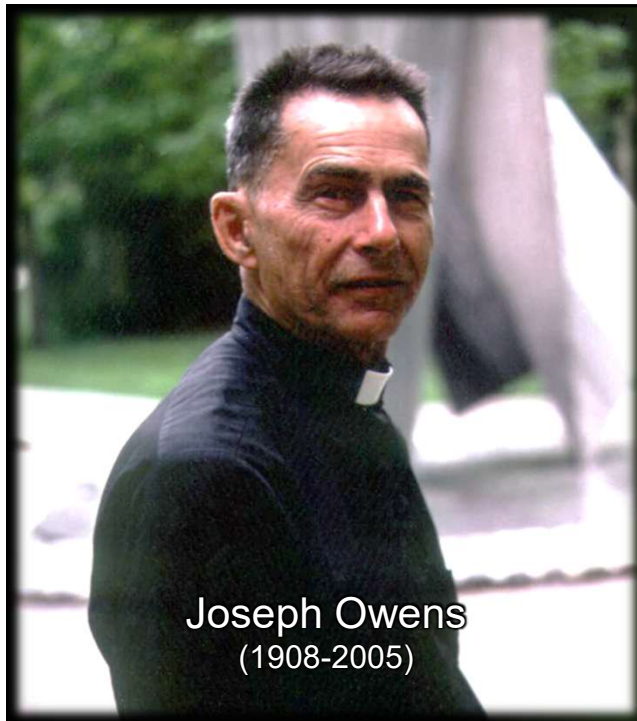
An Epistemological Inquiry

Joseph Owens, C.Ss.R.



Joseph Owens
(1908-2005)

"Cognition, then, has to be explained in terms of existence. The house exists in itself, but also exists in the awareness of the one perceiving it or knowing it. The two kinds of existence are obviously different from each other. For convenience, the existence of the house in itself may be called real existence. Its existence in somebody's awareness may be called intentional or cognitional existence. ..."



Joseph Owens
(1908-2005)

This traditional explanation of cognition as a way of existence is strange at first to those who approach it from a background of modern or postmodern philosophy. But it fits normally into an Aristotelian or Scholastic setting. Adjustment to it may take much careful thought and persevering attention. It is essential, however, for a philosophical understanding of cognition. The effort and time required for grasping it will accordingly be amply repaid."

[Joseph Owens, *Cognition: An Epistemological Inquiry* (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1992), 39, emphasis in original]



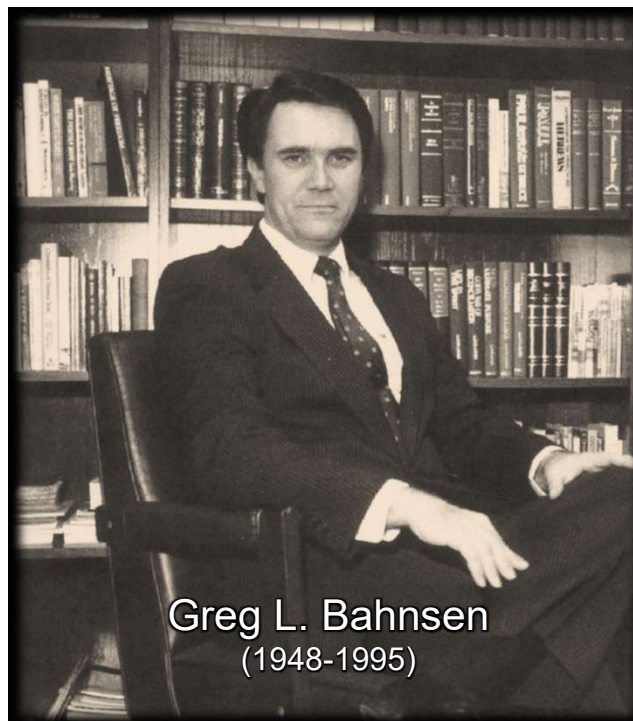
Joe Boot

*Nobody proves their [sic] most basic foundational assumptions with something else because the thing you proved your most basic assumption with would in fact be your most basic assumption. **So, there's no proposition without presupposition.** A Presuppositional apologist says 'My starting point in my reasoning, in my thinking, and in my defense of the faith is the self-attesting revelation of God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ and as revealed in Scripture.' "*

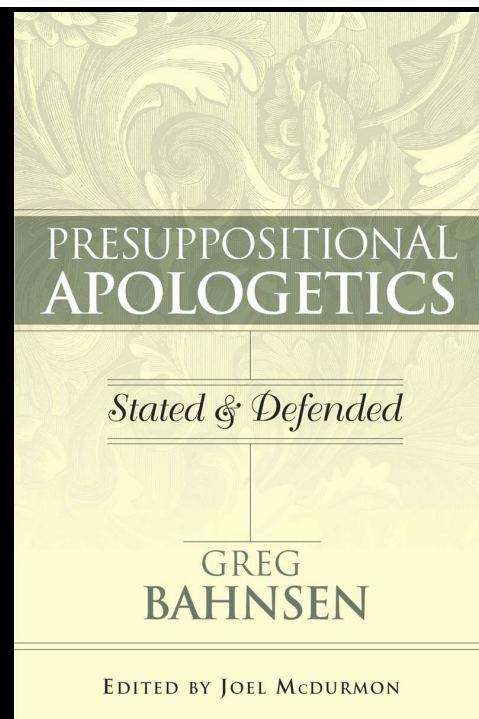
I think Boot is right here. But the question to ask is where do presuppositions come from?

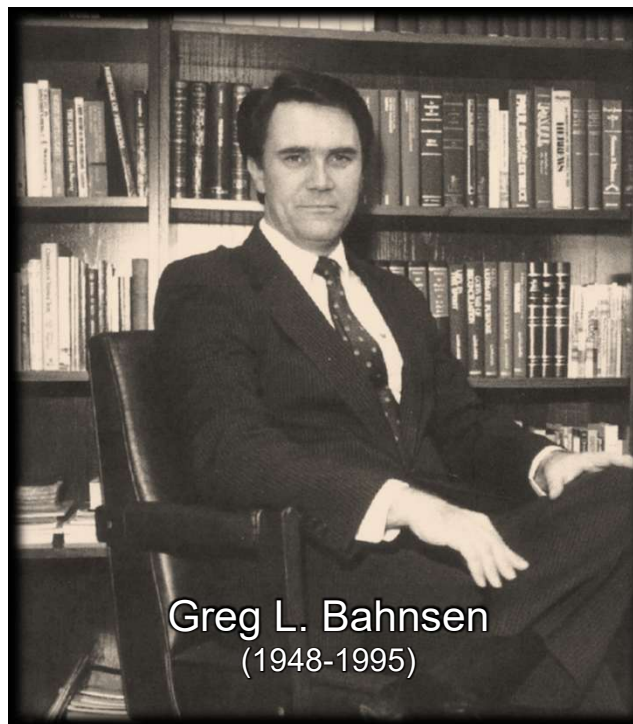
The Presuppositionalist thinks that one must choose the correct presupposition of the existence and authority of the Trinitarian God of the sixty-six books of the Protestant (Reformed) Bible.

Nobody proves their [sic] most basic foundational assumptions with something else because the thing you proved your most basic assumption with would in fact be your most basic assumption. So, there's no proposition without presupposition. A Presuppositional apologist says 'My starting point in my reasoning, in my thinking, and in my defense of the faith is the self-attesting revelation of God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ and as revealed in Scripture.' "



Greg L. Bahnsen
(1948-1995)





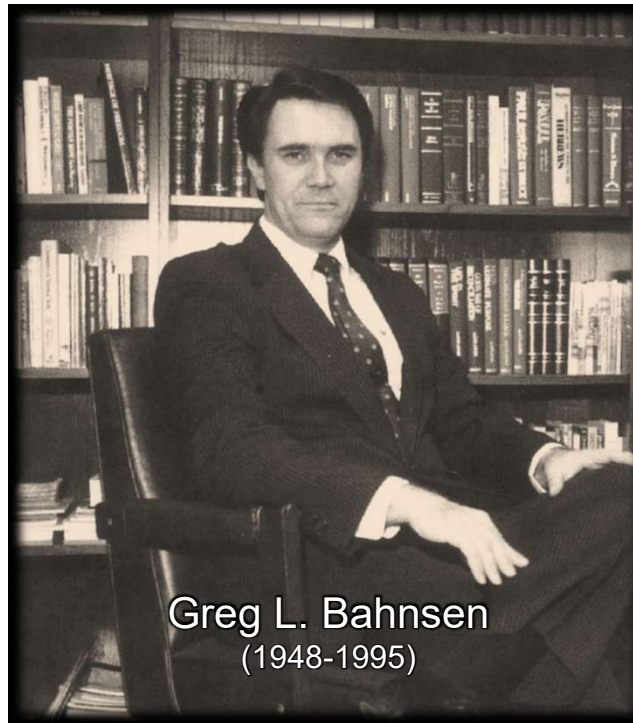
Greg L. Bahnsen
(1948-1995)

"Resting upon the authority of the living God rather than that of independent human reasoning, the apologist must presuppose the truth of Scripture and lay siege to all apostate presuppositions. This must be his method because the Word of God in the Bible has a unique epistemological status for the Christian: it requires no corroboration and carries its own evidence inherently or self-attestingly."

[Greg Bahnsen, *Presuppositional Apologetics: Stated and Defended*, ed. by Joel McDurmon (Power Springs: American Vision Press / Nacogdoches: Covenant Media Press, 4)]

He will insist that this presupposition is the necessary pre-condition of intelligibility.

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Greg L. Bahnsen
(1948-1995)

*"What the apologist must endeavor to do is to demonstrate that **without Christian presuppositions there is no intelligible use of facts and logic**—that human knowledge and interpretation fail instantly. Therefore, to be reasonable at all, men must submit to the ultimate standard of God's self-attesting word; to refuse this is to insist upon intellectual foolishness and eternal damnation."*

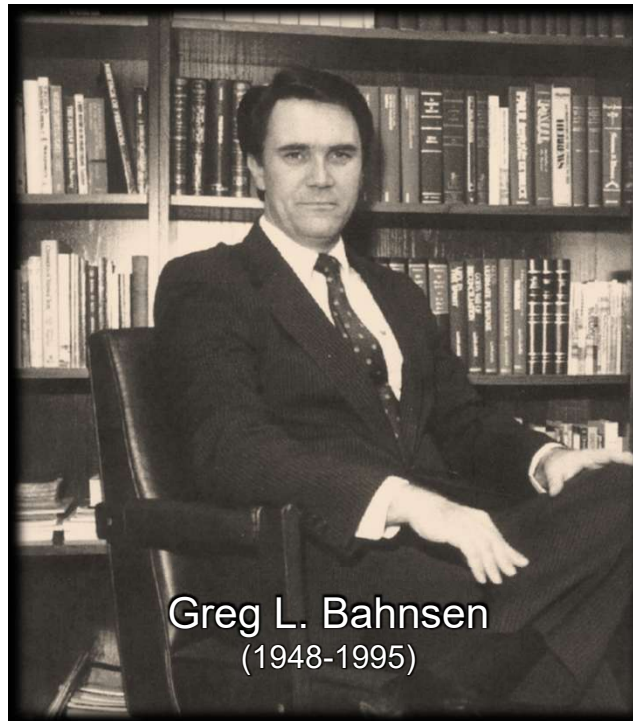
[Greg Bahnsen, *Presuppositional Apologetics: Stated and Defended*, ed. by Joel McDurmon (Power Springs: American Vision Press / Nacogdoches: Covenant Media Press, 14)]



Bahnsen / Sproul Debate

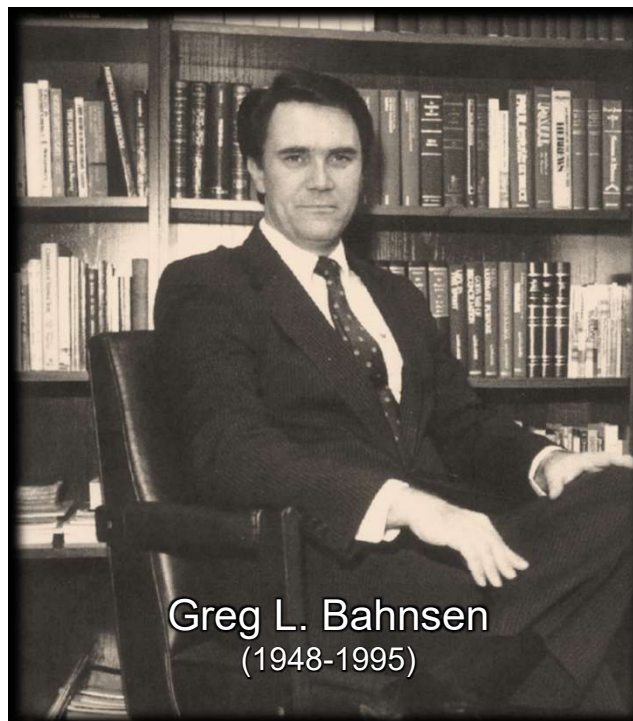
Greg Bahnsen
(1948-1995)

R. C. Sproul
(1939-2017)



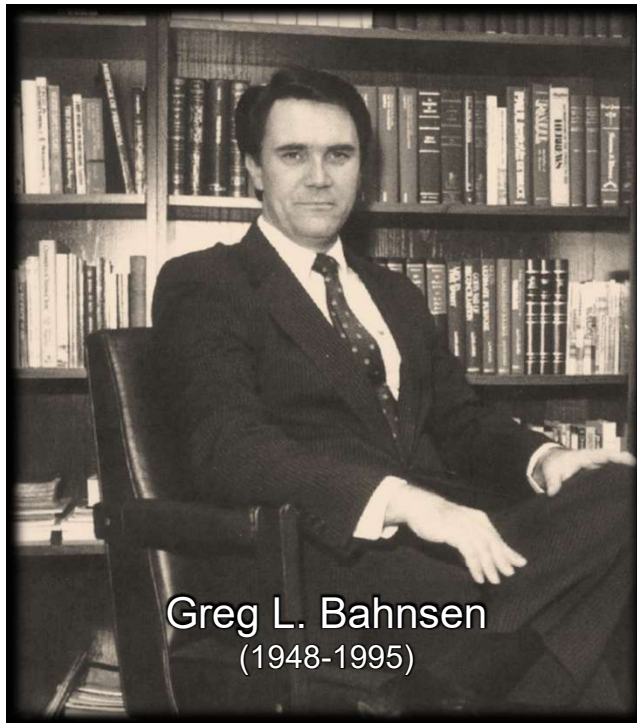
Greg L. Bahnsen
(1948-1995)

"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.**



Greg L. Bahnsen
(1948-1995)

"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."



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."

He will insist that this presupposition is the necessary pre-condition of intelligibility.

The Classical Realist will argue that one's fundamental presuppositions like, for example, the fundamental laws of thought, arise in our understanding from our encounter with the sensible world around us.

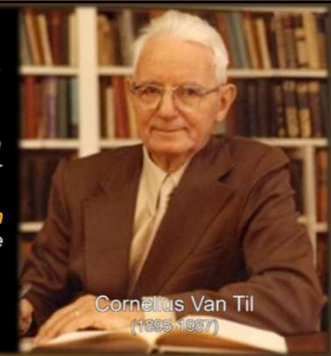
*Nobody proves their [sic] most basic foundational assumptions with something else because the thing you proved your most basic assumption with would in fact be your most basic assumption. **So, there's no proposition without presupposition.** A Presuppositional apologist says 'My starting point in my reasoning, in my thinking, and in my defense of the faith is the self-attesting revelation of God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ and as revealed in Scripture.' "*

I submit that long before the Presuppositionalist considered the issue of "starting points," he had already come to know many things about the world around him.

*Nobody proves their [sic] most basic foundational assumptions with something else because the thing you proved your most basic assumption with would in fact be your most basic assumption. **So, there's no proposition without presupposition.** A Presuppositional apologist says 'My starting point in my reasoning, in my thinking, and in my defense of the faith is the self-attesting revelation of God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ and as revealed in Scripture.' "*

Thus, the issue to examine is how is it that one can already come to know many truths about reality long before one finally starts to ask reflective questions about knowledge.

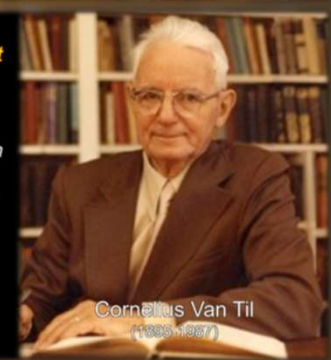
"We are well aware of the fact that non-Christians have a great deal of knowledge about this world that is true as far as it goes. That is, there is a sense in which we can and must allow for the value of knowledge of non-Christians. **This has always been a difficult point.** It is often the one great source of confusion on the question of faith and its relation to reason.



Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

"We should admit that **we cannot give any wholly satisfactory account of the situation as it actually obtains.** ... All that we can do with this question, as with many other questions in theology, is to hem it in, in order to keep out errors, and to say that truth lies within a certain territory.

[Cornelius Van Til, *Common Sense and the Apologetic*, 2nd ed., edited by M. Scott Oliphant (P&R Publishing, 1964), pp. 64]

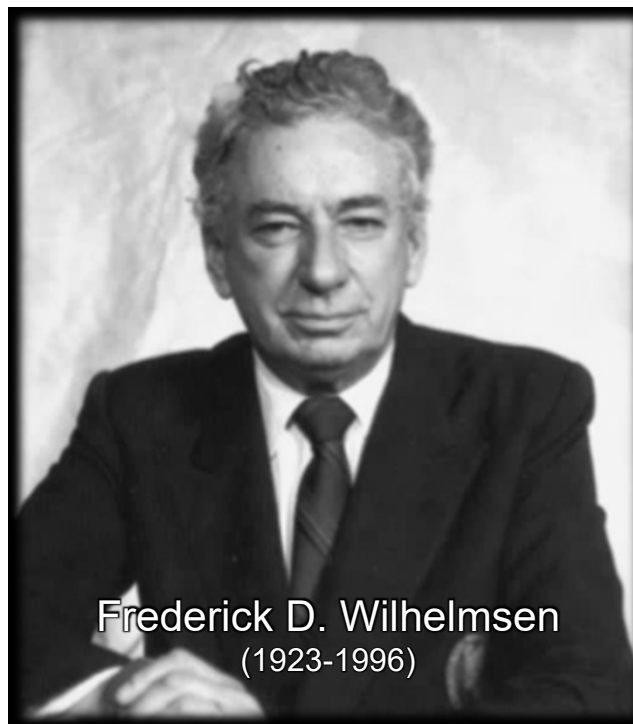


Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

Thus, the issue to examine is how is it that one can already come to know many truths about reality long before one finally starts to ask reflective questions about knowledge.

The problem is the Presuppositionalist has "hemmed himself in" to a qualified form of Calvinism that disallows the "account".

... the only way to [sic] must have been to start with assumptions with something like because the thing you are assuming must have been assumed in the first place. **In** there's no proposition without presupposition. A Presuppositionalist would say, 'My starting point is the existence of the Trinity, and the defense of the faith is the self-evident revelation of God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ and as revealed in Scripture.'



Frederick D. Wilhelmsen
(1923-1996)

"The realist is a philosopher who does not forget that he is a man when he begins to philosophize.

*As a man, if he be sane, a philosopher has not the faintest shade of a doubt that he exists in a world of things existing in independence of his cognition; even more, the very data of that knowing tell him that **knowing is of being and not of knowing.**"*

[Frederick D. Wilhelmsen, foreword to Etienne Gilson, *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge*, trans. Mark A. Wauck (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986), 15]

Thus is the problem with Presuppositionalism. Because of the (admitted) influence of Immanuel Kant, Van Til sought to focus the issue on human knowing, and argue that God is the deliverer of such knowing.

"The realist is a philosopher who does not forget that he is a man when he begins to philosophize.

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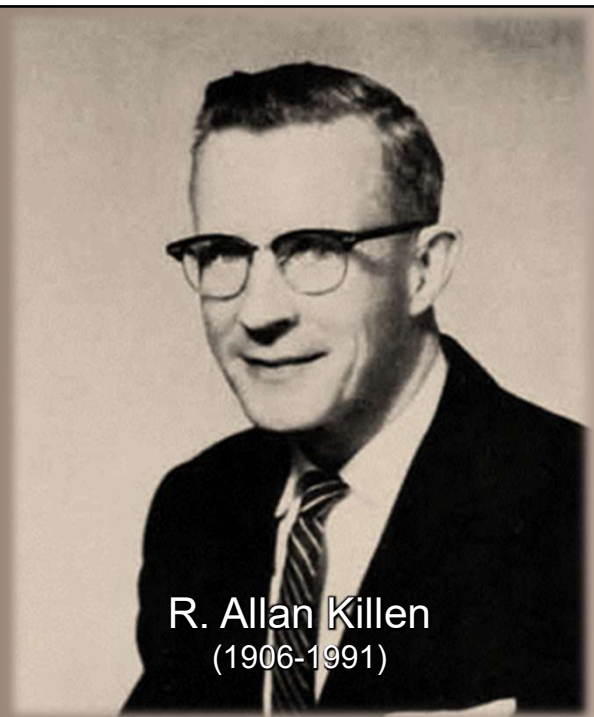
The Classical Apologist of the Thomistic Realism camp realizes that human knowing is first of all a knowing of sensible things and then argues that God is the creator of such things.

"The realist is a philosopher who does not forget that he is a man when he begins to philosophize.

*As a man, if he be sane, a philosopher has not the faintest shade of a doubt that he exists in a world of things existing in independence of his cognition; even more, the very data of that knowing tell him that **knowing is of being and not of knowing.**"*

[Frederick D. Wilhelmsen, foreword to Etienne Gilson, *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge*, trans. Mark A. Wauck (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986), 15]

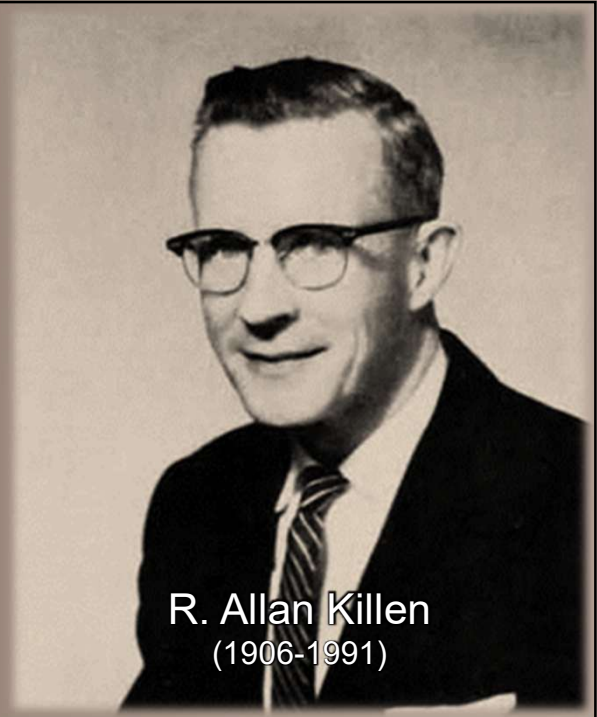
"The heart of Van Til's argument centers around the word fact. The word has two specific meanings. It can be used to express an event in history or a phenomenon in science ... [or] to express the meaning of an event or phenomenon. For example, the historical event of the Exodus can be seen as a fact 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)





Joe Boot

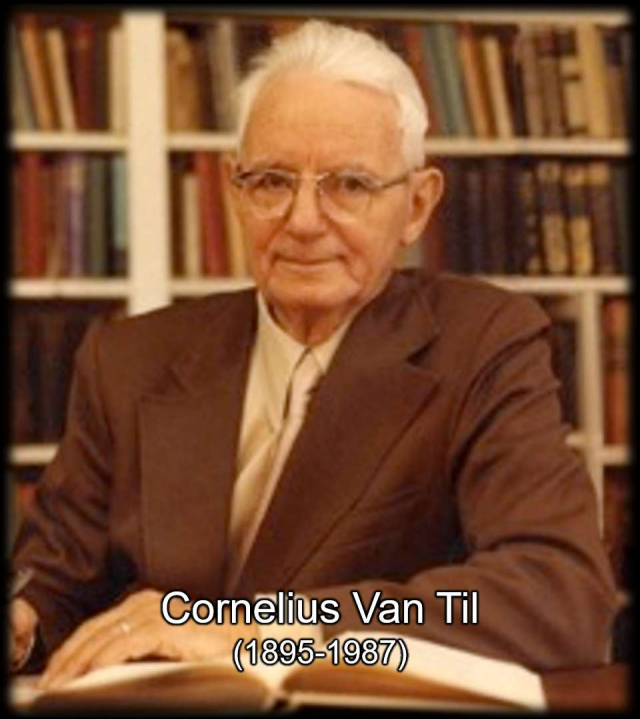
*"The tendency with other forms of apologetics is to suggest to the non-believer that in our engagement we stand together in **neutral territory**. Not in God's creation. Not as creatures of God wholly dependent upon Him. Not in terms of a law for thought that governs both of our reasoning. But as, in a certain sense, neutral persons coming to the 'facts' of experience.*

Given what we saw Van Til say earlier about the unbeliever's hatred of God and the impact that has on his knowledge of the world

*"The tendency with other forms of apologetics is to suggest to the non-believer that in our engagement we stand together in **neutral territory**. Not in God's creation. Not as creatures of God wholly dependent upon Him. Not in terms of a law for thought that governs both of our reasoning. But as, in a certain sense, neutral persons coming to the 'facts' of experience.*

"Man by his sinful nature hates the revelation of God. Therefore every concrete expression that any sinner makes about God will have in it the poisoning effect of this hatred of God. His epistemological reaction will invariably be negative, and negative along the whole line of his interpretive endeavor. There are no general principles or truths about the true God ... which he does not falsify."

[Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel*, 2nd ed., edited by K. Scott Oliphint (P&R Publishing, 2015), 71]



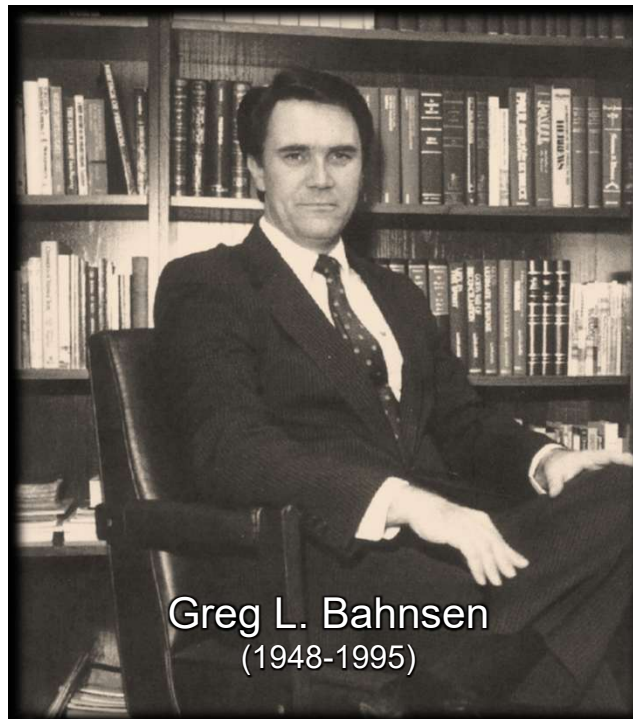
Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

Given what we saw Van Til say earlier about the unbeliever's hatred of God and the impact that has on his knowledge of the world, it should be obvious why Presuppositionalists deny any neutral territory (ground) between the believer and unbeliever.

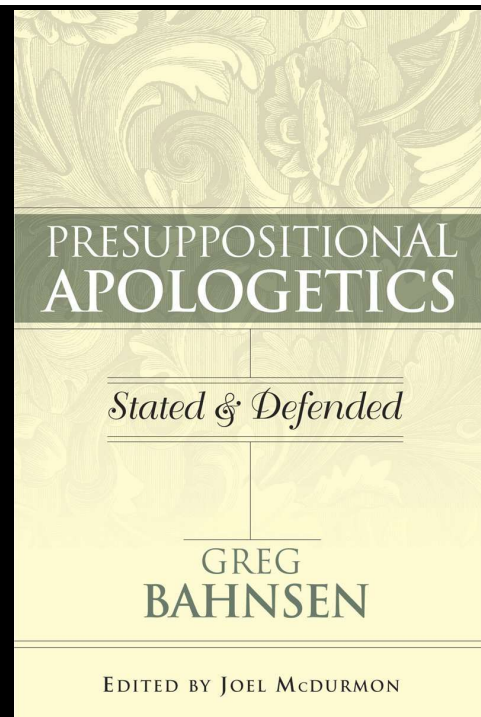
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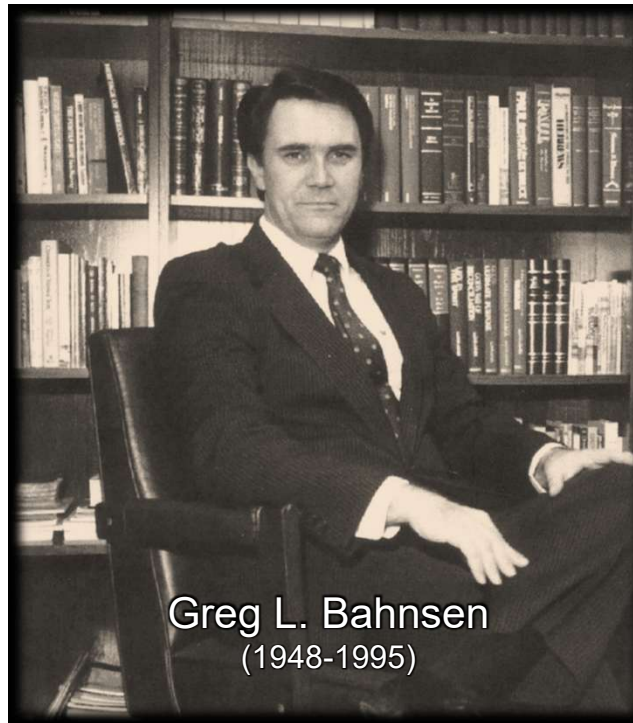
There is, however, a distinction Presuppositionalists make between "neutral" ground and "common" ground.

*"The tendency with other forms of apologetics is to suggest to the non-believer that in our engagement we stand together in **neutral territory**. Not in God's creation. Not as creatures of God wholly dependent upon Him. Not in terms of a law for thought that governs both of our reasoning. But as, in a certain sense, neutral persons coming to the 'facts' of experience.*



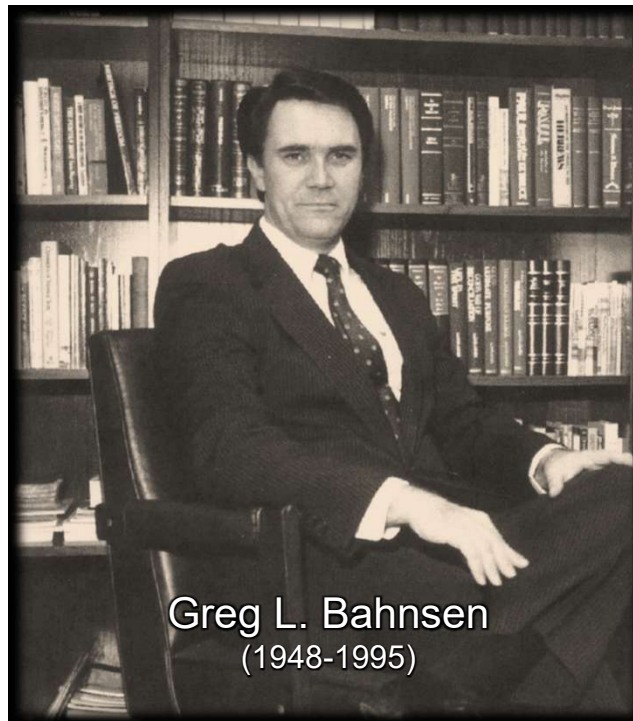
Greg L. Bahnsen
(1948-1995)





Greg L. Bahnsen
(1948-1995)

"There is not one fact or law which is 'neutral' to the Christian and non-Christian. ... While both stand on common ground, this common ground is distinctively Christian ground (for all creation is revelatory of God). But the non-Christian refuses to admit this and to build his reasoning and life upon the Word of God.



Greg L. Bahnsen
(1948-1995)

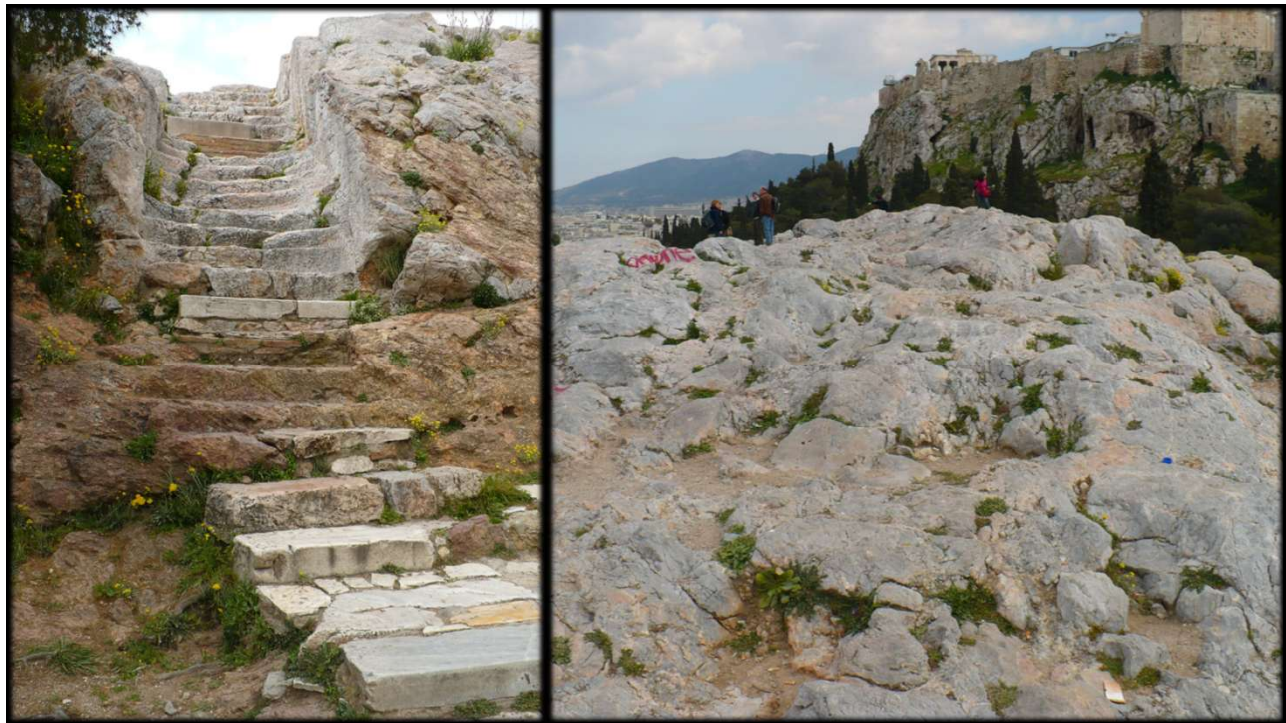
"So while both stand upon common Christian ground, the believer and unbeliever are nevertheless not neutral in their outlook and convictions. Given the antithetical mindset of the regenerate and unregenerate, the hope of a 'neutral' apologetics which appeals to commonly understood and accepted 'facts' and 'logic' is futile. Neutrality is impossible."

[Greg Bahnsen, *Presuppositional Apologetics: Stated and Defended*, ed. by Joel McDurmon (Power Springs: American Vision Press / Nacogdoches: Covenant Media Press, 91)]



Acts 10:1-2

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout *man* and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.

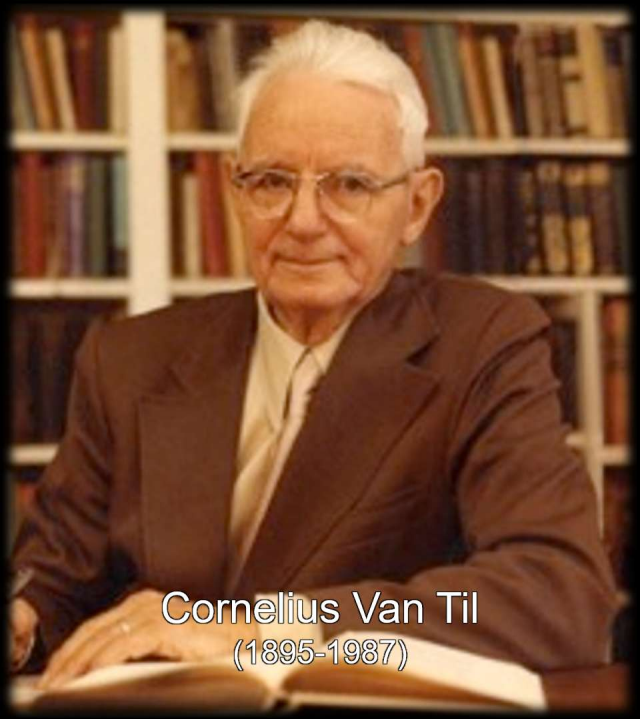


Acts 17:22-23

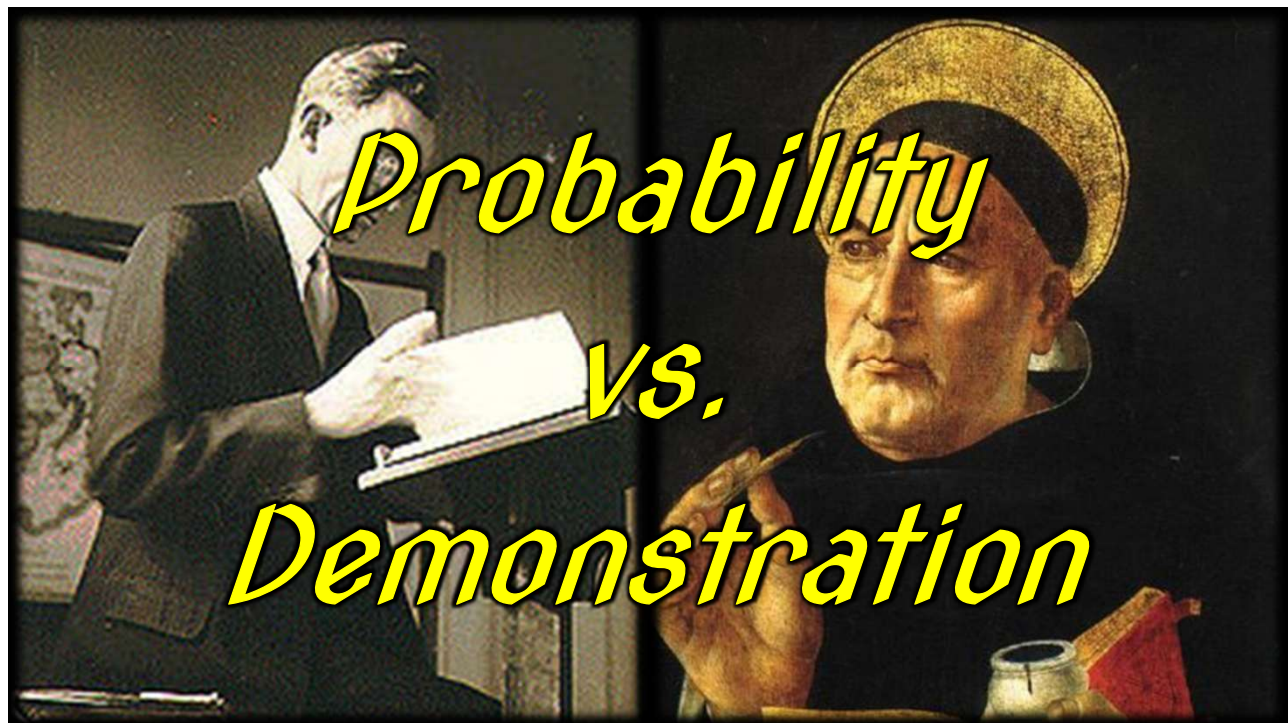
Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, **the One whom you worship without knowing**, Him I proclaim to you:

*"Man by his sinful nature hates the revelation of God. Therefore every concrete expression that any sinner makes about God will have in it the poisoning effect of this hatred of God. His epistemological reaction will invariably be negative, and negative along the whole line of his interpretive endeavor. **There are no general principles or truths about the true God ... which he does not falsify.**"*

[Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel*, 2nd ed., edited by K. Scott Oliphint (P&R Publishing, 2015), 71]



Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)





"And in a sense, sort of like the dot puzzle, and instead of following an order to discover the meaning, we're left actually in a position of the unbeliever which is: well these are just dots on the page. It's just brute facts, it's just brute data and I can join the dots however I like. I can invent the meaning."



*The tendency, implicitly or explicitly, with classical or evidential apologetics is the notion that we're neutral, we're looking at bare facts of human experience and we're going to come to those facts and try and add them up so that we see where they lead and, in terms of **the balance of probability**, decide well what is the hypothesis to **the most probable conclusion here**; what has **the balance of probability** or who has **the balance of probability** on their side; whose position is the most plausible.*



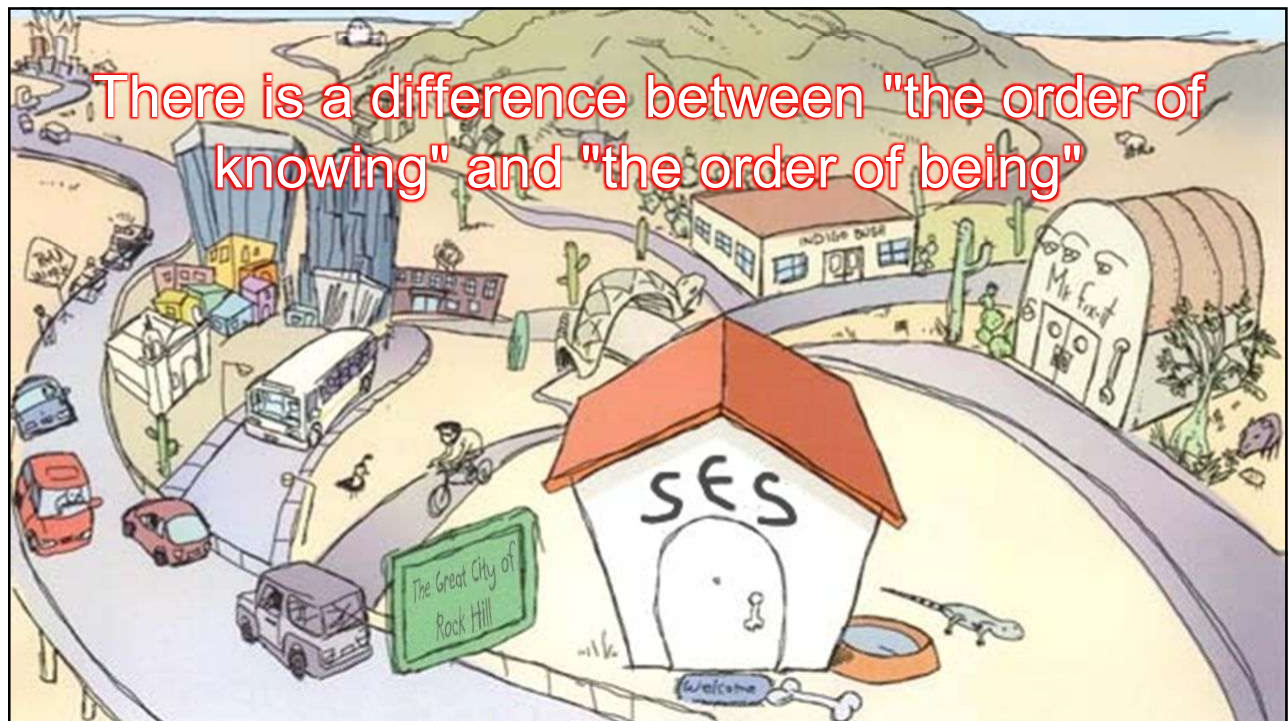
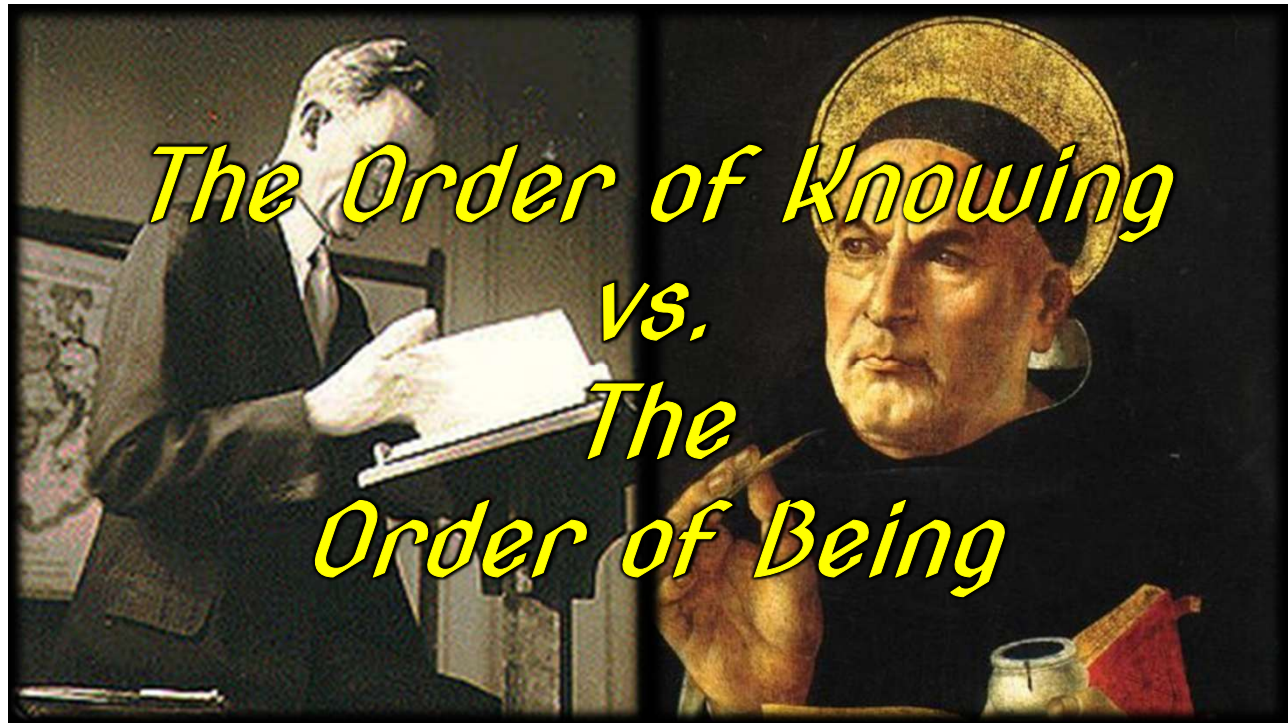
Joe Boot

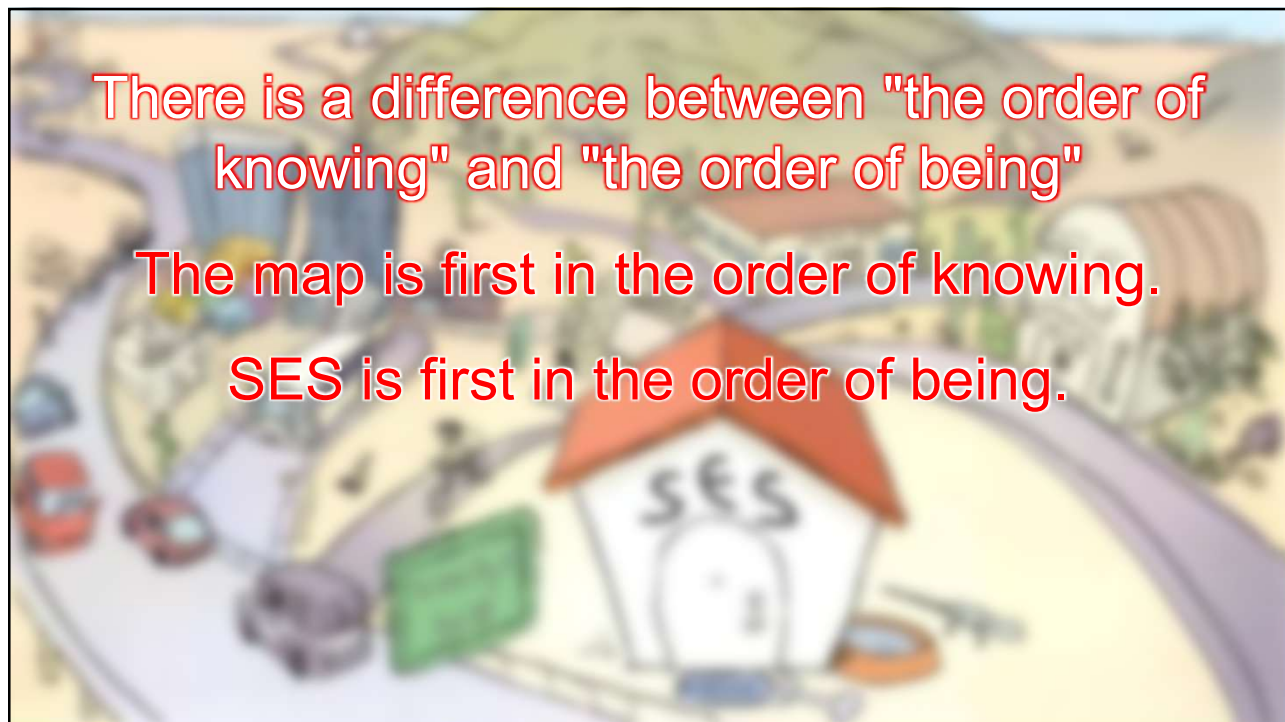
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Most Classical apologists with whom I am familiar do, indeed, argue abductively for both theism and Christianity.

But Thomists will maintain that their arguments for theism which employ the metaphysics are demonstrative, not versions of the "argument to the best explanation."

*The tendency, implicitly or explicitly, with classical or evidential apologetics is the notion that we're neutral, we're looking at bare facts of human experience and we're going to come to those facts and try and add them up so that we see where they lead and, in terms of **the balance of probability**, decide well what is the hypothesis to **the most probable conclusion here**; what has **the balance of probability** or who has **the balance of probability** on their side; whose position is **the most plausible**.*

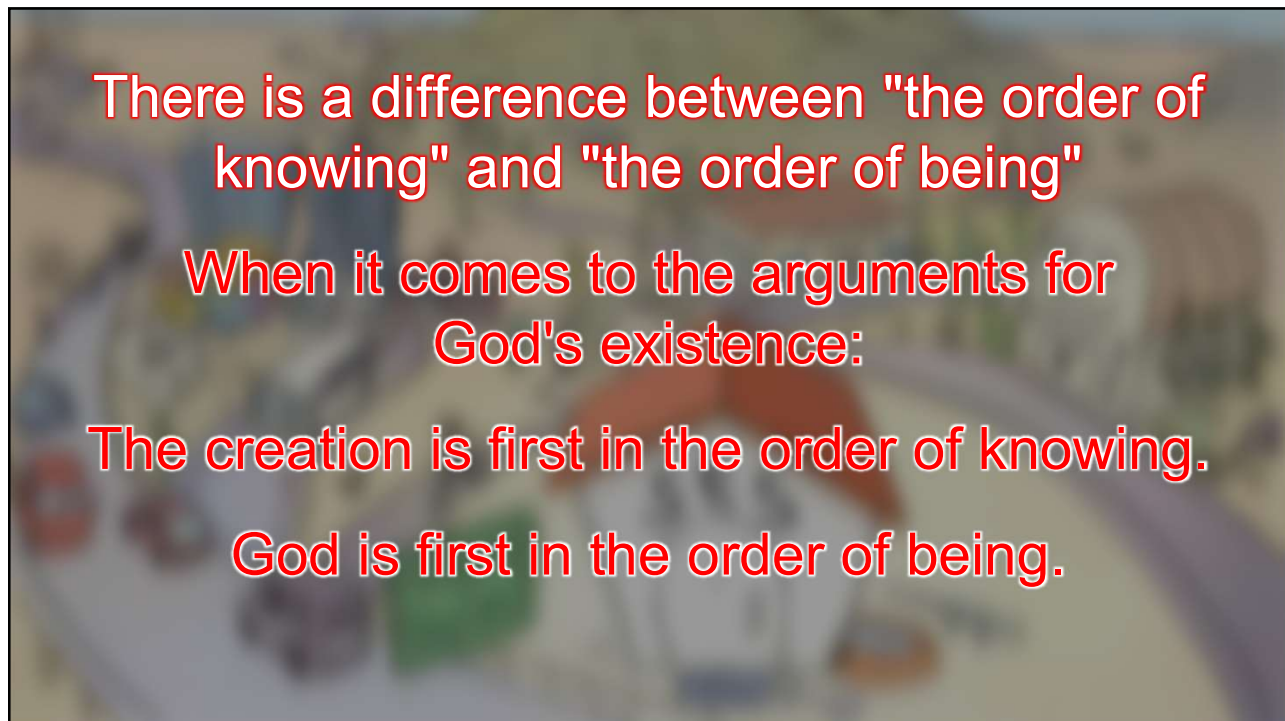




There is a difference between "the order of knowing" and "the order of being"

The map is first in the order of knowing.

SES is first in the order of being.

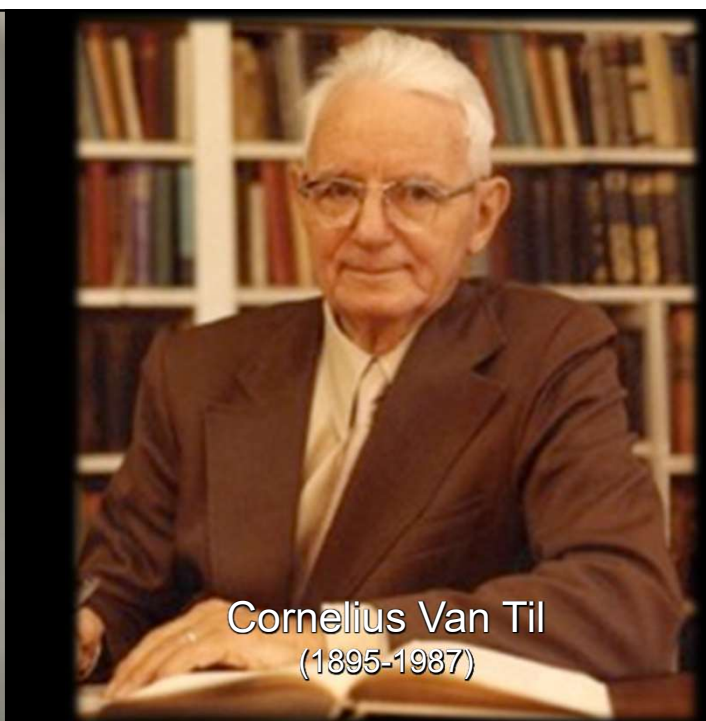
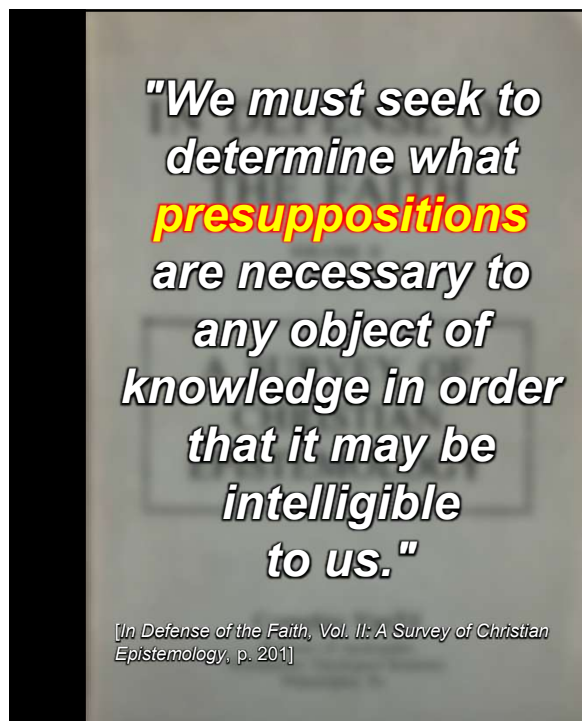
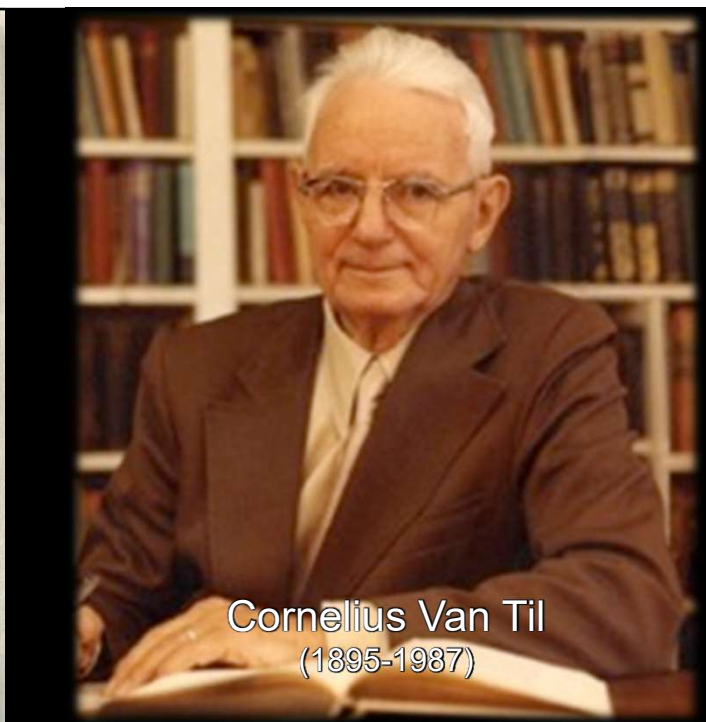
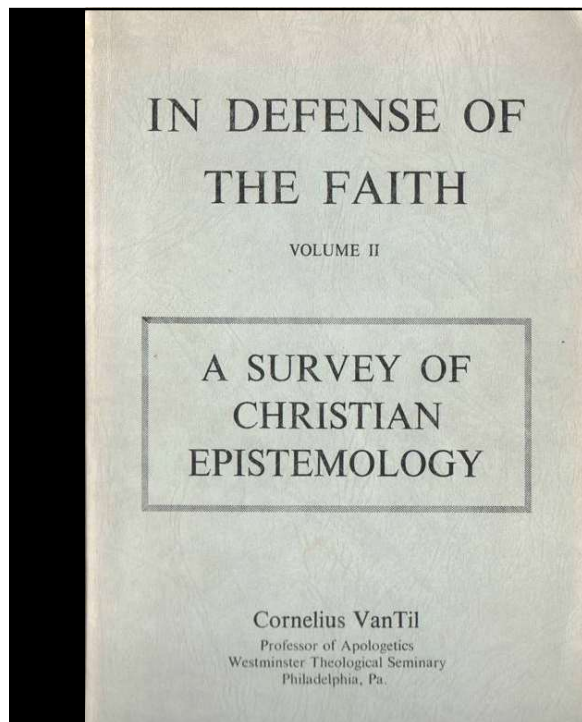


There is a difference between "the order of knowing" and "the order of being"

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* (n.c., Dulk Christian Foundation), 201]

What he goes on to say seemingly indicates that Van Til understands this.

"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]

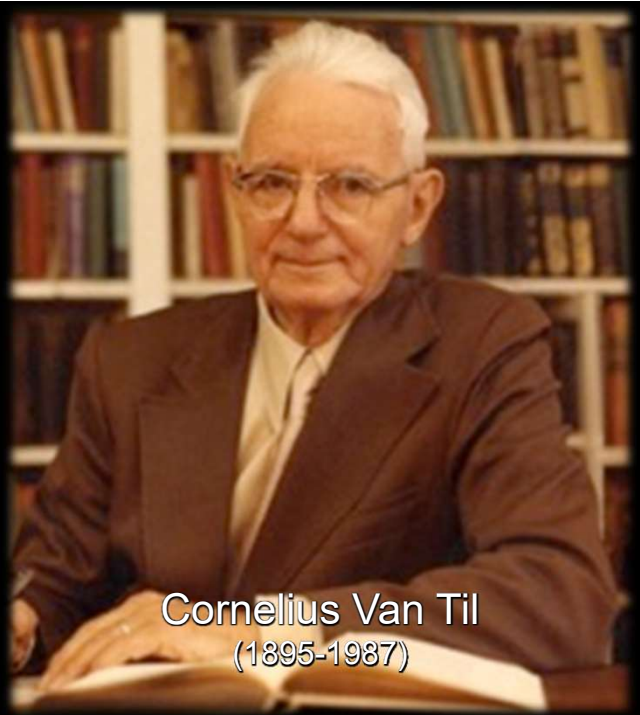
What he goes on to say seemingly indicates that Van Til understands this. However, the very nature of this "transcendental method" will end up overlooking this distinction and its implications for apologetics.

IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH

VOLUME II

A SURVEY OF CHRISTIAN EPISTEMOLOGY

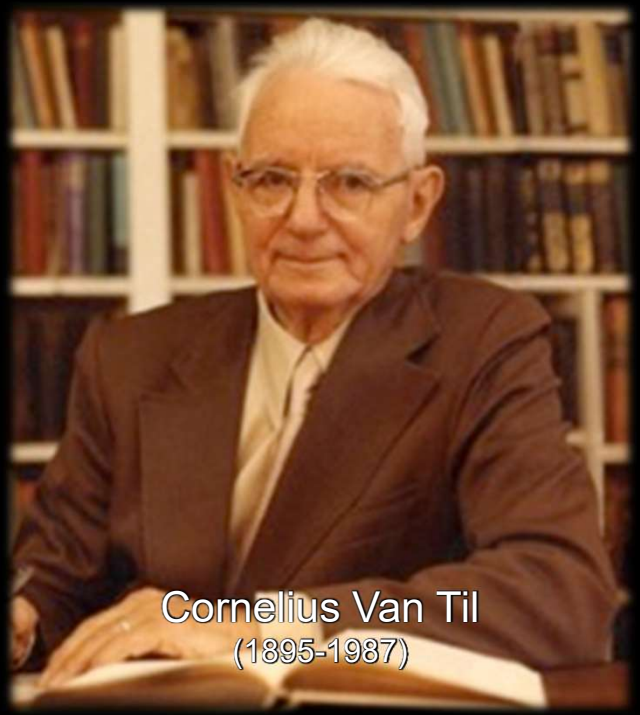
Cornelius VanTil
Professor of Apologetics
Westminster Theological Seminary
Philadelphia, Pa.



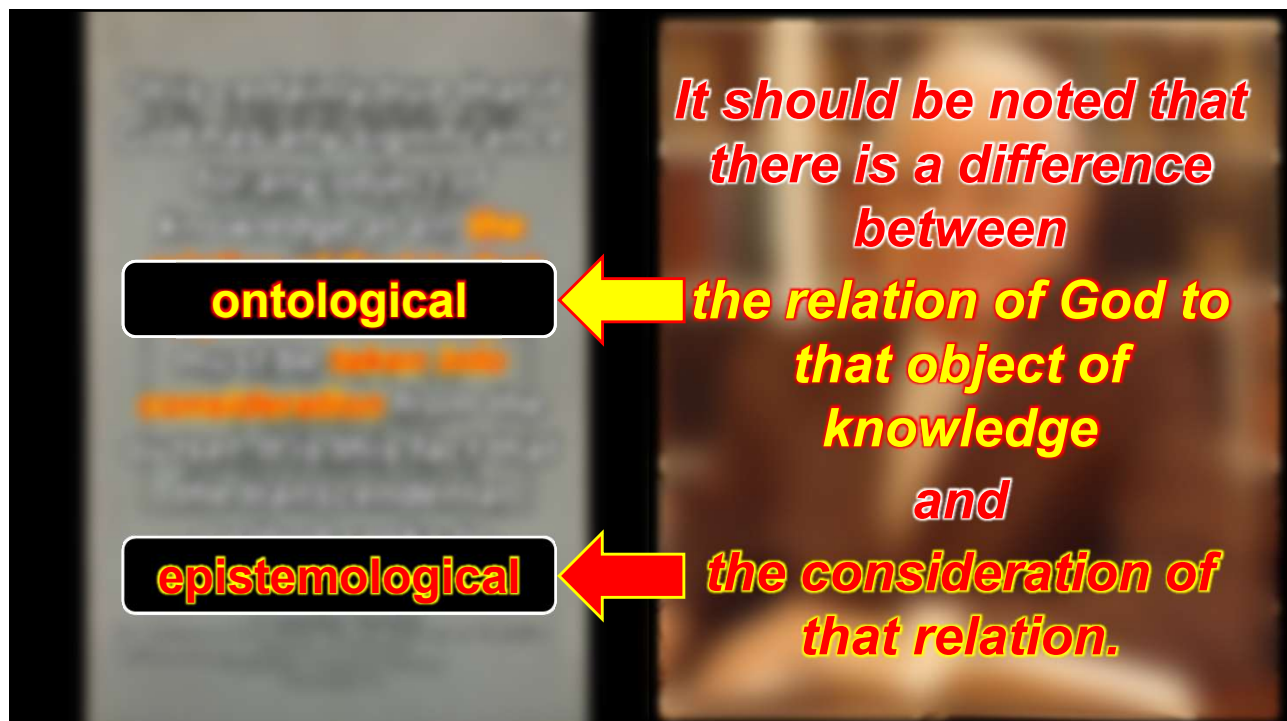
Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

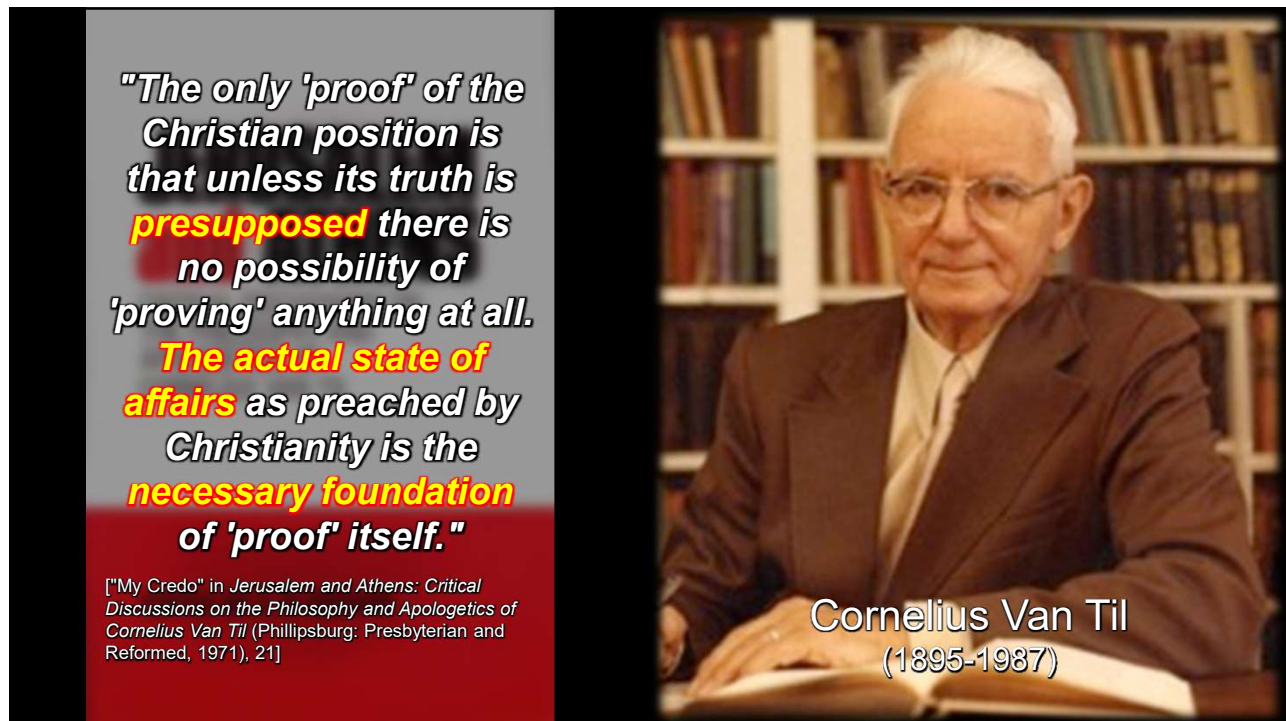
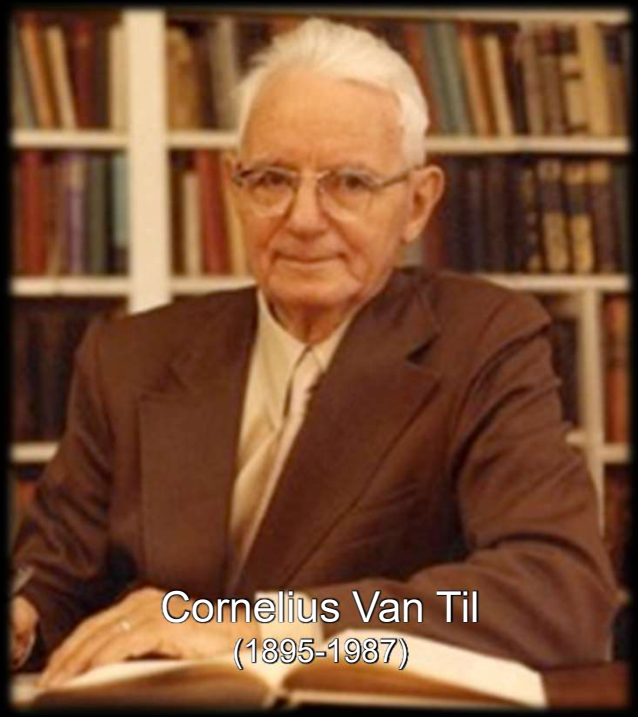
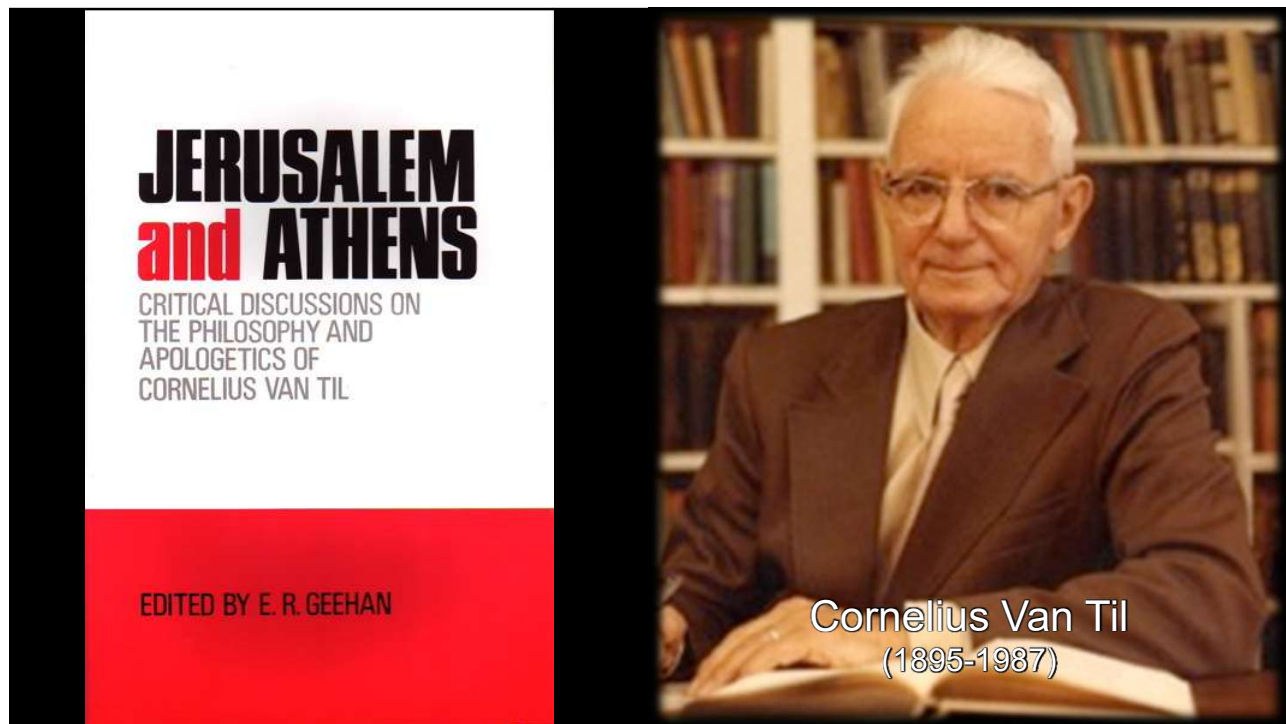
*"It is certainly true that if God has any significance for any object of knowledge at all, **the relation of God to that object of knowledge must be taken into consideration** from the outset. It is this fact that the transcendental method seeks to recognize."*

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



Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)





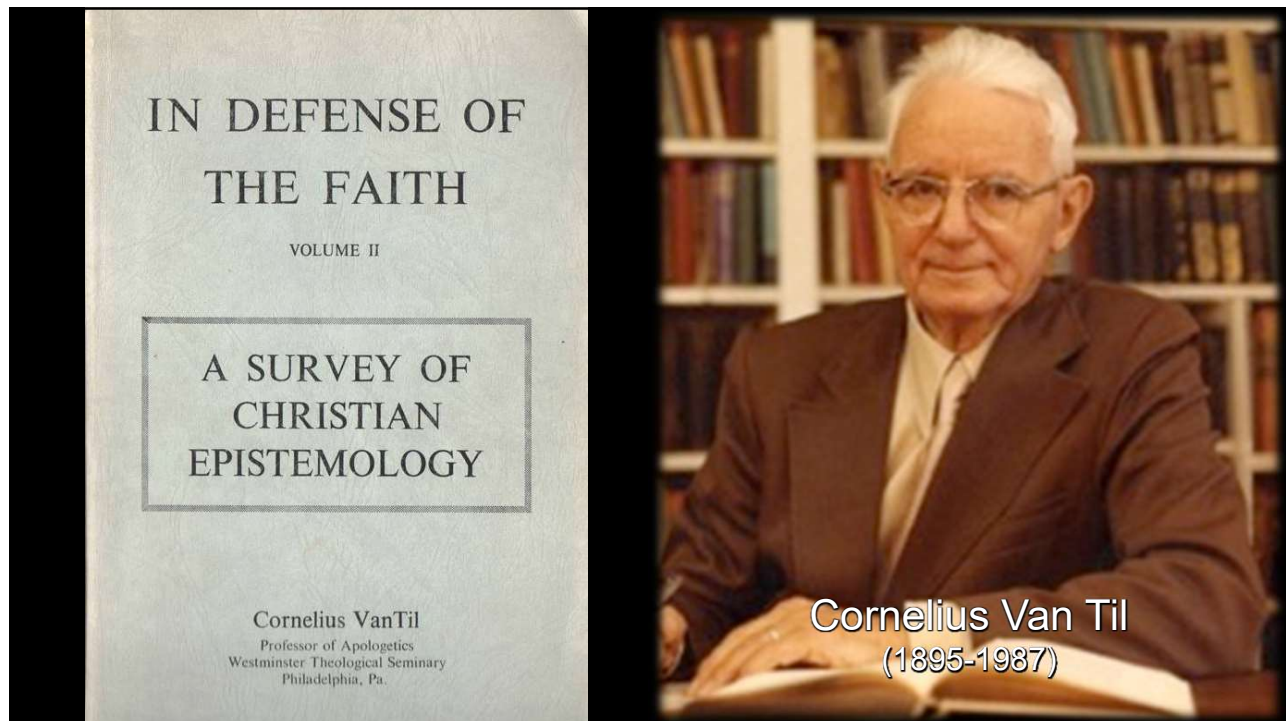
"The only 'proof' of the Christian position is that unless its truth is **presupposed there is no possibility of 'proving' anything at all. The actual state of affairs as preached by Christianity is the **necessary foundation of 'proof' itself.**"**

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

epistemology

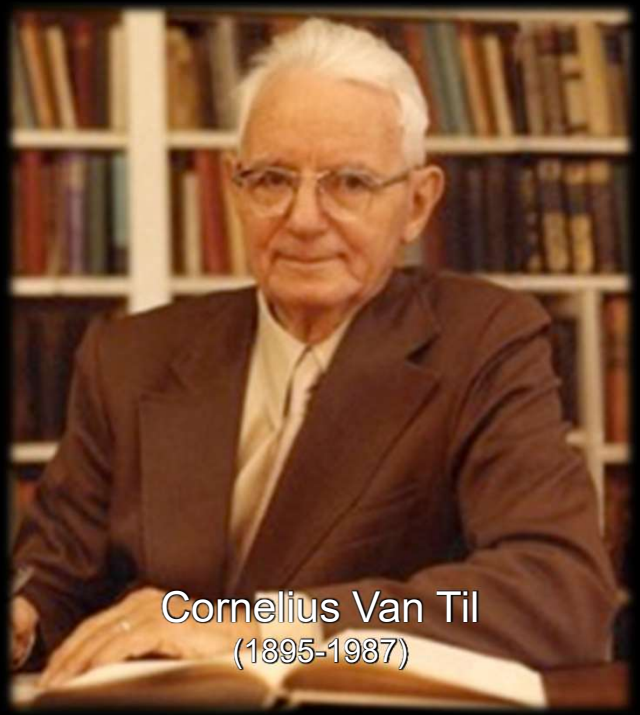
ontology

There is a difference between the actual state of affairs and presupposing the truth of the actual state of affairs.



"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]



Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

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

Consistently epistemological

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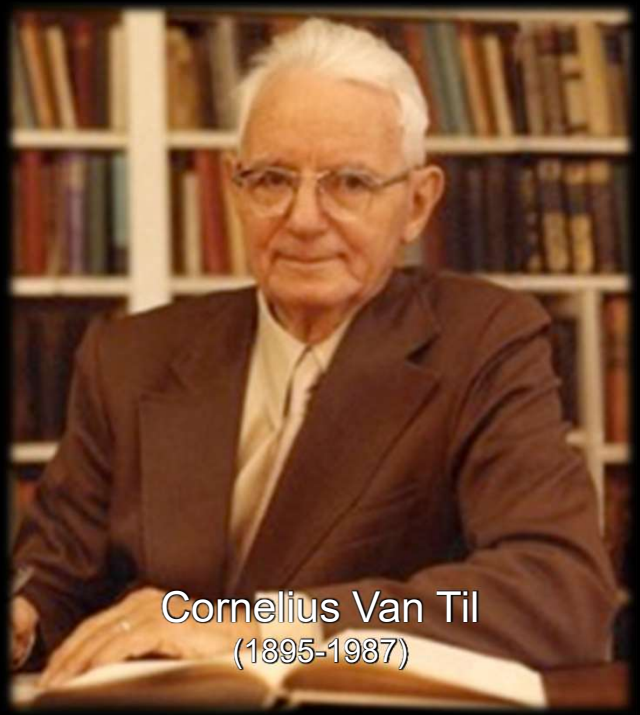
CORNELIUS
VAN TIL

EDITED BY K. SCOTT OLIPHINT

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]



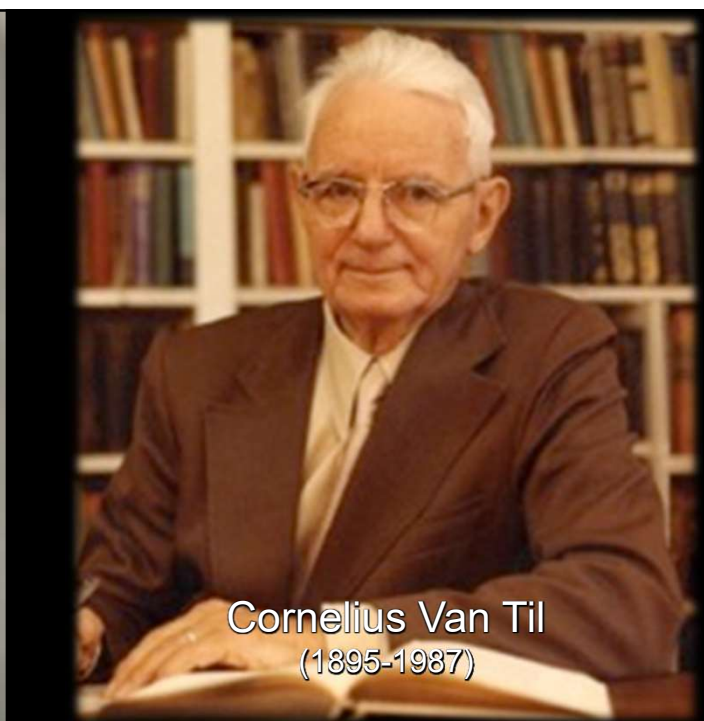
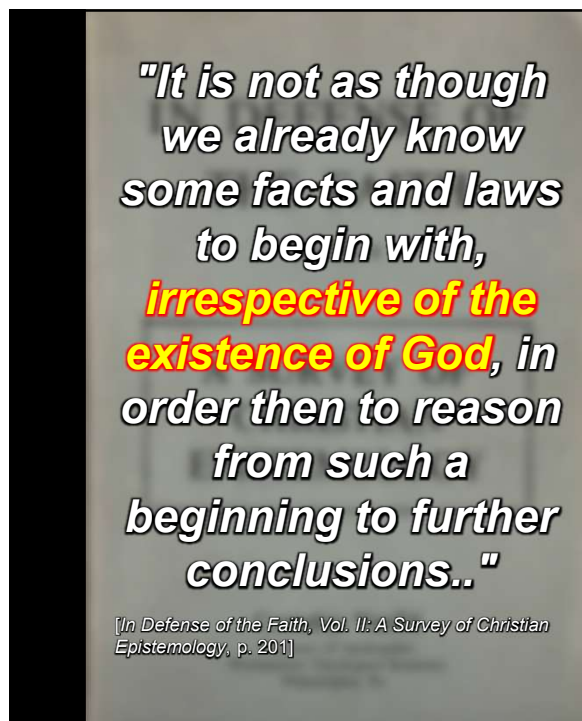
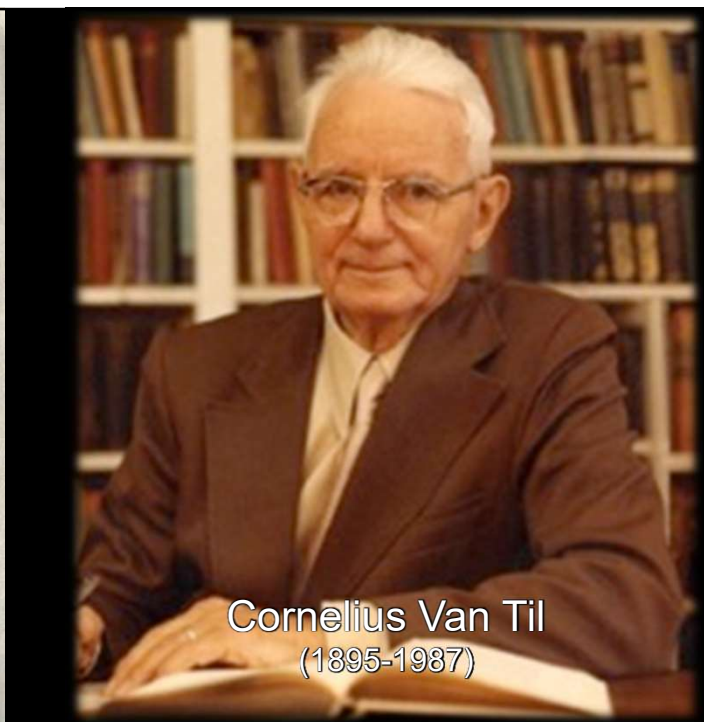
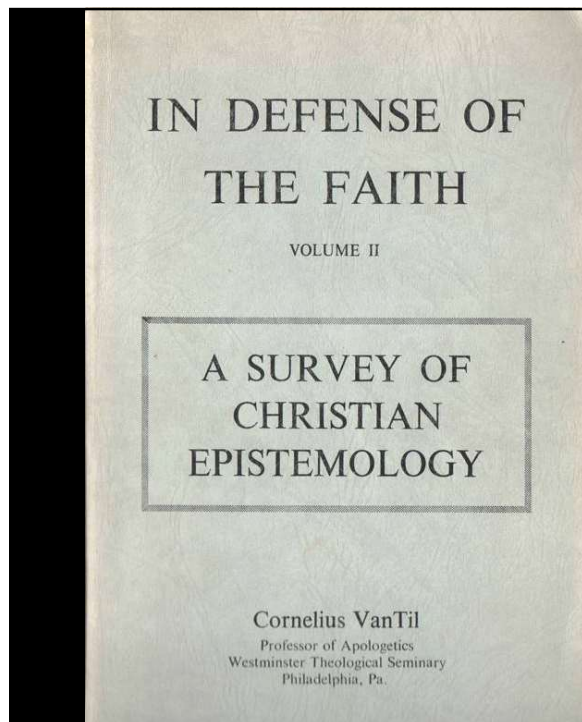
Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

"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]

Epistemological

Ontological



*"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.

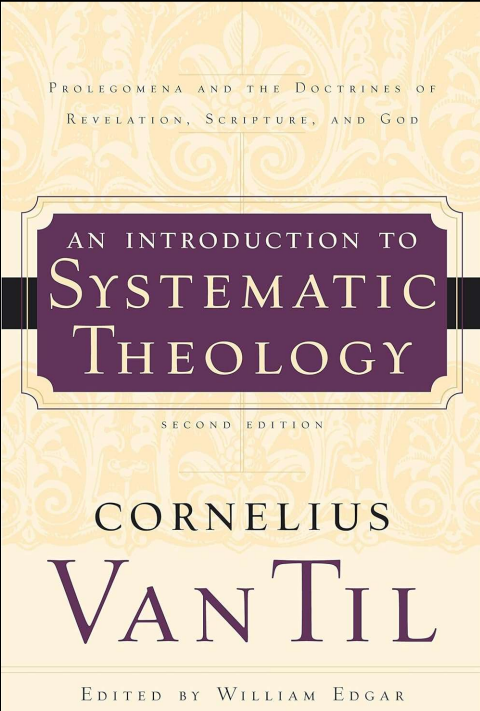
"It is not as though we already know some facts and laws to begin with, *irrespective of the existence of God*, in order then to reason from such a beginning to further conclusions.."

[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, Vol. II: A Survey of Christian Epistemology, p. 201]



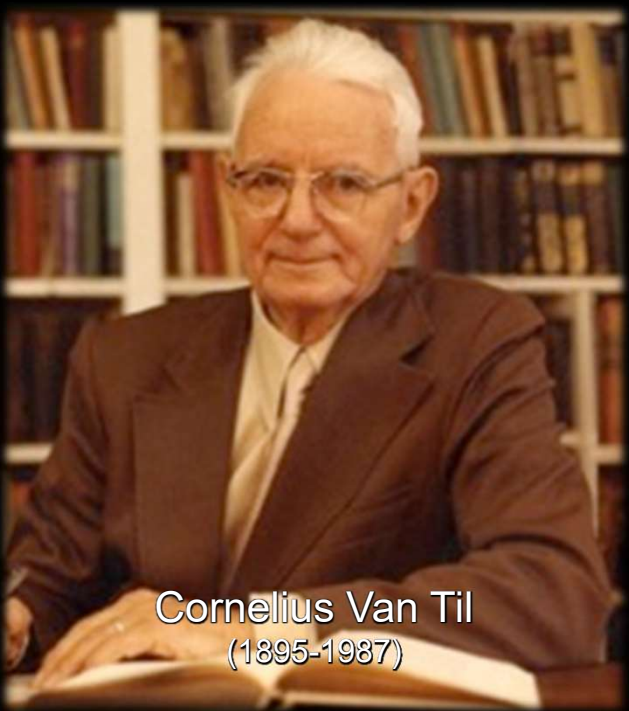
PROLEGOMENA AND THE DOCTRINES OF
REVELATION, SCRIPTURE, AND GOD

AN INTRODUCTION TO
**SYSTEMATIC
THEOLOGY**

SECOND EDITION

CORNELIUS
VAN TIL

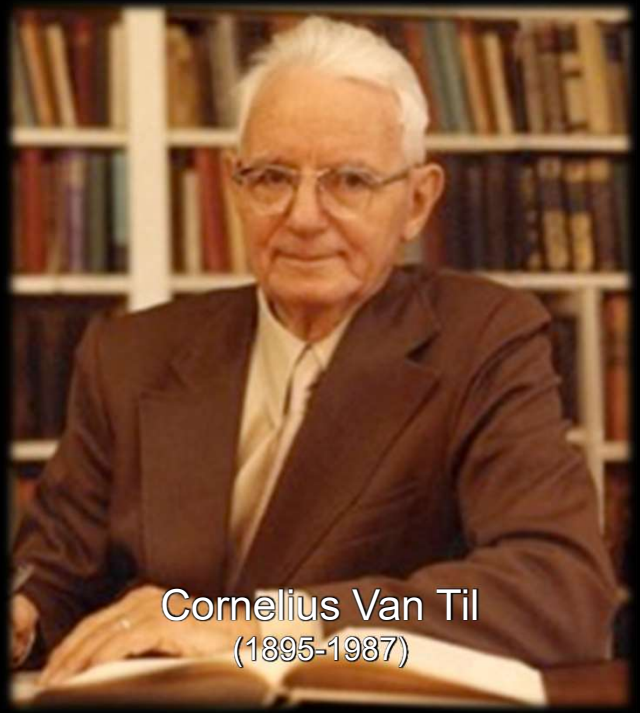
EDITED BY WILLIAM EDGAR



Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1937)

*"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]



Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

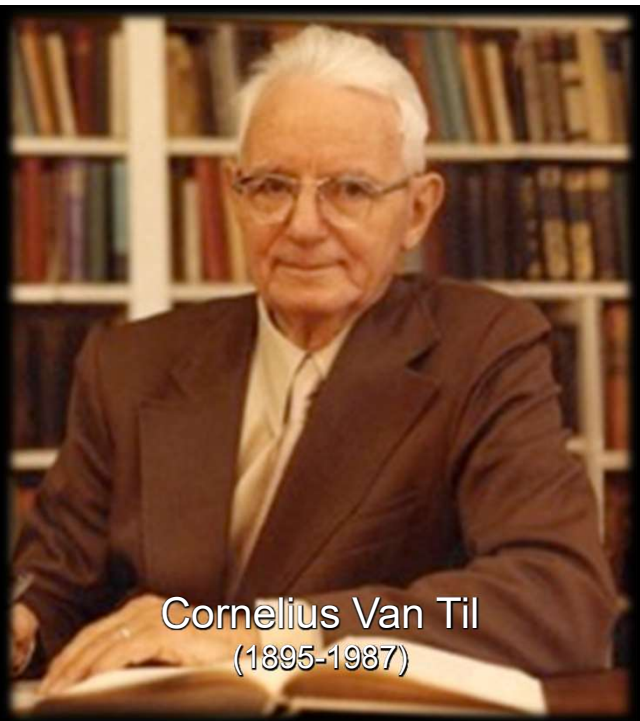
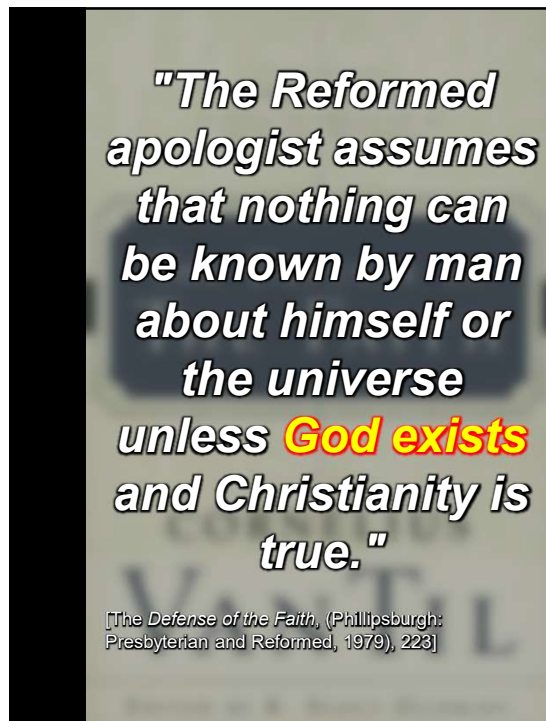
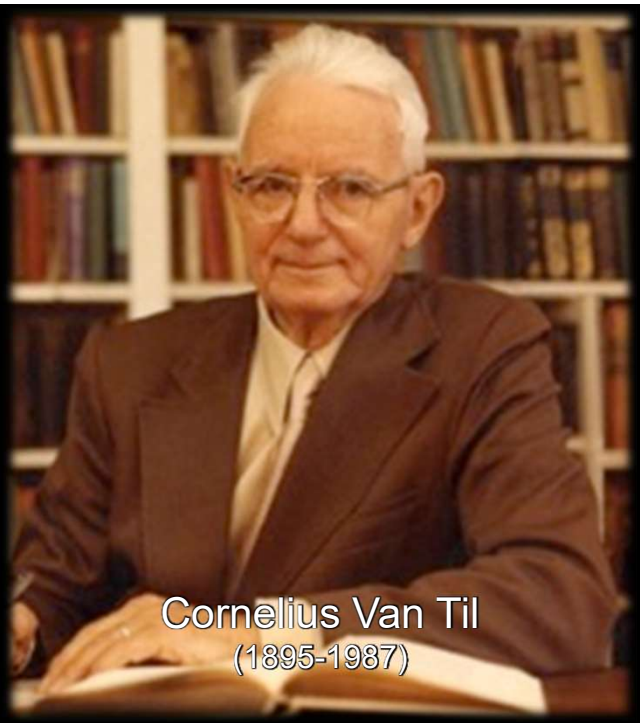
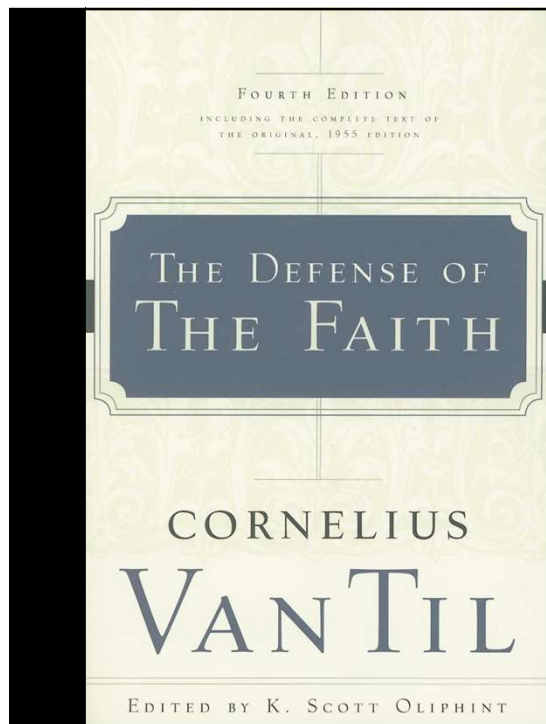
*"We must avoid the idea that human reason exists as a known and definable entity **apart from God** so that we may begin from it as from an ultimate starting point."*

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

This is an ontological point, not an epistemological one.

It is a point about being, not about knowing.

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





"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.



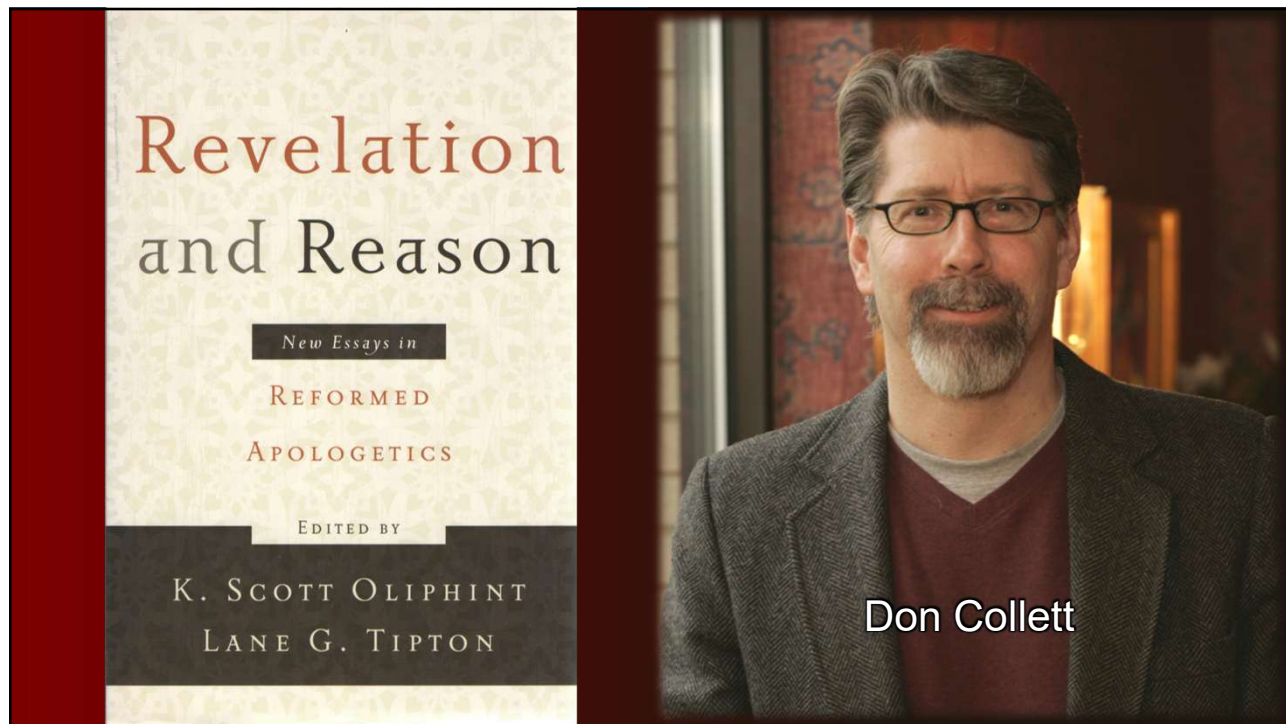
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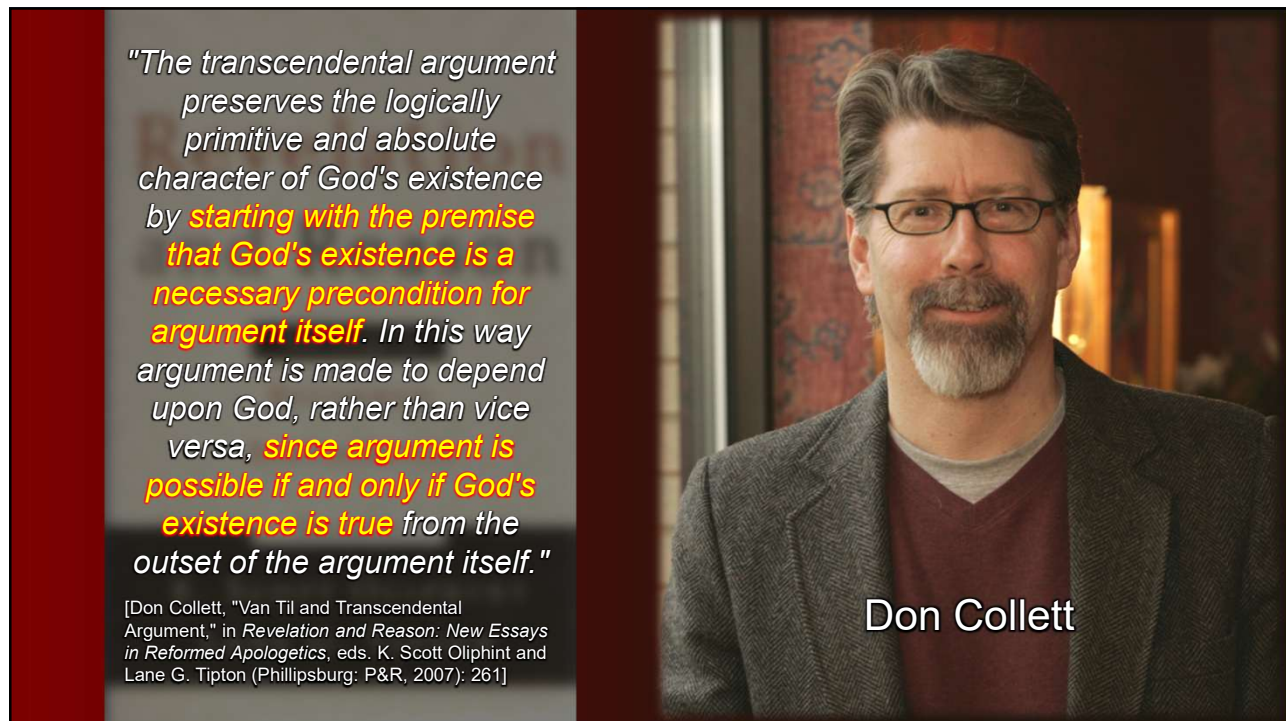
To be a presuppositional argument, Van Till should have said:

"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, (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 223]



Don Collett



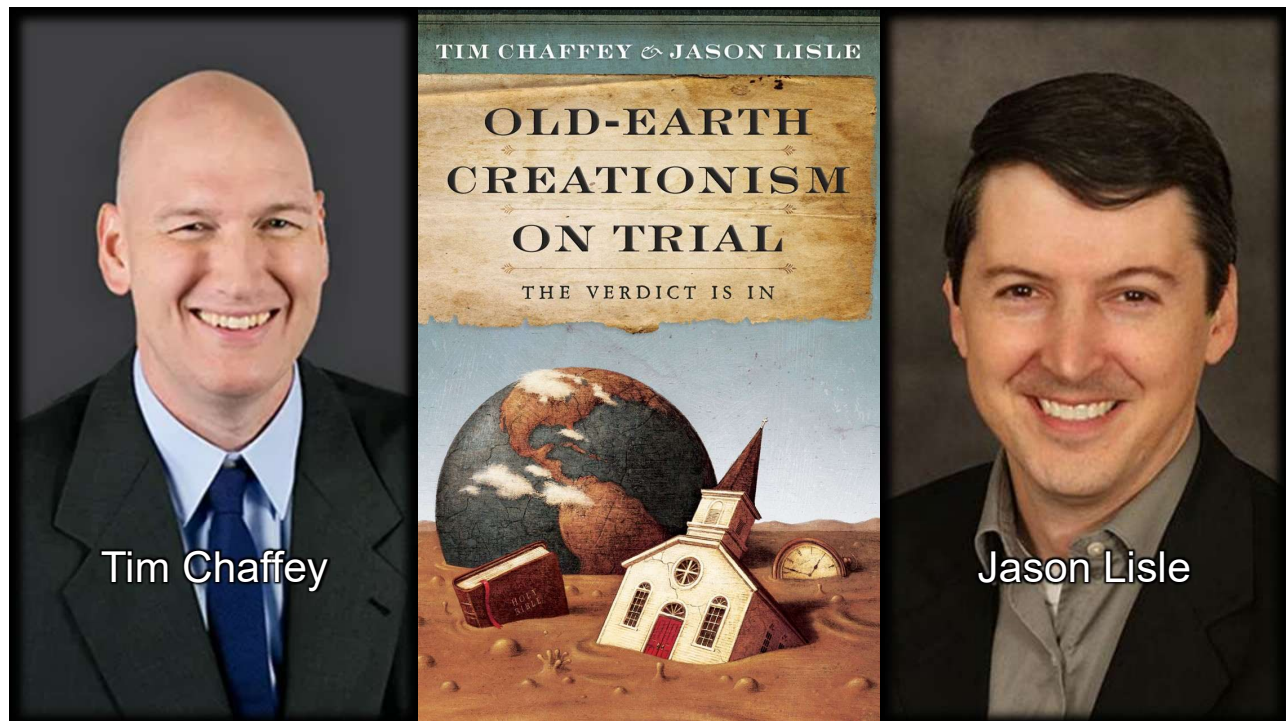
Don Collett

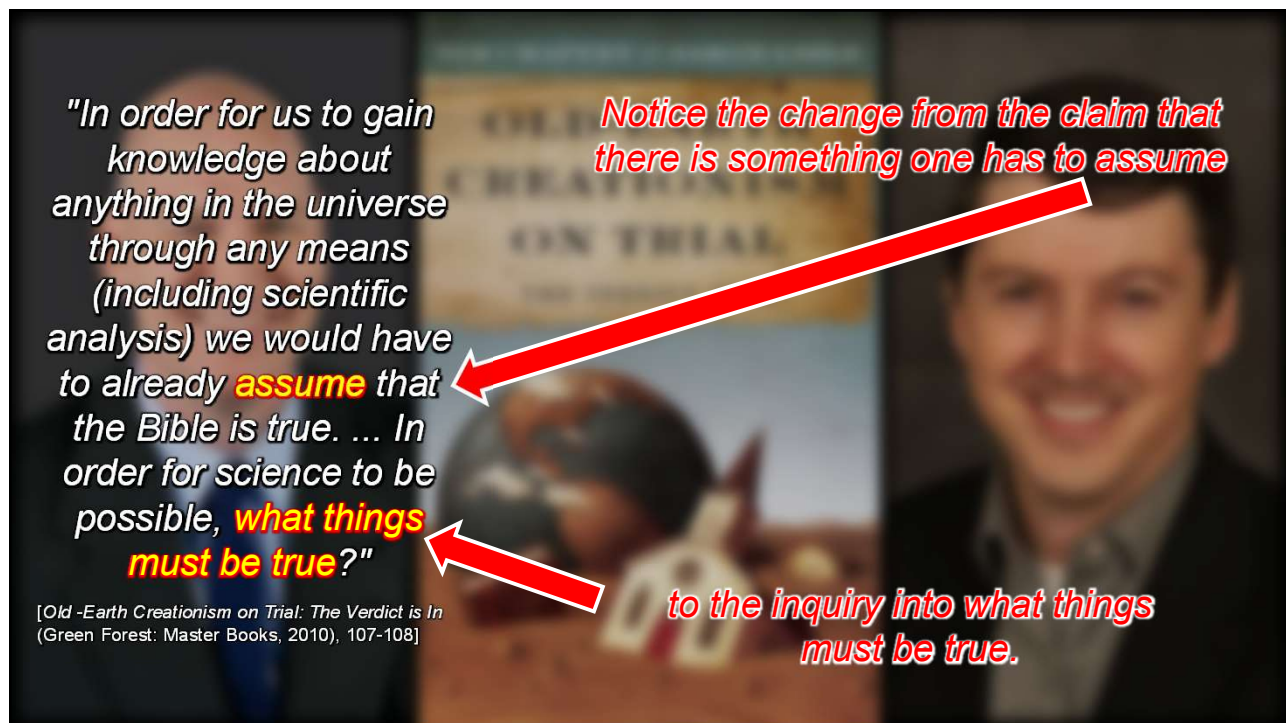
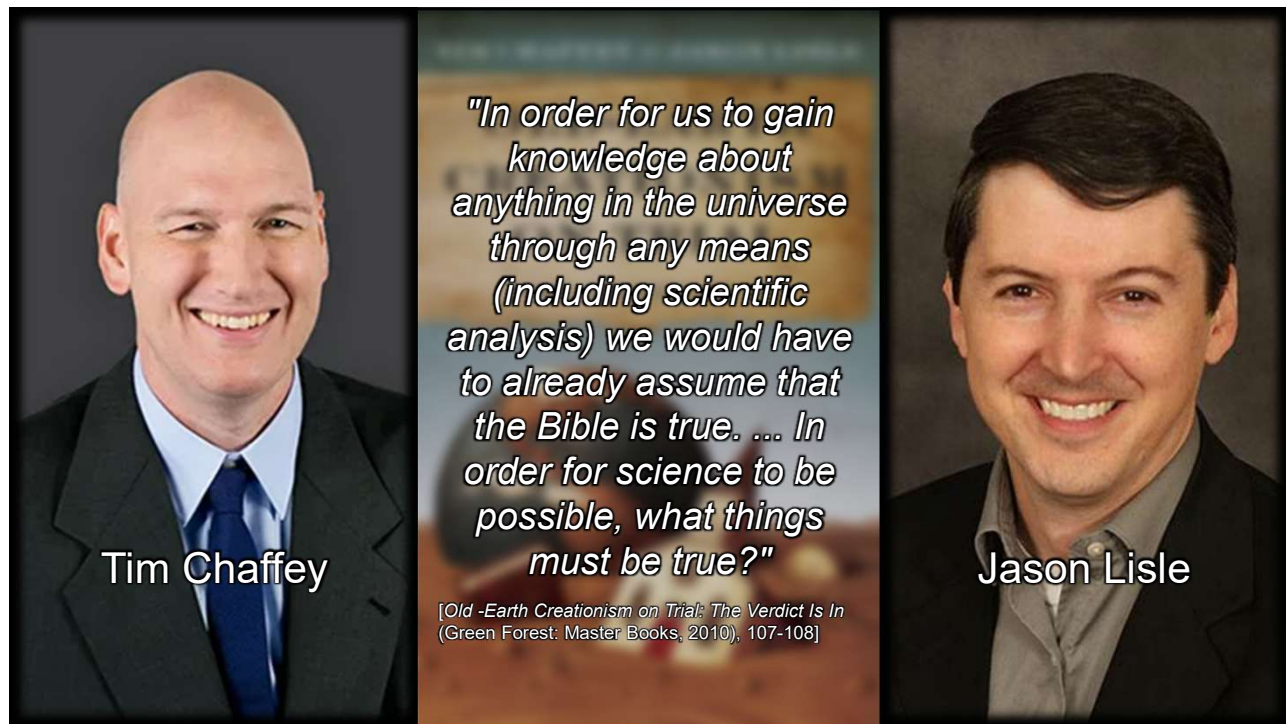
"The transcendental argument preserves the logically primitive and absolute character of God's existence by **starting with the premise that God's existence is a necessary precondition for argument itself**. In this way argument is made to depend upon God, rather than vice versa, **since argument is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





*"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 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]

THE
ABSURDITY OF

UNBELIEF

A WORLDVIEW APOLOGETIC OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

JEFFREY D. JOHNSON

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"Without knowledge of God, knowledge itself is impossible. In other words, without the God of the Bible, nothing makes sense in the grand scheme of things."

[Jeffrey D. Johnson, *The Absurdity of Unbelief: A Worldview Apologetic of the Christian Faith* (Conway: Free Grace Press, 2021), 47]



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