

Common Misunderstandings of Van Til's Apologetics

by Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

Part 2 of 2

Misconception #5: “Van Til rejected the importance of logic, including the law of non-contradiction.”

Van Til never denied the importance of logic. He affirmed that logic has its basis in the consistency and verity of God, and that logical thinking is an aspect of our nature as images of God. Our rational capacity is one of the ways in which we are like God. God wants us to think his thoughts after Him, and this includes the proper use of logic. Nevertheless, Van Til qualified these affirmations with the observation that logic — as well as we know and use it — is subject to creaturely limitations and sinful abuses.

Van Til utterly rejected the idea that God could contradict himself. Neither God nor his revelation can be contradictory. Otherwise, God would be a liar and that is not possible (Num. 23:19). Nevertheless, Van Til was quick to stress that many things about God remain beyond the grasp of human reason. The Bible contains mysteries that our minds cannot fathom (Deut. 29:29; Rom. 11:33-36).

For example, we cannot fully understand the intricacies of doctrines like the Trinity, the Incarnation, divine sovereignty and human responsibility, to name just a few. We can explore and understand these doctrines to some extent, but not enough to eliminate the appearance of significant logical difficulties. These Biblical teachings may have the *appearance* of contradiction, but *only* the appearance. We may not be able to explain adequately everything about these mysteries, but we rest in the knowledge that they are resolved in the mind of the God who knows all and is perfectly rational.

In this way, Van Til called for Christians to place practical limitations on the use of our sinful and finite understanding of the law of non-contradiction. We know that *in principle* no truth contradicts, but *in practice* we cannot always demonstrate how this is so. For this reason, we should not use the law of non-contradiction as the ultimate arbiter of truth. We are unable to penetrate exhaustively into the many mysteries that the Bible teaches. Therefore, Christians should observe the law of non-contradiction, but always to clarify — never to discount — the teachings of Scripture. When the Scriptures seem to contradict themselves or experience, we work hard to improve our understanding through logical reflection, but many times we reach the limits of our rational abilities. At these points, we put our trust in God as the One in whom there is no falsehood or contradiction.

The practical implications of these outlooks are essential to the Christian life because they raise questions about the authority and reliability of the Bible. The Bible contains no

contradictions within itself, nor does it contradict the facts of general revelation. But because our use of logic is finite and corrupted by sin, the teachings of Scripture often challenge our rational capacities. “It is not rational to believe such things,” unbelievers contend. As Christians, we have to admit both the appearance of logical difficulties and our inability to solve all of these problems. Yet, we affirm in no uncertain terms, that the problem is in the sinful use of human reason, not in Scripture.

For this reason, we must give practical priority to the Bible over our rational abilities, including our best attempts to follow the law of non-contradiction. It is dangerous to tell people that they should be *rational* without also warning them to be *humble* before the pure and infinite rationality of God revealed in Scripture. We must not place a corrupted finite standard above or on par with the absolute standard of God’s Word. When our thoughts conflict with the Bible, we should bow in humility before God, believing him despite the appearance of logical difficulties.

Support from Van Til’s writings:

“The gift of logical reason was given by God to man in order that he might order the revelation of God for himself” (*IST* 256).

“Christian theism should employ the law of contradiction, whether positively or negatively, as a means by which to systematize the facts of revelation. Whether these facts are found in the universe at large or in the Scripture. The law of contradiction cannot be thought of as operating anywhere except against the background of the nature of God” (*IST* 11).

“It appears that there must seem to be contradiction in human knowledge. To this we must now add that the contradiction that seems to be there can in the nature of the case be no more than a *seeming* contradiction. If we said that there is real contradiction in our knowledge we would once more be denying the basic concept of Christian-theism, i.e., the concept of the self-complete universal in God. We should then not merely be saying that there is no complete coherence in our thinking but we should also be saying that there is no complete coherence in God’s thinking. And this would be the same as saying that there is no coherence or truth in our thinking at all. If we say that the idea of paradox or antinomy is that of real contradiction, we have destroyed all human and all divine knowledge; if we say that the idea of paradox or antinomy is that of seeming contradiction we have saved God’s knowledge and therewith also our own” (*DOF* 62).

“As Christians we say that this is a mystery that is beyond our comprehension. It surely is. God himself, in the totality of his existence, is

above our comprehension. At the same time, this mysterious God is mysterious because he is, within himself, wholly rational” (*IST* 230).

“The interpretation that man would give to anything in this world can therefore never be comprehensive and exhaustive. This much of truth there is in the recent emphasis on the part of the men of science on the mysteriousness of the facts of the universe. However, as Christians, we hold that the reason for the mysteriousness of the facts of this universe is not that given by scientists today. Science today, in consonance with non-Christian thought in general, holds that the facts of this universe are surrounded by an ultimate void, that is, by an ultimate irrationality. We, on the contrary, hold that God as absolute Light is back of the facts of the universe. We hold that the atom is mysterious for us, but not for God” (*IST* 24).

“When then the apparently contradictory appears, as it always must when man seeks to know the relation of God to himself, there will be no denial either of election or of human responsibility in the name of the law of contradiction” (*IST* 257).

“Man can never in any sense outgrow his creaturehood. This puts a definite connotation into the expression that man is *like* God. He is like God, to be sure, but always on a creaturely scale. He can never be like God in God’s aseity, immutability, infinity and unity. For that reason the church has embedded into the heart of its confessions the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God. God’s being and knowledge are absolutely comprehensive; such knowledge is too wonderful for man; he cannot attain unto it. Man was not created with comprehensive knowledge. Man was finite and his finitude was originally no burden to him. Neither could man ever expect to attain to comprehensive knowledge in the future. We cannot expect to have comprehensive knowledge even in heaven. It is true that much will be revealed to us that is now a mystery to us but in the nature of the case God cannot reveal to us that which as creatures we cannot comprehend; we should have to be God ourselves in order to understand God in the depth of his being. God must always remain mysterious to man.

“The significance of this point will appear more fully when we contrast this conception of mystery with the non-Christian conception of mystery that is current today even in Christian circles. The difference between the Christian and the non-Christian conception of mystery may be expressed in a word by saying that we hold that there is mystery for man but not for God

while the non-Christian holds that there is either no mystery for God or man, or there is mystery for both God and man” (*DOF* 29-30).

“The finite mind cannot thus, if we are to reason theistically, be made the standard of what is possible and what is impossible. It is the divine mind that is determinative of the possible. We conclude then that God’s knowledge of the universe is also analytical. God’s knowledge of the universe depends upon God’s knowledge of himself. God has made the universe in accordance with his eternal plan for that universe. Thus the very existence of the universe depends upon God’s knowledge of or plan for the universe. God does, to be sure, behold the universe and the children of men as being “outside” himself. He beholds them now as actually existing beings engaged in actual work of their own, because he has from all eternity beheld them as going to exist. His knowledge of that which now takes place in the universe is logically dependent upon what he has from all eternity decided with respect to the universe” (*DOF* 56).

“We have repeatedly asserted that the facts of the universe are what they are because they express together the *system of truth* revealed in the Bible. *What is meant by the idea of truth as found in Scripture does not, as noted, mean a logically penetrable system. God alone knows himself and all the things of the created universe exhaustively.* He has revealed himself to man. But he did not reveal himself exhaustively to man. Neither the created universe nor the Bible exhaustively reveals God to man. Nor has man the capacity to receive such an exhaustive revelation. God reveals himself to man according to man’s ability to receive his revelation. *All revelation is anthropomorphic.* Moreover, when we say that man understands the revelation of God what is meant is not that he sees through this revelation exhaustively. Neither by logical reasoning nor by intuition can man do more than take to himself the revelation of God on the authority of God.” (*CTK* 37)

“A word must here be said about the question of antinomies. It will readily be inferred what as Christians we mean by antinomies. They are involved in the fact that human knowledge can never be completely comprehensive knowledge. Every knowledge transaction has in its [*sic*] somewhere a reference point to God. Now since God is not fully comprehensible to us we are bound to come into what seems to be contradiction in all our knowledge. Our knowledge is analogical and therefore must be paradoxical. We say that if there is to be any true knowledge at all there must be in God an absolute system of knowledge. We therefore insist that everything must

be related to that absolute system of God. Yet we ourselves cannot fully understand that system.

“We may, in order to illustrate our meaning here, take one of the outstanding paradoxes of the Christian interpretation of things, namely, that of the relation of the counsel of God to our prayers. To put it pointedly: We say on the one hand that prayer changes things and on the other hand we say that everything happens in accordance with God’s plan and God’s plan is immutable.

“The thing we are concerned about here is to point out that in the nature of the case there would have to be such a paradox or seeming contradiction in human knowledge. God exists as self-complete apart from us; he is all-glorious. Yet he created the universe that it might glorify him. This point lies at the bottom of every paradox or antinomy” (*DOF* 61-62).

“On the assumptions of the natural man logic is a timeless impersonal principle, and facts are controlled by chance. It is by means of universal timeless principles of logic that the natural man must, on his assumptions, seek to make intelligible assertions about the world of reality or chance. But this cannot be done without falling into self-contradiction. About chance no manner of assertion can be made. In its very idea it is the irrational. And how are rational assertions to be made about the irrational?” (*DOF* 143-144).

“The reader will at once observe that it is wholly counter to the approach taken in this syllabus to say that the laws of logic have been destroyed in the sinner. The whole point of the distinction between the antithesis as being ethical rather than metaphysical is that as a creature made in God’s image man’s constitution as a rational and moral being has *not* been destroyed. The separation from God on the part of the sinner is ethical. How could it be metaphysical? Even the lost in the hereafter have not lost the power of rational and moral determination. They must have this image in order to be aware of their lost condition” (*IST* 254).

Misconception #6: “Van Til denied the importance of logic by suggesting that it is acceptable to commit the fallacy of begging the question (arguing in a circle).”

Van Til never suggested that anyone should commit the logical fallacy of begging the question (e.g. “A is true because A is true.”). That would be strange indeed. In reality, he frequently called attention to the failure of such arguments. It is true that Van Til spoke

positively of “circular reasoning,” but he had something other than begging the question in mind. He was not talking so much about argumentation, setting down a convincing case that leads to a conclusion. In argumentation, reasoning should be linear. Instead, Van Til spoke of circularity in terms of the inescapable process by which finite minds attain knowledge to be used in arguments.

Van Til urged that *all* human reasoning is involved in a finite process of circular, or better spiral, learning. We grasp a measure of truth, reason from that to other truths, and these new truths in turn enhance our understanding of that first truth. There is no logical fallacy in this. It is the reality of human apprehension and reflection. This is the basic process of scientific induction. As we move from one fact to another, the latter illumines the former. It is similar to the procedure that we use in Biblical interpretation. The second and third verses we read help us understand the first verse we read. We do not begin with an idea and never return to it. Logical inferences constantly inform our understanding of the notions that started us thinking in a particular direction.

This kind of reciprocity in reasoning is *ultimately unavoidable*. For example, suppose you want to defend the idea that the senses are basically reliable. It would be fallacious to argue, “I believe in the reliability of the senses because I believe in the reliability of the senses.” That is begging the question. Nevertheless, we should all realize that it is absolutely impossible to argue for the basic reliability of sense perception without relying at least implicitly on sense perception. How do we argue for the reliability of our senses? We accumulate examples of times when our senses gave us true knowledge of the world. This is a perfectly sound induction. But how did we know that our examples even took place? How did we know our senses gave us true knowledge at these times? The answer is obvious: through sense perception. In what other way could one possibly demonstrate the reliability of the senses, except by relying on the senses? This is the kind of circularity or spiraling that Van Til pointed out in all human reasoning. It has nothing to do with begging the question.

Consider the law of non-contradiction. How can it be logically justified? Of course, no one should say, “The law of non-contradiction is true because the law of non-contradiction is true.” That is begging the question. We may say that the law is self-evident, but that is an assertion, not an argument. Every linear argument we muster in support of the law of non-contradiction at least implicitly relies on the law. Sometimes, we argue for the law of non-contradiction by saying that its denial leads to absurdity. But to recognize absurdity we have implicitly to use the law of non-contradiction. At other times, we argue for the law by pointing out that every attempt to deny it requires the implicit use of the law. Once again, we rely implicitly on the principle to support the principle. Because the law of non-contradiction holds as a universal principle for *all* human reasoning, we can *never* reason properly without it, even as we defend its necessity. If it is indeed necessary for human thought, we then use it *all the time*, even when discussing the law itself. To acknowledge this is not to beg the question, it is merely to acknowledge the reality of how we come to know things.

Now consider the whole system of beliefs that we hold as Christians. The teaching of Scripture is vast, entailing not only ideas about God, but a host of teachings about the world (an orderly universe, etc.) and humanity (sinful, rational, etc.) as well. Suppose we want to argue for this world and life view by focusing on one claim of the Bible — say, the existence of God. We would not want to beg the question by arguing, “I believe God exists because God exists.” Instead, we would demonstrate this belief by any number of linear arguments: the principle of cause and effect, the design of the world, the testimony of human conscience, etc. But once we touch on these ideas (or for that matter, any other true concept), we have argued with ideas derived from the Christian world and life view, an outlook that is based on the fact that God exists.

The situation in apologetics is similar to that which we face with sense perception and the law of non-contradiction. If the Christian belief system is an exhaustive world and life view, covering *all* matters, we can *never* argue for it or any part of it without using arguments that are implicitly dependent on it. We cannot support the truth of Christianity without implicitly relying on truths that Christianity teaches. In this sense, we should not attempt to use ideas outside of the Christian world and life view to argue for Christianity, unless we want to argue from lies to the truth.

Happily, people are God’s images and have the inescapable witness of general revelation. They often accept (at least superficially) truths that we use in argumentation. For this reason, we do not always have to tell unbelievers that our arguments are distinctively Christian ideas. But remember, even the truths of general revelation that many unbelievers acknowledge (order of nature, existence of God, reliability of the senses, etc.) are part of our Christian world and life view. To argue for Christian theism without at the same time implicitly depending on Christian theism is like trying to get out of your skin to reach out and touch yourself. Impossible.

This is what Van Til taught when he described all reasoning as “circular.” He did not for a moment suggest that Christians should beg the question. Argumentation is to be linear. He merely insisted that there is no way for finite creatures to escape the implicit spiral of the learning and reasoning processes.

Support from Van Til’s writings:

“We hold it to be true that circular reasoning is the only reasoning that is possible to finite man. The method of implication as outlined above is circular reasoning. Or we may call it spiral reasoning. We must go round and round a thing to see more of its dimensions and to know more about it, in general, unless we are larger than that which we are investigating. Unless we are larger than God we cannot reason about Him by any other way, than by a transcendental or circular argument. The refusal to admit the necessity

of circular reasoning is itself an evident token of Antitheism. Reasoning in a vicious circle is the only alternative to reasoning in a circle” (MA 24).

“To admit one’s own presuppositions and to point out the presuppositions of others is therefore to maintain that all reasoning is, in the nature of the case, *circular reasoning*. The starting-point, the method, and the conclusion are always involved in one another” (DOF 118).

“At the outset it ought to be clearly observed that every system of thought necessarily has a certain method of its own. Usually this fact is overlooked. It is taken for granted that everybody begins in the same way with an examination of the facts, and that the differences between systems come only as a result of such investigations. Yet this is not actually the case. It *could not* actually be the case. In the first place, this could not be the case with a Christian. His fundamental and determining fact is the fact of God’s existence. That is his final conclusion. But that must also be his starting point. If the Christian is right in his final conclusion about God, then he would not even get into touch with any fact unless it were through the medium of God. And since man has, through the fall in Adam, become a sinner, man cannot know and therefore love God except through Christ the Mediator...

“If all things must be seen ‘in God’ to be seen truly, one could look ever so long elsewhere without ever seeing a fact as it really is. If I must look through a telescope to see a distant star, I cannot first look at the star to see whether there is a telescope through which alone I could see it. If I must look through a microscope to see a germ, I cannot first look at the germ with the naked eye to see if there is a microscope through which alone I can see it. If it were a question of seeing something with the naked eye and seeing the same object more clearly through a telescope or a microscope, the matter would be different. We may see a landscape dimly with the naked eye and then turn to look at it through a telescope and see it more clearly. But such is not the case with the Christian position. According to it, nothing at all can be known truly of any fact unless it be known through and by way of man’s knowledge of God” (SCE 4-5).

Misconception #7: “Van Til rejected the use of rational arguments and empirical evidences to support the claims of Christ. He simply told unbelievers that they must believe.”

On the contrary, Van Til affirmed that apologists should use every available rational argument and empirical evidence to present a convincing case for Christian theism. Traditional theistic proofs, archaeological evidences, and the like are part of the arsenal for believers engaged with the world of unbelief. They are tools that the Spirit uses to bring men and women to saving faith.

Van Til did not, however, emphasize the use of particular rational and empirical resources. He was more concerned with alerting his readers to the basic outlooks people use to evaluate such evidences. Van Til believed that every fact of the universe confirms the truth of Scripture. How could it be otherwise? Nonetheless, appealing to particular facts or arguments to defend the faith often proves vain because unbelievers have alternative explanations that rise out of their basic world views.

For instance, the empty tomb does not prove that Jesus is the Son of God, unless we adopt a fuller Christian outlook on the world. Perhaps his body was stolen; maybe Jesus was a freak accident in a chance universe, the only mere man to come back to life. Likewise, the principle of cause and effect does not prove the existence of God, unless we operate with a host of other Christian ideas. Many leading physicists today simply respond that the universe is infinite and eternal; perhaps there is an infinite series of physical causes, or a multiplicity of gods and demons that formed the universe as we know it.

Van Til affirmed that in reality most traditional arguments used in support of Christian theism are absolutely conclusive; they objectively demonstrate the truth of Christianity. But unless the Spirit is at work, unbelievers will dispute their decisiveness because they operate out of a false world and life view that keeps them from drawing the proper conclusions. When this occurs, Christian apologists must be ready to address the deeper issues that mislead unbelievers, especially their commitment to human autonomy. Van Til believed that these more basic commitments were neglected in other apologetic methods. So he stressed dealing with presuppositions over particular arguments and evidences.

In a word, Van Til never disputed the value of rational arguments and empirical evidences. He simply called attention to how we should use them. On a practical level, Van Til followed the counsel of Proverbs 26:4,5:

Do not answer a fool according to his folly,
or you will be like him yourself.
Answer a fool according to his folly,
or he will be wise in his own eyes.

He proposed a two-step approach. First, believers should invite unbelievers to consider the evidence for Christian theism on its own terms, making certain that we do not follow the principles of unbelievers (Prov. 26:4). Does it cohere? Does it make sense of the world? If

Christianity is true, does it not explain reality? Here apologists use every argument, great and small, to demonstrate the credibility of the claims of Christ. On the deepest (transcendental) level, we urge that the *only* sufficient basis (or presupposition) for human knowledge is Christian theism.

Second, believers should help unbelievers examine their own outlooks on life, so that they will not be so wise in their own eyes (Prov. 26:5). Do they cohere? Do they make sense of the world? If their world view is true, then why doesn't it explain reality? Here evidences and arguments are used to demonstrate the futility of trying to understand anything on the basis of human autonomy. With the false self-confidence of unbelievers shaken, the truth of the gospel stands out clearly. If the Spirit is at work, it will become plain that Christ alone is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

Support from Van Til's writings:

"I would therefore engage in historical apologetics. (I do not personally do a great deal of this because my colleagues in the other departments of the Seminary in which I teach are doing it better than I could do it.) Every bit of historical investigation, whether it be in the directly Biblical field, archaeology, or in general history, is bound to confirm the truth of the claims of the Christian position. But I would not talk endlessly about facts and more facts without ever challenging the non-believer's philosophy of fact. A really fruitful historical apologetic argues that ever fact *is* and *must be* such as proves the truth of the Christian theistic position" (*DOF* 258).

"The method of reasoning by presupposition may be said to be indirect rather than direct. The issue between believers and non-believers in Christian theism cannot be settled by a direct appeal to "facts" or "laws" whose nature and significance is already agreed upon by both parties to the debate. The question is rather as to what is the final reference-point required to make the "facts" and "laws" intelligible. The question is as to what the "facts" and "laws" really are. Are they what the non-Christian methodology assumes that they are?" (*DOF* 117).

"The Christian apologist must place himself upon the position of his opponent, assuming the correctness of his method merely for argument's sake, in order to show him that on such a position the "facts" are not facts and the "laws" are not laws. He must also ask the non-Christian to place himself upon the Christian position for argument's sake in order that he may be shown that only upon such a basis do "facts" and "laws" appear intelligible" (*DOF* 117-118).

“Accordingly I do not reject “the theistic proofs” but merely insist on formulating them in such a way as not to compromise the doctrines of Scripture” (*DOF* 256).

“That is to say, if the theistic proof is constructed as it ought to be constructed, it is objectively valid, whatever the attitude of those to whom it comes may be” (*CTK* 292).

“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” (*DOF* 94).

“The truly Biblical view, on the other hand, applies atomic power and flame-throwers to the very presupposition of the natural man’s ideas with respect to himself. It does not fear to lose a point of contact by uprooting the weeds rather than by cutting them off at the very surface. It is assured of a point of contact in the fact that every man is made in the image of God and has impressed upon him the law of God. In that fact alone he may rest secure with respect to the point of contact problem. For that fact makes men always accessible to God. That fact assures us that every man, to be a man at all, must already be in contact with the truth. He is so much in contact with the truth that much of his energy is spent in the vain effort to hide this fact from himself. His efforts to hide this fact from himself are bound to be self-frustrative” (*DOF* 111-112).

“The Reformed apologist will point out again and again that the only method that will lead to the truth in any field is that method which recognizes the fact that man is a creature of God, that he must therefore seek to think God’s thoughts after him” (*DOF* 119).

“If one follows Calvin there are no such troubles. Then one begins with the fact that the world is what the Bible says it is. One then makes the claims of God upon men without apologies though always *suaviter in modo*. One knows that there is hidden underneath the surface display of every man a sense of deity. One therefore gives that sense of deity an opportunity to rise in rebellion against the oppression under which it suffers by the new man of the covenant breaker. One makes no deal with this new man. One shows that on his assumptions all things are meaningless. Science would be impossible; knowledge of anything in any field would be impossible. No

fact could be distinguished from any other fact. No law could be said to be law with respect to facts. The whole manipulation of factual experience would be like the idling of a motor that is not in gear. Thus every fact--not *some* facts--every fact *clearly* and not probably proves the truth of Christian theism. If Christian theism is not true then nothing is true" (*DOF* 266-267).

"It is not as though the Reformed apologist should not interest himself in the nature of the non-Christian's method. On the contrary he should make a critical analysis of it. He should, as it were, join his "friend" in the use of it. But he should do so self-consciously with the purpose of showing that its most consistent application not merely leads away from Christian theism but in leading away from Christian theism leads to destruction of reason and science as well" (*DOF* 119).

"Intellectually sinners can readily follow the presentation of the evidence that is placed before them. If the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian position is only made plain to them, as alone it can be on a Reformed basis, the natural man can, for argument's sake, place himself upon the position of the Christian. But though in this sense he then knows God more clearly than otherwise, though he already knew him by virtue of his sense of deity, yet it is only when by the grace of God the Holy Spirit removes the scales from men's eyes that they know the truth existentially. Then they know him, whom to know is life eternal" (*DOF* 397).

"This is, in the last analysis, the question as to what are one's ultimate presuppositions. When man became a sinner he made of himself instead of God the ultimate or final reference point. And it is precisely this presupposition, as it controls without exception all forms of non-Christian philosophy, that must be brought into question. 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" (*DOF* 94).

"Our argument as over against this would be that 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. We cannot *prove* the existence of beams underneath a floor if by proof we mean that they must be ascertainable in the way that we can see

the chairs and tables of the room. But the very idea of a floor as the support of tables and chairs requires the idea of beams that are underneath. But there would be no floor if no beams were underneath. Thus there is absolutely certain proof for the existence of God and the truth of Christian theism. Even non-Christians presuppose its truth while they verbally reject it. They need to presuppose the truth of Christian theism in order to account for their own accomplishments” (*DOF* 120).

“Christian theism must be presented as that light in terms of which any proposition about any fact receives meaning. Without the presupposition of the truth of Christian theism no fact can be distinguished from any other fact” (*A* 73).

“The proofs may be formulated either on a Christian or on a non-Christian basis. They are formulated on a Christian basis if, with Calvin, they rest clearly upon the ideas of creation and providence. They then appeal to what the natural man, because he is a creature of God, actually does know to be true. They are bound to find immediate response of inward assent in the natural man. He cannot help but own to himself that God does exist.

“When the proofs are thus formulated they have absolute probative force. They are not demonstrable in the sense that this word is often taken. As often taken, the idea of demonstration is that of exhaustive penetration by the mind of man; pure deduction of one conclusion after another from an original premise that is obvious. Such a notion of demonstration does not comport with the Christian system. That system is analogical. Man cannot penetrate through the relations of the Creator to the creature. But this does not in the least reduce the probative force of the proofs. Man is internally certain of God’s existence only because his sense of deity is correlative to the revelation of God about him. And all the revelation of God is clear” (*DOF* 196).

“The argument for the existence of God and for the truth of Christianity is objectively valid. We should not tone down the validity of this argument to the probability level. The argument may be poorly stated, and may never be adequately stated. But in itself the argument is absolutely sound. Christianity is the only reasonable position to hold. It is not merely as reasonable as other positions, or a bit more reasonable than other positions; it alone is the natural and reasonable position for man to take. By stating the argument as clearly as we can, we may be the agents of the Holy Spirit in pressing the claims of God upon men. If we drop to the level of the merely

probable truthfulness of Christian theism, we, to that extent, lower the claims of God upon men” (CG 62).

“Hence Warfield was quite right in maintaining that Christianity is objectively defensible. And the natural man has the ability to understand intellectually, though not spiritually, the challenge presented to him. And no challenge is presented to him unless it is shown him that on his *principle* he would destroy all truth and meaning. Then, if the Holy Spirit enlightens him spiritually, he will be born again “unto knowledge” and adopt with love the principle he was previously anxious to destroy” (DOF 364).

“The *indicia* of divinity in Scripture are therefore part of the same process and act of the self-attestation of God. All the facts of the universe attest God. They are all inter-related in their testimony. If there is a cumulative effect produced by the evidence for the existence of God and for the truth of Christianity it is cumulative because each fact says the same thing, proves the same point in a different manner” (DOF 395).

“God has continued to reveal himself in nature even after the entrance of sin. Men ought, therefore, to know him. Men ought to reason analogically from nature to nature’s God. Men ought, therefore, to use the cosmological argument analogically in order thus to conclude that God is the creator of this universe. Men ought to realize that nature could not exist as something independent. They ought to sense that if anything intelligible is to be said about nature, it must be in relation to the absolute system of truth, which is God. Hence, they ought at once to see nature as the creation of God. Men ought also to use the ontological argument analogically. Men ought to realize that the word “*being*” cannot be intelligently applied to anything unless it be applied to God without limitation” (IST 102).

“Order, when viewed from the point of view of the passage of time, is purpose. Men should therefore also have used the teleological argument analogically. It is in connection with the rational and moral activity of the mind of man that the concept of purpose comes out most strikingly. So then man should see that all things in this universe, and, in particular, all things in the mind and moral activity of man, would be at loose ends if it were not for God and his purpose with respect them” (IST 105).

Abbreviations in this article:

CG = Common Grace

MA = Metaphysics of Apologetics

SCE = Survey of Christian Epistemology

CTE = Christian Theistic Evidences

CTK = Christian Theory of Knowledge

A = Apologetics

TRA = Toward a Reformed Apologetics

IST = Introduction to Systematic Theology

DOF = Defense of the Faith