The Modal Transcendental Argument
for God's Existence

By David Reiter

The Van Tilian transcendental argument for God's existence is a daring argument which is deeply rooted in Reformed theology, and it is worthy of rigorous examination. In this paper, I carefully examine two recent discussions of the transcendental argument and I propose a new analysis of its argumentative form. Don Collett has argued for the distinctive character of transcendental reasoning, and has proposed that the transcendental argument is best understood by drawing on the twentieth-century philosopher P. F. Strawson's account of presupposition.[1] According to Collett, the essence of the transcendental argument is found in the claim that every truth-valued proposition presupposes the existence of God. Alternatively, Sean Choi has provided a detailed reconstruction and critique of the transcendental argument as advanced by Greg Bahnsen in the Bahnsen-Stein debate on the existence of God.[2] Choi concludes that Bahnsen's transcendental argument "seems too ambitious and [is] doomed to fail" (Choi, 247). While Collett and Choi's discussions are both very helpful, I argue that neither provides a fully adequate characterization of the form of the transcendental argument for God's existence. In the final section of the paper, I distinguish between *generic* and *modal* transcendental theistic arguments, and I articulate the general form of the *modal transcendental argument* for God's existence.

1. Collett on Strawson's Account of Presupposition

Collett proposes the innovative idea of using P. F. Strawson's account of presupposition to explicate the transcendental argument. Now Strawson's general thought is that one proposition, A, presupposes another, B, if the truth of B is required in order to meaningfully "raise the question" of the truth or falsity of A. Bas Van Fraassen explains Strawson's account as follows:

The best known source for the concept of presupposition is [Strawson's] view that a property cannot be either truly or falsely attributed to what does not exist. Thus, the sentence "The King of France (in 1967) is bald" is neither true nor false, on this view, *because* the King of France does not exist. The explicit characterization of *presupposes* is therefore given by

1. *A presupposes* B if and only if A is neither true nor false unless B is true.

This is equivalent to

2. A presupposes B if and only if
(a) if A is true then B is true.
(b) if A is false then B is true.[3]

Van Fraassen goes on to compare the relations of implication and presupposition. According to Van Fraassen, both involve "necessitation," which he defines as follows:

6. *A necessitates* B if and only if, whenever A is true, B is also true (Van Fraasen, 138).

Accordingly, Van Fraassen holds that the notion of

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1. Don Collett, "Van Til and Transcendental Argument," in *Revelation and Reason: New Essays in Reformed Apologetics,* ed. K. Scott Oliphint and Lane G. Tipton (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007) 258–278. Collett has reiterated his position more recently in "Van Til and Transcendental Argument Revisited," in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John Frame,* ed. John J. Hughes (P&R, 2009) 460–488.

2. Sean Choi, "The Transcendental Argument," in *Reasons for Faith: Making a Case for the Christian Faith,* ed. Norman L. Geisler and Chad V. Meister (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 231–247.

3. Bas C. Van Fraasen, "Presupposition, Implication, and Self-Reference," *The Journal of Philosophy* 65 (1968): 136–152.

presupposition can be completely explained in terms of necessitation, as follows:

7. *A presupposes* B if and only if:
(a) A necessitates B, and
(b) (not-A) necessitates B.**4**

Altogether then, the Strawson-Van Fraasen account of presupposition may be stated in terms of possible worlds semantics as follows:

A presupposes B if and only if:
(a) In any possible world where A is true, B is true,

And: (b) In any possible world where A is false, B is true.

Now let us return to Strawson's example where the proposition (B) *The King of France is bald* presupposes that (E) *The King of France exists*. It follows then that for any possible world W, if the proposition *The King of France is bald* has a truth-value in W, then the proposition *There is a King of France* is true in W. (Incidentally, it follows from this account that if proposition B presupposes E in one possible world, then B presupposes E in all possible worlds. That is, if B presupposes E, then B *necessarily* presupposes E.)

Before moving forward, I want to make an important observation about Strawson's account of presupposition. In this paradigm case where (B) *The King of France is bald* presupposes (E) *The King of France exists*, both (B) and (E) are *contingent* claims. There may be many possible worlds where (E) is false (because there is no King of France), and of course the central thought of Strawson's account is that in any such possible world (where (E) is false), then (B) simply lacks a truth-value altogether—it is neither true nor false. The point I want to make here is that Strawson's account of presupposition was designed primarily for contexts where the *presupposing* and *presupposed* claims are both *contingent* propositions.**5** Having taken note of this significant point, let us move forward.

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4. Van Fraasen, 138.

5. Van Fraassen points out that if p is a necessary truth, then it follows that any truth-valued claim presupposes p. Thus, if *2+2=4* is a necessary truth, it follows that *Lincoln is the capital of Nebraska* presupposes that *2+2=4*. And of course, if *God exists* is a necessary truth, then any truth-valued proposition presupposes that God exists.

6. Collett, "Van Til," 270.

7. I take it that premise 2 in argument (2) is not claiming that *there is causality in every possible world*—a claim that would be inconsistent with the fact that it was not necessary that God create.

2. Collett on Transcendental Arguments and the Presuppositionalist Claim

Drawing on Strawson's account of presupposition, Collett proposes the following as examples of transcendental arguments:

Transcendental Argument (2):
1. C [i.e., There is causality] presupposes G [i.e., God's existence]
2. C
So 3. G

And Transcendental Argument (3):
1. C presupposes G.
2. ~C [i.e., There is no causality]
So 3. G.**6**

The central and critical point here is that we can validly derive God's existence *as long as the causality premise* (i.e., the premise that *There is causality*) merely has a truth-value! If the presuppositional premise (the first premise in both arguments) is true and the causality claim simply has a truth-value, it follows that *at least one of these arguments is a sound theistic argument*, and thus it really isn't even necessary for the apologist to commit to one of them in particular. This is what makes the transcendental argument such a daring move in Christian apologetics.

Let me make another important point about these arguments. In addressing issues of apologetic methodology, Collett rightly emphasizes the desirability of arguing for the *necessity* of God's existence: "In short, theistic argument must bear witness to the *necessary* character of God's existence" (Collett, "Van Til," 262). But for either of the arguments Collett presents (those just above), the argument only establishes the *actual* existence of God, it does not establish the *necessity* of God's existence. For in both arguments, premise 2 is merely a claim about the actual world, and therefore a modal (necessity) conclusion cannot be validly derived.**7** Therefore, relative to the goals that Collett has specified, there is a significant weakness in these arguments as formulated above.

Let us now explore more carefully the nature of the arguments that can be generated by using Strawson's account of presupposition, and see if perhaps the weakness just identified can somehow be remedied. Van Til holds that predication is impossible apart from God's existence. Drawing on our discussion above, this predication claim amounts to the conjunction of:

(a) There is no possible world where some proposition p is true and God does not exist.

And: (b) There is no possible world where some proposition p is false and God does not exist.

Or more compactly, we can state (as I shall call it) the *presuppositionalist claim* as follows:

(P) There is no possible world where some proposition p has a truth-value and God does not exist.

The presuppositionalist claim then yields the following *basic presuppositionalist argument form*:

1. There is no possible world where some proposition p has a truth-value and God does not exist.

2. There is some proposition p that has a truth-value in the actual world (e.g., the proposition *Lincoln is the state capital of Nebraska* has the truth-value of *true*).

So 3. God exists in the actual world.

I will make two observations about this basic presuppositionalist argument form. First, this is a *maximally versatile* theistic argument form in the sense that the existence of God follows validly from the truth *or falsity* of *any proposition whatsoever*. The second observation is that this argument form still only yields the *actual* existence of God—it does *not* yield the modal claim that God exists in every possible world (i.e., that *Necessarily, God exists*). As far as the argument form itself goes, perhaps there could be a possible world where it is not the case that God exists, but this would have to be a world where no proposition whatsoever has any truth-value, and to say the least, this scenario is a bit hard to swallow! It does seem maximally plausible to suppose that in every possible world, there is *at least one proposition* which is either true or false. Incorporating this supposition then yields the following argument form:

1. There is no possible world where some proposition p has a truth-value and God does not exist. [The Presuppositionalist Claim.]

2. For any possible world W, there is some proposition p that has a truth-value in W.

So 3. For any possible world W, God exists in W.

For convenience, I will call this argument form the form of *The Transcendental Argument from Presupposition*. This argument form is perfectly valid, and it yields the modal conclusion that *God exists in every possible world*. We now move on to examine Sean Choi's recent discussion of the transcendental argument.

3. Choi on the General Form of Transcendental Arguments

According to Sean Choi, the general form of transcendental arguments (TAs) looks like this:

(TA1) q.
(TA2) It is necessary that: If not-p, then not-q.
(TA3) So, p.[8]

Choi proposes Descartes' *Cogito* argument as a "paradigm example of a sound TA":

(C1) I am thinking.
(C2) It is necessary that: if I do not exist, then I am not thinking.
(C3) So, I exist.[9]

And the general schema for the transcendental argument for God's existence (TAG) is:

(TAG1) LOGIC.
(TAG2) It is necessary that: if God does not exist, then not-LOGIC.
(TAG3) So, God exists.[10]

According to Choi, a TA has two premises, one is the "granted premise" and the other is the "transcendental premise." The granted premise simply asserts a relatively uncontroversial fact,[11] while the transcendental premise "asserts that there is a conceptual or metaphysical connection between the phenomenon mentioned in q

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8. Choi, "Transcendental," 234.
9. Choi, "Transcendental," 235.
10. Choi, "Transcendental," 236.
11. More precisely, Choi states that in this argument form "q [i.e., the variable for the granted premise] is a variable that takes as its value propositions concerning some phenomenon that can be asserted, without much controversy in the philosophical context in question, to obtain and thus to be a fact" (234). One might reasonably wonder how well this understanding of a granted premise fits with the Van Tilian doctrine that every fact must be interpreted in the light of worldview presuppositions.

and the phenomenon mentioned in p such that the latter is a condition for the possibility or intelligibility of the former" (Choi, "Transcendental," 234).

Let us note that there is an important respect in which the general form of a transcendental argument (as specified by Choi) is somewhat puzzling. From a purely dialectical perspective that is concerned only with the construction of a valid argument for a given conclusion, the transcendental argument seems to represent a degree of overkill. If the desired conclusion of the TA is a mere *actuality* claim (as it certainly is in the paradigmatic Cogito example),**[12]** then the transcendental premise is unnecessarily strong, since a weaker (non-transcendental) version of the premise would deliver exactly the same conclusion. To illustrate my point, consider the following "non-transcendental" version of Descartes's Cogito argument:

(C1) I am thinking.

(C2*) If I do not exist, then I am not thinking.

(C3) So, I exist.

Note that this is a perfectly valid argument for the actuality claim in (C3), even though it contains no transcendental premise whatsoever. We should note that for any transcendental argument, there will be a *non-transcendental counterpart* for that argument, which differs only in having a *contingently true* conditional, rather than having a *necessarily true* conditional. And from a purely dialectical perspective, the transcendental argument offers no advantage whatsoever over the non-transcendental version. (Indeed, it might be argued that the non-transcendental argument is preferable, for it might be more difficult or challenging to argue for the necessary conditional than to argue for the mere conditional.) If the goal is to construct a valid argument for the existence of God or the truth of Christian theism, then *from the purely dialectical standpoint I have specified, a transcendental argument offers no advantage whatsoever over its non-transcendental counterpart.* We will return to explore this point a bit further below.

4. Choi on Bahnsen's Transcendental Argument

Choi offers a careful and detailed analysis of Bahnsen's TAG. In accordance with his analysis of the general

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12. That is, the "I exist" conclusion of the Cogito only makes a claim about the *actual* world.

form for transcendental arguments, Choi offers the following "reconstruction" of Bahnsen's main argument:

Bahnsen's Main TAG:

(1) There is a rational justification for the laws of logic. (Granted premise.)

(2) It is necessary that: if Christian theism is false, then there is no rational justification for the laws of logic. (Transcendental premise.)

So (3) Christian theism is true.

Of course, premise 2 is the critical (and controversial) premise in the argument. Choi offers the following reconstruction of Bahnsen's reasoning for P2:

(2a) If there is a non-Christian theistic way to justify the laws of logic, then it will be either the a priori way or the a posteriori way or the conventionalist way.

(2b) Neither the a priori way nor the a posteriori way nor the conventionalist way will justify the laws of logic.

(2d) Necessarily: if there is a rational justification for the laws of logic, then it will be either Christian theistic or non-Christian theistic.

So (2) It is necessary that: if Christian theism is false, then there is no rational justification for the laws of logic.

Concerning this argument, Choi correctly points out that if (2a) and (2b) are both merely *contingent* truths, then the premises do not imply the conclusion (2), which is a necessary truth. (2) is a claim about *all possible worlds*, as it must be in order to qualify as a transcendental premise (which is in turn required for a transcendental argument). But (2a) and (2b) are both claims about *the actual world only*. Thus, Choi proposes revised "modal" versions of both premises:

(2a*) It is necessary that: if there is a non-Christian theistic way to justify the laws of logic, then it will be either the a priori way or the a posteriori way or the conventionalist way.

And: (2b*) It is necessary that: neither the a priori way nor the a posteriori way nor the conventionalist way will justify the laws of logic.

Now if we substitute in (2a*) and (2b*), we then get a valid argument for premise (2) of the main argument.

The rest of Choi's discussion consists of two criticisms. First, Choi argues that Bahnsen fails to give an adequate argument for (2b*). And second, Choi argues that Bahnsen fails to adequately support (2a*). Let us consider both criticisms.

Concerning (2b*), Choi's point is that even if Bahnsen has examined and refuted all of the a priori/a posteriori/conventionalist accounts (hereafter, simply "AAC accounts") that have actually been proposed, this would not constitute a refutation of all such *possible* accounts. In short, Bahnsen simply fails to establish that *there is no possible world whatsoever* in which some AAC account of logic is correct.[13] This surely is a significant weakness (or incompleteness) in Bahnsen's argumentation.

In the final section of his paper, Choi discusses the prospects and difficulties of defending premise (2a*):

(2a*) It is necessary that: if there is a non-Christian theistic way to justify the laws of logic, then it will be either the a priori way or the a posteriori way or the conventionalist way.

To facilitate his discussion here, Choi specifies a proposition which is the negation of (2a*), and so I shall call this proposition (Not-2a*):[14]

(Not-2a*) It is possible that: there is a non-Christian theistic way to justify the laws of logic and it is neither the a priori way nor the a posteriori way nor the conventionalist way.

Now what exactly does (Not-2a*) mean? I take it that if (Not-2a*) is true, then there is some possible world W, where Christian theism is false and where there is a non-AAC rational justification for the laws of logic. Of course, if there is such a world W, then (2a*) is false, and even more critically, the transcendental premise (i.e., premise 2) of TAG is false. At this point, Choi argues that *It is epistemically possible that (Not-2a*)*.[15] And Choi argues for this last proposition, in turn, by arguing that the following proposition (F) is consistent with our evidence—that is, that (F) is epistemically possible:

(F) It is possible that: there is a worldview distinct from Christian theism and which is such that if it *were* true, it would provide a *sufficient* justification for the laws of logic (Choi, "Transcendental Argument," 243).

Now Choi does not provide a detailed analysis of the exact meaning of (F), but in light of his discussion, I think it is fairly clear that if (F) is true, then there is some possible world—I shall dub this world "WF," such that: (1) some worldview F is true in WF, (2) Christian theism is false in WF, and (3) there is a rational justification for the laws of logic in WF.[16] To facilitate consideration of (F), Choi has us consider a (putative) possible world where Fristianity is true:

"As a specific illustration of such a worldview, consider Fristianity, which is a theistic worldview that holds to the doctrine of quadrinity (one God in four persons) and is otherwise identical to Christianity, or as similar to Christianity as possible (given its quadrinitarian tenet). And more relevantly for our purposes, *in whatever way* that Christian theism is supposed to account for the laws of logic, Fristian theism would account for them *in like manner*" (Choi, "Transcendental Argument," 244–245).

Let me now pause to state Choi's argument as clearly and accurately as possible. First, let us define proposition (F*):

(F*) It is possible that (i.e., there is a possible world where) Fristianity is true and there is a non-AAC rational justification for the laws of logic.

We can now state Choi's argument as follows:

(1) If (F*) is epistemically possible, then (2a*) has not been adequately supported (and so TAG fails).

(2) (F*) is epistemically possible.

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13. It seems that someone might reasonably think that the true account of logic must be *either a priori or a posteriori*. From this perspective, showing that there is no possible world in which there is a correct AAC account would be tantamount to showing that there is no possible world in which there is a true account of logic.

14. Choi uses the same designation (viz., (2a*)) for both (2a*) *and* its negation. Perhaps this is just a typographical or editing error—at any rate it is rather confusing. Thus I shall deviate from Choi's text and use the name "(Not-2a*)" for the negation of (2a*).

15. More accurately, he argues for the "iterated" claim that *It is epistemically possible that it is possible that (Not-2a*)*, but, as Choi points out, given the widely accepted system of modal logic S5, this proposition is equivalent to the simpler *It is epistemically possible that (Not-2a*)*. The reader is encouraged to consult Choi's footnote 24 to further explore the reasoning here.

16. A technical glitch in Choi's argumentation here is that the epistemic possibility of (F) does not entail the epistemic possibility of (Not-2a*), since (F) does not entail that the rational justification for logic is non-AAC, but let us overlook this point. Nevertheless, proposition (F) is still of critical importance: for if (F) is true, then the transcendental premise of Bahnsen's main TAG is false and the argument thus fails.

So (3) (2a*) has not been adequately supported (and so TAG fails).

In evaluating this argument, I will make one observation about premise (1) and then concentrate exclusively on premise (2). Setting aside a technical difficulty noted above,[17] premise 1 is correct in its claim, and even more directly, if (F*) is epistemically possible then it is epistemically possible that the transcendental premise (premise 2) of TAG is false. Let us move on to consider premise 2. Now the claim that *(F*) is epistemically possible* is precisely the claim that *(F*) is consistent with our evidence base* (i.e., *with everything we know to be true*). But there is a very significant problem in judging whether this claim is true, precisely because we have no idea (given Choi's discussion) of what is and isn't included in "our evidence base."

Epistemic possibility is a person-relative notion. If I know that *Sam has gone fishing* but my brother Paul doesn't know this, then the proposition *Sam has not gone fishing* is epistemically possible for Paul but not for me. So the claim that a given proposition is epistemically possible is a claim that is intrinsically "relativized" to a particular person's evidence-base at a given time. Thus, in order to judge whether (F*) is epistemically possible for a given person S at a given time t, we must have some idea of what S's evidence is at time t. Now, just going on Choi's discussion, we really have no idea whether "our evidence base" includes the claim that *The Triune God necessarily exists*. If our evidence base includes this claim, then, contrary to the argument, (F*) is *not* epistemically possible. Now in response it might be suggested that, *of course* our evidence base does *not* include the necessary existence of the Triune God, since this is just what the TAG argument is supposed to establish in the first place. This is a reasonable point, but on the other hand, this argument is proposed in the larger context of presuppositionalist apologetics, which insists that we must *begin* our reasoning with Christian presuppositions. The bottom line is that Choi's objection is inconclusive—it has not been shown that (F*)

is epistemically possible. Whether (F*) is epistemically possible for a given individual depends on S's evidence-base, and this, in turn, may depend on S's basic presuppositions themselves.

5. Distinguishing the Modal Transcendental Argument from Generic Transcendental Arguments

Above I argued that if the desired conclusion of a TA is a mere actuality claim (as in the *Cogito* argument), then the "modal element" of the transcendental premise is dialectically unnecessary. It is interesting that while Choi strongly emphasizes the necessity of the transcendental premise (since this makes for the "essence" of the transcendental argument), he does not even address the issue of the modal status of the conclusion.[18]

On the other hand, if the goal is to construct an argument for the *necessary truth* of Christian theism, as Collett emphasizes, then the transcendental premise is indeed appropriate and necessary. But if this *is* the goal, then Choi's formulation of the general form of TAG is inadequate because it is not sensitive to the modal status of the "granted" premise. Let us at this point introduce the general form for a *Modal Transcendental Argument*, as I shall call it:

(MTA1) It is necessary that q.

(MTA2) It is necessary that if not-p, then not-q.

So, (MTA3) It is necessary that p.[19]

The important revision here (relative to Choi's analysis) is that both the granted premise and the transcendental premises are *necessary* propositions. Incidentally, a bit of reflection will reveal that our final formulation of *The Transcendental Argument from Presupposition* (found above at end of section 2) is equivalent to an instance of this general form. We can now express the *Modal Transcendental Argument Form* as follows:

MTAG1. It is necessary that there is a proposition that has a truth-value.

MTAG2. It is necessary that if God does not exist, then it is false that there is a proposition that has a truth-value.

So MTAG3. It is necessary that God exists.

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17. See footnote 16.

18. On 236, Choi highlights the fact that, at least for Bahnsen, the desired conclusion is the truth of *Christian* theism, as opposed to "theism in general," but he does not explicitly give any indication that TAG is supposed to establish the truth of Christian theism *in all possible worlds*.

19. We may note that (by contraposition on premise 2) this is equivalent to the "cleaner" modus ponens form:

   (MTA1) It is necessary that q.
   (MTA2) It is necessary that: If q, then p.
   (MTA3) So, It is necessary that p.

theology in the seventeenth century. Rather, they affirm it. We used the Abrahamic covenant as a test case. The designation of the Abrahamic covenant as a covenant of grace in classic covenant theology is compatible with the concept of the covenant of royal grant, in parallel with the treaty of royal grant which was one of the two different patterns on the treaties in the ancient Near East.

We explored how the judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah was redemptive judgment through holy war and separated the covenant community from the non-covenant community and corrupt world. It was a type of the final redemptive judgment at the *Parousia*. The redemptive judgment within the historical context of the Abrahamic covenant was the divine demonstration that the ultimate realization of the promises of the Abrahamic covenant would be fulfilled with the eschatological redemptive judgment.

Through the intended sacrifice of Isaac on the altar of Mount Moriah by Abraham, we endeavored to seek the image of the Son of Man sacrificed on the altar of Golgotha. In that sense, the sacrifice of Isaac on the altar was a Messianic prophecy of how "the woman's offspring" would come as "the Son of Man" to forgive the sins of the elect and bestow all the redemptive blessings that God promised to Abraham, including personal salvation.

We established the apostolic designation of "in Christ Jesus," "in Christ," and "through Christ Jesus" to note redemptive blessings, including personal salvation, adopted from the Abrahamic covenant wherein God promised redemptive blessings to Abraham and his descendants by the means of the phrases "in your offspring" and "in you."

We endeavored to support a thesis that Abraham's justification by faith within the historical context of the Abrahamic covenant provided for the first time in redemptive history a soteriological pattern that sinners are justified by faith apart from obedience or works of the law. Representatively, Paul used this soteriological motif after his Damascus Road conversion experience and proclaimed it for both Jews and Gentiles, as did the other apostles.∎

On the Shoulder of Giants: Van Til's Appropriation of Warfield and Kuyper. Continued from Page 146.

Finally, Kuyper was correct to connect apologetics with the other dogmatical sciences. Apologetics cannot be divorced

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20. For further discussion focused specifically on the *generic* form of the transcendental argument, see my "A Dilemma For the Proponent of the Transcendental Argument for God's Existence," *Philosophia Christi* 11, no. 2 (2009): 465–469. James Anderson provides an insightful reply to my proposed dilemma in "No Dilemma for the Proponent of the Transcendental Argument: A Response to David Reiter," forthcoming in *Philosophia Christi*, Vol. 13, No. 1, (2011). I reply to Anderson in "Rejoinder to Anderson," also forthcoming in *Philosophia Christi*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2011).

from the Christianity it is intended to defend or vindicate. However, he was wrong to diminish its significance. Given Van Til's correction of Kuyper's territorial notion of the antithesis and common grace with a temporal or eschatological view, we can now see that apologetics has an essential role to play in the proclamation of the Gospel (and in this Warfield was correct). Apologetics is no more fruitless than preaching or evangelism in this age before the consummation. Preaching and witnessing have no inherent powers to convert the sinner. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. However, the Holy Spirit uses preaching and witnessing and so can also use apologetics.

Conclusion

Cornelius Van Til critically appropriated the apologetic insights of both Benjamin B. Warfield and Abraham Kuyper. He accepted Warfield's insight into the objective, intelligible, and clear revelation of God to man in nature and history. But he rejected Warfield's abstract notion of induction and probability and what he understood to be Warfield's notion of neutral "right reason." Van Til agreed with Kuyper's notion of the antithesis between belief and unbelief but he rejected the idea that there were practices unaffected by the fall or that there were neutral zones in this fallen world and he rejected Kuyper's diminution of apologetics which resulted from his territorial notion of the antithesis and common grace. Van Til's improvement on Kuyper's notion of antithesis and common grace allows us to recognize the central place of the transcendental argument in presuppositional apologetics: the argument for the impossibility to the contrary.

Van Til stood on the shoulders of giants and he benefitted from the insights of Warfield and Kuyper. He saw farther and more clearly than these two Reformed stalwarts and we do them no dishonor when we recognize this. Greg Bahnsen is correct when he notes that he who understands how Van Til critically appropriated *both* Warfield and Kuyper will understand the genius of the presuppositional apologetic method.∎

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Our study has led us to distinguish the *Modal Transcendental Argument Form* from the more "generic" transcendental argument form.[20] Collett strongly emphasizes the desideratum that the transcendental argument should establish the necessity of God's existence (Collett, "Van Til," 262), but he does not clearly recognize and make explicit the modal status of the premises of the argument—this is especially true with regard to the "granted" premise of the argument. On the other hand, Choi explicitly asserts that a modal (necessity) premise is of the very essence of a transcendental argument. But he

neglects the modal status of both the granted premise and the theistic conclusion. The overall conclusion of our discussion is that a transcendental argument intended to establish the necessity of God's existence must be *purely* transcendental[21]—i.e., it must be composed *exclusively* of necessary truths. ▪[22]

Review: **Douglas Bond,** *The Mighty Weakness of John Knox.* **D.M. Lloyd-Jones and Iain Murray,** *John Knox and the Reformation.* **Continued from Page 212**
already discovered, and which had been forgotten" (13). This is a salutary point in today's church, where many people seem to think that church history started in 1517.

The bad point is a small indication that Lloyd-Jones was influenced by R.T. Kendall's "Calvin versus the Calvinists" school. He lambastes the "scholastic philosophy" of the Medieval period (pp. 18–19), as if the term "scholastic" indicated the content of what was taught rather than the method (Richard Muller, in particular, has been helpful in making the point that "scholasticism" refers to a method of teaching, not the content of what is taught).

The second essay is a bit more helpful, in this reviewer's opinion. He praises John Knox's "sense of discrimination" (42), a quality that we usually refer to today as "discernment." He argues that this quality was one of the most outstanding features of his life, alongside "shrewdness" (43), "wisdom" (44), and "moderation" (45). This last characteristic sounds pretty silly when talking about John Knox, a man not precisely known for moderating his tone. However, there are some examples of moderation in Knox's life that show that he could be moderate sometimes. This reviewer would have appreciated a few more examples to counter-balance the evidence for the opposite position taken by many historians.

In getting to the thesis itself, he argues that originality as a character trait was one of the hallmarks of both Knox and the Puritans (52). Furthermore, the principle that the Scriptures have the supreme authority in our lives is also one the Puritans upheld (although it can certainly be argued that all the Reformers did this). The third piece of evidence he adduces is that Knox put into practice his principles (55–56), surely a characteristic of the Puritans, if there ever was one.

One last fascinating historical point that Lloyd-Jones explains is the origin of the so-called "Black rubric," a sheet of paper added to the Book of Common Prayer by Cranmer, but, as Lloyd-Jones argues, forced to do so by John Knox (pp. 58–63). This sheet of paper had a warning in it designed to be a compromise between the Anglicans and the Puritans concerning kneeling during the Lord's Supper. The rubric explains that such kneeling has nothing to do with adoration or worship of the elements or anything else. Lloyd-Jones's conclusion concerning the Black Rubric is that "Here is proof positive that this man was the leader of the Puritan party in this explicit manner" (63).

Murray's essay is purely biographical, in order to complement Lloyd-Jones's more thesis-oriented essays. It is entitled "John Knox and 'The Battle.'" Murray desires to point out how controversial a figure Knox was (83). After a helpful and orderly marching through the key events in Knox's life, Murray ends with a section entitled "What We May Learn from Knox" (pp. 114ff). The first helpful point he makes here is that we have an advantage that Knox never had. He had to fight against every tradition, because almost every tradition in the church was bad. We, however, have many good traditions which we do not have to jettison. The second helpful point is that Knox engaged in a very extensive ministry of encouragement (120). Knox used key doctrines like election to encourage people (see the same point made above concerning the Bond book). The third point he makes is about the power of preaching. In an age where digital media are constantly threatening to make preaching obsolete, we must never lose faith in the God of the Word, who has promised us that His Word will never return to us void. This reviewer does recommend this book also as a helpful analysis of several key issues in play during the time of the Scottish Reformation. It is a great place to get one's feet wet in Scottish church history, which has Knox for its main fountainhead.

Psallo. Psalm 116:1–9. **Continued from Page 213.**
Solomon, it speaks prophetically of Christ and His eternal reign. "God save the King" applies most assuredly to Christ as the King of Israel forever, and hearing the proclamation of the Psalmist in 72.15 "and he shall live!" gives great comfort to us in that we know that our King reigns by the power of an endless life.

Finally, as we meditate upon Psalm 116 let us see our Lord prophetically represented as that public Person whose deliverance from death brings joy and salvation to His people. Let us remember that the Father always hears Him (v. 2, cf. John 11:42). In His being brought low, and in His exaltation, (v 6–8) our salvation is accomplished. In His taking the cup of salvation (v. 13, cf. Matthew 26:27), and in keeping His covenant bond with the Father (v. 18, cf. Titus 1:2), our King takes our sins to Himself, and provides for us a righteousness not our own. As He calls us to Jerusalem for the great feast (vv. 18–19), so we are gathered to Him. And as He lives, so shall we live also (v. 19, cf. John 14:19).

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