

# The Role of the Transcendental Argument in Creation Research

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## Abstract

The transcendental argument for God is fundamental to creation research. Clearly defined, it reveals the biblical foundations upon which real science rests. It links creation research to the objective truthfulness of God while showing the absurdity of the secular view by uncovering its subjective foundation. The transcendental argument also has application to evidence claims, experimentation, and arguments against evolution.

## Introduction

Creation research, by its very nature, has both presuppositional and evidential aspects. It is presuppositional in its reliance on the biblical account of Creation, which also links it to absolute truth. It is evidential in its use of science in forensic history to support and enlarge the biblical narrative. The transcendental argument, which addresses axiomatic issues, provides a logical argument to expose the presuppositional truth claims of both Christianity and secular natural history.

The bulk of creation research is evidence based, as demonstrated by the fact that most articles published over the last 50 years by the *Creation Research Society Quarterly* were in evidence-based sciences (Reed, 2013). These articles

gain strength and clarity with the foundation of the transcendental argument by connecting evidence to a biblical framework. In other words, evidence does not stand alone without first being interpreted, and the transcendental argument provides a method to expose these interpretations.

## Defining the Transcendental Argument

Defining the transcendental argument can be difficult. First, it is clearly different from the more familiar deductive and inductive arguments. Second, many variations of contemporary transcendental arguments have been proposed by thinkers as diverse as Immanuel Kant

(1724–1804) and Cornelius Van Til (1895–1980).

Biblical scholar Michael Butler (1997) defines the argument in general terms:

Popularized by Immanuel Kant, transcendental arguments attempt to discover the preconditions of human experience. They do so by taking some aspect of human experience and investigating what must be true in order for that experience to be possible. (Butler, 1997, p. 6)

Philosopher and apologist Greg Bahnsen further defines the transcendental argument this way:

It has been central to the philosophies of Aristotle and Kant. ... Van Til asks what view of man, mind, truth, language, and the world is necessarily presupposed by our conception of knowledge and our methods of pursuing it. For him, the transcendental answer is supplied at the very first step of man's

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reasoning—not by autonomous philosophical speculation, but by transcendent revelation from God. (Bahnsen, 1998, p. 6)

The argument typically follows this pattern or takes this form:

As standardly conceived, transcendental arguments are taken to be distinctive in involving a certain sort of claim, namely that *X* is a necessary condition for the possibility of *Y*—where then, given that *Y* is the case, it logically follows that *X* must be the case too. (Stern, 2013)

Butler explains:

The transcendental argument tries to show transcendentals ... The word ‘transcendental,’ used as a noun, is a condition for some kind of experience ... and is usually indexed to a certain type of experience or concept. (Butler, 1994)

Van Til explains:

A truly transcendental argument takes any fact of experience which it wishes to investigate, and tries to determine what the presuppositions of such a fact must be, in order to make it what it is. (Van Til, 1969, p. 18)

So, in the form described above, *X* is the transcendental based on the observation of *Y*. For example, if some “natural law” is observed, there must be a prior explanation of the intelligibility of nature to man (Figure 1). Figure 2 shows the differences between transcendental arguments and the more familiar inductive and deductive arguments.

## The Presuppositional Nature of Creation Research

The application to creation research is obvious, because embedded in creation research are biblical presuppositions (Lisle, 2009; Reed, 2000; Reed et al., 2004). In other words, the Bible is the ultimate epistemological reference point for the events and consequences of Genesis 1–11. This is an appeal to the objective, absolute truth of God, which

**X** is a precondition for the possibility of **Y**  
**Y** is the case because **X** is the case  
**X** is the transcendental for **Y**  
**X** = revelation from God (transcendental) for **Y** = conception of knowledge  
**X** = revelation from God for **Y** = any observation

Figure 1. Different ways to look at the transcendental argument formula.

### A. Inductive Argument

The meerkat is closely related to the suricat  
 The suricat thrives on beetle larvae  
 Therefore, the meerkat probably thrives on beetle larvae

### B. Deductive Argument

The meerkat is a member of the mongoose family  
 All members of the mongoose family are carnivores  
 The meerkat is a carnivore

### C. Secular Transcendental Argument

Everything about the meerkat is understood as the product of evolution. Human science alone uncovers the relationship of the meerkat to other members of the mongoose family or any other fact about the animal.

### D. Christian Transcendental Argument

Everything about the meerkat can only be understood in the context of God’s revelation. Genesis 1 provides the basis for understanding the relationships of all kinds of animals. Furthermore, God provides the structure of logic and knowledge that allow human reason to understand the meerkat. Without God, understanding is not possible.

Figure 2. Different types of arguments. A and B from Hurley (2008).

is different in kind from “subjective” scientific opinions that must be defended experimentally or from historical inferences made by scientists. Rather, it is a stance on the existence of God and His revelation in the Bible and in nature.

The transcendental argument forces

the scientist to recognize that his science is not autonomous and that God has a unique ontological status. He is self-sufficient, self-authenticating, self-attesting, and self-identifying. God exists necessarily, and this beginning point must be acknowledged.

It is only upon Christian presuppositions that we can have a sound scientific methodology. (Van Til, 1975, p. iv)

The certainty, absoluteness, and exclusivity of the God to whom the young-earth position appeals must be clearly presented and not minimized in any way. The way (presuppositionally) in which creation research is conducted is important.

Failing to recognize God as the source of truth for science as well as for any other human discipline (and not just theology) is essential, as is the contrary—that science is not intelligible apart from Christian axioms. Nothing is intelligible without God, for it is in Christ where all understanding and knowledge are found; in Him “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3 ESV). Bahnsen explains:

If God did not exist, the intelligibility of human experience, reasoning, and communication would be lost; indeed, God must exist in order for someone meaningfully to deny His existence. (Bahnsen, 1998, p. 620)

Van Til explains that God must be acknowledged to give significance to any object of knowledge:

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. 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. (Van Til, 1969, p. 174)

Creation researchers also must understand the implications for common ground with secular scientists. To the extent that common ground exists in the methods and assumptions of science, it is inconsistent with the secular worldview. Ultimately, any researcher

is attempting to support his basic presuppositions. The difference is that the creation researcher admits a prior belief system based on the Bible, while many secular scientists refuse to admit this basic truth. An appeal to the absolute authority of God is an attack on the human autonomy that presuppositionally supports the unbeliever’s way of thinking. This challenge to the secular scientist’s inconsistent (in the sense that science is Christian) foundations demonstrates the fundamental irrationality, which is shown in attacks on those who oppose evolution (Bergman, 2008; *Expelled: No Science Allowed*, 2008).

Furthermore, presuppositional apologetics should not be misunderstood. Pointing out that assumptions are involved is not enough. That is, it must be clear that God’s position as ultimate authority in all matters of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics is the starting point of all reality, of all knowing and experience.

Van Til’s point is not simply that everybody has assumptions. There is little specific help for a successful program of apologetics in that observation (which nearly everybody can make). Indeed, left there, the insight might woefully suggest that nature and history could be just as well interpreted on a non-Christian basis as on a Christian one—a thought that was abhorrent to Van Til. Instead ... the apologist must “press the objective validity of the Christian claim at every point.” (Bahnsen, 1998, p. 108)

### **The Evidential Nature of Creation Research**

Although creation science is presuppositional, the bulk of its work is done with evidence and, where possible, experimentation. Because science itself is an enterprise constructed within the Christian worldview, it provides common ground with the public. However, if issues of presuppositional consistency

are not raised, creationism runs the risk of being seen as merely another subjective opinion, and the apologetic mandate of Scripture is ignored. The biblical foundations upon which research is conducted should be clearly presented. Nancy Pearcey illustrates the harmfulness of abandoning objective truth:

If Christians would just relinquish all claims to objective truth, then they would be granted an arena where their beliefs are secure from criticism. But it has become evident that such a bargain offers a false security. ... That’s why it is dangerous to engage in cognitive bargaining that relegates Christianity to the value realm. (Pearcey, 2004, p. 221–222)

Furthermore, she explains the problem of a fact/value dichotomy:

By accepting the fact/value dichotomy, many of us have come to think of religion and morality in terms of a privatized, upper-story experience. (Pearcey 2004, p. 203)

In Figure 2, the inductive and deductive arguments about characteristics of a meerkat are helpful and do not overtly reference values. The transcendental argument, which exposes the philosophical underpinnings about how the meerkat is viewed, illustrates that facts are not value free. Van Til uses the term “brute fact” to illustrate this. “If we seek to interpret any fact based on a non-Christian hypothesis it turns out to be a brute fact” (Van Til, 1975, p. 65), he writes, then adds:

The mere assumption of a brute fact is a denial of the creation doctrine. ... Taking brute facts for granted, scientists must also take for granted the ultimacy of the human mind. (Van Til 1975, p. 84)

Bahnsen clarifies this:

Every fact of the universe and history is preinterpreted by the sovereign Creator; it is *what* it is in virtue of His plan and knowledge. Hence to understand the world correctly one must subordinate his thinking to

the revelation of God, thinking His thoughts after Him in a receptively reconstructive fashion. Meaning is not attached to brute facts by man's mind, but all facts bear the meaning that God assigns and must be known as such. (Bahnsen, 2008, p. 227)

Therefore, facts (evidence) cannot be neutral because then the best we could hope for is an apologetic that points to an indeterminate God.

Secular science is vulnerable to an assault on its presumed neutrality and autonomy. Scientific evidence operates in one belief system or another. The only consistent one is that which points to the self-defining God of Scripture:

If God himself provides evidence for what he declares to be truth it is calumnious to repudiate the value of evidence. (Sproul et al., 1984, p. 20)

So while the value of evidence is enormous, it must be understood in its proper perspective.

Discussions usually sink to a 'my evidence' versus 'your evidence' level, while in reality all evidence must be *interpreted* ... discussions should be 'my interpretations based on my assumptions' versus 'your interpretations based on your assumptions' and the reasonableness of each set of assumptions and interpretations. (Morris, 1994, pp. 119–120)

This flow from assumptions to data to conclusions by way of interpretations has been used by many (Chittick, 1984; Ham, 1987; Morris, 1994).

Ken Ham has been using this approach effectively for years. It is the theme of his classic book, *The Lie*. He explains:

I had been using what can be called an *evidentialist* approach ... I then changed methods and taught students the true nature of science—what science can and cannot do. ... They were told that all scientists have presuppositions (beliefs) which they use in interpreting the evidence. I shared with them my beliefs in the

Bible ... I had begun teaching from what could be called a 'presuppositional' approach. The difference was astounding. (Ham, 1987, pp. 30–31)

Does Ham abandon arguments from natural theology? No. His popular use of the example of the platypus in many of his lectures is an argument from design. "It's designed to do what it does do and what it does do it does do well." This is an argument from natural theology, specifically a teleological argument. However, it would be an incomplete response if it were not tied to the Designer described in Genesis.

A good illustration of the relationship of evidence and interpretations is found in John 12:28–29:

"Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said: "An angel has spoken to him." (ESV)

Those who made the assumption that a Creator can act perceived a communication in the form of words. On the other hand, those who made the assumption that nothing supernatural was involved concluded that the noise was thunder ... The two groups of people had the same facts available to them ... Their conclusions about it, however, were quite different and depended on the as-

sumptions they held. (Chittick, 1984, p. 30)

Despite assertions to the contrary, evolutionists develop and maintain their position because of their philosophical starting point. The mere presence of compelling counterevidence for biblical history demonstrates that the debate is over *interpretations* of the evidence. The transcendental argument allows us to resolve that debate. Its usefulness is seen in two areas: (1) the preconditions for intelligibility and (2) in the effectiveness of the argument for the impossibility of the contrary.

### Preconditions for Intelligibility

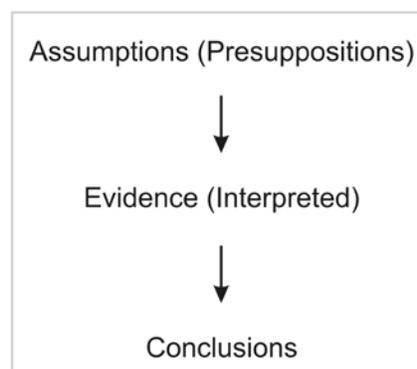
Science rests on nature being intelligible to man. This is what the transcendental method does. Secularists blindly assume that the human mind is the ultimate source of all intelligibility. But this creates a problem for evolutionists.

Their problem has always been how contingent, limited, fallible humans can achieve absolute, unlimited, and infallible knowledge. At present, they appear to have settled for the abolition of knowledge in favor of emotion (so-called "post-modernism"). (Reed, et al., 2004, p. 225)

An evolutionist has an especially big problem when he is faced with the challenge of accounting for his source of intelligibility.

The evolutionist must use biblical creation principles in order to argue against biblical creation ... Evolutionists must assume the preconditions of intelligibility in order to make any argument whatsoever. ... But the preconditions of intelligibility do not comport with an evolutionary worldview. (Lisle, 2009, pp. 45–46)

Consider two examples. First, how can the evolutionist explain a non-material reality like logic? We know that even though we cannot put our hand



**Figure 3. The flow from data to conclusion.**

on it or see it, logic is real. How could it have evolved? This is inexplicable in the secular worldview, where materialism is the ultimate reality. However, Christians can readily justify logic by reference to the nature of God. The *transcendental* to the *experience* of logic is a God who is orderly and uniform and displays regularity in time and space (Lisle, 2009). This same argument can be applied to other nonmaterial realities like love, morality, or our senses.

Second, consider a material reality, such as a rock formation. Both creationists and uniformitarian geologists may seek to explain the formation. A creationist can gain historical context by the prior knowledge of the truth of the Bible. The *transcendental* to the *observational feature* of that rock formation is this context of Creation and the Flood. Thus, God, through Scripture, gives intelligibility to the explanation of the rock formation. Conversely, empirical research conducted without a clear acknowledgement of God as the source of intelligibility can appeal only to the limitations of the human mind, and it is only to the extent that the unbeliever borrows from the Christian worldview that he can make sense of anything (Bahnsen 2008).

Reed et al. illustrate this by exposing how naturalism has hijacked Christian axioms:

Naturalism is formally invalid because it relies on axioms antithetical to its methods and conclusions. Naturalism sprouted from the soil of Christian presuppositions. Larceny is profitable as long as no one notices, but when the spotlight is aimed in the right direction, the long arm of logic must act. We contend that unless Naturalism can recreate these axioms and justify them in a way that is consistent with the rest of its worldview, creationists should be screaming that the entire worldview is false and should be ignored in discussions about origins or Earth

history. All of the empirical data in the world cannot save Naturalism from formal flaws. (Reed et al., 2004, p. 228)

The strength of the transcendental method can be seen by its exposing this truth. Oliphint sums this up well:

Methodologically, what has Van Til done thus far? He has shown that the pragmatist cannot do justice to his own system of thought because it presupposes in its defense that which it rejects. (Oliphint, 1997, p. 6)

### **Impossibility of the Contrary**

Another way in which the transcendental argument is useful is in the form of argument known as the “impossibility of the opposite.” Bahnsen writes:

Only Christianity is a reasonable position to hold and ... unless its truth is presupposed there is no foundation for an argument that can prove anything whatsoever. Thus it is irrational to hold to anything but the truth of Scripture. (Bahnsen, 2008, p. 124)

Also:

At the level where there are conflicting claims as to the true, self-evident starting point, our apologetic argumentation must require all or nothing; either complete surrender to the epistemic Lordship of Christ (Col. 2:3) or utter intellectual vanity and striving after wind (Eccl. 1:13–17). We must argue from the impossibility of the contrary. (Bahnsen, 1996, p. 74)

In the formula above (see Figure 1), Y is the case *because* of X. So, without X, Y cannot be the case. The “impossibility of the contrary” states: If X is a necessary condition of Y, then without X, Y is impossible. If God is X and Y is the operational features of nature, and if God is a necessary condition for them, then Y cannot be explained without God. Absent God, the source of all knowledge, there is no accounting for

the components of logic, causality, order, etc. because these cannot be explained by materialism. It is the distinct claim of Van Til’s (1975) transcendental argument that it is God who provides the preconditions for intelligibility. However, it is not a mere assertion that God provides the preconditions for intelligibility. It is the observation of things for which God is a necessary explanation. Because we observe them, it is logically impossible to propose the absence of God, according to Van Til (1975).

### **Evidentialism Versus Presuppositionalism**

A division has developed between theologians over the method of apologetics. The position of the most prominent modern presuppositionalist, Van Til, was challenged and critiqued by Sproul et al. (1984) in their book *Classical Apologetics*. The details of this debate are beyond this paper, but it has relevance to creationism through the transcendental argument:

The transcendental method is, according to Van Til, the combination of both the inductive and deductive elements *as these are understood in the Christian context*. To combine these elements for a Christian runs somewhat like this: All facts that are investigated must be seen first of all as created and therefore interpreted by God. (Oliphint, 1997, p. 12)

The problem with a division between these two approaches is that they become competing methodologies. If two baseball teams compete with one another, one team cannot borrow players from the other team. Instead, evidential and presuppositional methods should be viewed as *complementary* methods of arriving at truth.

To think that one has to have either an evidential or presuppositional approach to apologetics is to commit the logical fallacy of a false dilemma. It is not an either/or proposition because

evidentialists have presuppositions, whether they admit it or not, and most presuppositionalists use evidence.

At heart is the ontological error called a *category mistake*. If I want to describe the taste of an apple, I would not say it tastes green. I may say it tastes sweet or sour but not green. That is because “green” is not in the same category as “sweet” or “sour.”

Likewise, the transcendental argument is not in the same category as a deductive argument. A deductive argument may be logically valid, following from a premise to a conclusion. But it is not true if the premise is faulty. That determination is left to the transcendental argument. A premise is true only if it meets a precondition for intelligibility. It is through checking premises against the objective standard of God’s Word that true advancements in science can be made. It is at this point that the scientific superiority of the biblical creation worldview is most clearly seen.

Conversely, ignoring the transcendental approach to evidence and blindly accepting premises weakens science, whether creationist or evolutionist. Evolution is sustained by its blind acceptance of premises that are inconsistent with its worldview, showing the foundational, and thus scientific, superiority of biblical creationism. This does not minimize empirical science but supports it.

What then is the benefit of inductive science? Great in every respect—but impossible without the superstructure of theology and philosophy explicit in its formative stages. (Reed, 2000, p. 161)

### **Intellectual Credibility**

In 1992, Sproul and Bahnsen debated apologetic method. Sproul expressed his concern that presuppositional apologetics would cause Christianity to “lose intellectual credibility.” (Bahnsen and Sproul, 1992). This statement seemed strong, since the presuppositional ap-

proach highlights the logical and intellectual weak points of evolution. The transcendental argument is the logical tool that can uncover arbitrariness, inconsistencies, and the fallacious assumptions of evolution. Lisle proposed three tests to effectively challenge evolutionists. First, he explained that the arbitrariness of the evolutionists can be seen when they express mere opinion, relativism, prejudicial conjecture, and an unargued philosophical bias. Second, their inconsistencies reveal their logical fallacies. Third, when challenging the evolutionist’s preconditions for intelligibility, one finds they cannot account for morality, the uniformity of nature, the reliability of the senses, or other fundamental axioms (Lisle, 2009; see also Lisle, 2010; Glover 1984; Reed et al., 2004).

Lisle cites Proverbs 26:4–5: “Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes” (ESV). For example, accepting the evolutionist presupposition that the universe is millions of years old is to answer a fool according to his folly. However, if we expose his presuppositions and show him that they lead to absurdity, subjectivism, and skepticism, then we will correctly answer him according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes (Lisle 2009).

This can be a difficult task but a fruitful one. It can be fruitful because it will expose the basic human autonomy that is the authority in the evolutionists’ worldview. Most scientists have never seriously questioned their presuppositions and dogmatically hold to their naturalistic worldview (Clark, 1994; Reed and Williams, 2011). John Morris sums it up well:

Most people believe in evolution because most people believe in evolution. That is all they have ever been taught. If creation is even mentioned, it’s ridiculed and unfairly caricatured. Thus, evolution is assumed, not

proved, and creation is denied, not refuted. (Morris, 1994, p. 22)

### **Fideism, Faith, and Science**

Another challenge to the presuppositionalist is the claim that Van Til’s presuppositionalism is fideistic (Sproul et al., 1984). Since this is also a common accusation made by atheists against Christianity, it is worth considering. The basic problem with the conclusion that presuppositionalism is fideism is that this is a category mistake. The transcendental argument seeks to arrive at axiomatic solutions that do expose faith positions, but it does so by providing rational strength to evidence claims.

If the transcendental argument is seen as a mere appeal to a faith claim, then it is misunderstood. It is an argument from intelligibility that exposes underlying reference points for rationality. The position of this argument in regard to faith is most clearly seen in the comments above regarding the impossibility of the contrary. Faith obviously is involved in this endeavor, but it is not blind or irrational. So, it should not be a concern for the transcendental argument (as outlined above), though it does raise the issue of the relative role of belief and knowledge in the origins debate.

Faith is involved in any belief system, whether naturalism or Christianity. The issue is not the presence of faith but how it is consistent with truth. Creationists should not be ashamed of having faith and of its role in their system. After all, the Bible states that by faith we understand that the world was created by God’s word (Hebrews 11:3). At the same time, Romans 1 teaches us that this is not a blind faith but a faith consistent with what we observe.

Naturalists also have faith. The differences are that their faith is not consistent with what we observe, and it is often denied, even though it is obvious to all but the denier. Evolutionists express blind faith in evolution and the big bang.

They express more faith in the axioms of science, which are inconsistent with their worldview. Instead of pretending that faith is not a part of science, we must argue for its legitimate function:

The apologist must clearly grasp the principal conflict in philosophical positions, think and reason in terms of it, and constantly lay out for the unbeliever this fundamental clash in perspectives as the *defining and determinative context* for their argument with each other. (Bahnsen, 1998, p. 273)

God makes an exclusive claim to truth. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth and the life” (John 14:6 ESV). This implies that science cannot be conducted without an acknowledgment of God. Johannes Kepler understood this, as he is often quoted as saying he was “thinking God’s thoughts after Him” (Morris 1982, p. 12). Kepler also wrote, “We duly subordinate the created mind—of whatsoever excellence it may be—to its Creator” (Kepler, 1995, p. 243).

If science is defined on purely naturalistic terms, it is not true to reason or Scripture. It is only to the extent that human reasoning reflects the mind of God that reason can be considered intellectual or scientific or make any substantive advance in human knowledge. However,

Many non-Christian scientists have discovered much truth about nature ... because of the fact that they cannot help but work with the “borrowed” capital of Christianity. (Bahnsen, 1998, p. 298)

The problem for the unbeliever is that he keeps committing himself to some requirement of “rationality” and insisting on it being honored, only to find upon analysis that only the Christian worldview coheres with it. (Bahnsen, 1998, p. 483)

It is a matter of consistency; since science developed from the Christian worldview, then that is its home belief system. Science is not “neutral,” and

evolutionary natural history is even less so. The faithful work of creation research submits evidential and experimental science to the consistency test of God’s thoughts.

Naturalism in any form is an assault on reason and on the intellectual credibility of Christians. Theologian Robert L. Dabney observed:

If you must persist in recognizing nothing but natural forces ... I will show you that it will land you, if you are consistent, nowhere short of absolute atheism. (Dabney, 1985, p. 261)

The teleological, ontological, and cosmological arguments of natural theology are important and useful. However, *solely* relying on these arguments without a connection to a biblical starting point leads only to “probabilism”:

Such a ‘defense’ of the faith is not worthy of that name; this is simply a *non-apologetic*, for it offers no positive *reason* for the hope that is in us. The retreat to skeptical probabilism does Christian apologetics no service; the despisers of the faith can make exactly the same move. (Bahnsen, 2008, p. 225)

In his book *Always Ready*, Bahnsen sums up this discussion of faith and intellectual credibility with quotes from both Friedrich Nietzsche and Van Til’s mentor, J. Gresham Machen:

In *The Antichrist: Attempt at a Critique of Christianity* (1895), Friedrich Nietzsche expressed his derision toward this attitude by saying: “Faith means not *wanting* to know what is true.” ... However, all criticism in this vein flows from a fundamental mistake as to the nature of Christian faith. As J. Gresham Machen boldly put the matter in his book, *What is Faith?*, “we believe that Christianity flourishes not in the darkness, but in the light.” He fervently resisted “the false and disastrous opposition which has been set up between knowledge and faith,” arguing that

“at no point is faith independent of the knowledge upon which it is logically based.” Machen declared: “Faith need not be too humble or too apologetic before the bar of reason; Christian faith is a thoroughly reasonable thing.” (Bahnsen, 1996, p. 195)

## Danger in Ignoring Presuppositions

Certain dangers become apparent when the transcendental method is ignored. Without acknowledging God in the beginning of a scientific endeavor, science becomes elevated to an unnatural place.

God does not come in at the end of the process, having earned the intellectual right to a place in our thinking. The very process of transcendental thinking or analysis must itself begin with belief in the living and true God. (Bahnsen, 1998, p. 506)

Van Til understood the strength of the transcendental analysis, which he said

is no doubt the most penetrating means by which the Holy Spirit presses the claims of God on men. By stating the argument as clearly as we can, we may be the agents of the Holy Spirit. (Van Til, 1954, p. 62)

Conversely, the Christian scientist needs to beware of his efforts becoming sterile, abstract, or subjective. This is the weak foundation upon which the secular evolutionist stands because of his *a priori* commitment to oppose the Creator. Instead, standing on the objective and concrete presuppositions of Scripture, science regains its rightful place as an “agent of the Holy Spirit” to uncover God’s “invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature” (Romans 1:20a ESV).

In addition, if Christians accept conclusions of creation research without considering their clear connection to Scripture, there is a danger when

results change. Relying on human conclusions that by definition cannot be absolute rather than depending on the unchangeable Bible “cheats” believers. Colossians 2:8 states, “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ” (NKJV). The transcendental argument will help identify false philosophies, empty deceit and the basic principles of this world. In a culture permeated in naturalism, the transcendental argument provides a logical method to check premises and detect deception.

The beginning of evolutionary reason is human autonomy. In contrast, the creationist acknowledges God as the ultimate authority and source of truth. The transcendental argument forces the evolutionist to face his foundational beliefs and to face the emptiness of human authority.

If Christians retreat from the authority of the Bible, they are swept into that endless philosophical morass. If men depend upon God for knowledge, then acquiring knowledge is not an exploration of the unknown, but the discovery of God’s creation that is already known by God ... the Christian view of truth is essential for science. That being so, science must accept the entire package, and learn to respect its place within Christian epistemology, submitting itself to special revelation and limiting itself to its proper boundaries. (Reed, et al., 2004, p. 225)

However, if presuppositions are not exposed and if the debate over origins is simply a matter of evidence, then human autonomy is the ultimate judge, and God is judged in the court of human reason. This playing field disarms the biblical creation researchers, leaving them intellectually naked, scientifically impotent, and insignificant to secular society. Even a person convinced of the strength of the creation point of view by

“science” has arrived at this point relying on the authority of his own mind. He has no need for the higher authority of God and no reason to question his own autonomous ability. He cannot judge human autonomy with human autonomy. God is not found at the end of a reasoning process. This does not mean that God is not reasonable or that He is not the author of reason in man. But absolute truth relies ultimately on God’s omniscience, not finite man’s science.

A good illustration of this is my “geology walk” at Stone Mountain Park, Georgia. Using the work of Froede (2000), I explain the geology of Stone Mountain based on a creation model. It incorporates the truth of the geologic implications of Day 3 of Creation and of the Flood but examines the physical features of the mountain. Research like this is valuable, but the Bible does not depend on it; rather, it depends on the Bible. God’s truthfulness and His Word are the precondition that provide intelligibility to the observational features in the geology at Stone Mountain.

## Summary

At the bottom of creation research is an appeal to the creation account in the Bible and thus to God, its Author. The transcendental argument links biblical presuppositions to scientific truth. The transcendental argument

is a forceful, all-or-nothing intellectual challenge to unbelief in all of its manifestations. Our method of apologetics should not be concessive or compromising. As Van Til put it: “The natural man must be blasted out of his hideouts, his caves, his last lurking places.” (Bahnsen, 1998, p. 503)

This suggests the transcendental argument is a powerful tool for biblical creation researchers to wield with grace, patience, and humility.

Thus the Christian-theistic position must be shown to not be as defen-

sible as some other position; it must rather be shown to be the position which alone does not annihilate intelligent human experience. (Van Til, 1955, p. 503)

It is from the mind of God that facts gain intelligibility—not from the mind of man. This is an all-important reminder to the research scientist who pours his mind into his work, who spends hours in the field with interpretation, experimentation, and observation and who relies on his efforts to produce a scientific paper of significance and relevance. So, it is natural for the research scientist to honor his efforts, but it is critical that he be reminded that it is from God that he gains even the most basic components of intelligibility. The transcendental method applied to biblical creation research does this.

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