



# VAN TILLIAN Apologetics

June 12th, 2022 - Part 8

Jon Kaus



- 1 Went through A6-A7 and discussed possible objections to them.
- 2 Deduced T3-T5, proving the truth of Christianity.
- 3 Went back through the checklist of components for Van Til's apologetic.
- 4 Presented Van Til's argument in its simplest form.
- 5 Presented Van Til's argument in three further levels of complexity.



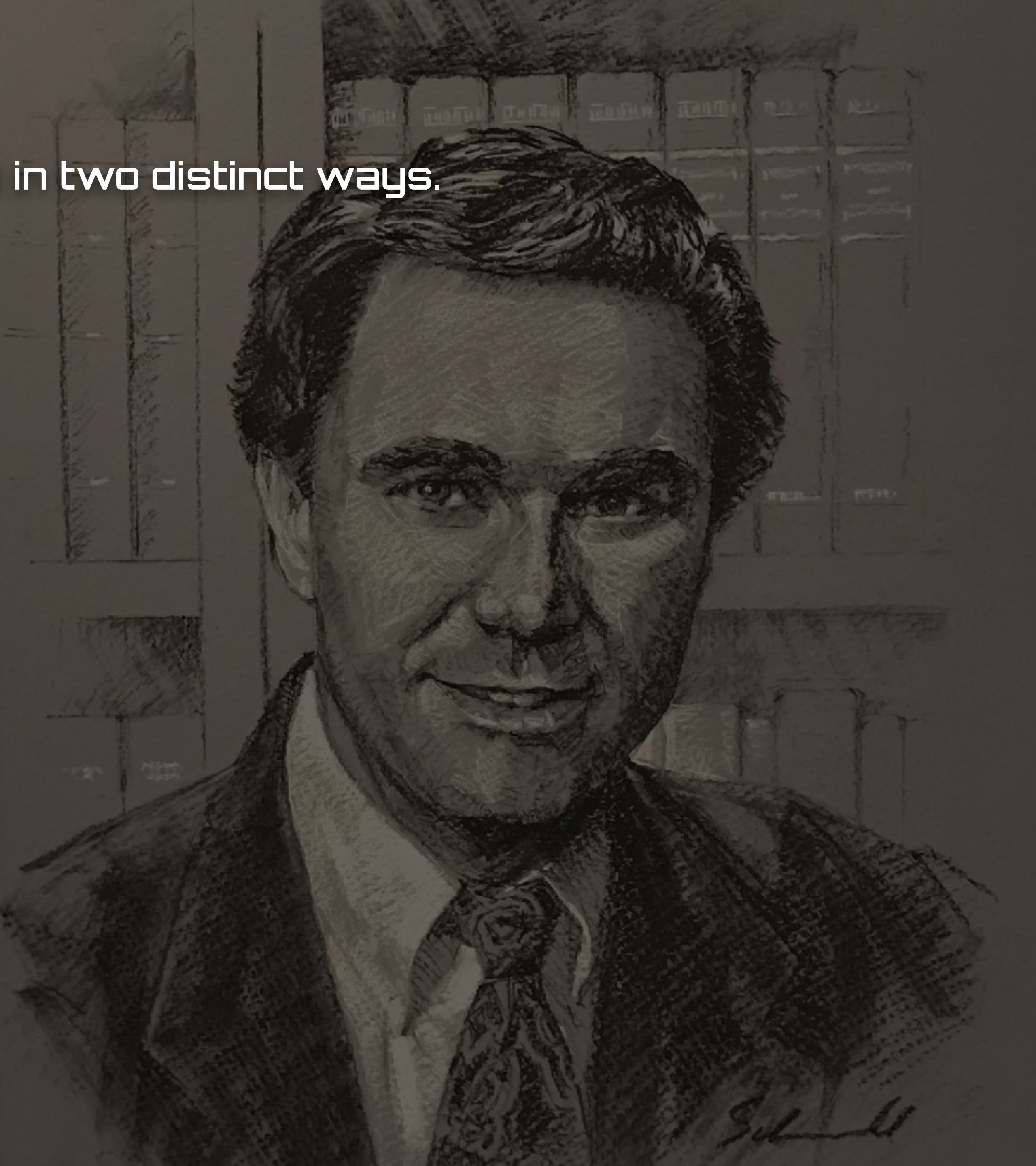
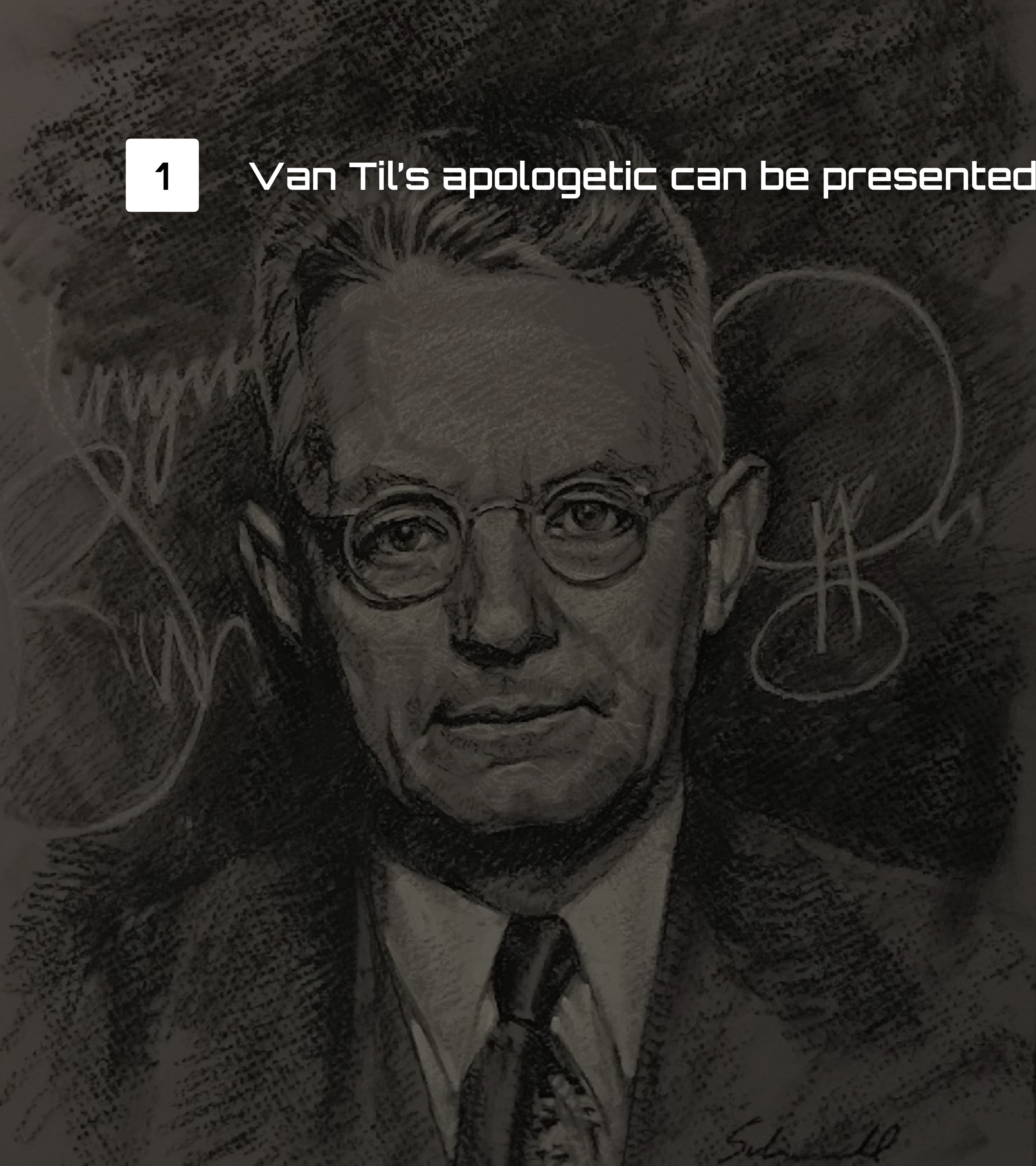


# CLEAN UP



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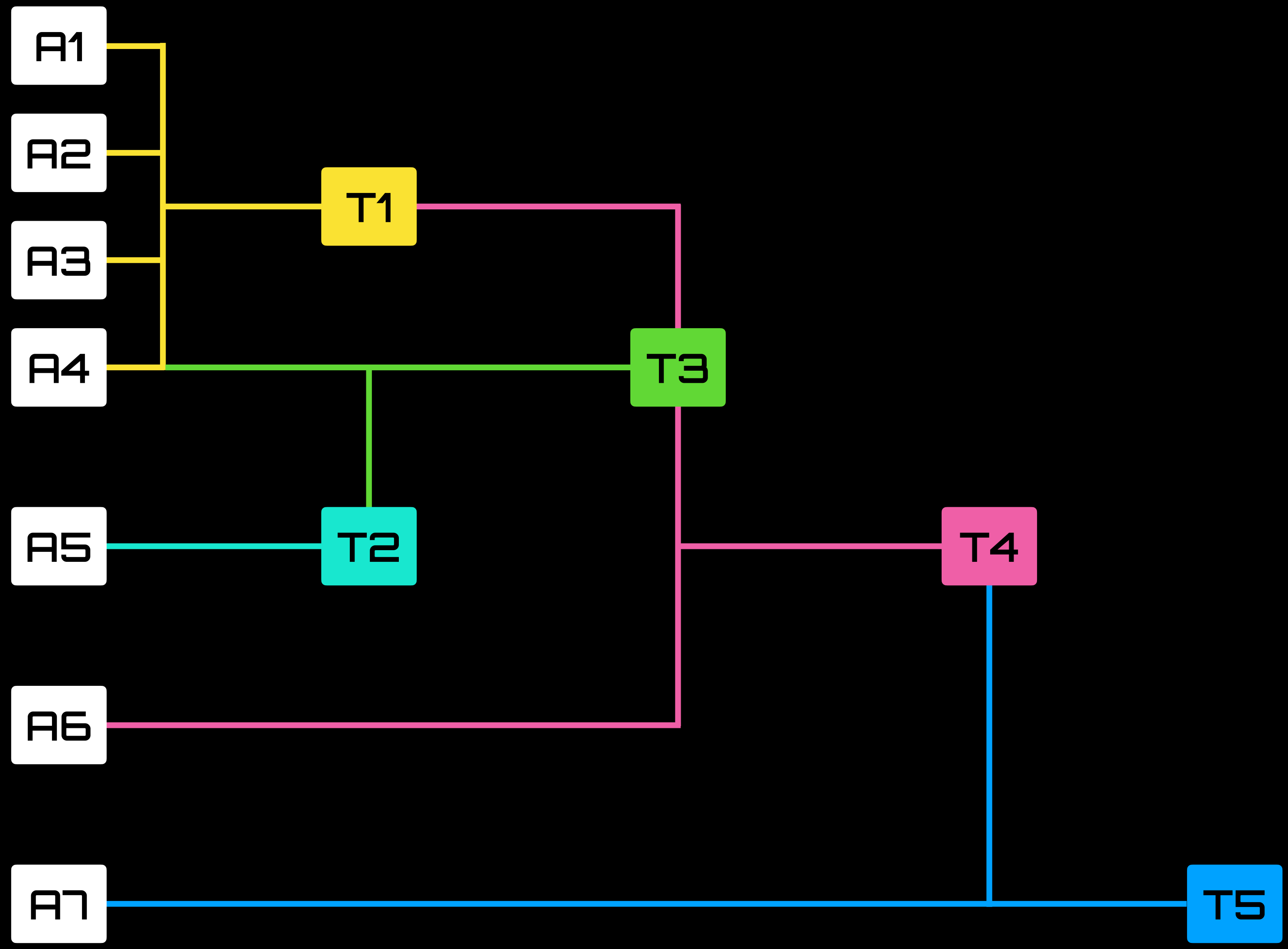
Van Til's apologetic can be presented in two distinct ways.





# DIRECT

God's Truth → Christianity is True



# DIRECT

God's Truth → Christianity is True

# INDIRECT

~~Autonomy~~ → Falsehood

Christianity or ~~Autonomy~~

# DIRECT

God's Truth → Christianity is True

# INDIRECT

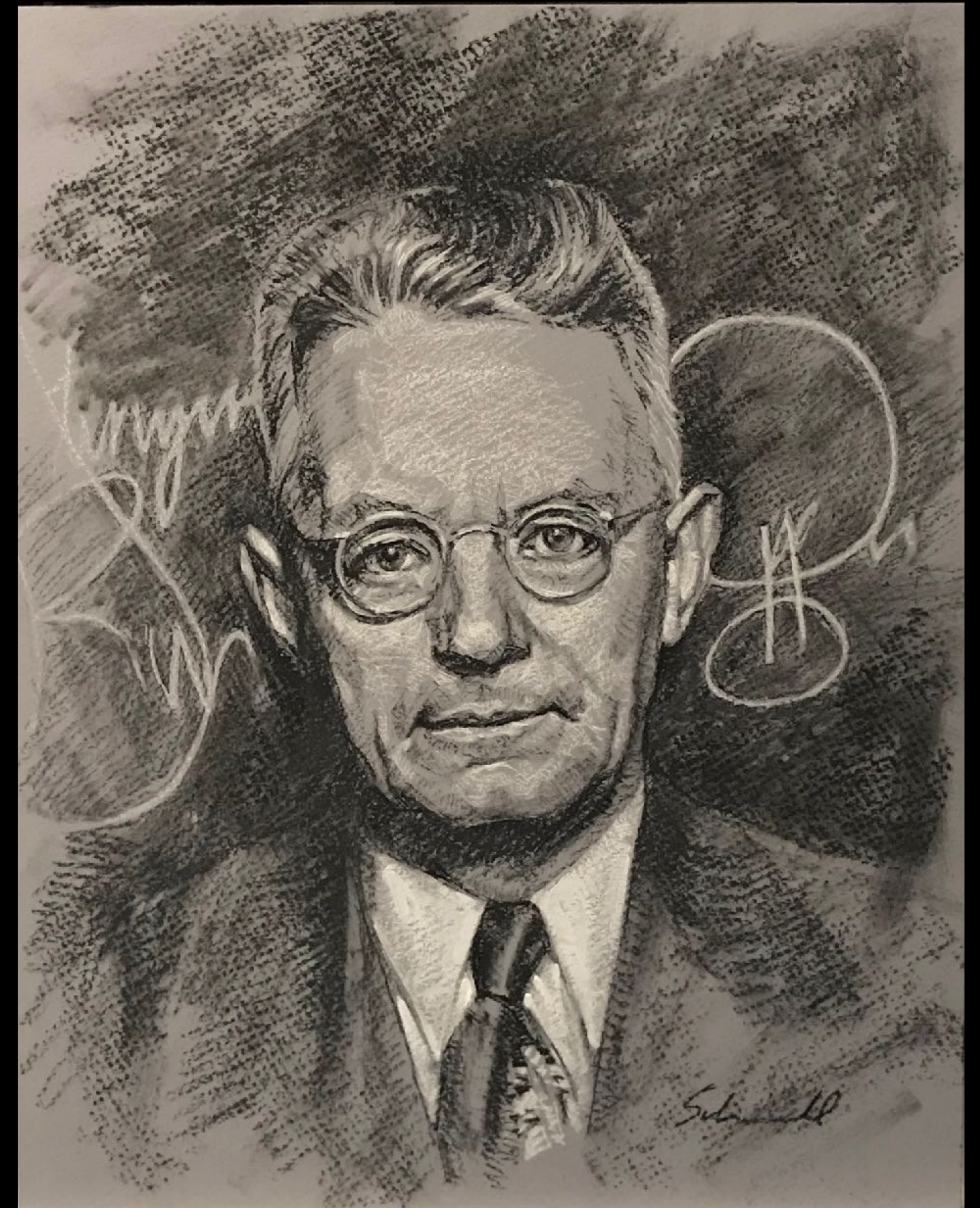
~~Autonomy~~ → Falsehood

Christianity or ~~Autonomy~~



The method of reasoning by presupposition may be said to be indirect rather than direct. The issue between believers and nonbelievers in Christian theism cannot be settled by a direct appeal to “facts” or “laws” whose nature and significance is

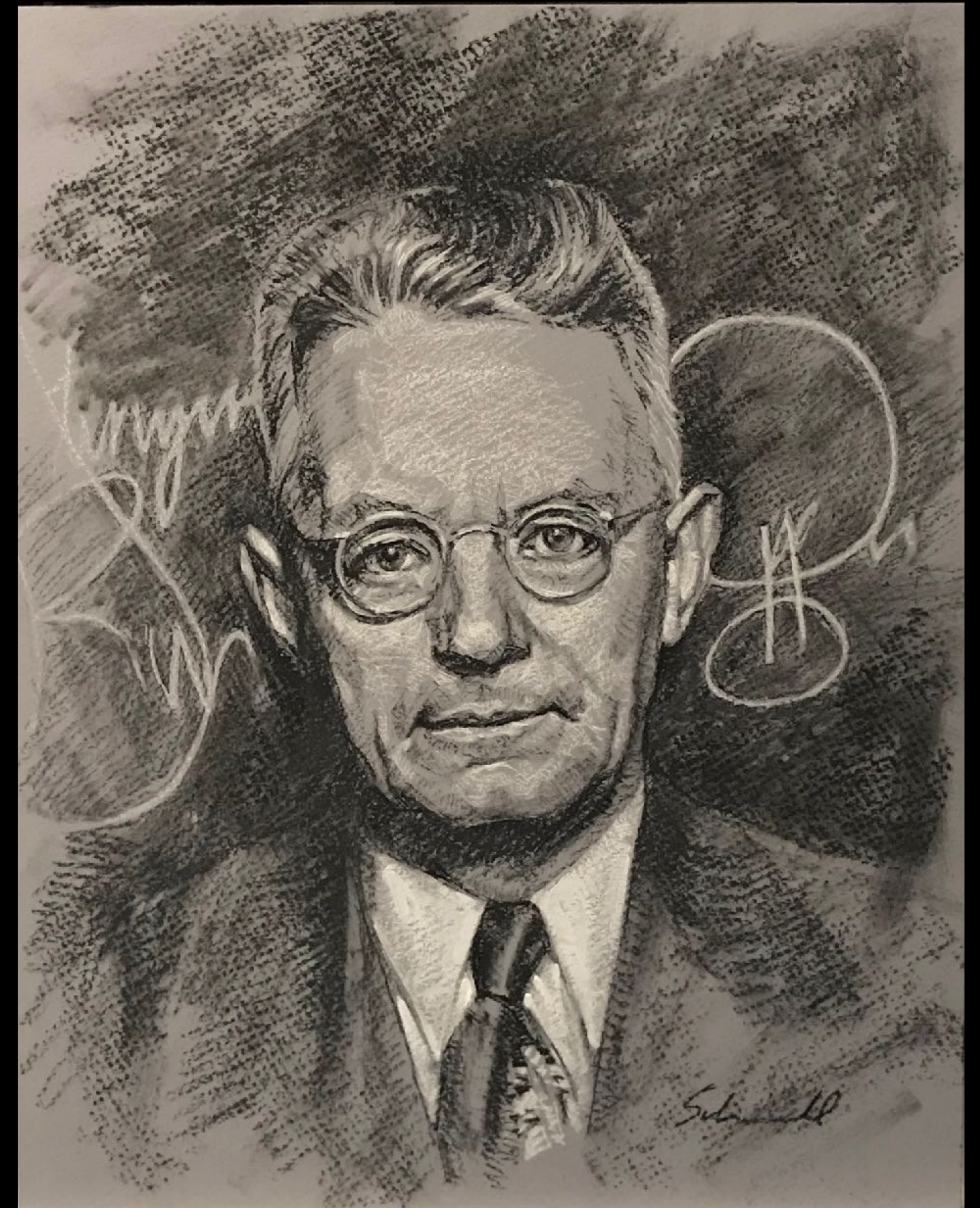
Cornelius Van Til  
The Defense of the Faith, 122





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

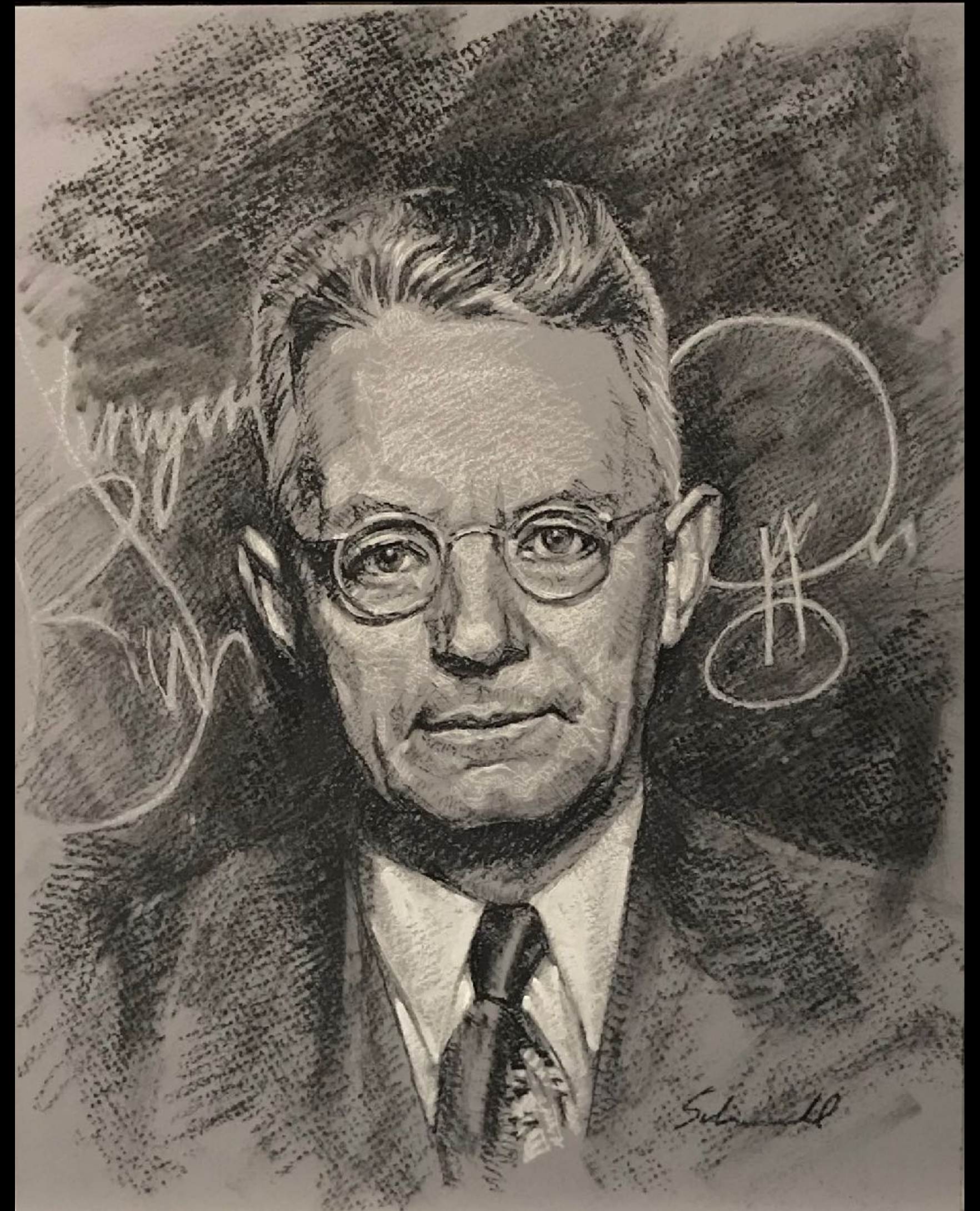
Cornelius Van Til  
The Defense of the Faith, 122





methodology assumes  
that they are? Are they  
what the Christian-theistic  
methodology presuppose  
they are?

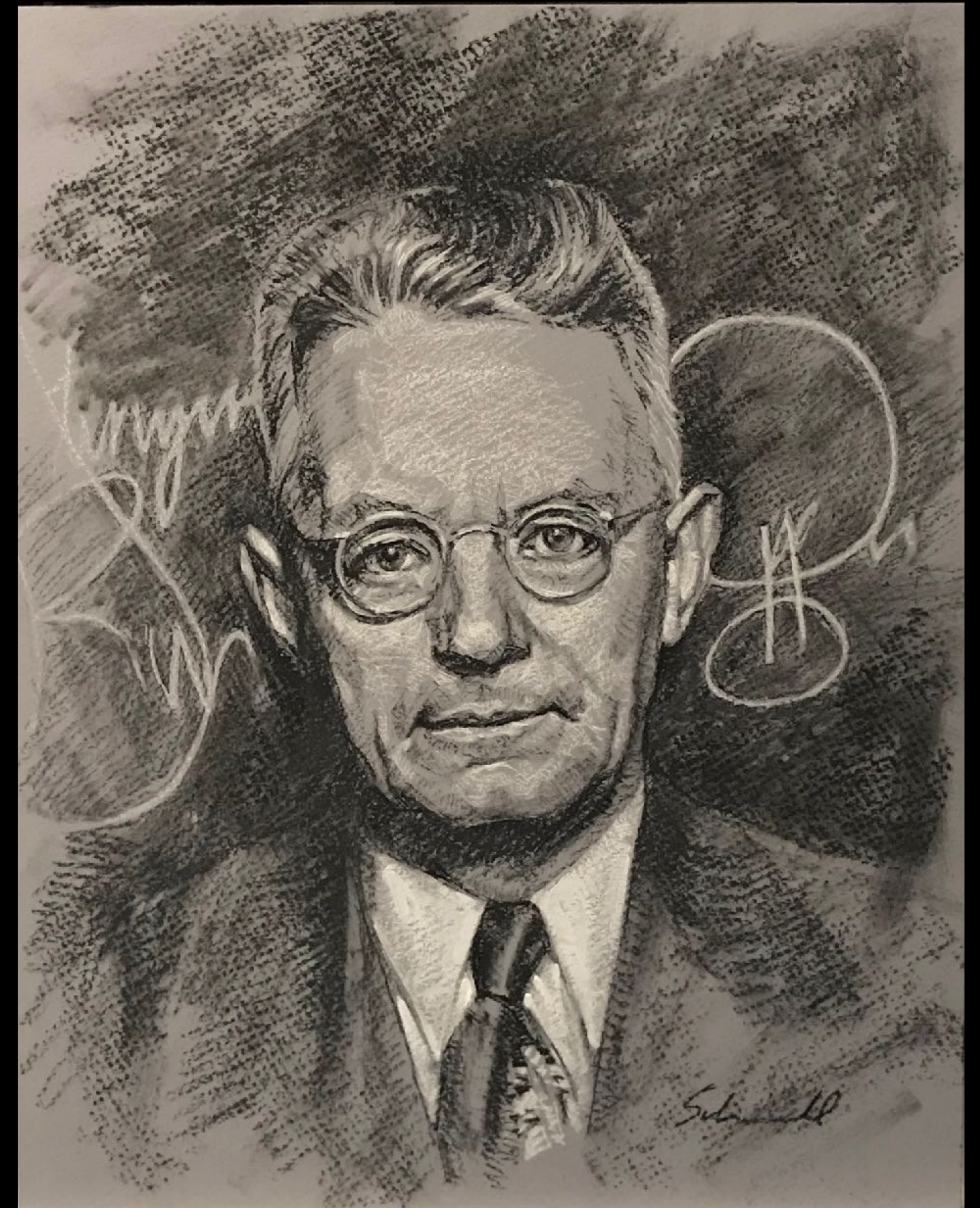
Cornelius Van Til  
The Defense of the Faith, 122





Roman Catholics and Arminians . . .  
are bound to use the **direct method**  
of approach to the natural man, the  
method that **assumes the essential**  
**correctness** of a non-Christian and  
**non-theistic conception of reality.**

Cornelius Van Til  
Apologetics, 63

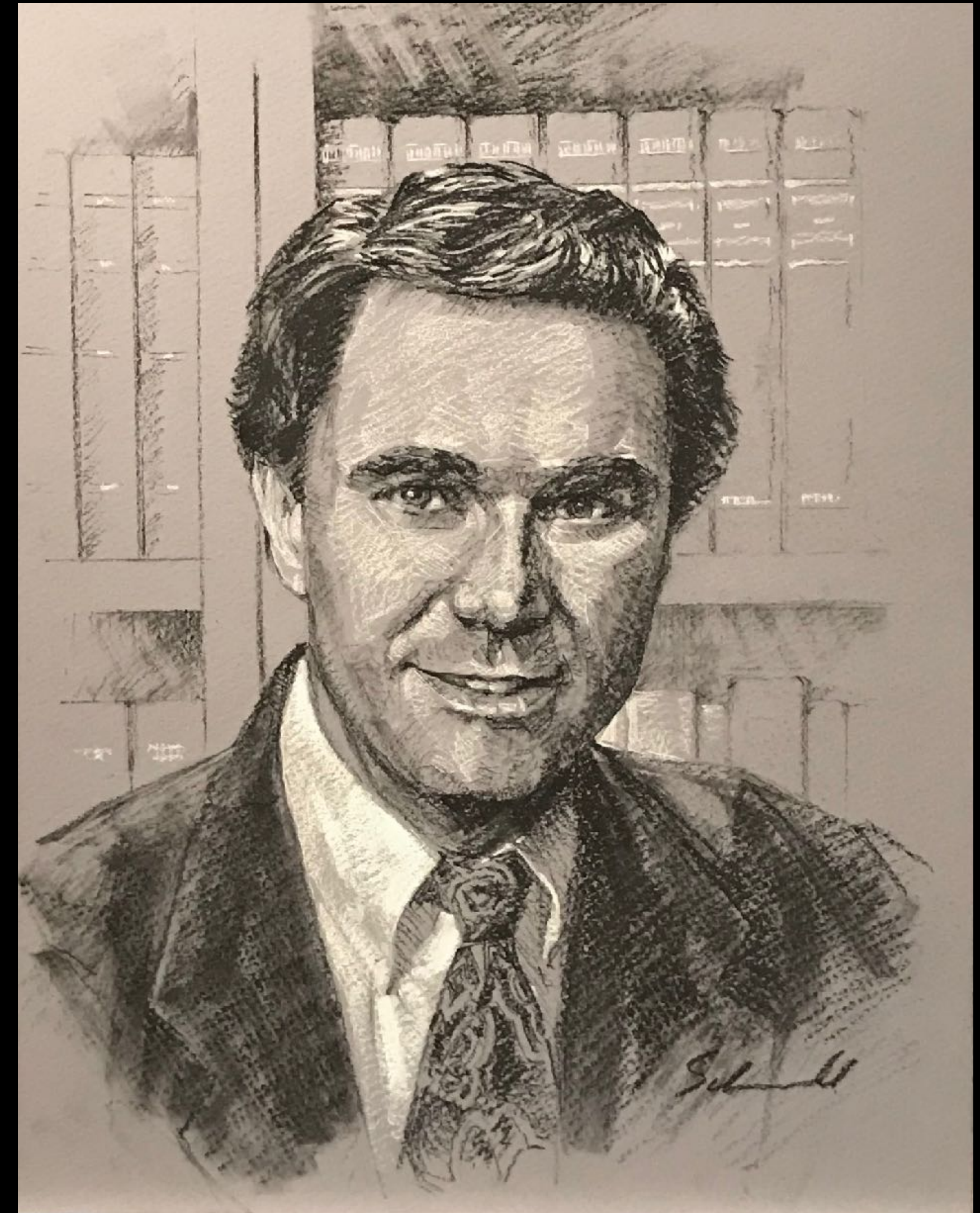




Thus there can be **no direct proof** offered for the truth of either perspective. . . . The argument between believer and unbeliever **must then be indirect**, admitting the **impossibility of a neutral approach** to reasoning and facts . . .

Greg Bahnsen

Presuppositional Apologetics, 15

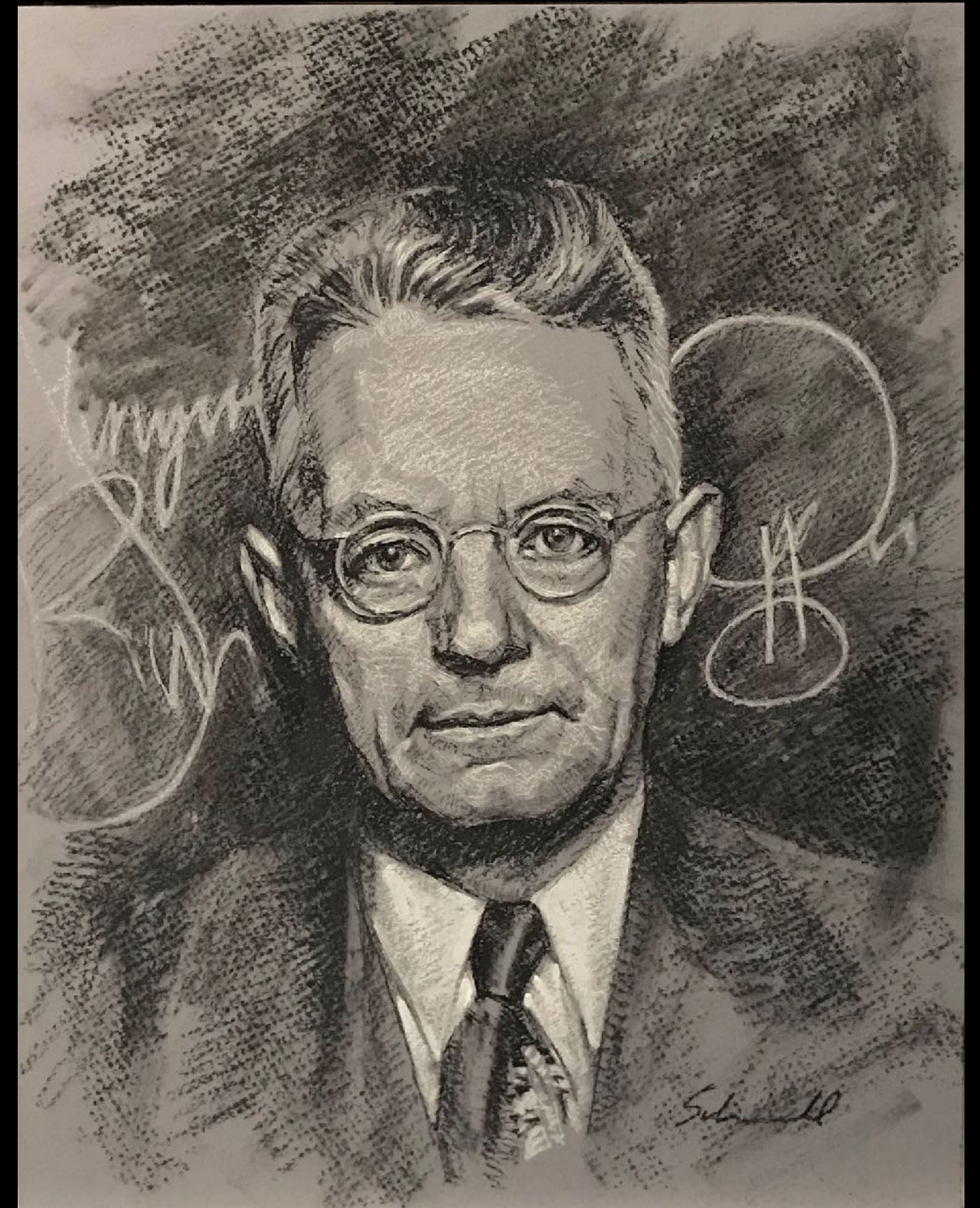




In seeking to follow the example of Paul Reformed Apologetics needs, **above all else**, to make clear **from the beginning** that it is **challenging the wisdom of the natural man** on the authority of the self-attesting Christ speaking in Scripture.

Cornelius Van Til

Toward a Reformed Apologetic, 14

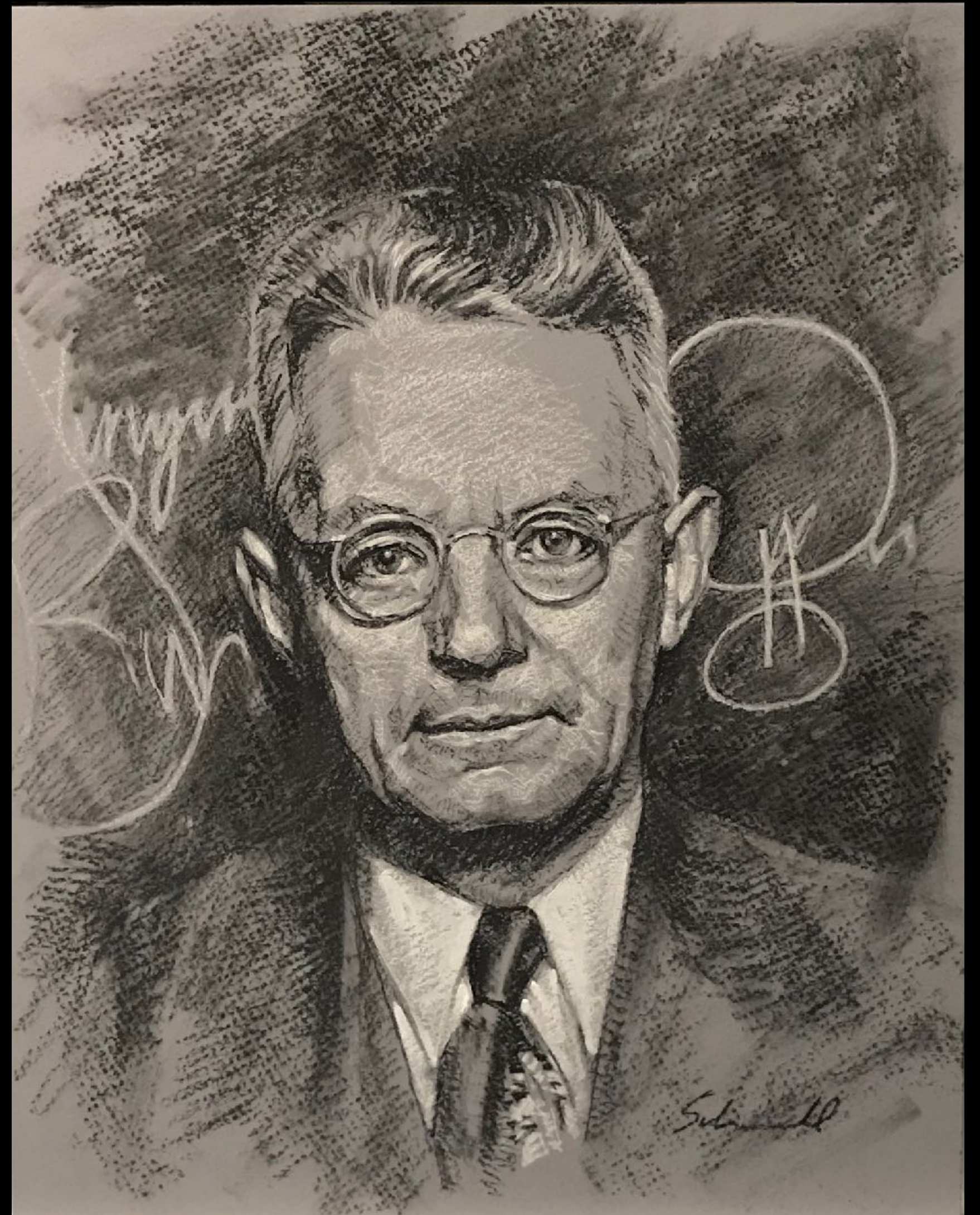




Doing this the Reformed apologist must **place himself** on the **position** of his “opponent,” the **natural man** in order to show him that on the presupposition of **human autonomy** **human predication cannot even get under way.**

Cornelius Van Til

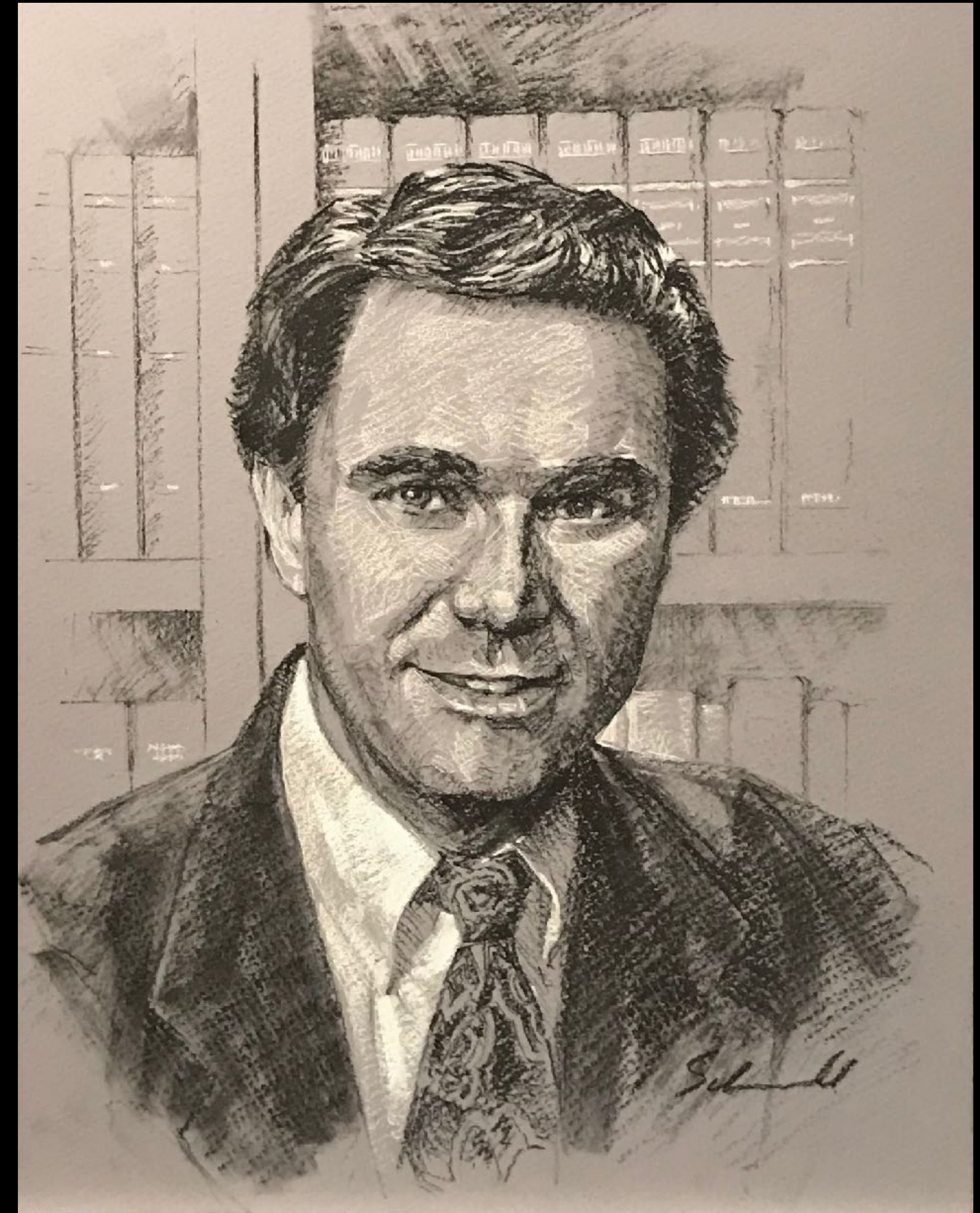
Toward a Reformed Apologetic, 14





In order to display this truth to the unbeliever, the presuppositionalist is willing to “think things through” in terms of what the unbeliever claims are his basic assumptions, and then, for the sake of comparison, he invites the unbeliever to “think things through” in terms of the Christian’s basic assumptions.

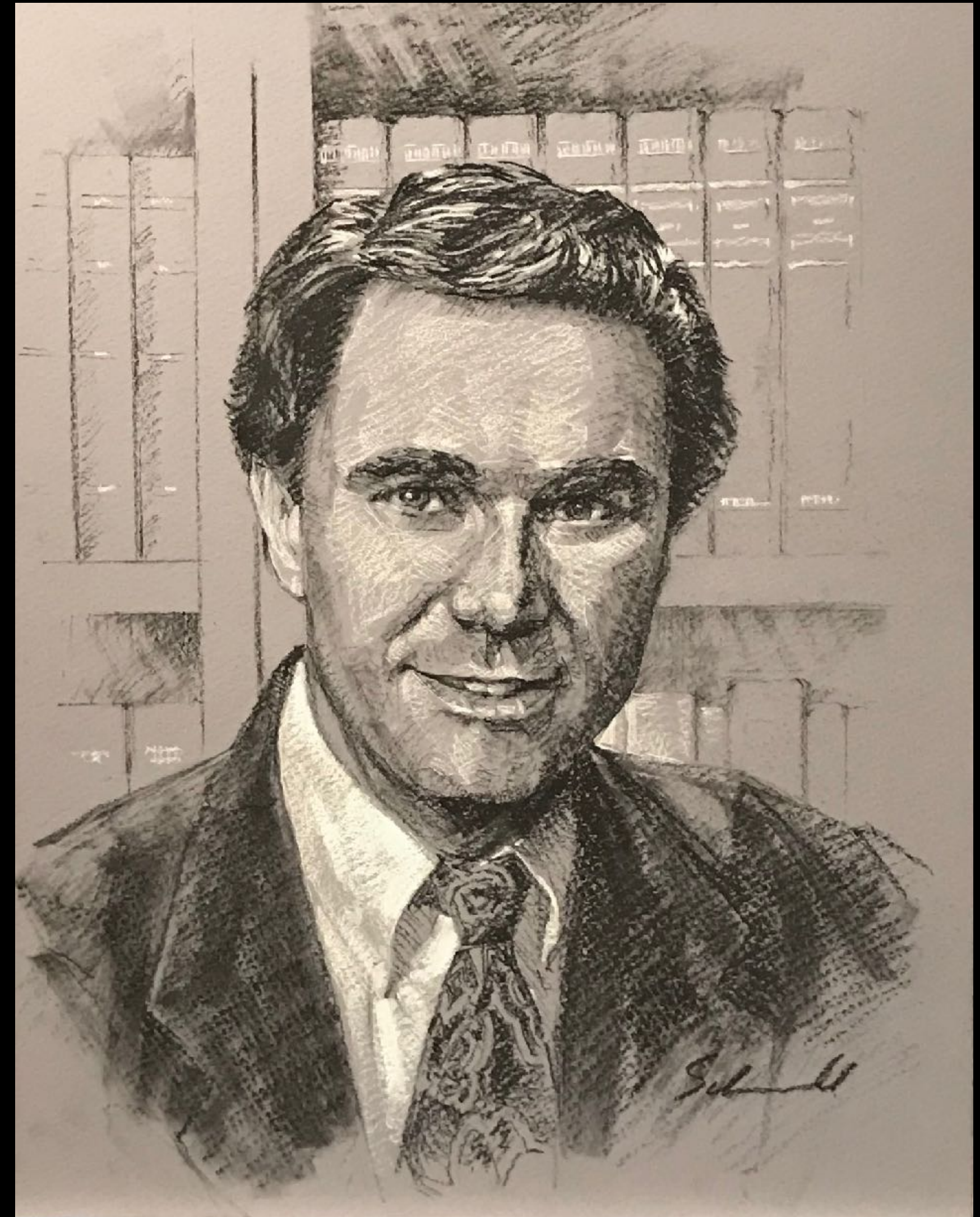
Greg Bahnsen  
Van Til’s Apologetic, 124





It clearly exhibited the **salient lines** of Van Til's presuppositional approach: (a) locating the opponent's crucial presuppositions, (b) criticizing the autonomous attitude that arises from a failure to honor the Creator-creature distinction, (c) exposing the internal and destructive philosophical tensions that attend autonomy, and then (d) **setting forth the only viable alternative, biblical Christianity.**

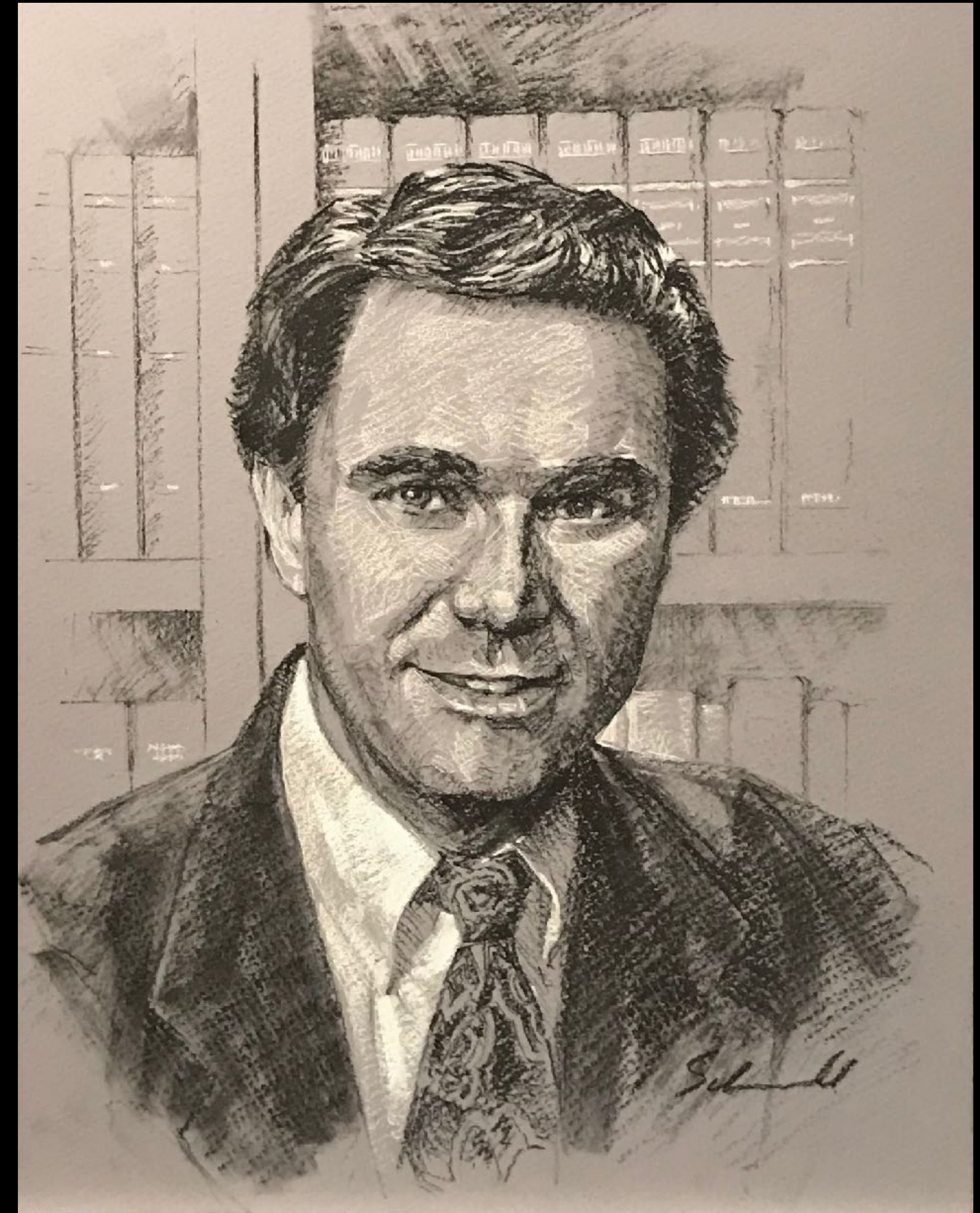
Greg Bahnsen  
Van Til's Apologetic, 10





This is a synopsis of the “indirect” or two-step apologetical procedure that presuppositional apologetics advocates. The first step is to lay out the Christian worldview, in terms of which human experience is intelligible and the objections of the unbeliever can be contextually defeated.

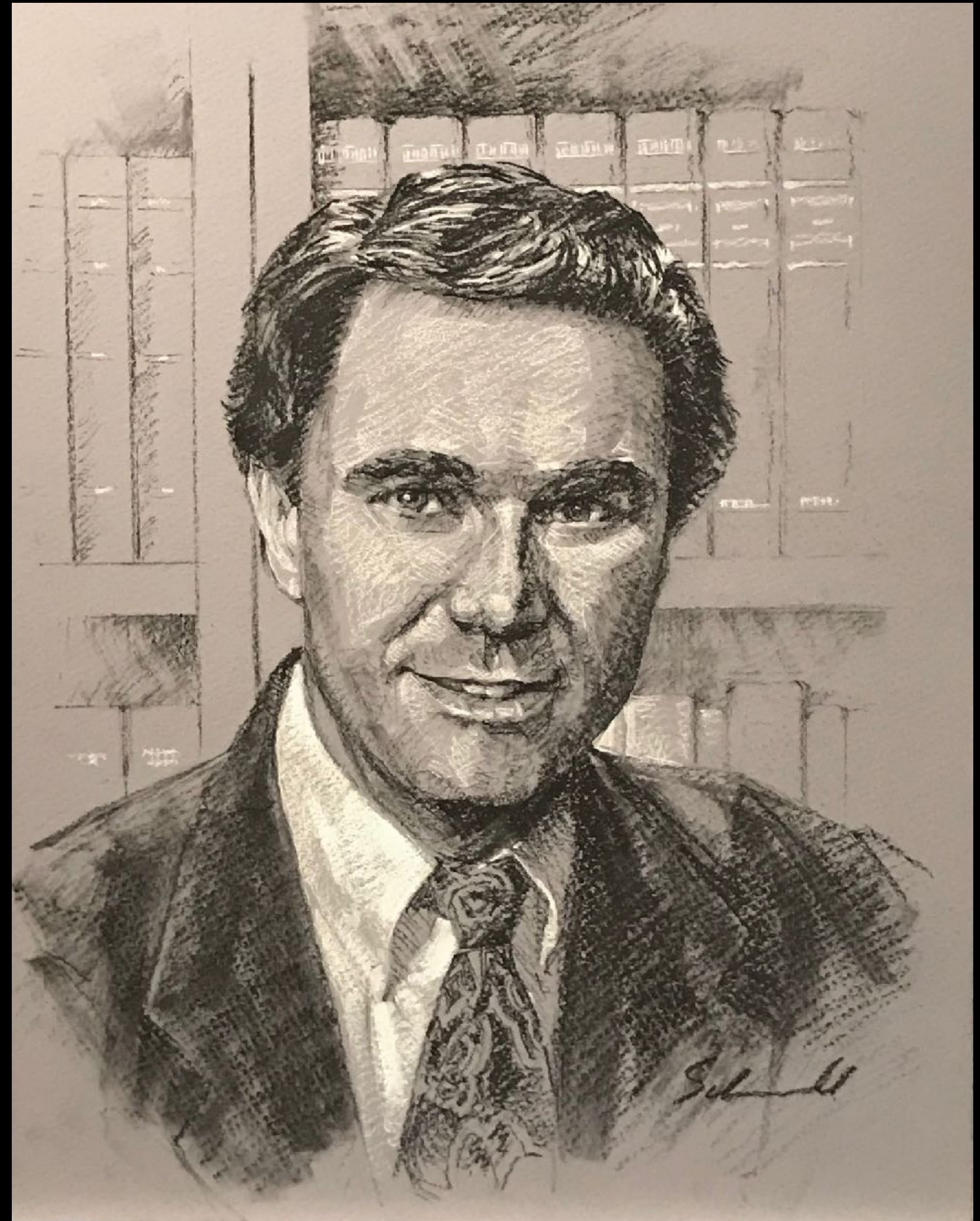
Greg Bahnsen  
Van Til's Apologetic, 268





The **second step** is to show that within the **unbeliever's worldview**, **nothing is intelligible**—not even objections to the Christian's viewpoint. (**The order** in which these two steps in the argument are taken is **not important**.)

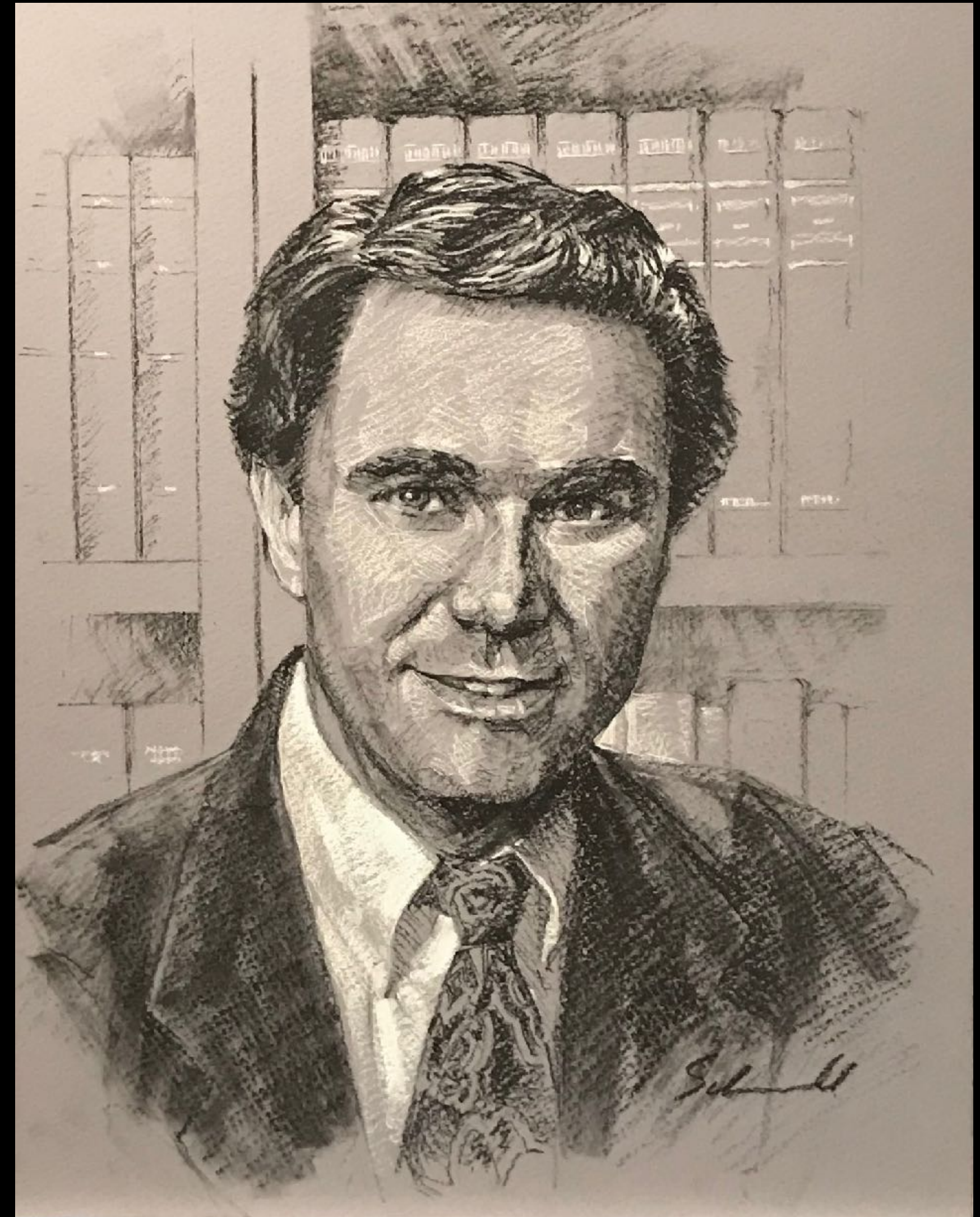
Greg Bahnsen  
Van Til's Apologetic, 268





Since there are **only two options** at the most fundamental level—the truth or falsity of Christian theism as a presupposition—the **refutation** of the **unbelieving one** (in whatever illustrative variation it appears) is an **indirect proof of the other**.

Greg Bahnsen  
Van Til's Apologetic, 277

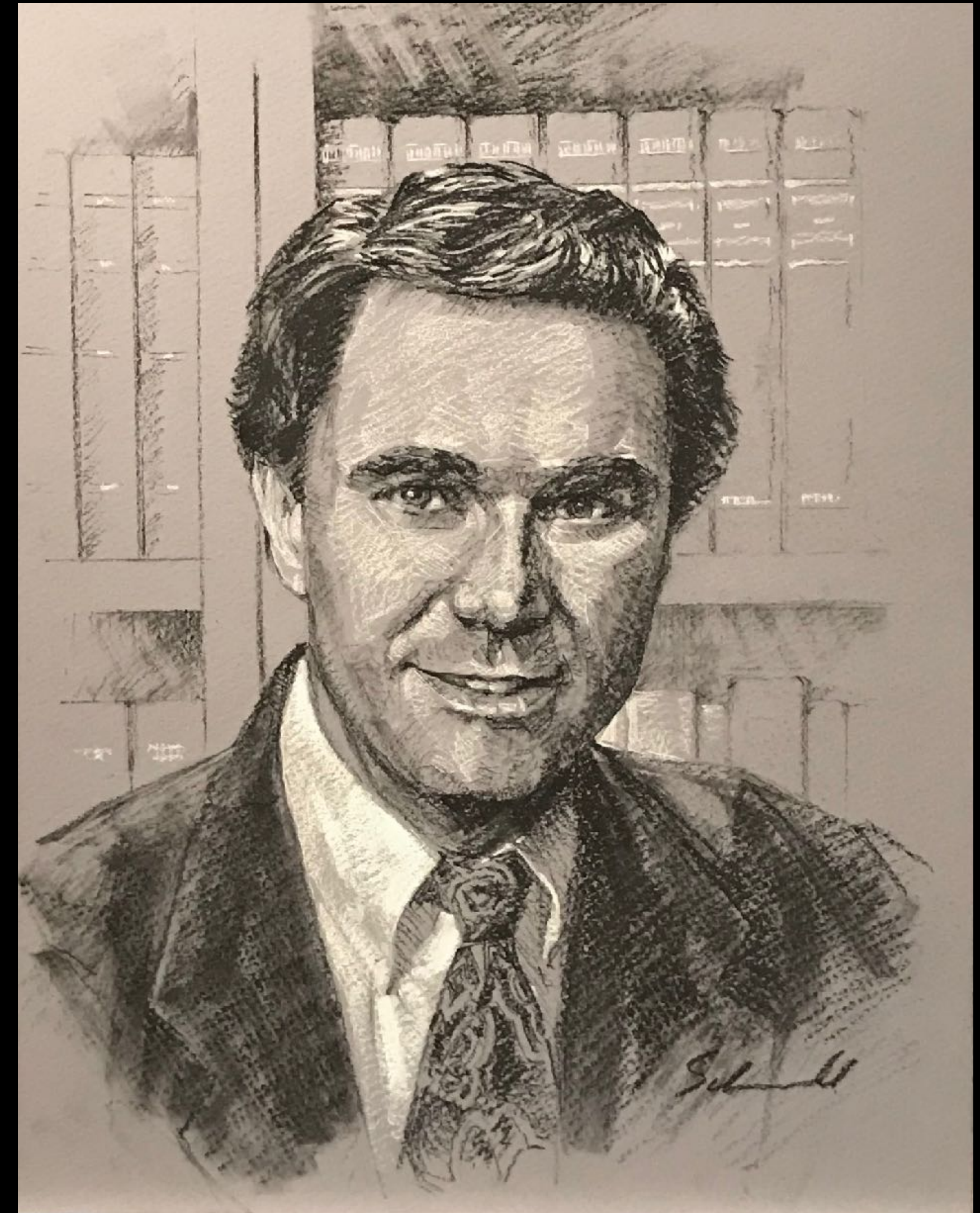




Yet **no human**, not even a  
Christian apologist, **has the**  
**omniscience to know all**  
**possible rival hypotheses nor**  
the eternity needed in which  
to test them all.

Greg Bahnsen

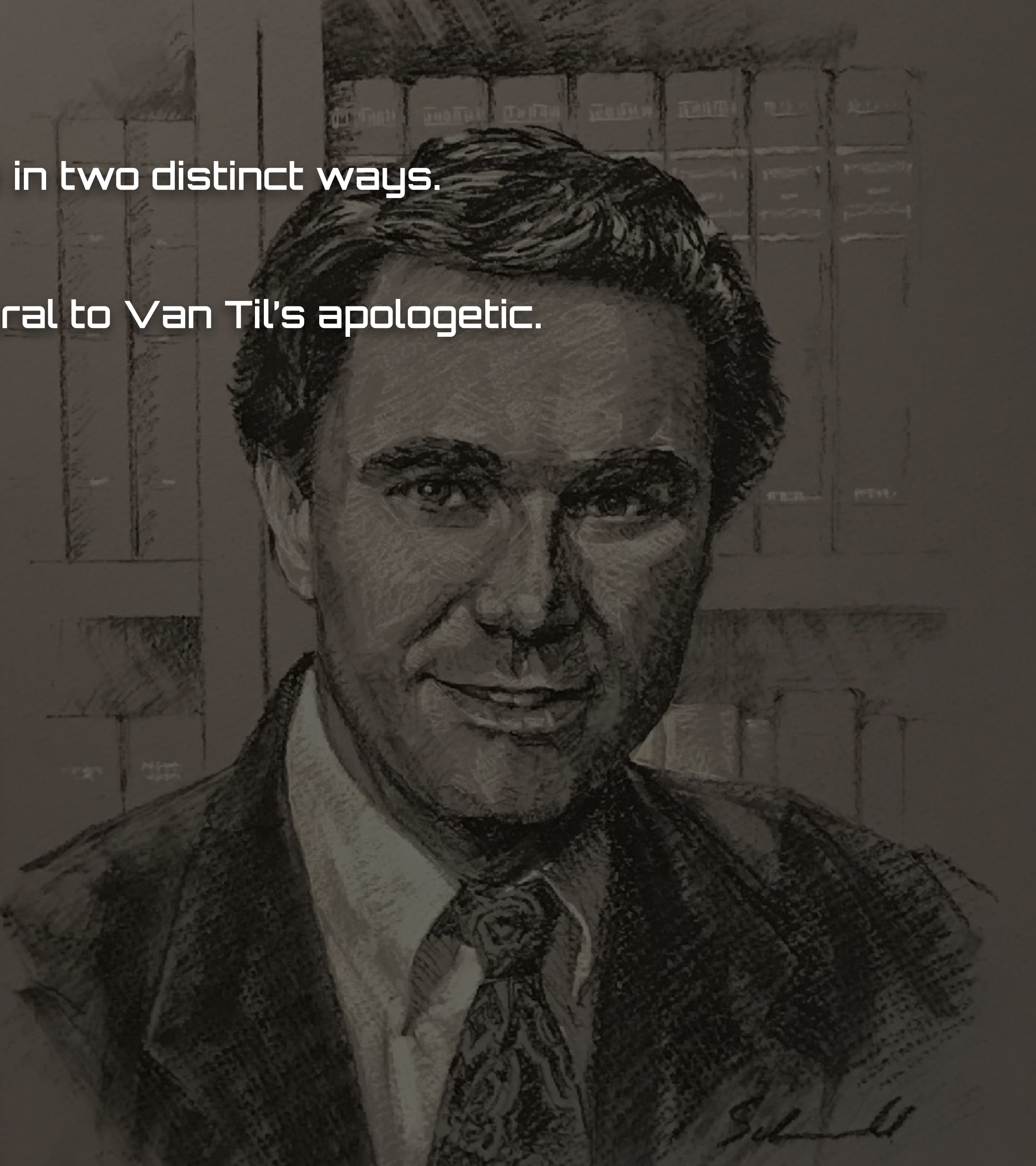
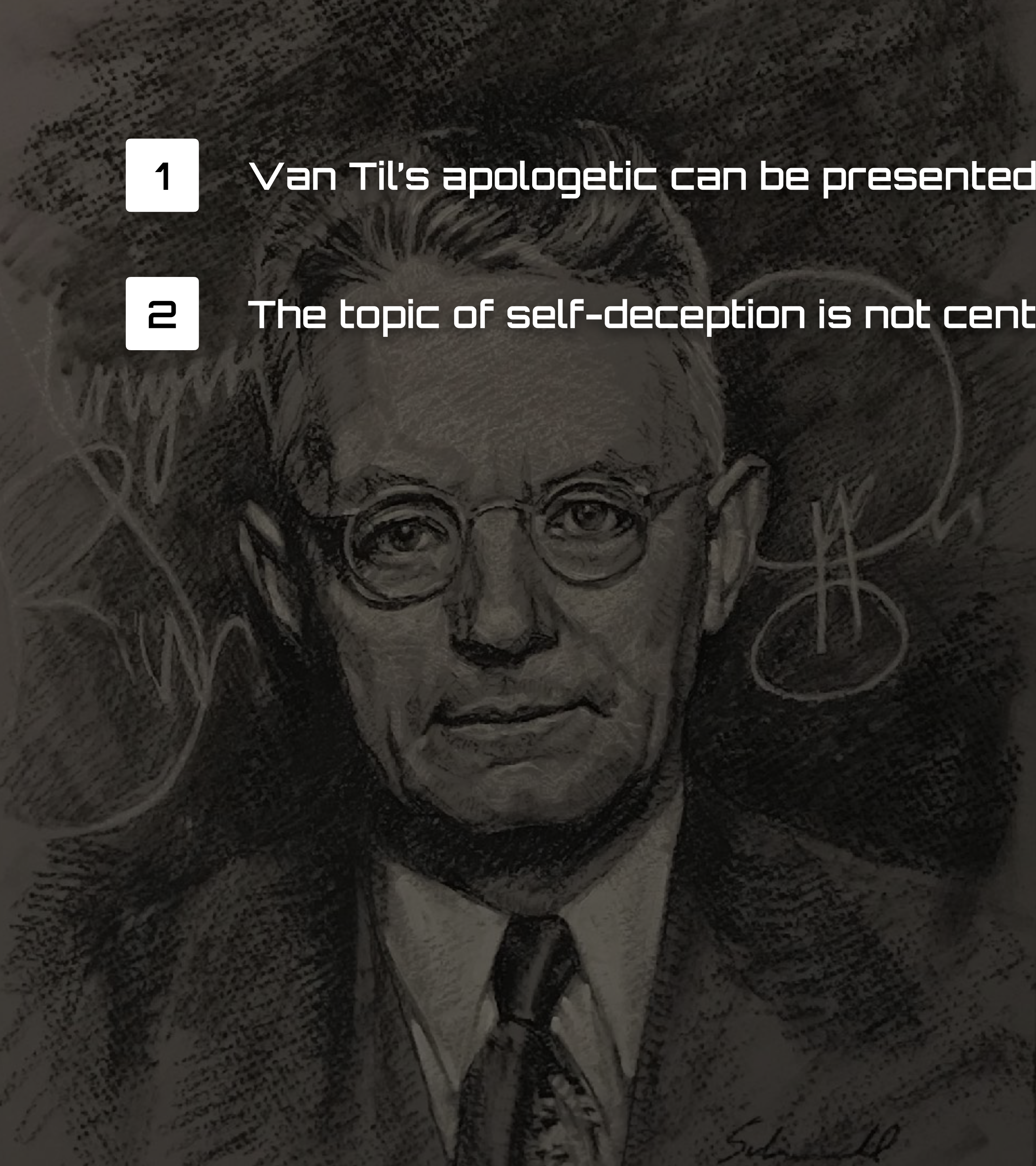
Presuppositional Apologetics, 265





1 Van Til's apologetic can be presented in two distinct ways.

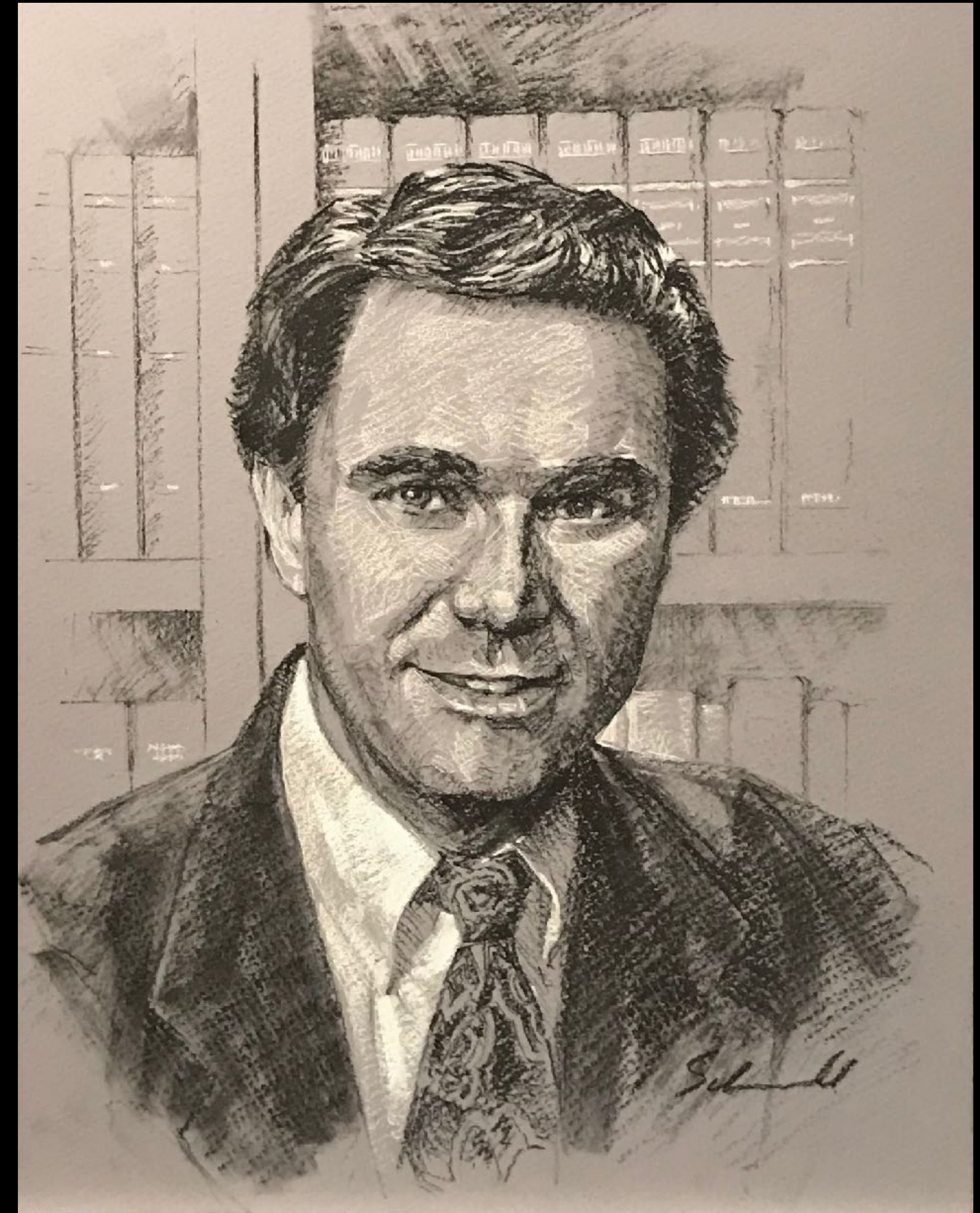
2 The topic of self-deception is not central to Van Til's apologetic.





There is no question that Scripture teaches this complex view of the unbeliever. **He does not know God**, being an unbeliever who repudiates the truth of God's revelation; nevertheless, **he does in fact know God** very well.

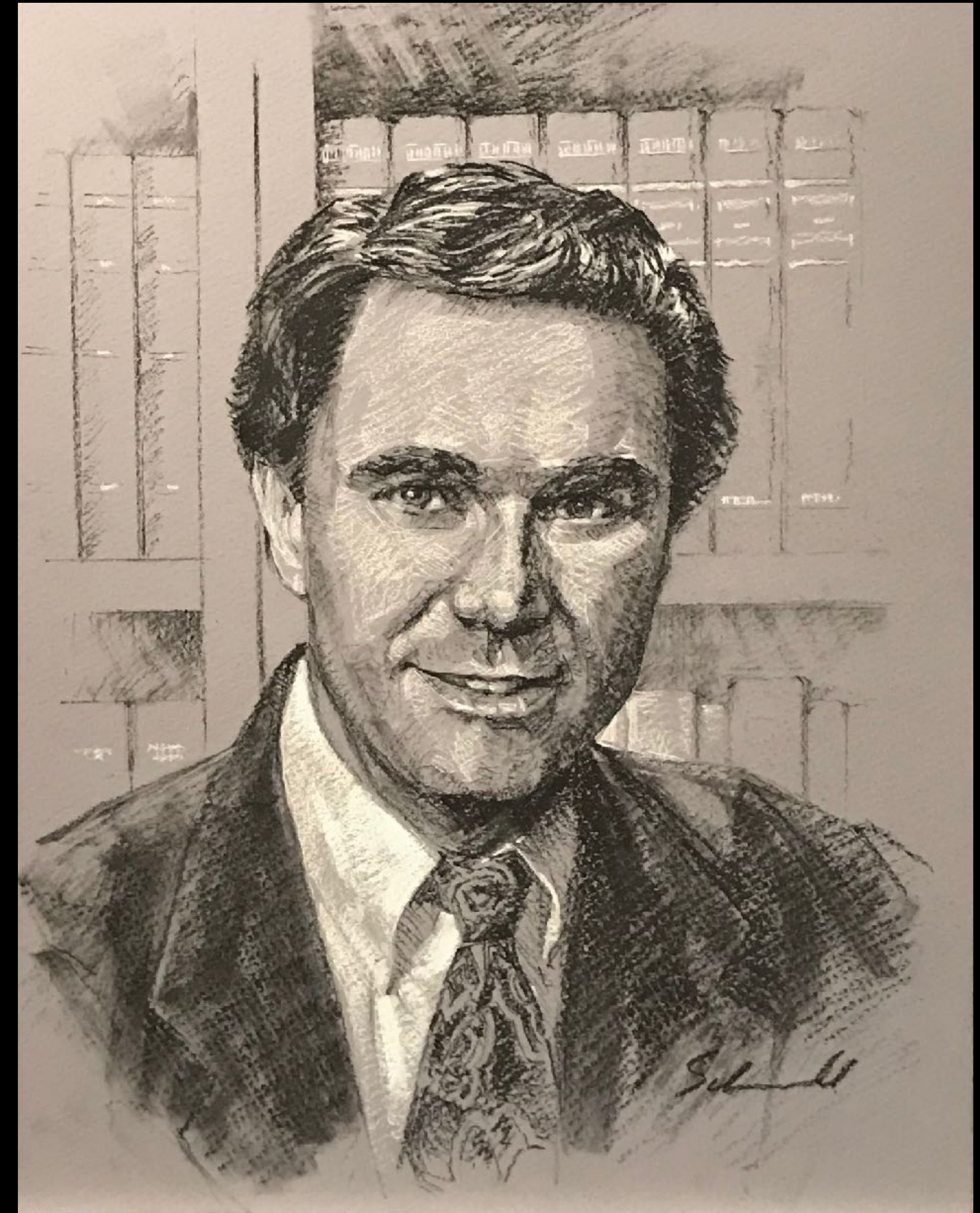
Greg Bahnsen  
Van Til's Apologetic, 444





Because both sides of this complex situation are biblically based, Van Til is to be commended for incorporating them into the heart of his apologetic.

Greg Bahnsen  
Van Til's Apologetic, 444



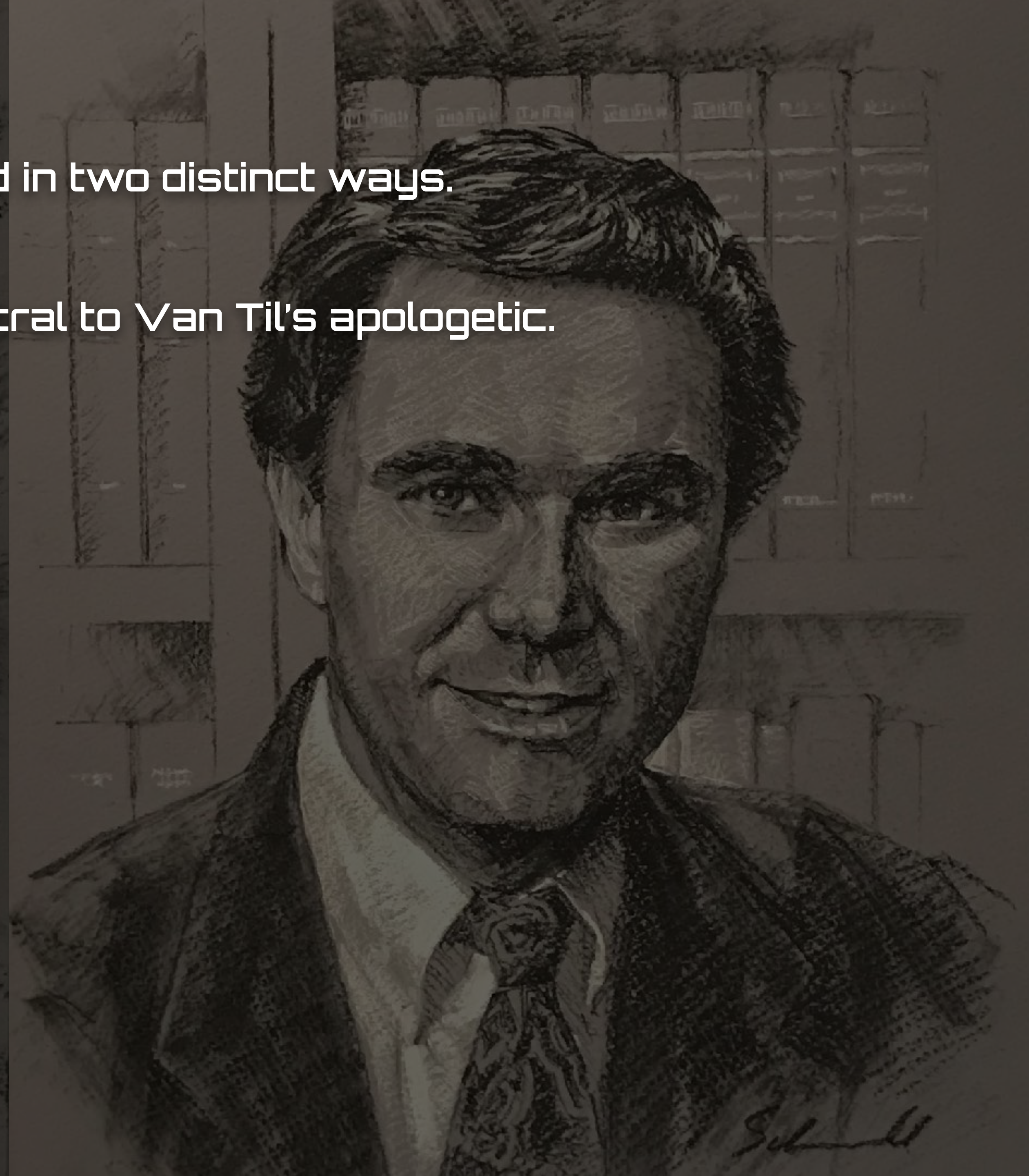




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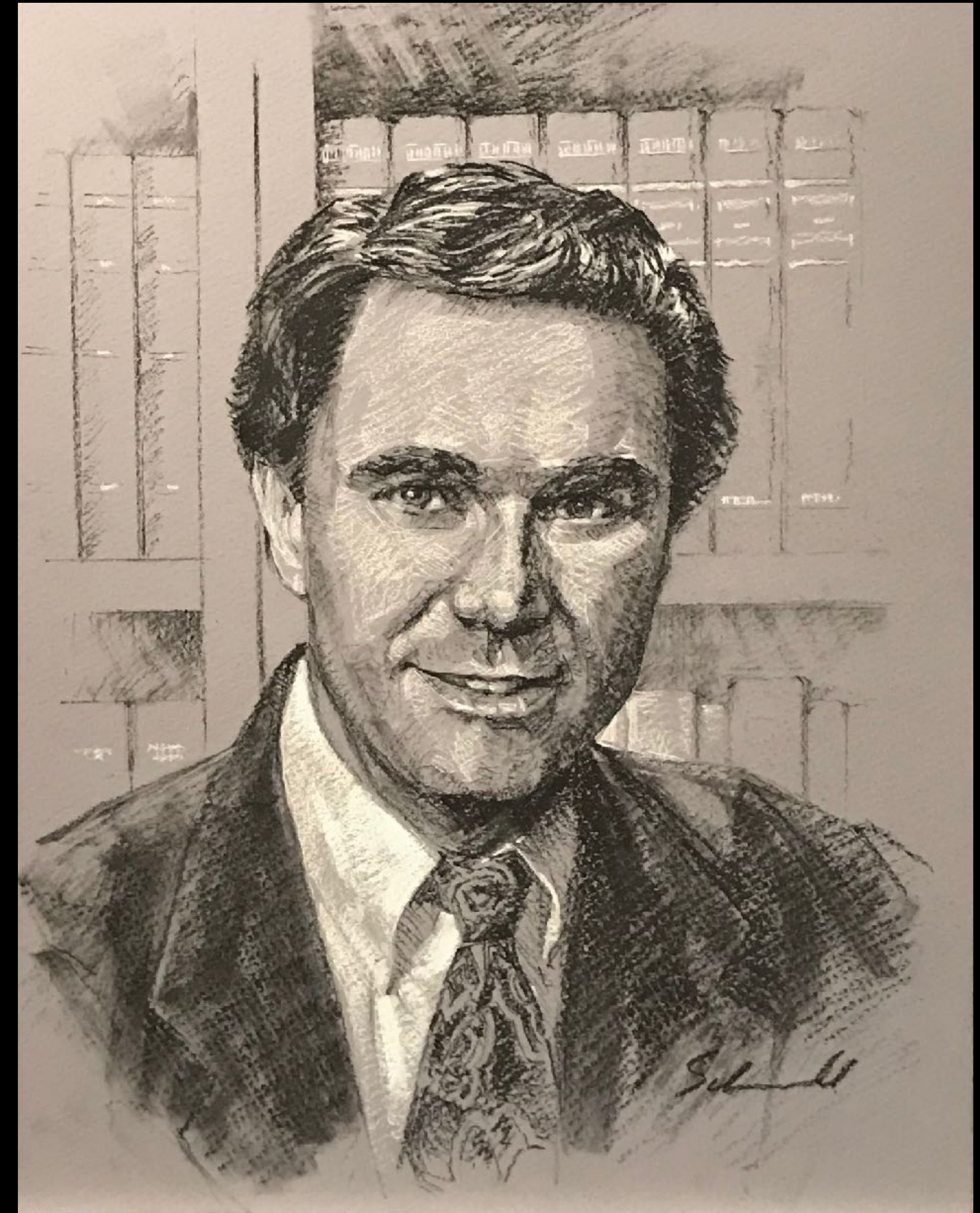
3 We welcome the burden of proof.





In this special case, the **burden of proof** in the argument between a theist and an antitheist would **shift to the person denying God's existence**, since the possibility and intelligibility of that very debate is directly affected by the position taken.

Greg Bahnsen  
Van Til's Apologetic, 479





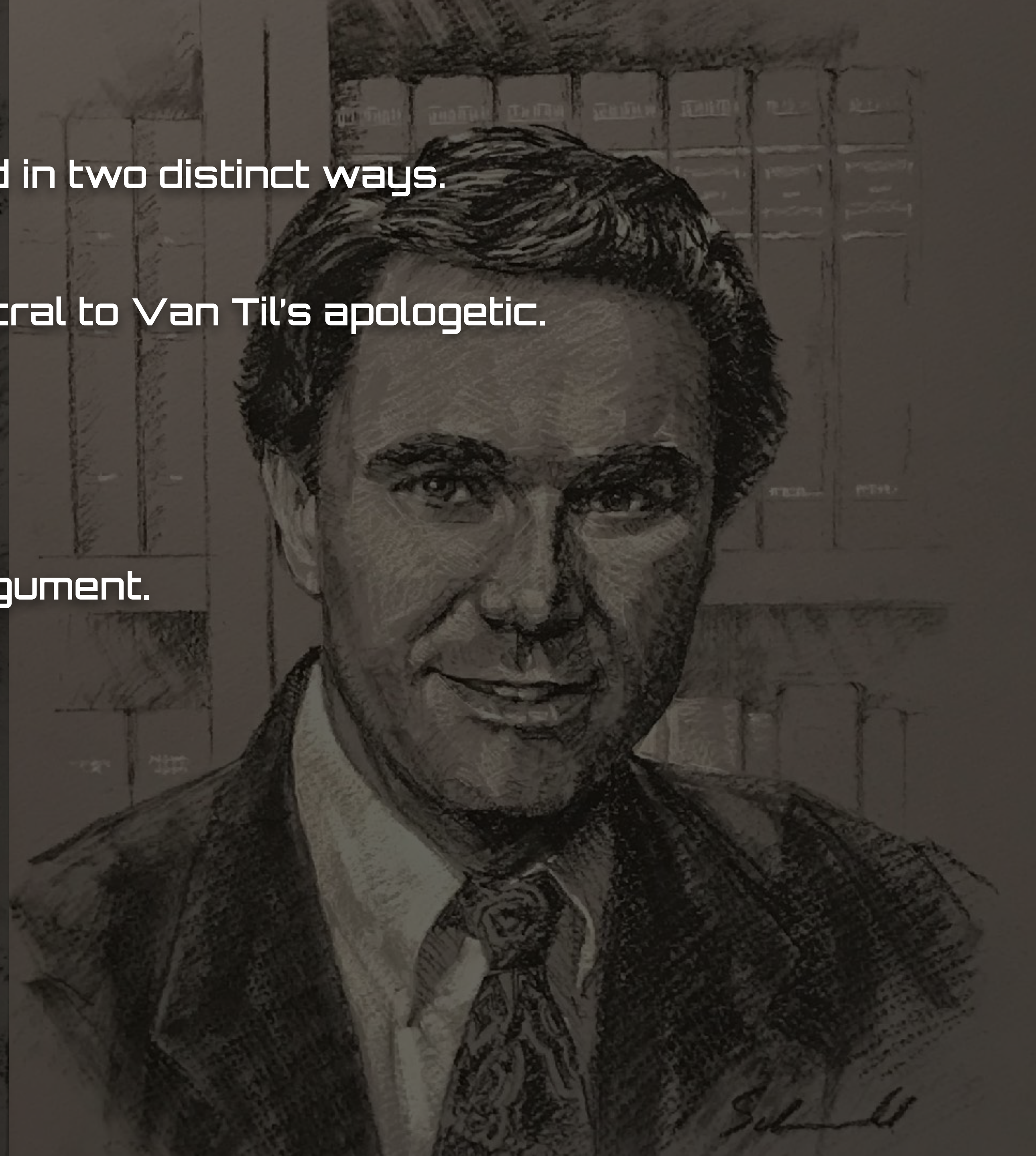


1 Van Til's apologetic can be presented in two distinct ways.

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4 Van Til's apologetic is a deductive argument.

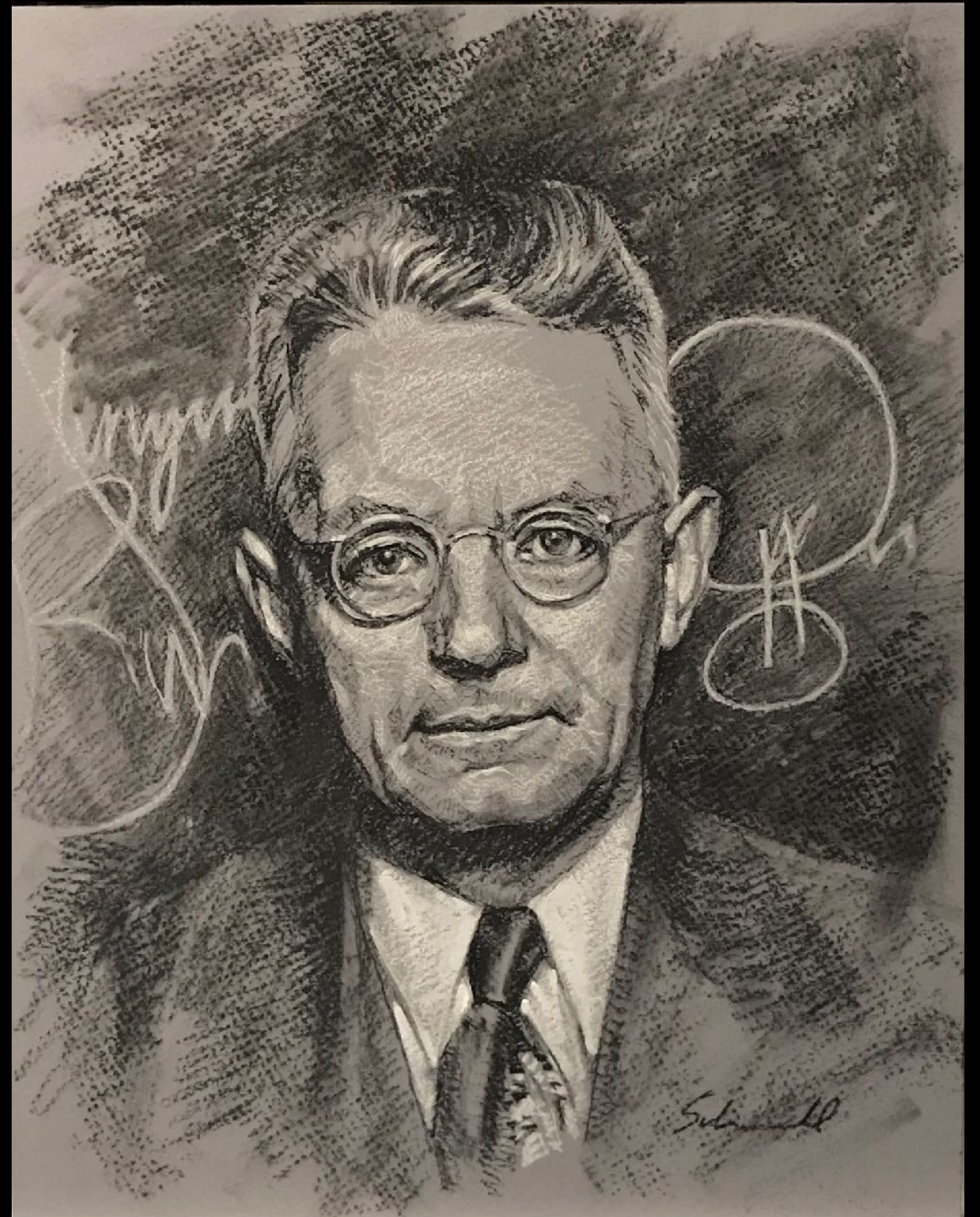




... when the Christian and his  
opponent use the same terminology  
they do not mean the same things.  
Both speak of **inductive, deductive** and  
**transcendental** methods, but each of  
them presupposes his own starting  
point when he uses these terms, and

Cornelius Van Til

A Survey of Christian Epistemology, 6





that fact gives these terms a different meaning in each case. It follows from this too that **what the Christian is opposing is not these methods, as such, but the anti-Christian presuppositions at the base of them.**

Cornelius Van Til

A Survey of Christian Epistemology, 6

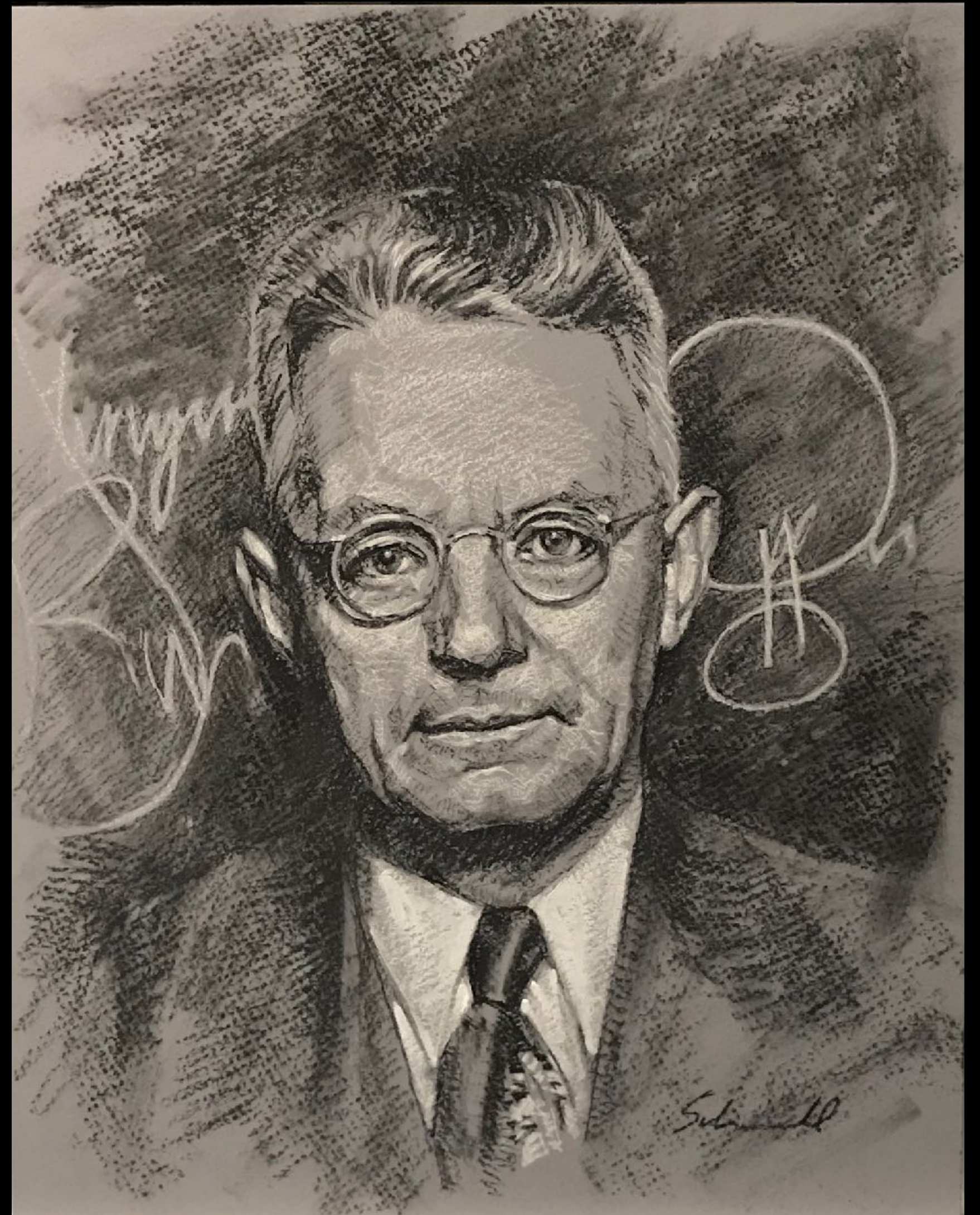




If the **axioms** on which **science** depends are thought of as **resting in the universe**, the **opposite** of the **Christian position** is in effect **maintained**.

Cornelius Van Til

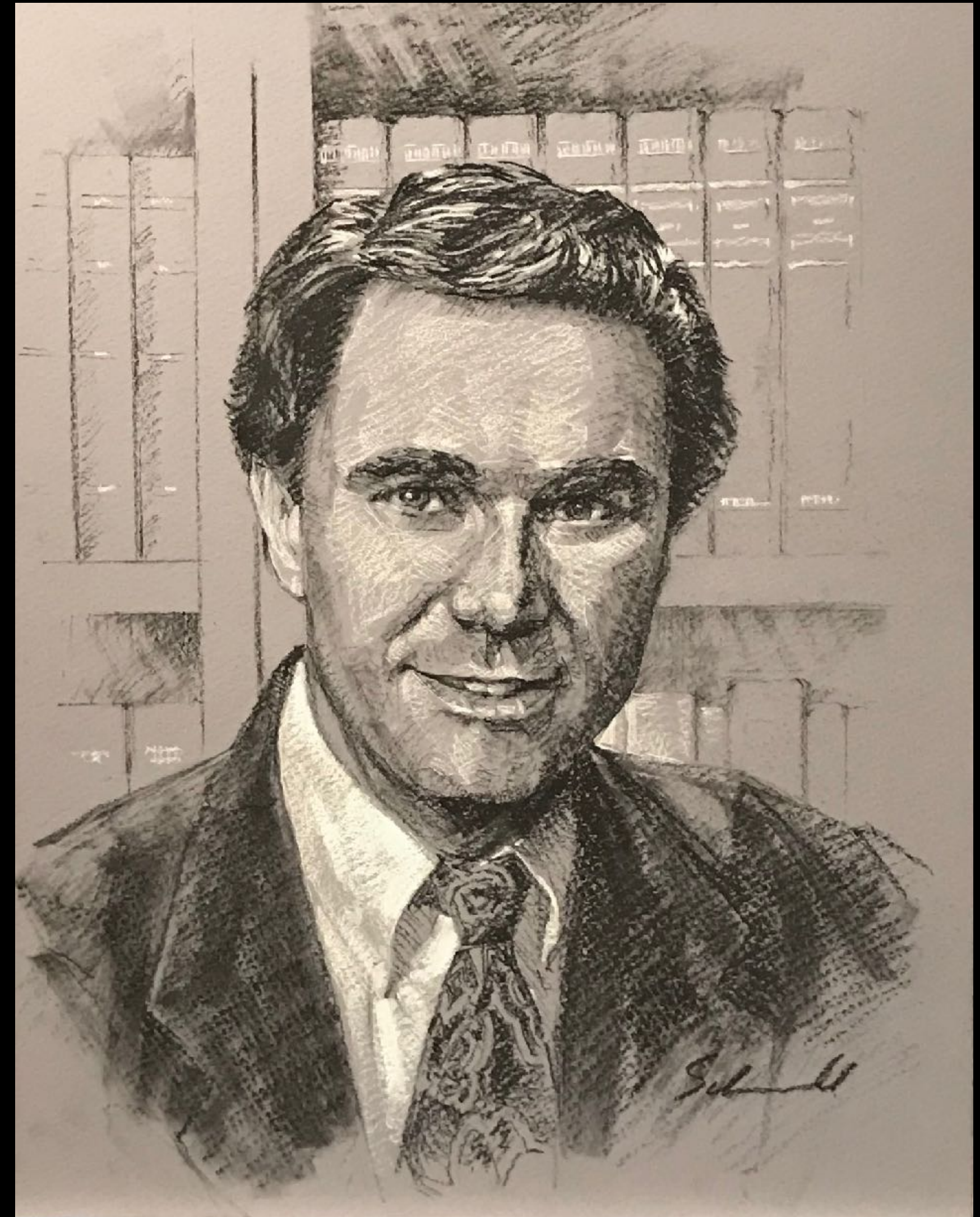
A Survey of Christian Epistemology, 9





Years ago Van Til realized that opponents of presuppositionalism tend to think that there are only two kinds of reasoning: inductive and deductive. Deductive reasoning stands opposed to inductive. However, there is also

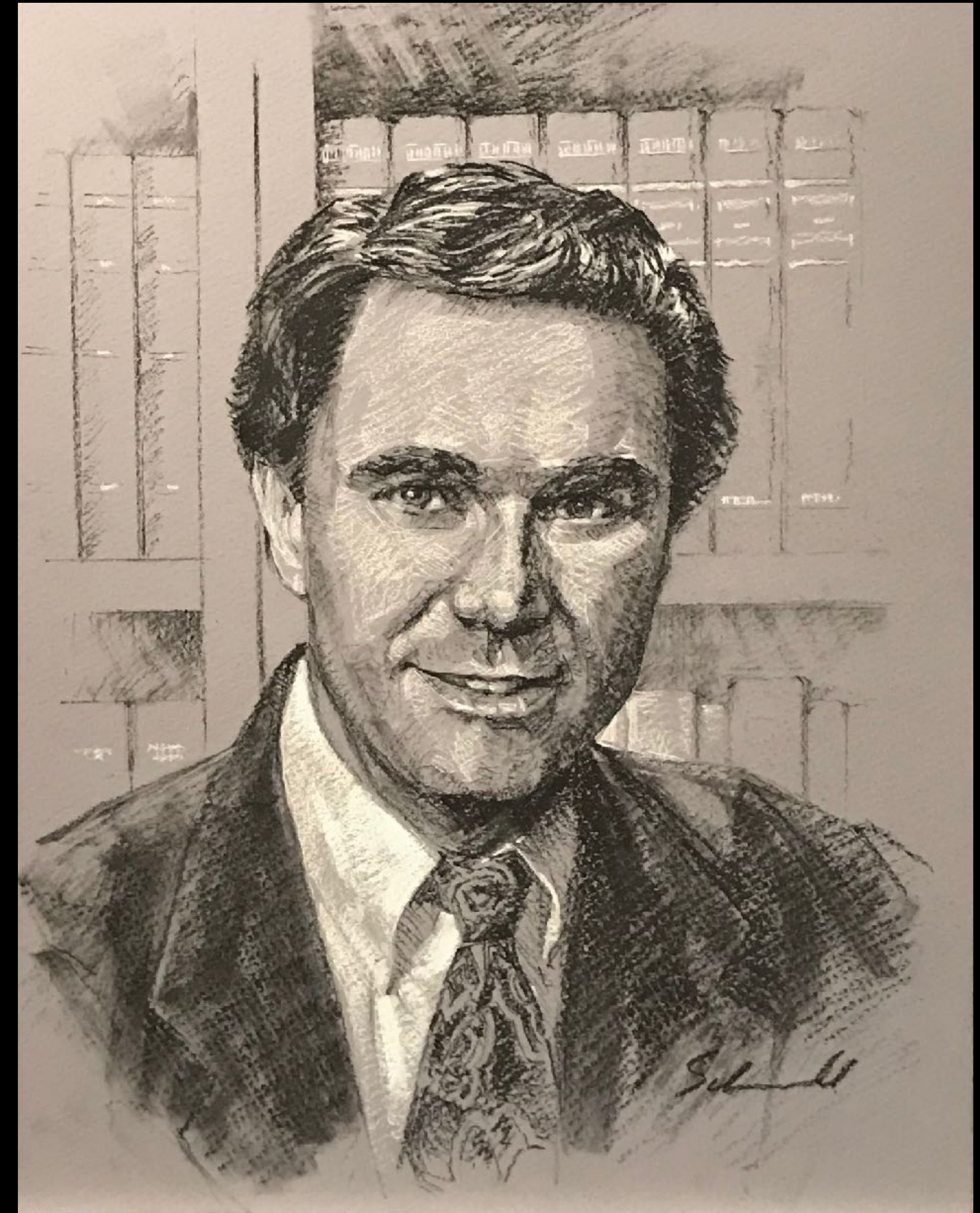
Greg Bahnsen  
Van Til's Apologetic, 176





transcendental reasoning, in which the preconditions for the intelligibility of what is experienced, asserted, or argued are posed or sought. It, too, stands opposed to a purely inductive approach to knowledge.

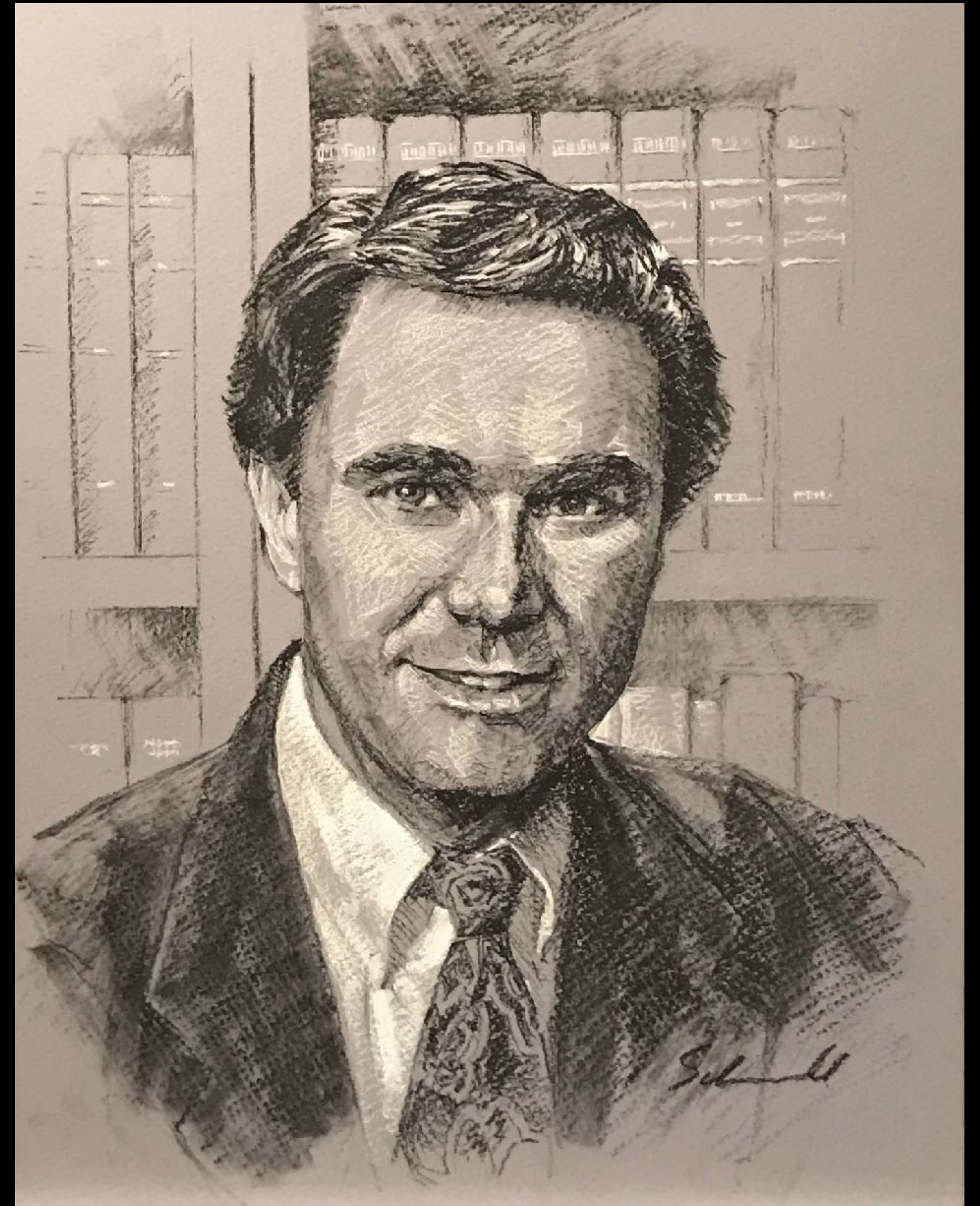
Greg Bahnsen  
Van Til's Apologetic, 176





Critics seem to think that, since presuppositionalism does not endorse pure inductivism, it **must favor deductivism** instead. This logical fallacy is known as false antithesis.

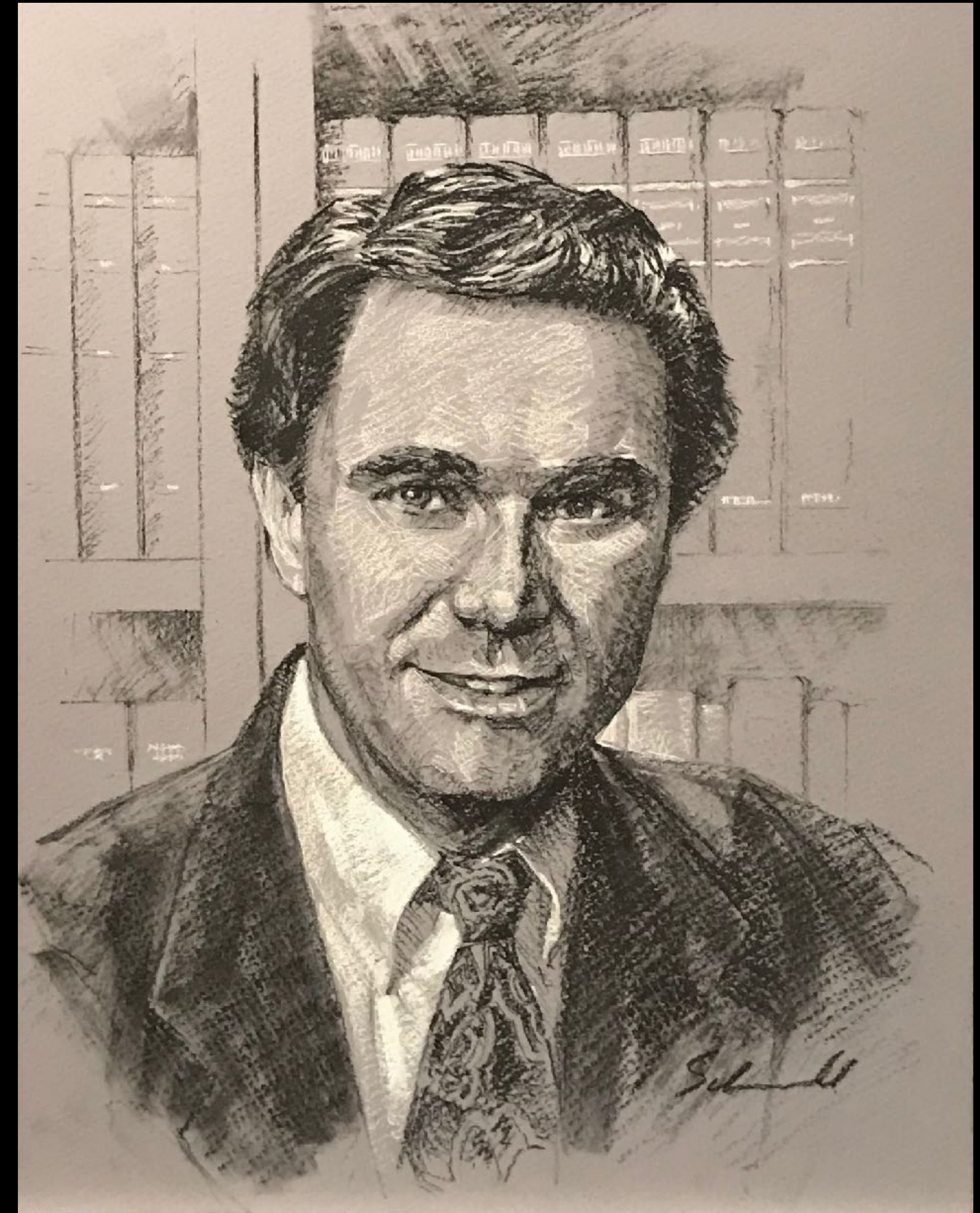
Greg Bahnsen  
Van Til's Apologetic, 176





It should be clear from the context here that **Van Til meant to claim more than** that the argument is “**valid**” (i.e., that its conclusion necessarily follows from the premises). In the first place, the strong kind of argument that **he is advocating** would also be “**sound**” (i.e., its premises would be true).

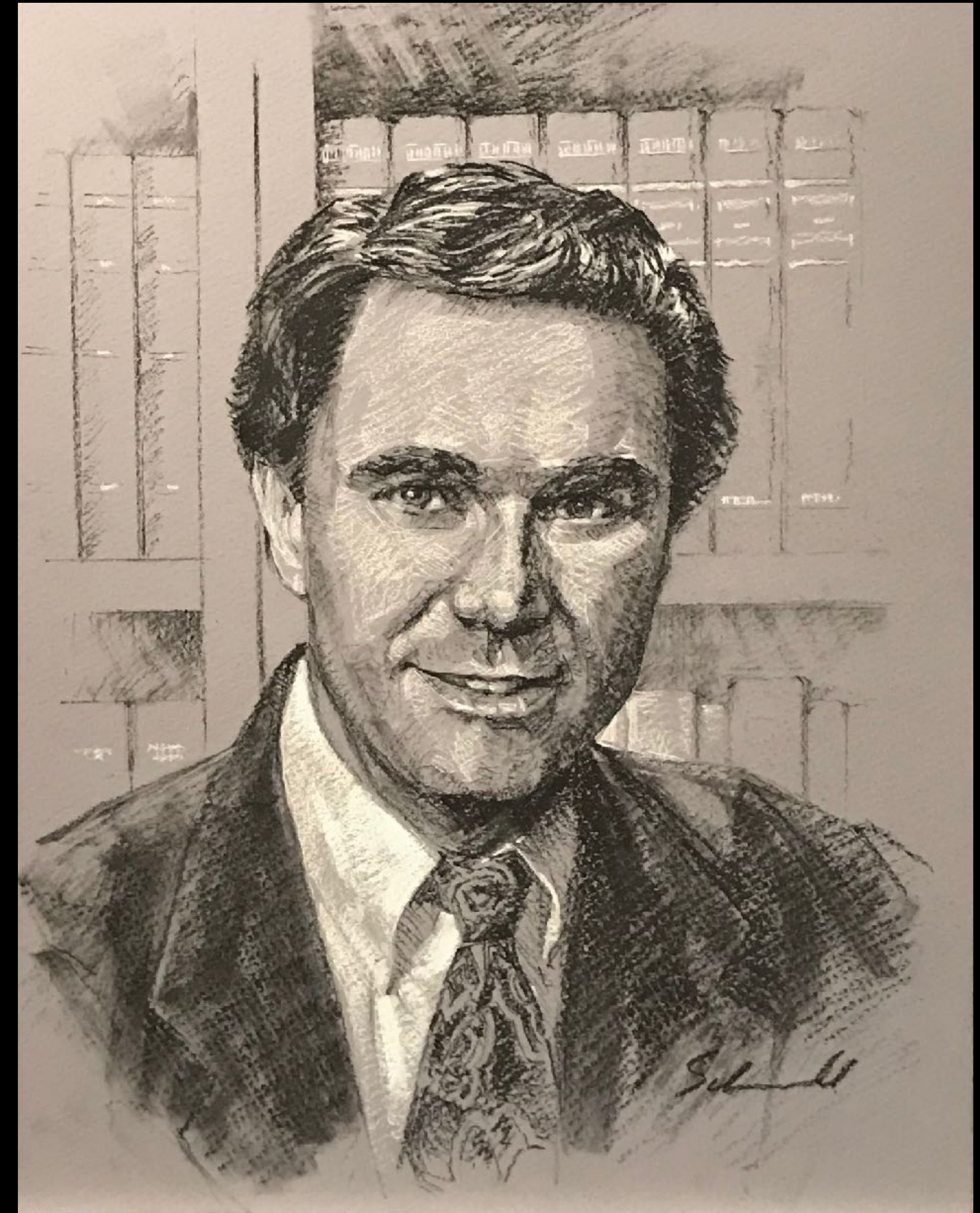
Greg Bahnsen  
Van Til's Apologetic, 79-80





Moreover, the truth of its premises (or the soundness of secondary, tertiary, etc., arguments used for those premises) is acknowledged or knowable without prior acknowledgment or statement of the conclusion in the formulation(s). The kind of strong argument intended by Van Til represents

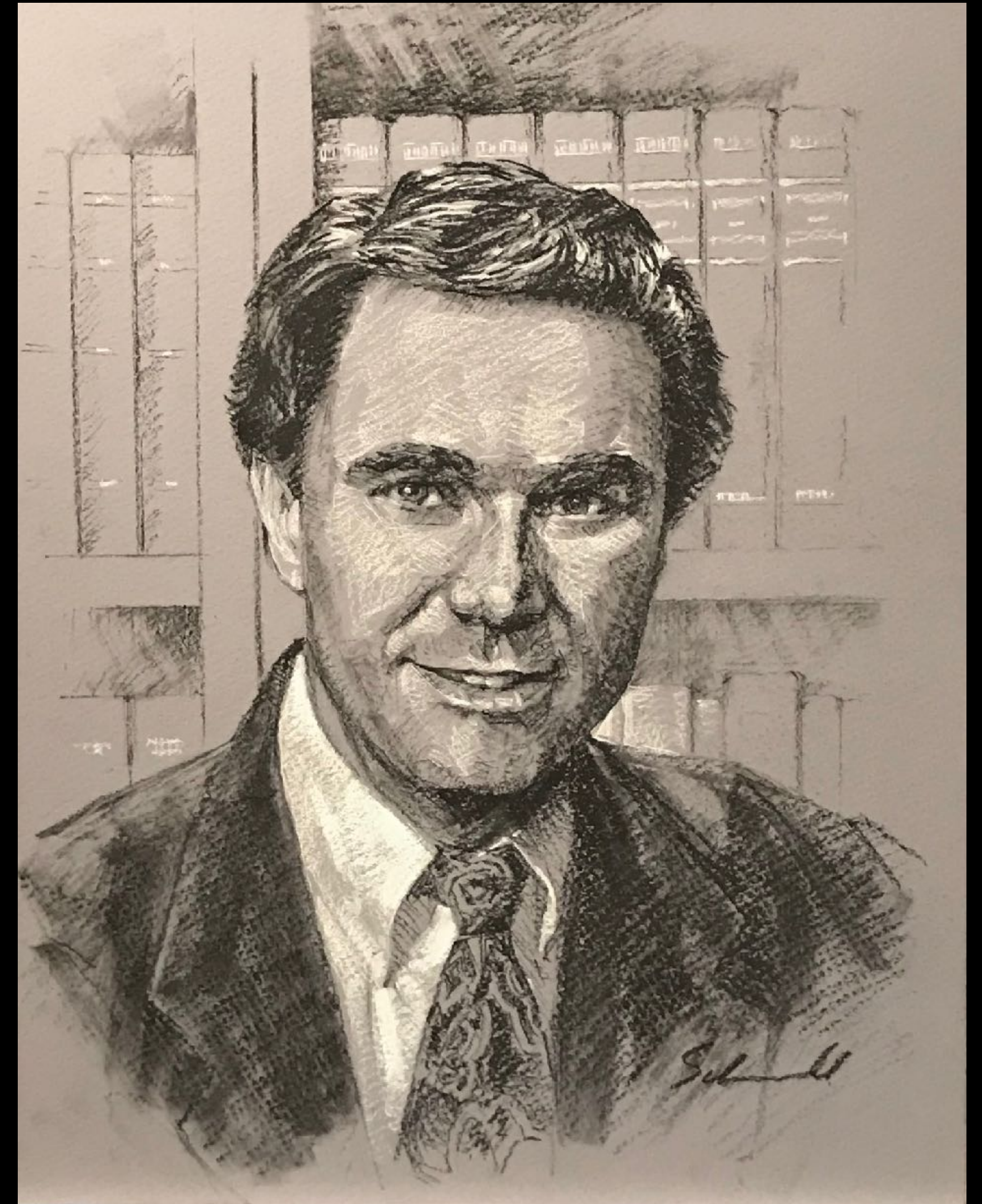
Greg Bahnsen  
Van Til's Apologetic, 79-80





a genuine “cognitive advance” (to use Mavrode’s expression) because things which the unbeliever will acknowledge turn out, **without him realizing it**, upon analysis to require or **imply the truth of the Christian worldview.**

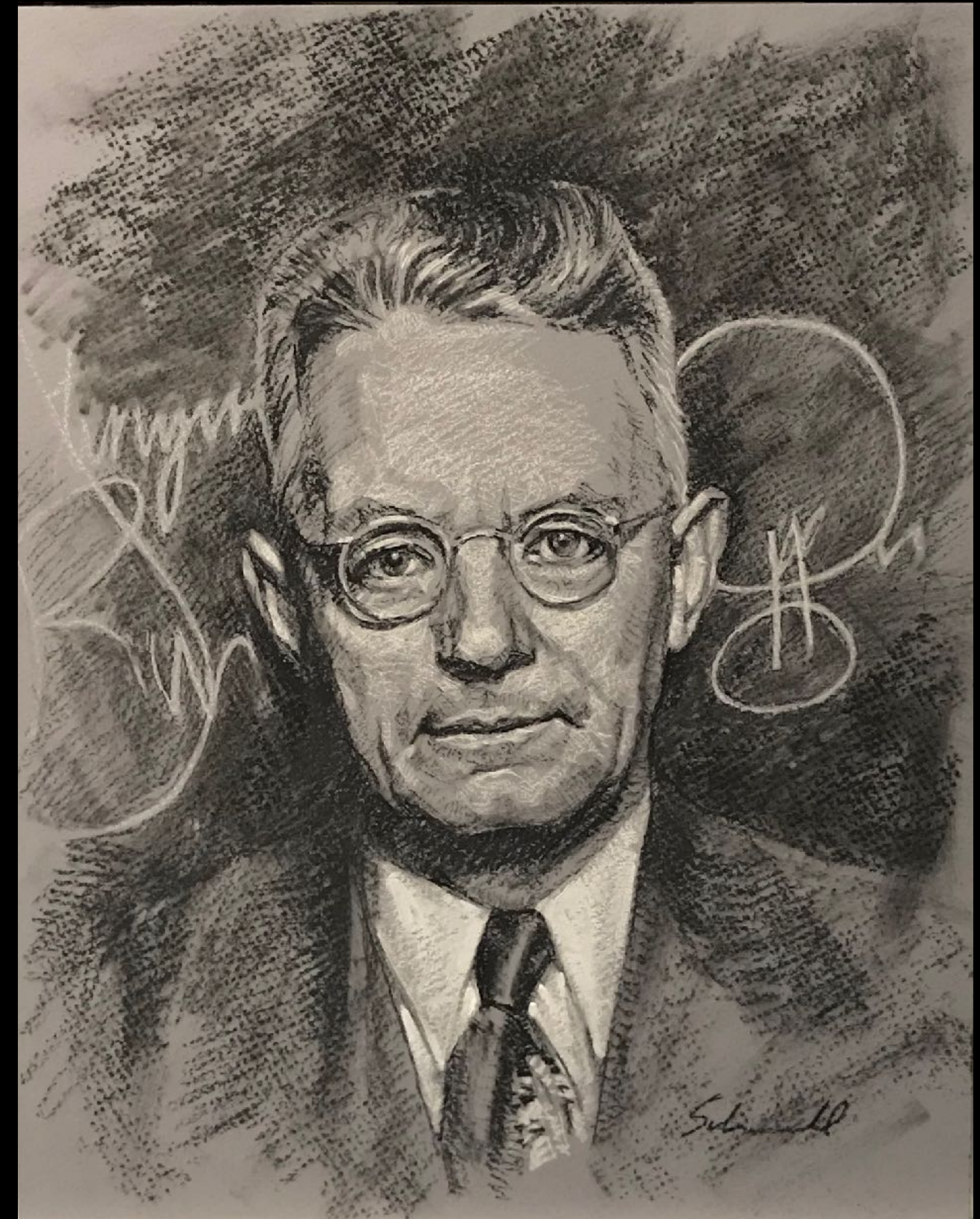
Greg Bahnsen  
Van Til’s Apologetic, 79-80





But after all, you are **not** (as I am not!)  
**interested** in apriori **deductive**  
**systems**. I have argued on a number of  
occasions against various people to  
the effect that the biblical “system of  
truth” is based upon the exegesis of  
the authoritatively given truth content  
of Scripture.

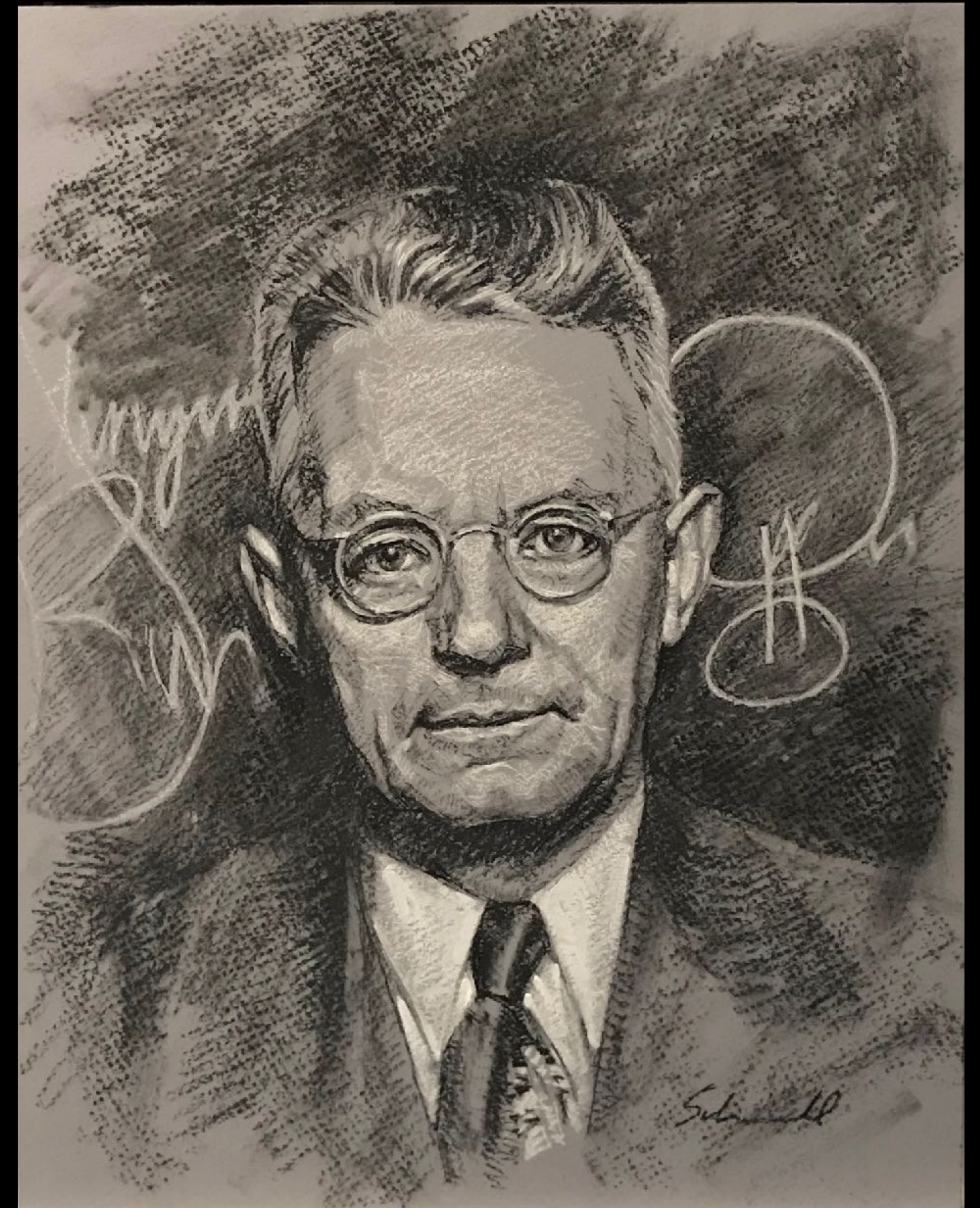
Cornelius Van Til  
Jerusalem and Athens 398-399





When **exegesis** seems to **lead into** so-called "**antinomies**" such as the relation of the all-controlling sovereignty of God to the freedom or responsibility of man, I simply admit that **I cannot logically penetrate the situation.**

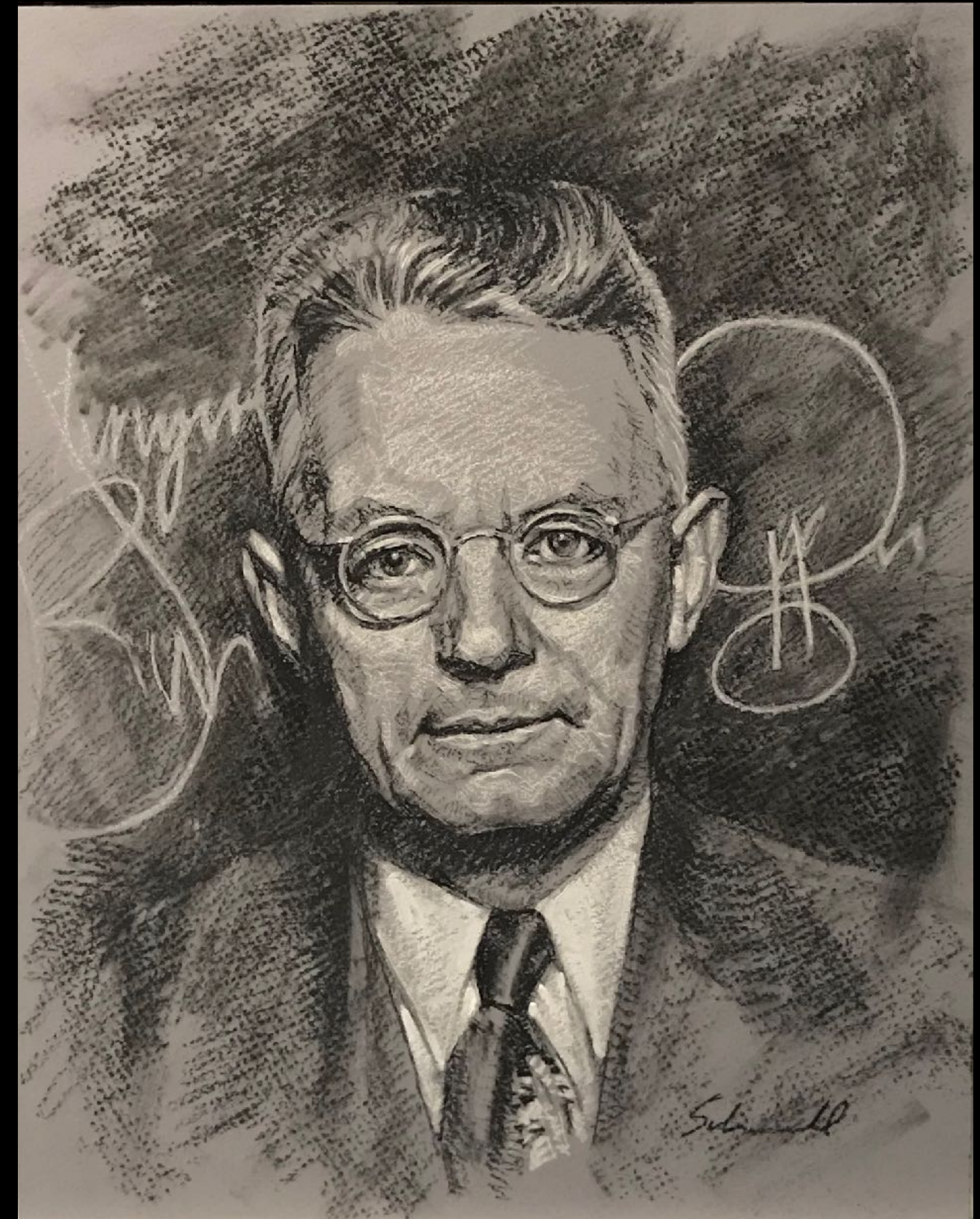
Cornelius Van Til  
Jerusalem and Athens 398-399



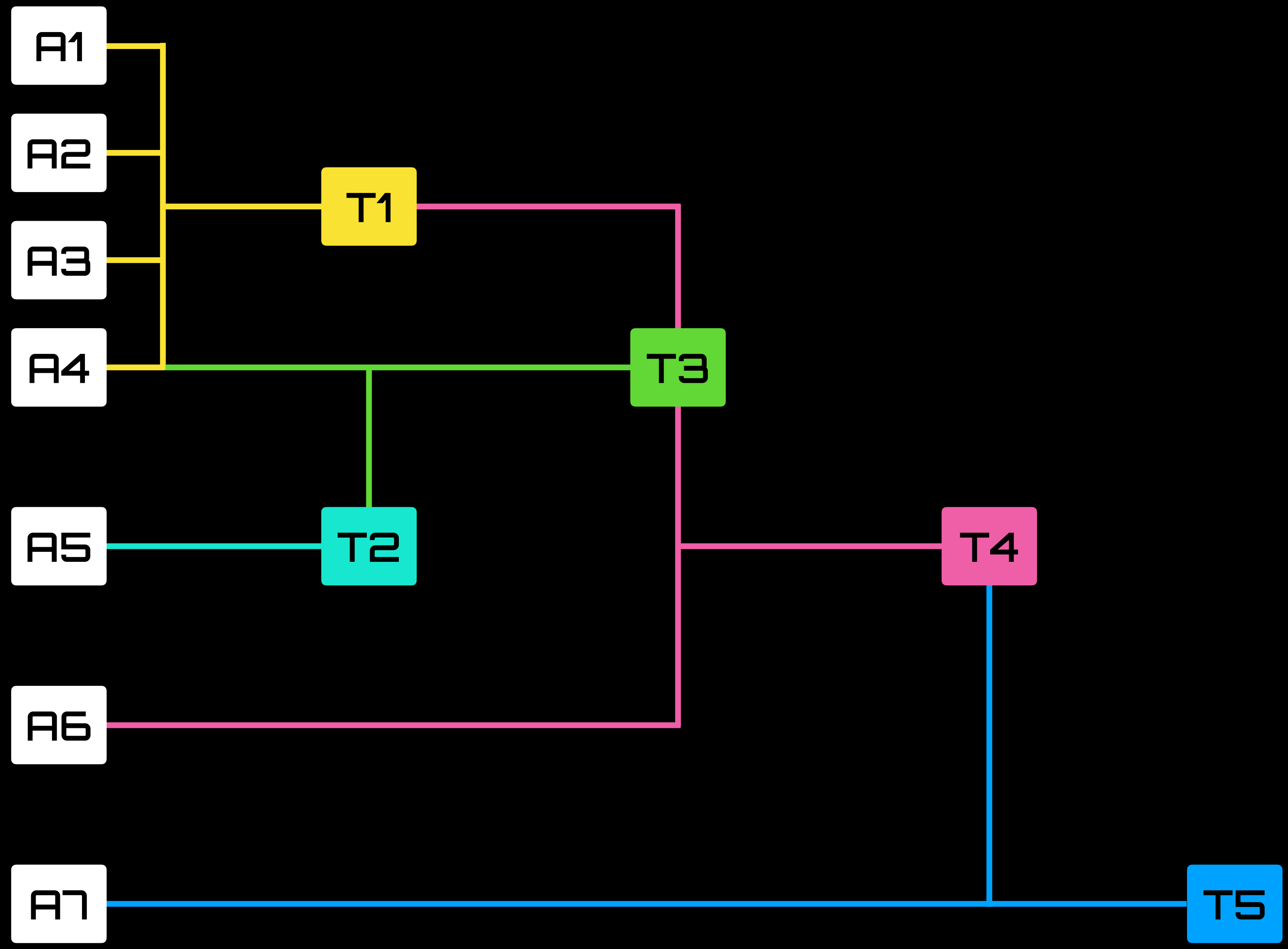


The Bible teaches God's sovereign electing grace. It also teaches the universal offer of the gospel. I cannot logically comprehend the relation between these two, but this fact does not lead me to a denial of either one of them.

Cornelius Van Til  
Jerusalem and Athens 398-399



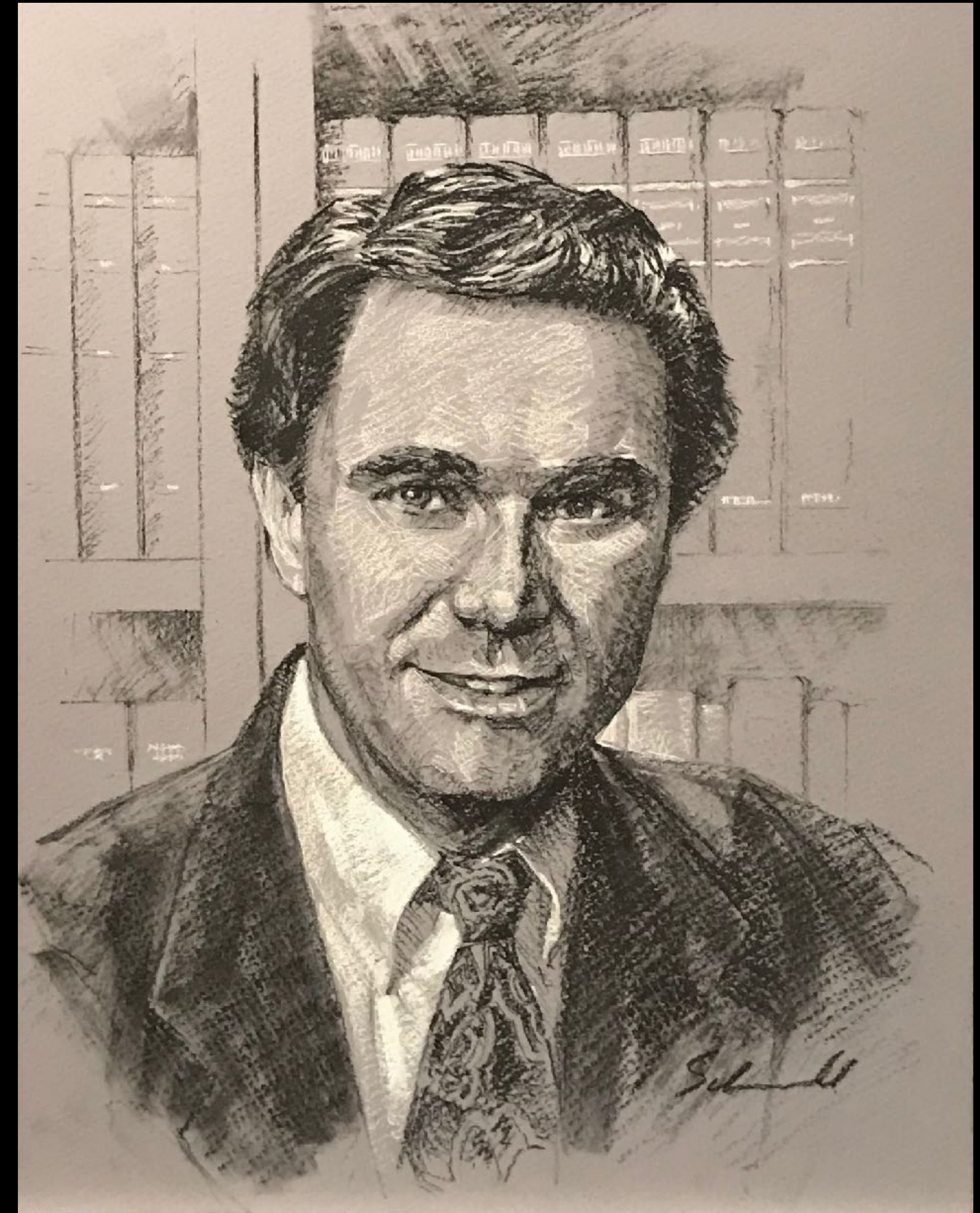






It is extremely important to notice and reflect upon the point being made by Van Til at this juncture. As we shall see shortly, a “transcendental” argument has this special “logical feature” about it, that it can draw its conclusion from the affirmation of some position

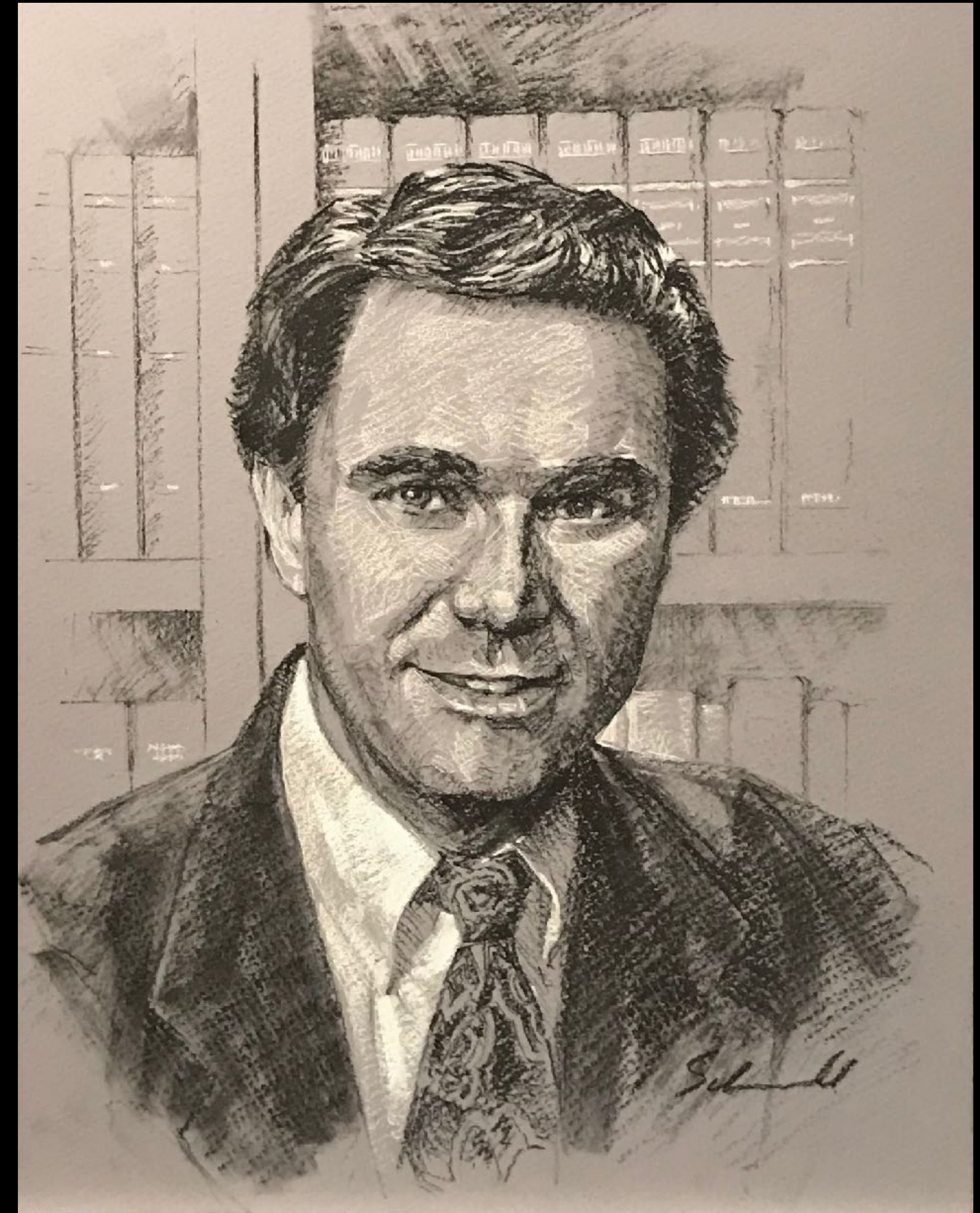
Greg Bahnsen  
Van Til's Apologetic, 481





(or premise) as well as from the denial of that position (or premise). This exhibits the “necessity” of what the transcendental argument proves. This is not, then, the same as deductive necessity, since the denial of crucial premise in a deductive argument would render the argument invalid.

Greg Bahnsen  
Van Til's Apologetic, 481

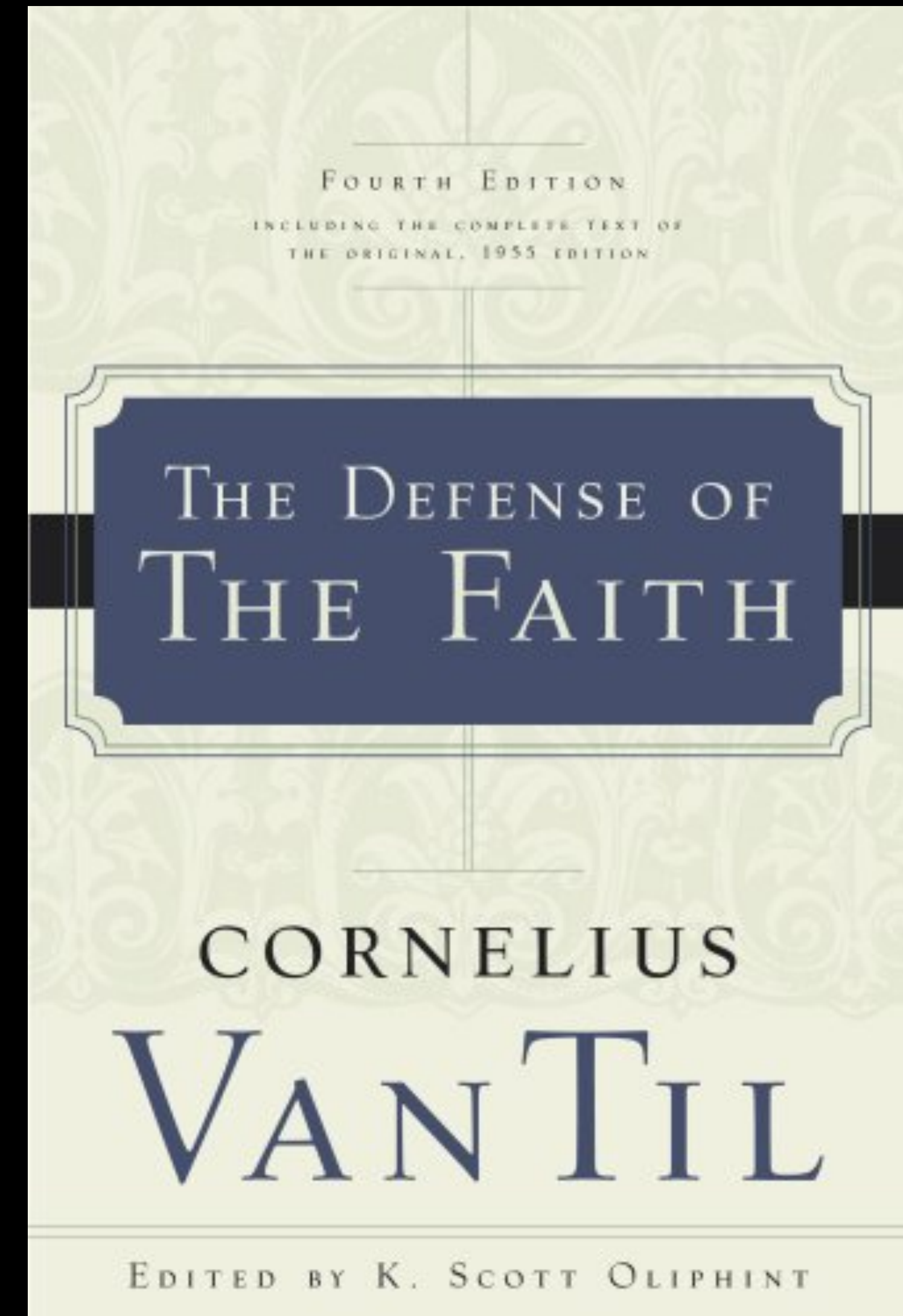




If we were to set forth his notion of a presupposition in general terms, perhaps the “Strawsonian” formula is the best representative: “**P presupposes Q if and only if Q is true provided P is true or P is false.**”

Scott Oliphint

The Defense of the Faith, 121





1. If  $p$ , then  $q$ .

2. If not  $p$ , then  $q$ .

$\therefore q$



1. If  $p$ , then  $q$ .

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$\therefore q$



1. If  $p$ , then  $q$ .

2. If  $\text{not } p$ , then  $q$ .

$\therefore q$



1. If  $p$ , then  $q$ .

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$\therefore q$



1. If  $p$ , then  $q$ .

2. If not  $p$ , then  $q$ .

$\therefore q$



1. If  $K$ , then  $C$ .

2. If not  $K$ , then  $C$ .

$\therefore C$



1. If  $K$ , then  $C$ .

2.  $K$ .

$\therefore C$



1. If  $K$ , then  $C$ .

2.  $K$ .

$\therefore C$



$K \rightarrow C$

$K$

$\therefore C$

$K \rightarrow C$

$\sim K \rightarrow C$

$\therefore C$

$K \rightarrow C$

$(K \rightarrow C) \rightarrow C$

$\therefore C$



$K \rightarrow C$

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$\therefore C$

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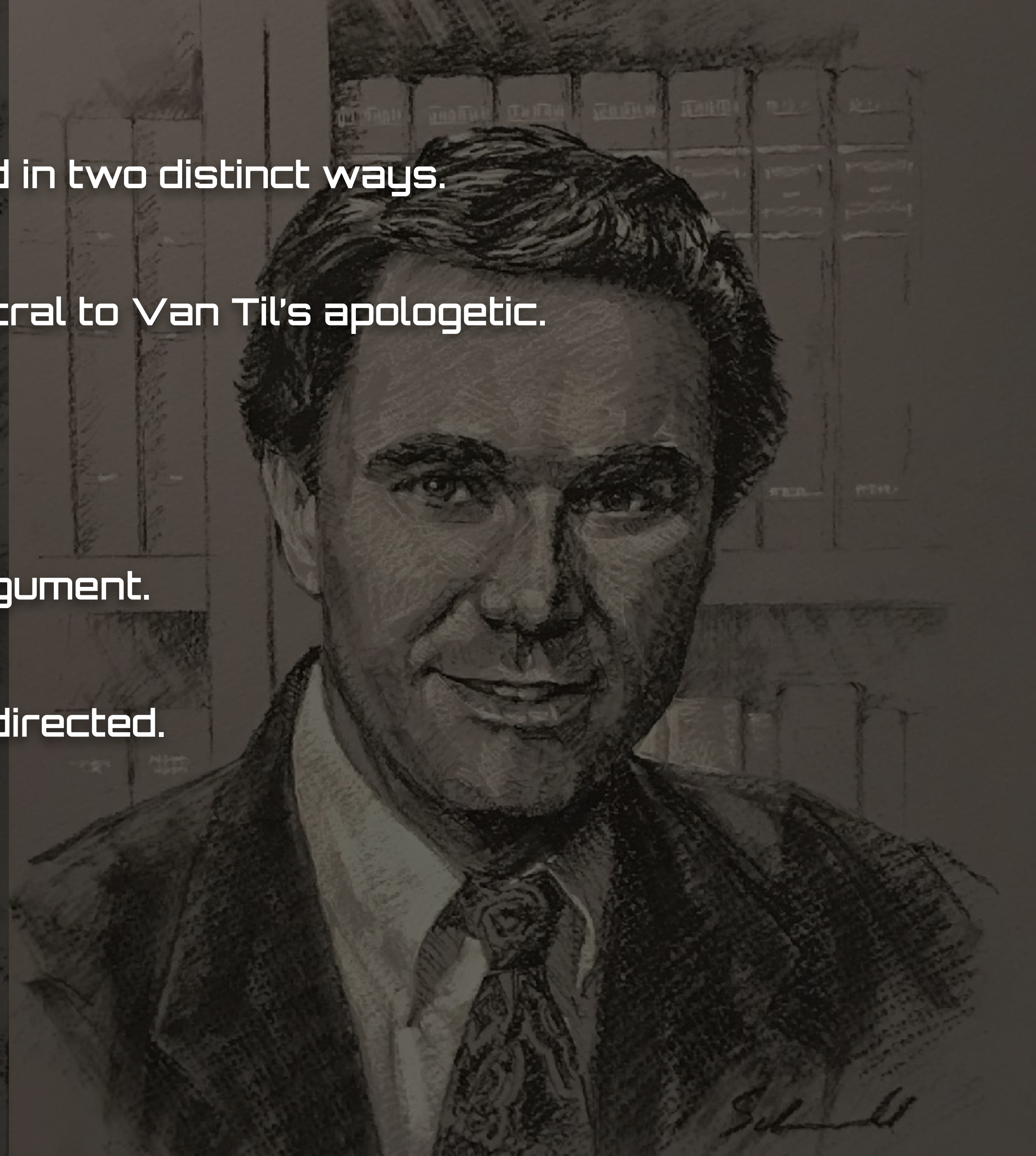
1 Van Til's apologetic can be presented in two distinct ways.

2 The topic of self-deception is not central to Van Til's apologetic.

3 We welcome the burden of proof.

4 Van Til's apologetic is a deductive argument.

5 The transcendental premise is truth directed.





1. If there is knowledge, then Christianity is true.

2. There is knowledge.

∴ Christianity is true.



1. If there is knowledge, then Christianity is true.

2. There is knowledge.

∴ Christianity is true.



1. If there is knowledge, then we must **believe** in Christianity.

2. There is knowledge.

∴ We must **believe** in Christianity.



1. If there is knowledge, then we know Christianity to be true.

2. There is knowledge.

∴ We know Christianity to be true.



1. If there is knowledge, then Christianity is true.

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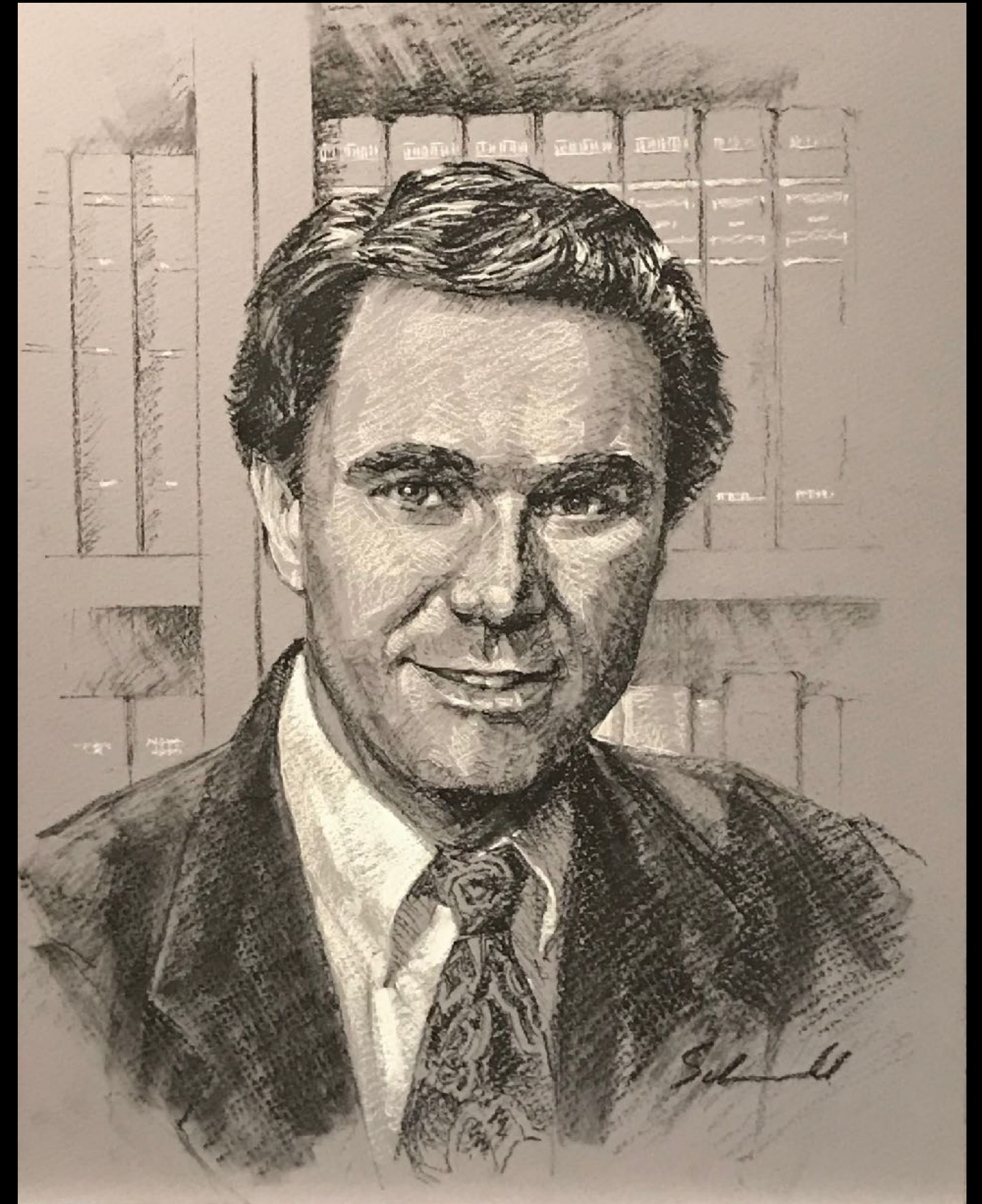
∴ Christianity is true.



What I'm going to show  
is that **to prove**  
**anything, you first**  
have to **believe in God.**

Greg Bahnsen

The Impossibility of the Contrary, 90







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6 Presuppositions are meta-assumptions outside of our arguments.

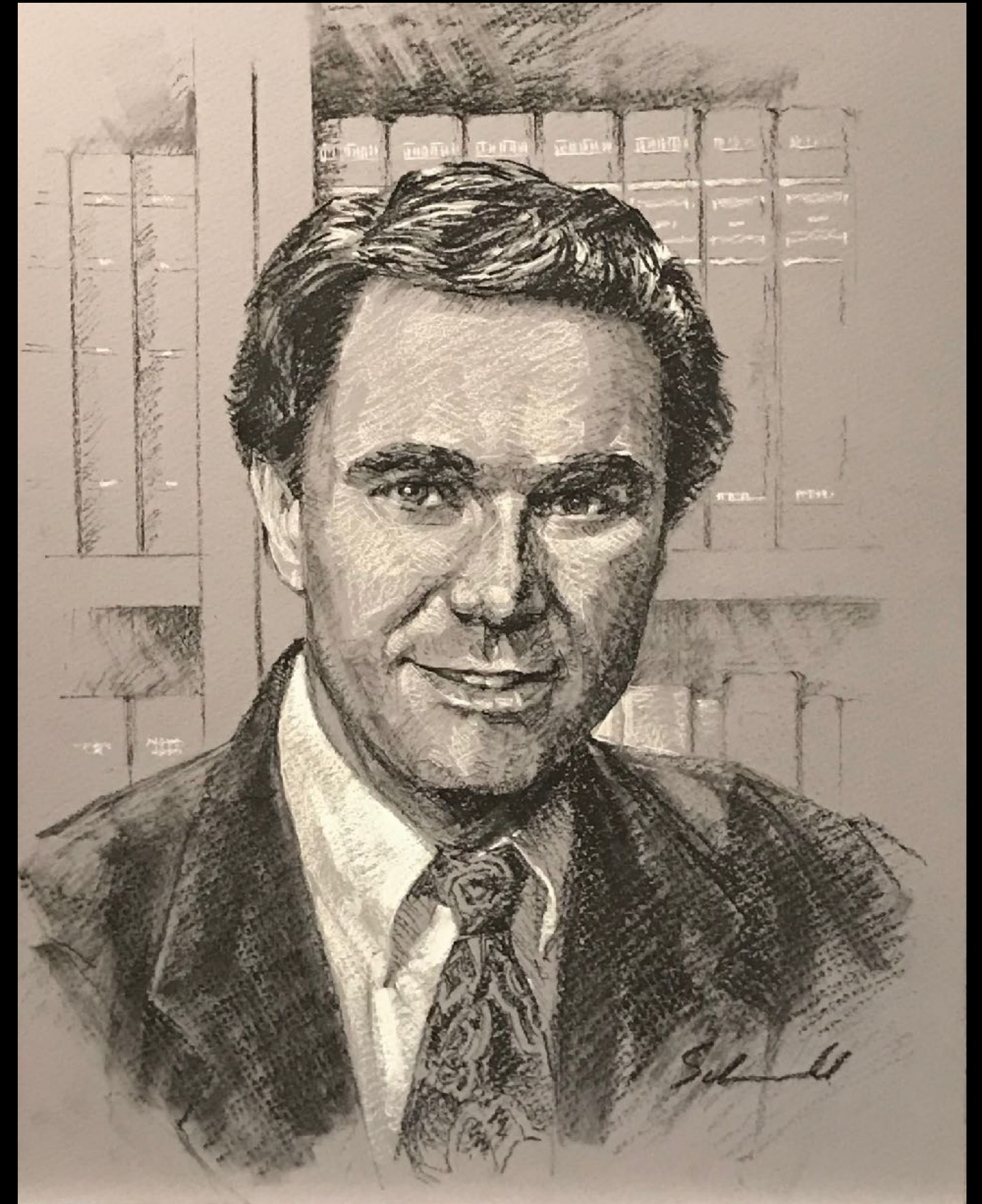




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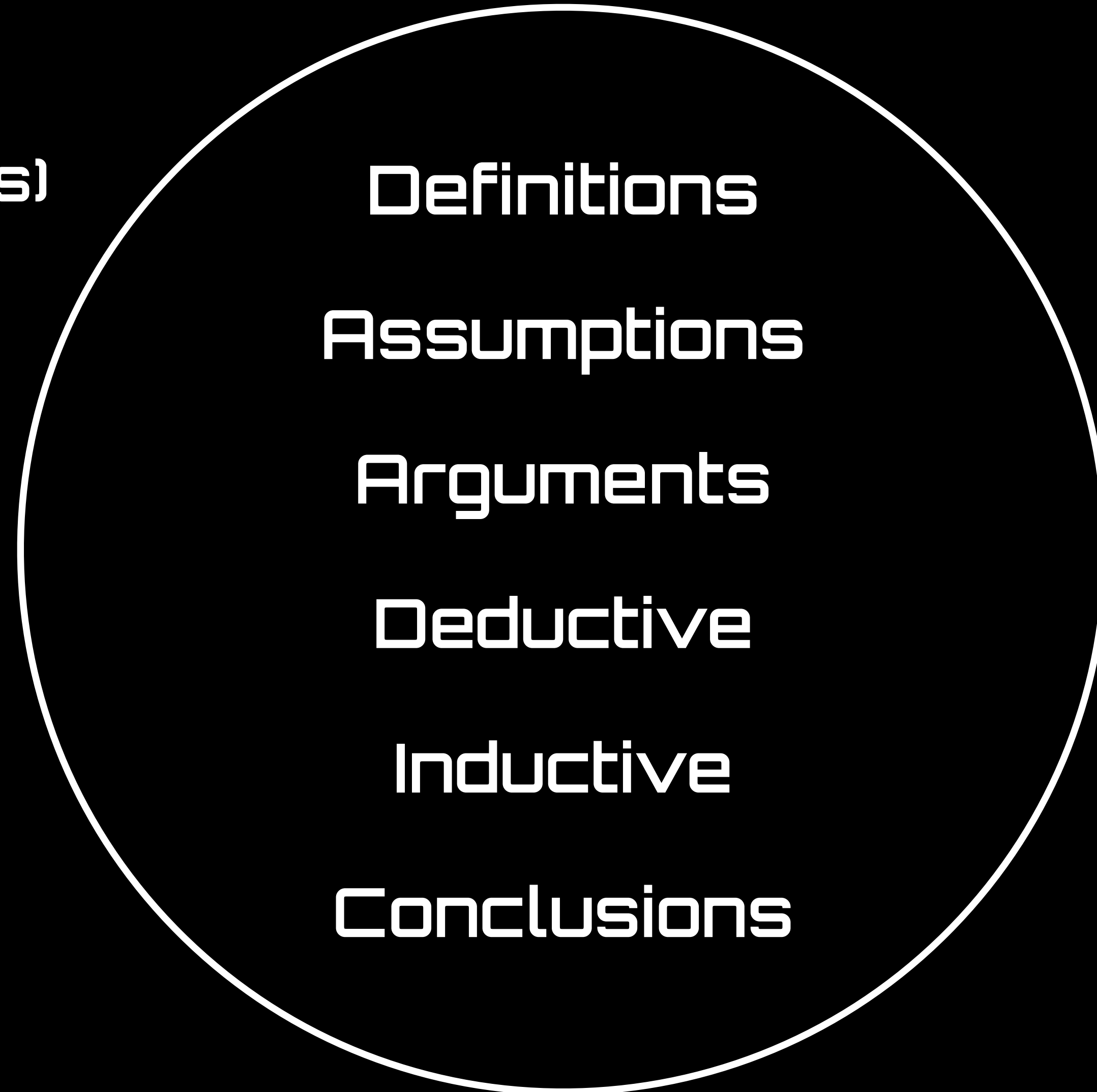
Greg Bahnsen

The Impossibility of the Contrary, 90





Transcendentals  
(Presuppositions)  
(Meta-Assumptions)

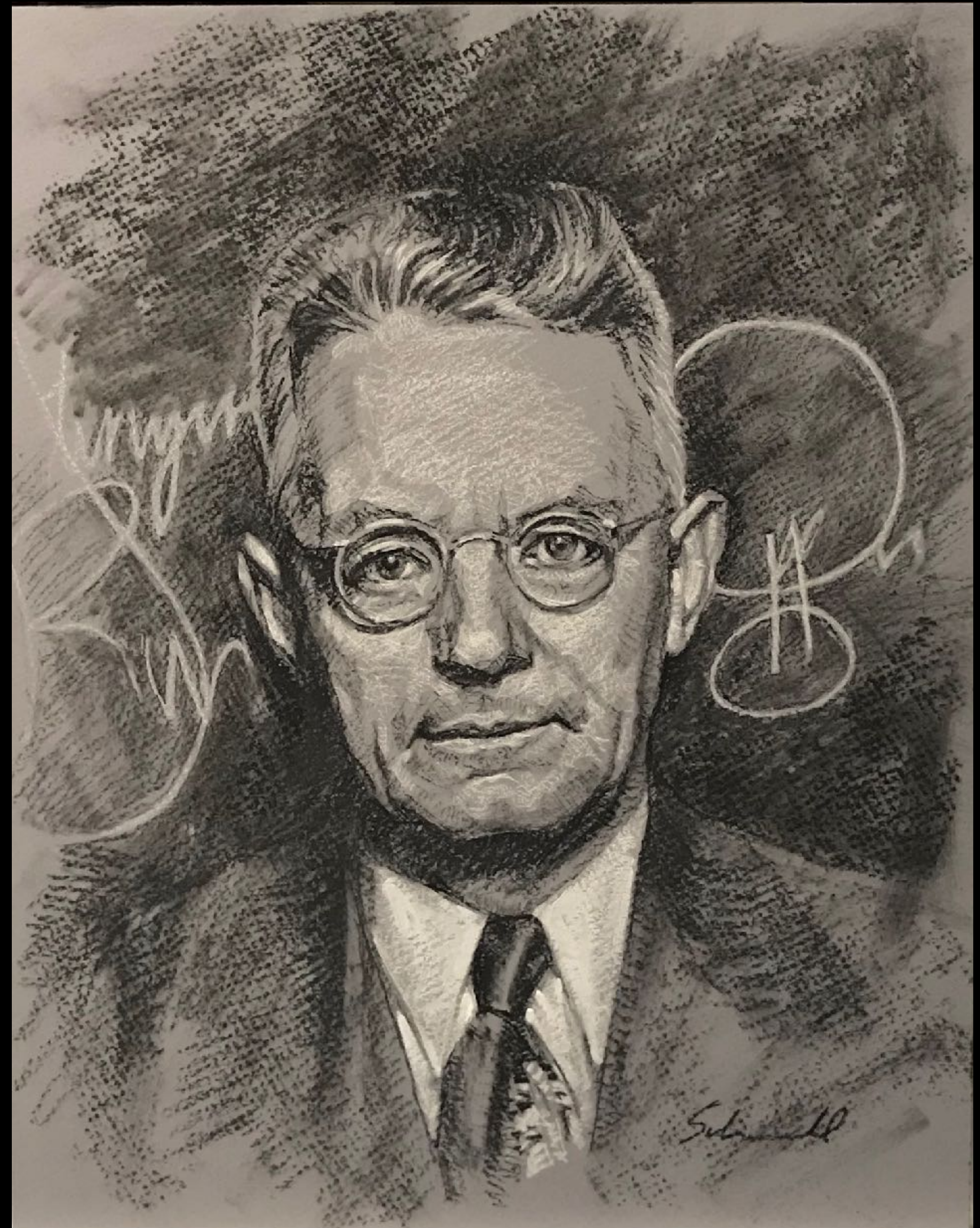




Our answer to this is briefly that we prefer to **reason in a circle to not reasoning at all**. We hold it to be true that circular reasoning is the only reasoning that is possible to finite man. The method of implication as outlined above is circular reasoning. Or we may call it **spiral reasoning**. We must go round and round a thing to see more of its dimensions and

Cornelius Van Til

A Survey of Christian Epistemology, 12

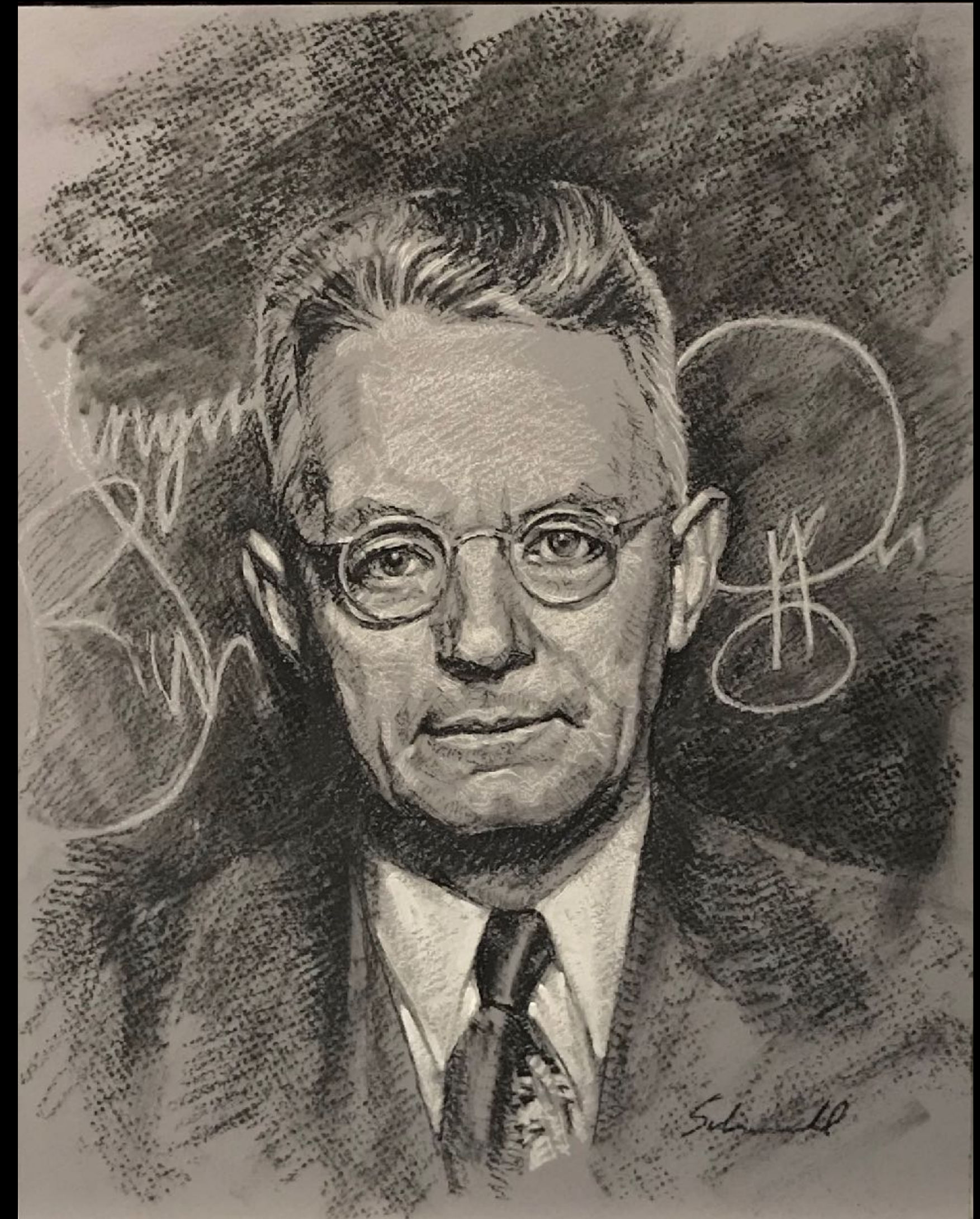




to know more about it, in general, unless we are larger than that which we are investigating. Unless we are larger than God we cannot reason about him any other way, than by a **transcendental** or **circular argument**. The refusal to admit the necessity of circular reasoning is itself an evident token of opposition to Christianity.

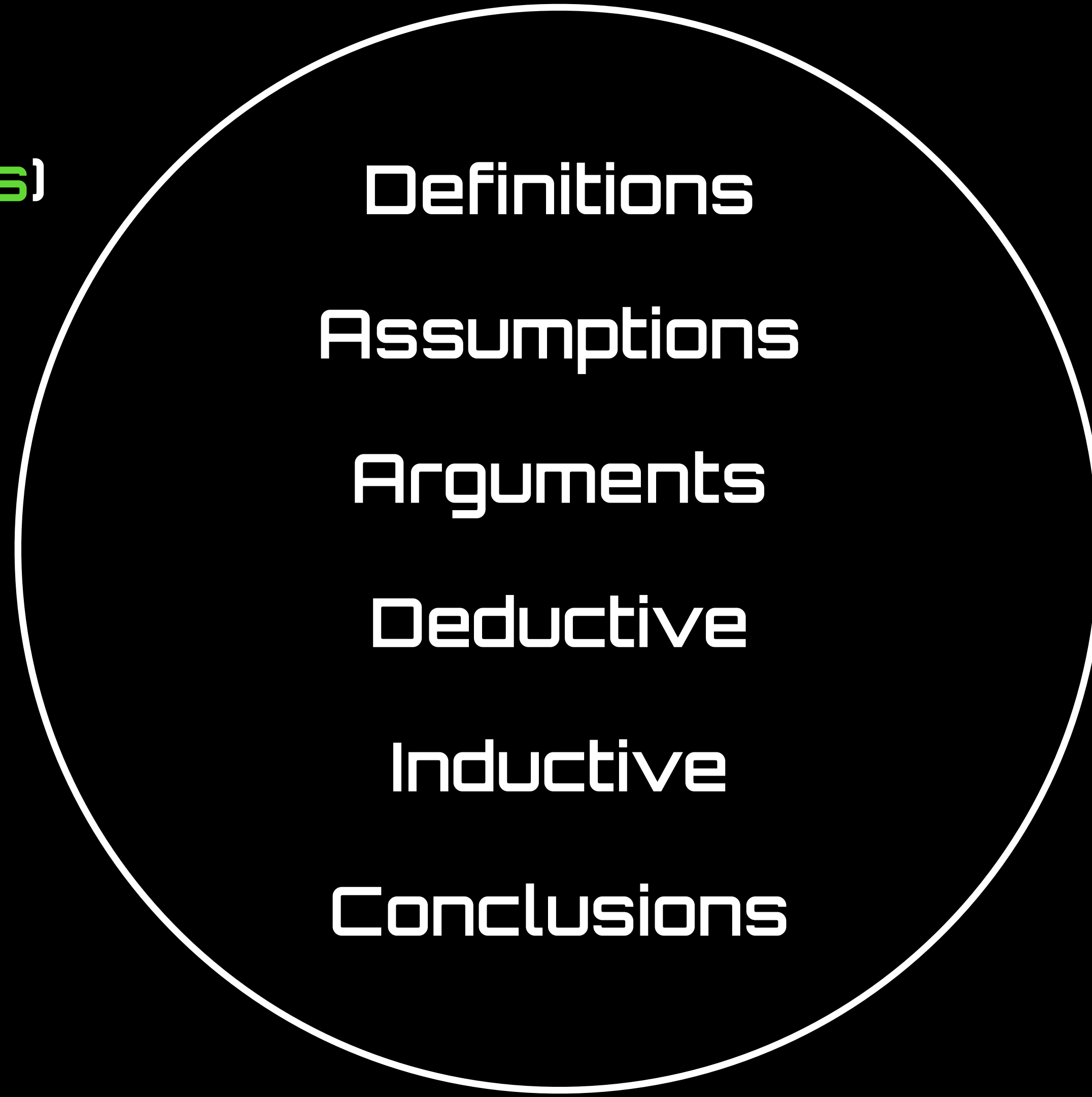
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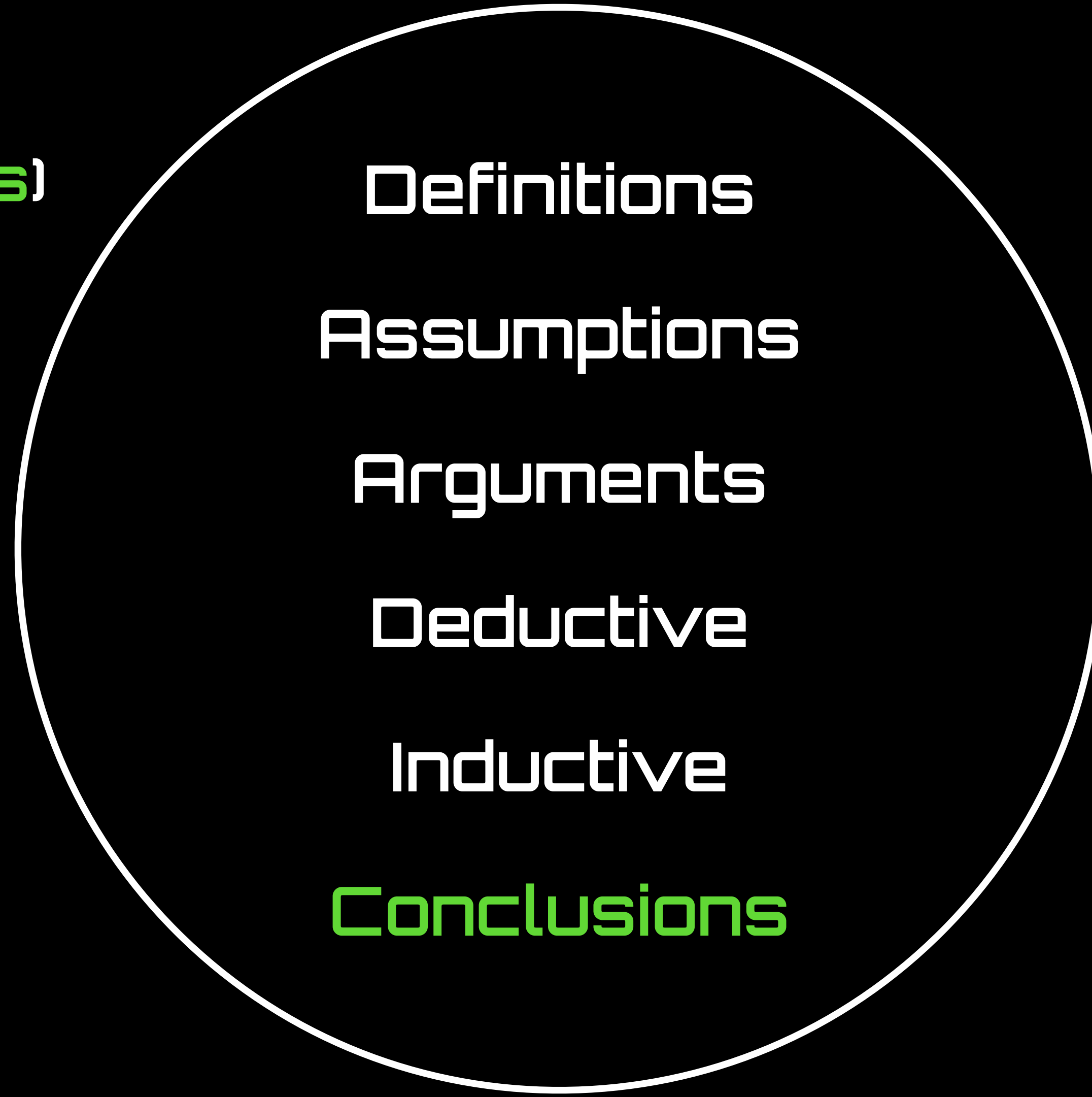


Transcendentals  
(Presuppositions)  
(Meta-Assumptions)



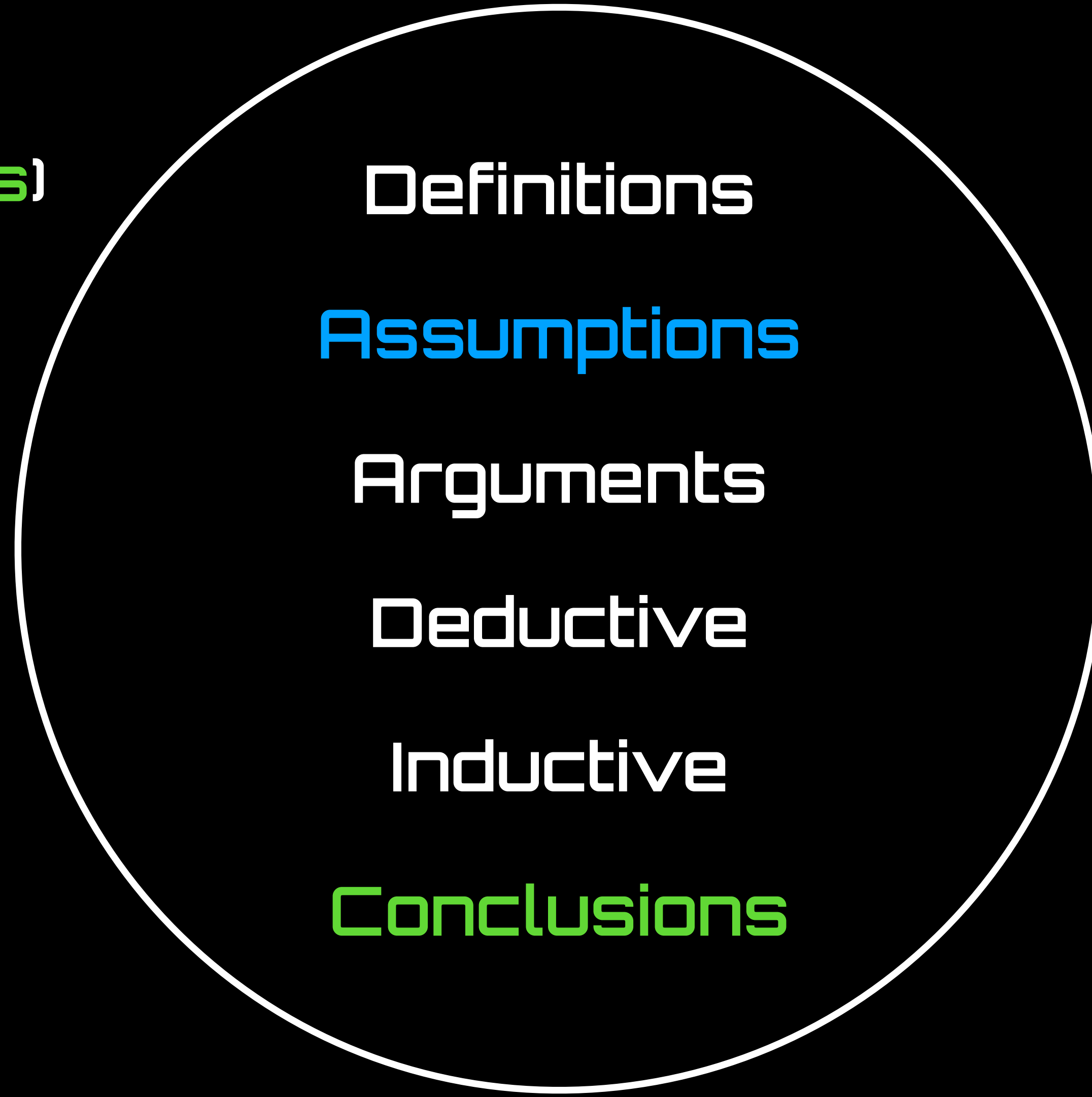


Transcendentals  
(Presuppositions)  
(Meta-Assumptions)



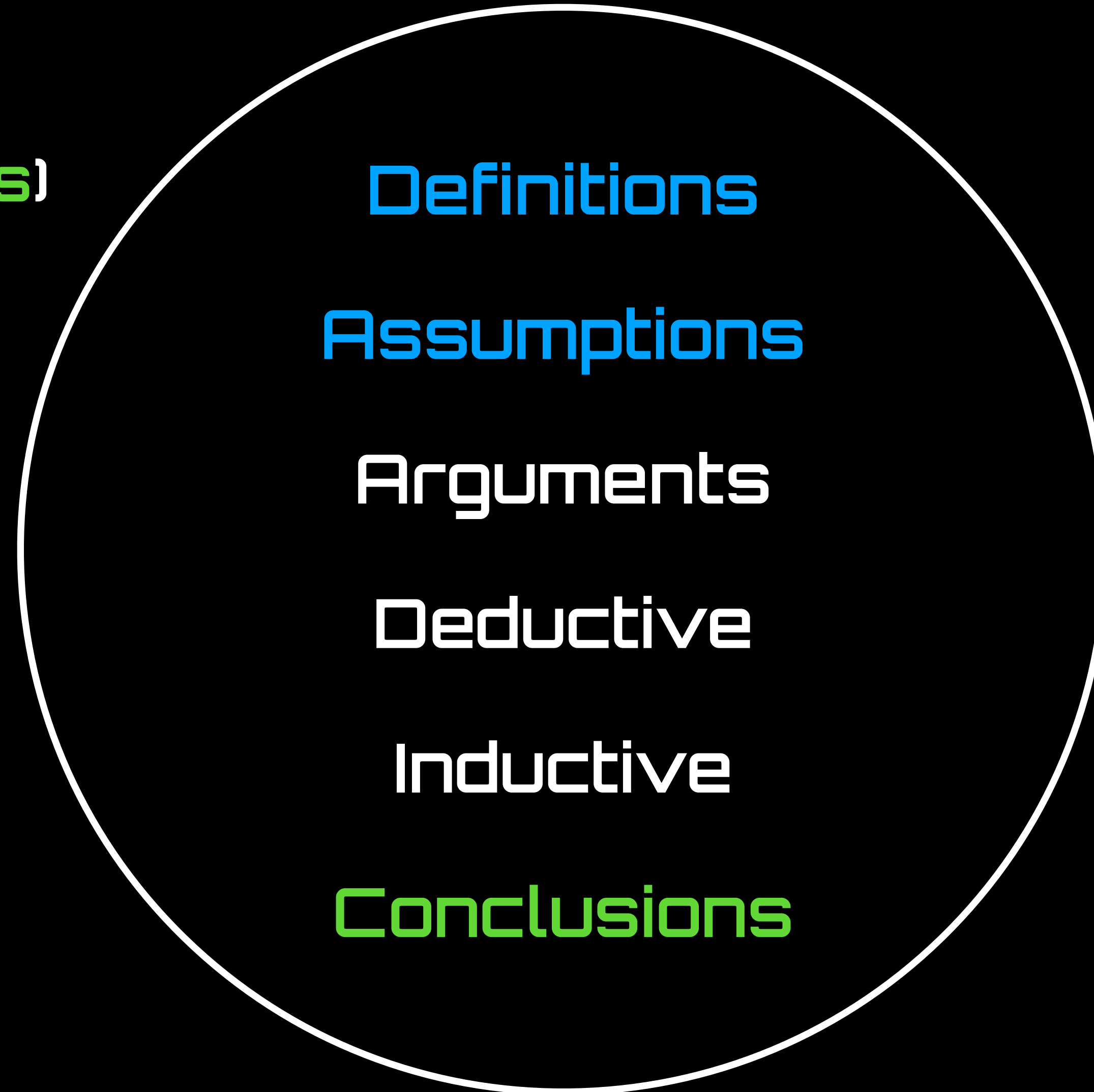


Transcendentals  
(Presuppositions)  
(Meta-Assumptions)





Transcendentals  
(Presuppositions)  
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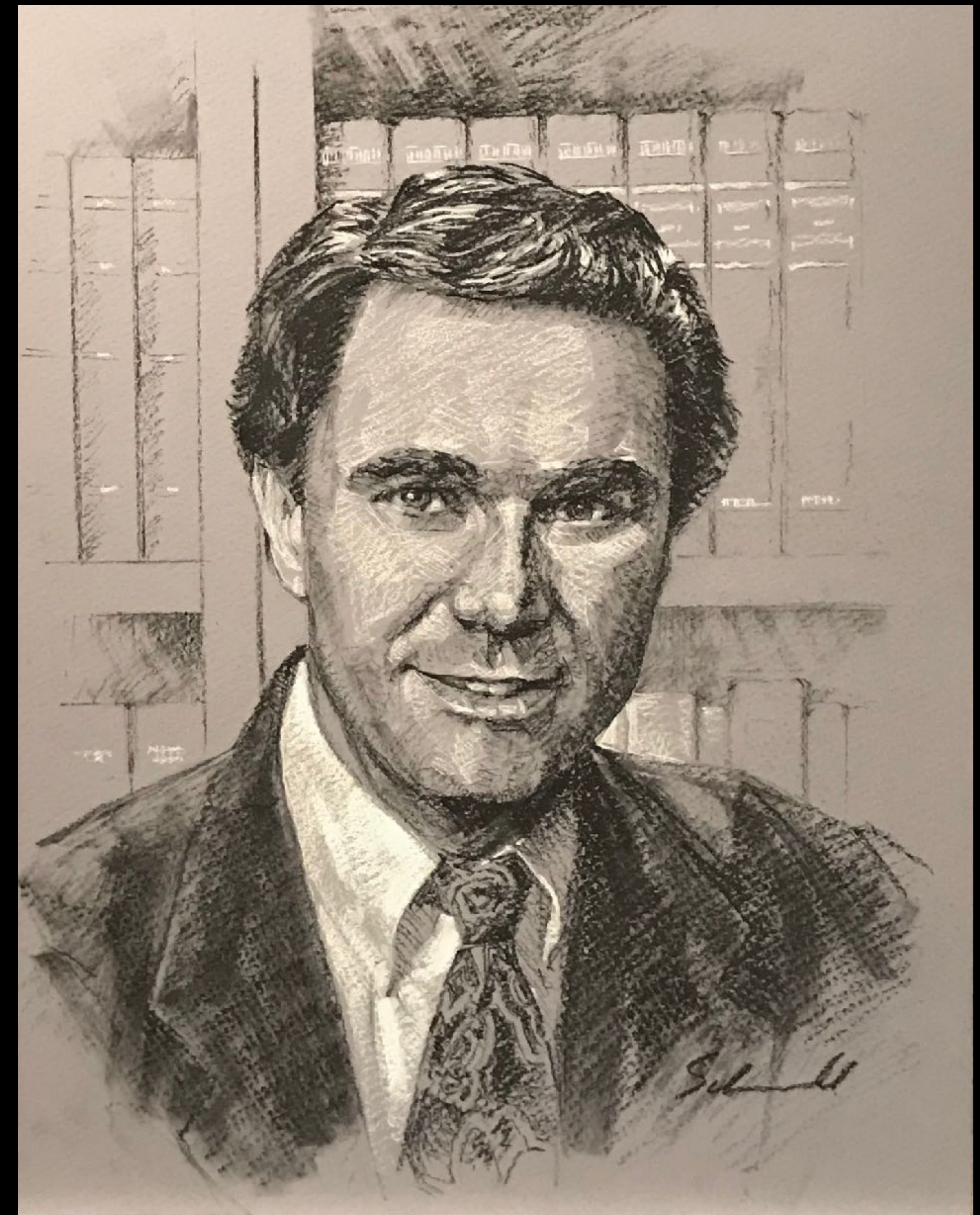




Every system must have some unproven assumptions, a starting point not antecedently established, with which reasoning begins and according to which it proceeds to conclusions.

Greg Bahnsen

Presuppositional Apologetics, 87

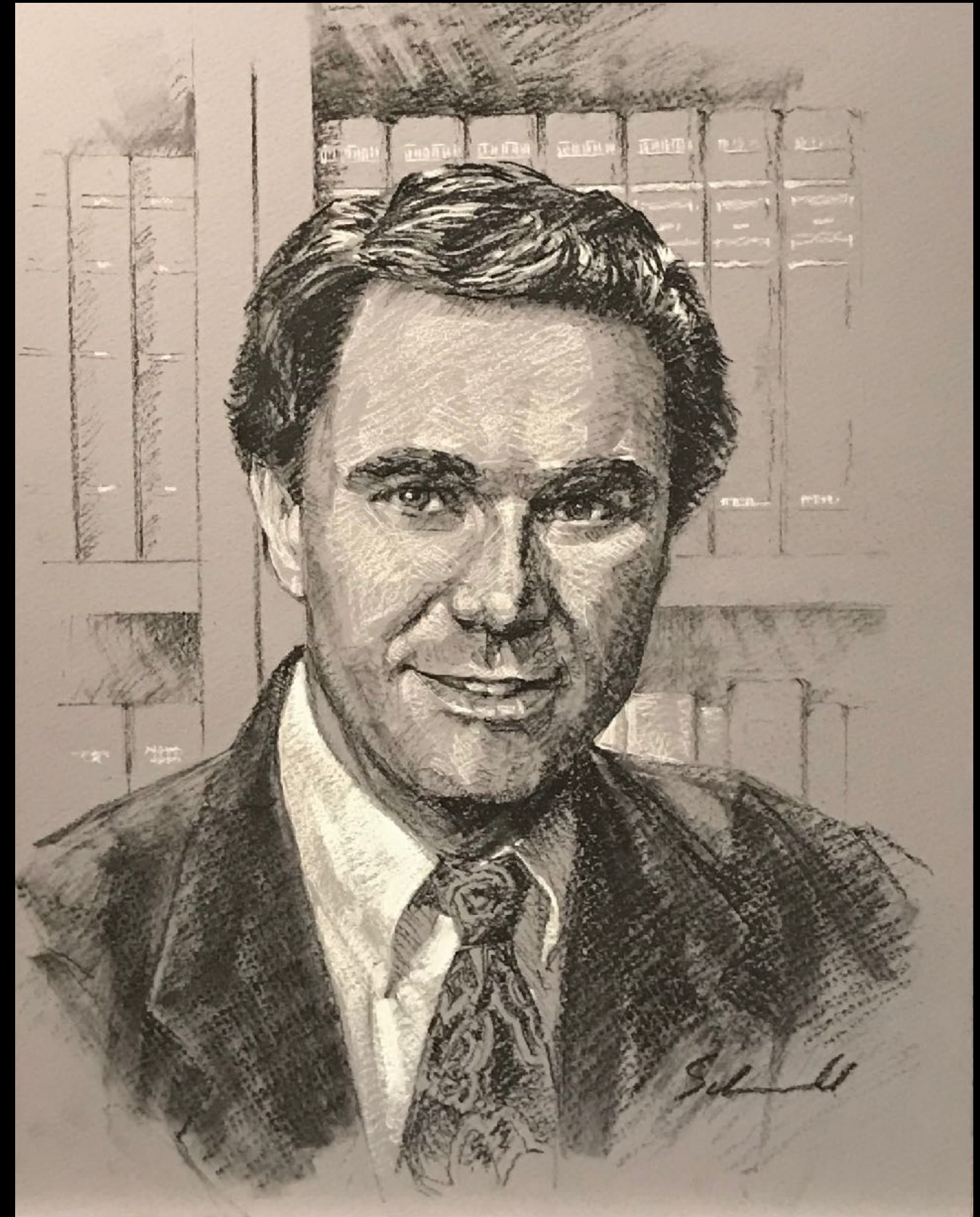




Therefore, all argumentation over **ultimate issues** of truth and reality will come down to an **appeal to authorities** which, in the nature of the case, are **ultimate authorities**. **Circularity** at this level of argumentation is **unavoidable**.

Greg Bahnsen

Presuppositional Apologetics, 87







1 Van Til's apologetic can be presented in two distinct ways.

2 The topic of self-deception is not central to Van Til's apologetic.

3 We welcome the burden of proof.

4 Van Til's apologetic is a deductive argument.

5 The transcendental premise is truth directed.

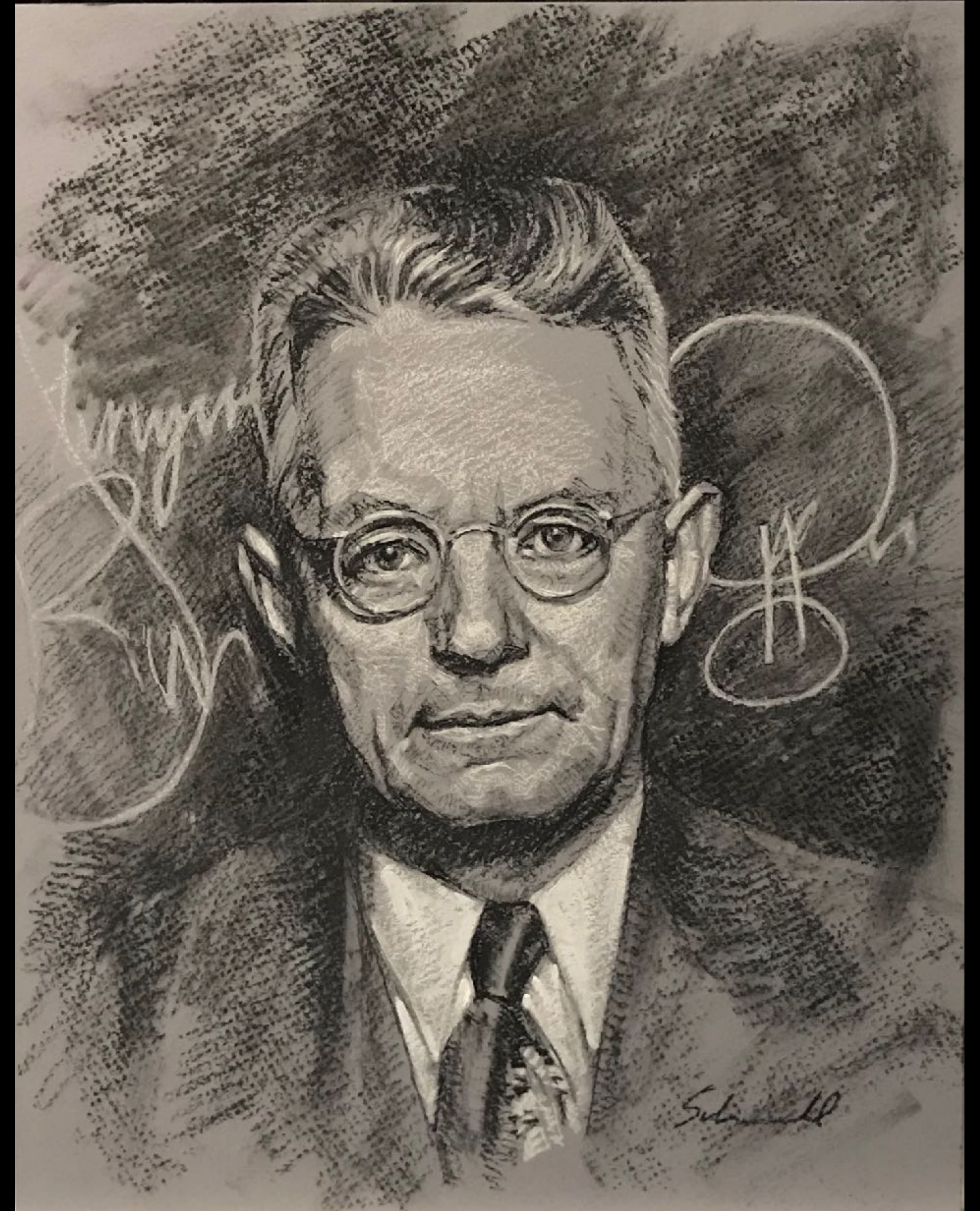
6 Presuppositions are meta-assumptions outside of our arguments.

7 Van Til's apologetic is not necessarily Reformed.



It has already become plain that this implies a refusal to grant that any area or aspect of reality, any fact or any law of nature or of history, can be correctly interpreted except it be seen in the light of the **main doctrines of Christianity.**

Cornelius Van Til  
The Defense of the Faith, 118

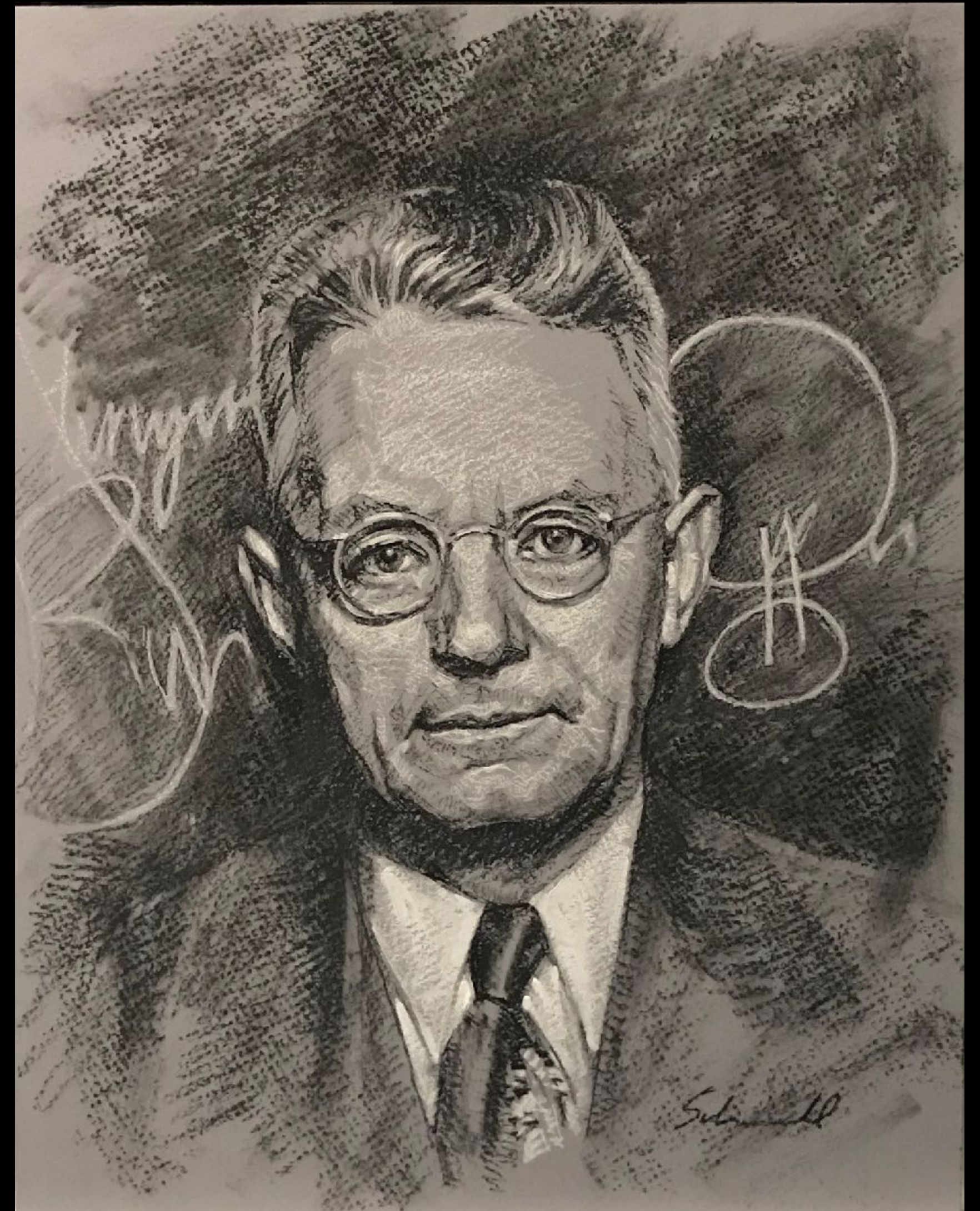




Reformed theology does not attribute infallibility to its confessions. Yet the main points of doctrine of these confessions are, by Reformed men, assumed to be, for all practical purposes, a faithful reproduction of the truths of revelation.

Cornelius Van Til

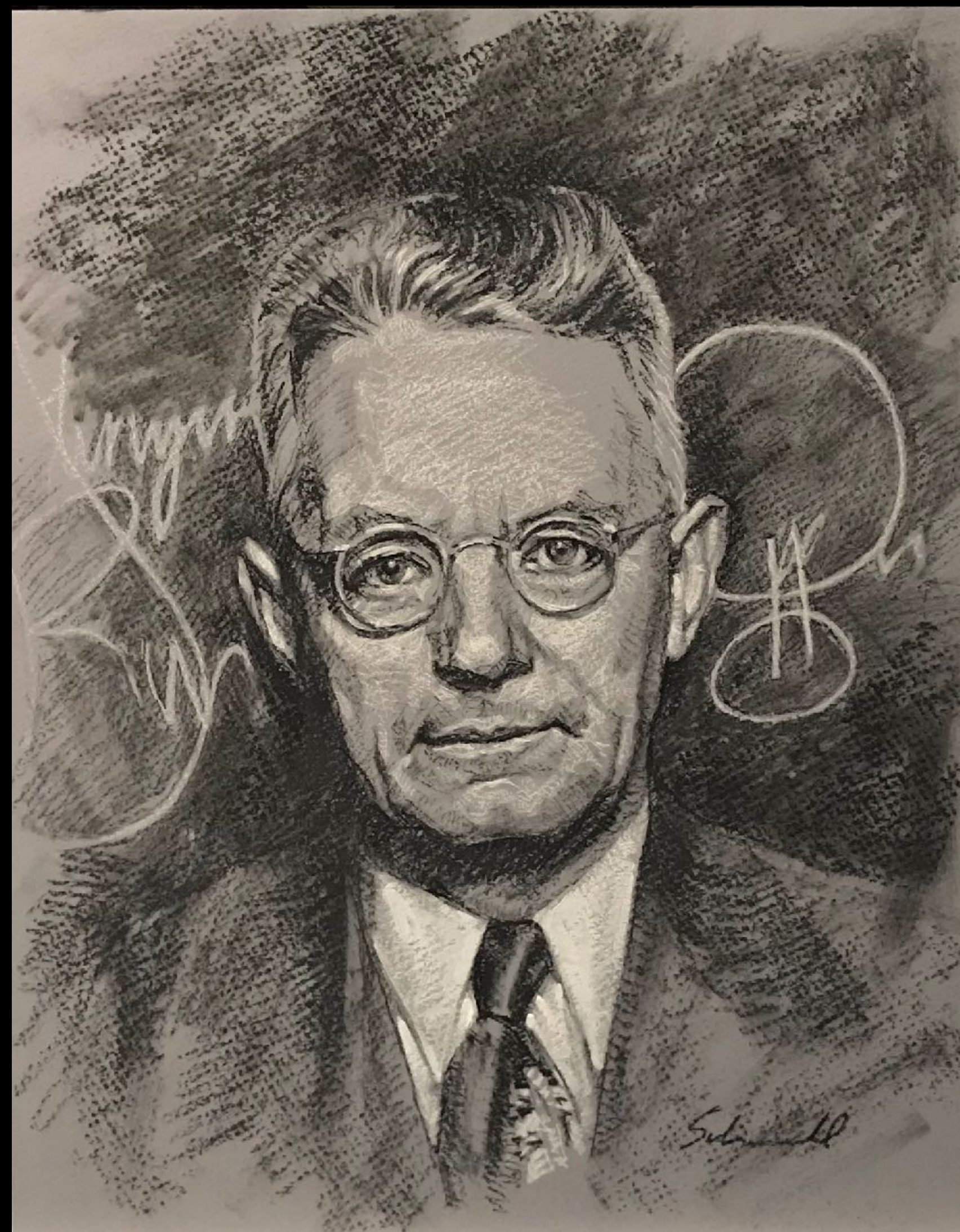
Common Grace and the Gospel, 220-221





There are **two ways of constructing a proof** for the **existence of God**. These two ways are mutually exclusive. The **one is in accord with the basic construction of Reformed theology**; the other is destructive of it. The **one begins with the presupposition of the existence of the triune God of the Scriptures**. The other begins with the presupposition of man as ultimate.

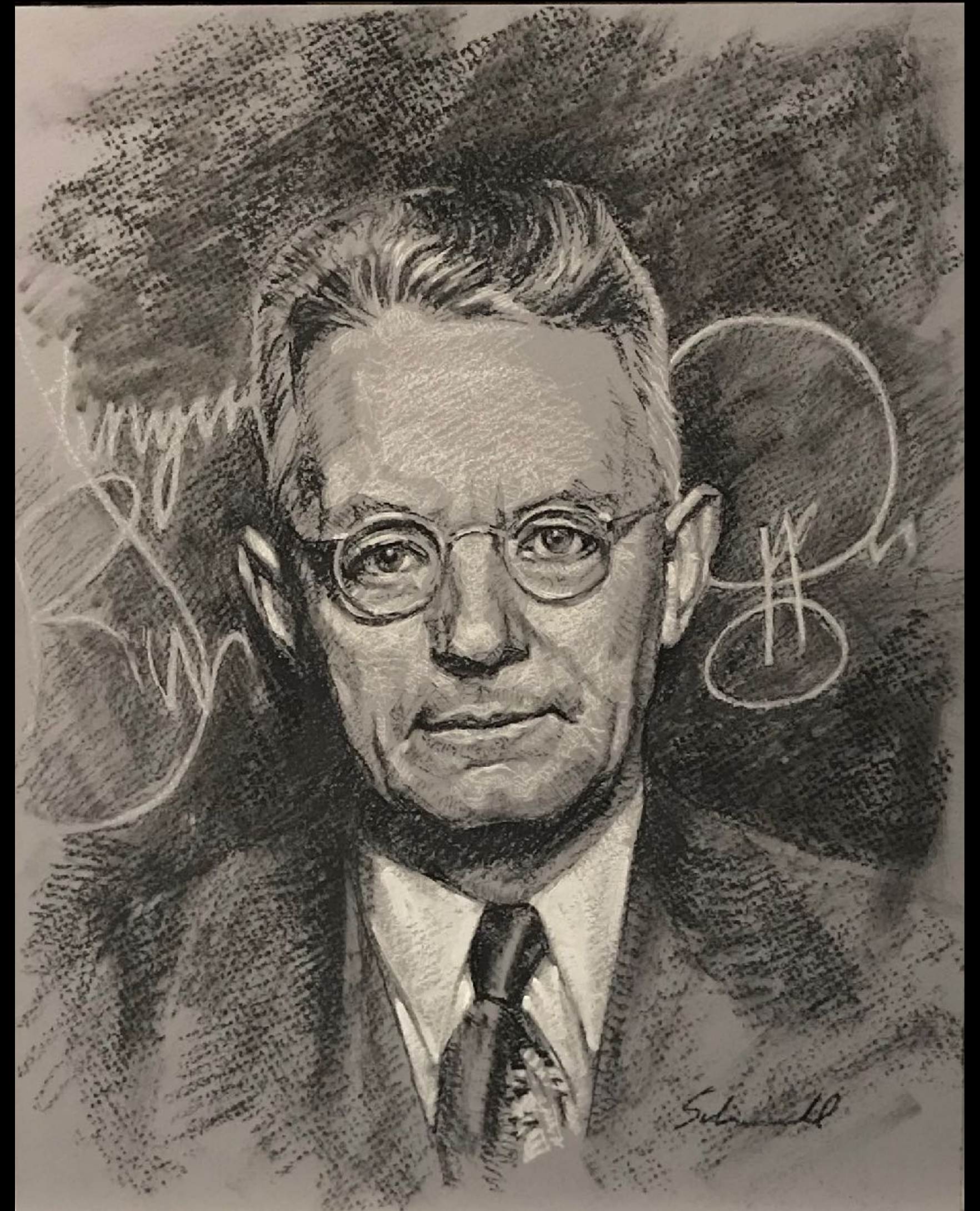
Cornelius Van Til  
Common Grace and the Gospel, 218





It is **only in Reformed theology** that the means are available to oppose this modern approach. . . . it is rather because **only in Reformed theology** is full justice done to the **idea of God as man's creator.**

Cornelius Van Til  
Common Grace and the Gospel, 231

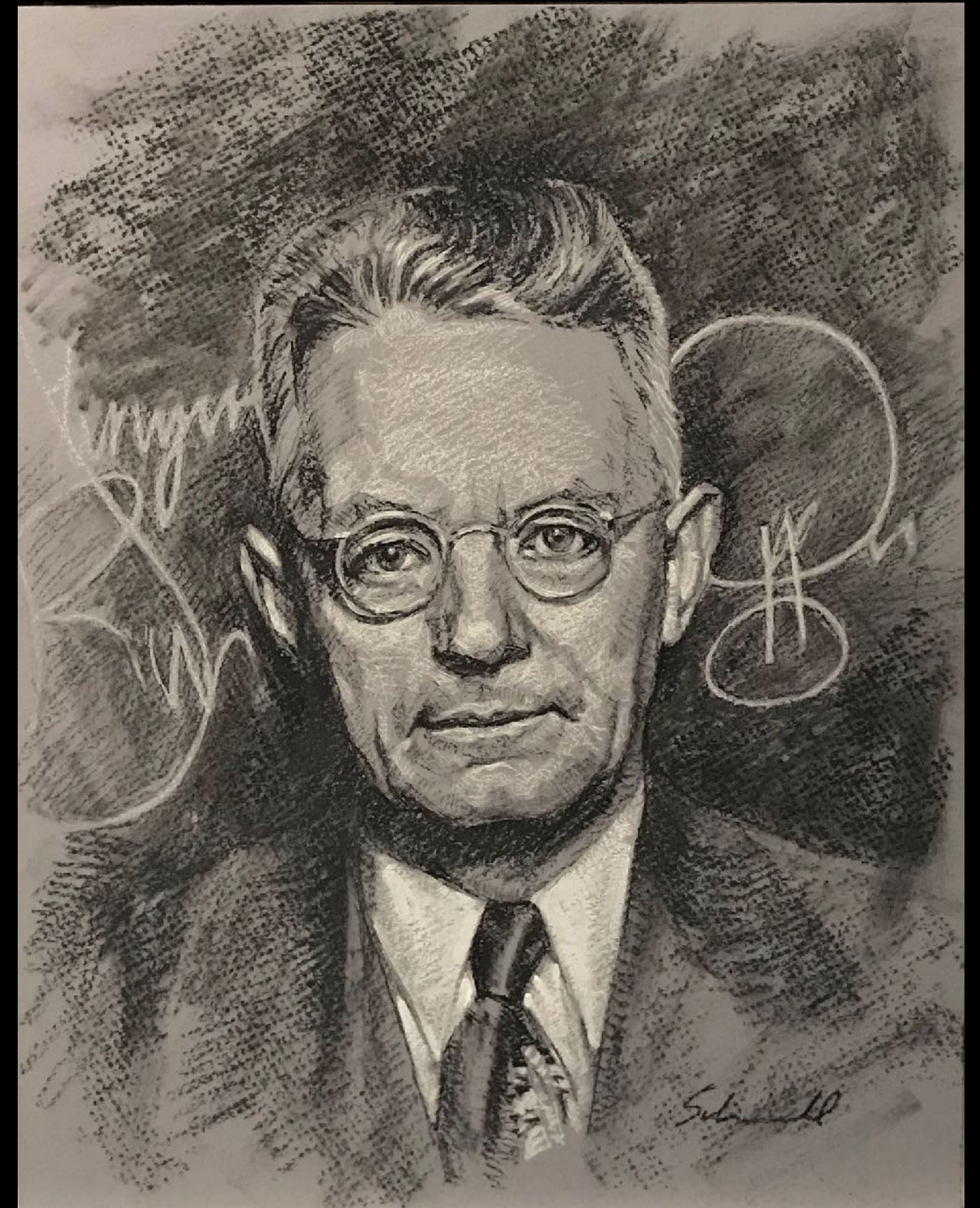




It will be noted that the point discussed in the preceding paragraph is the difference between Arminianism and Calvinism. It may be asked whether we should not in apologetics ignore the difference that exists between different theological schools and defend the

Cornelius Van Til

The Defense of the Faith, 40-41

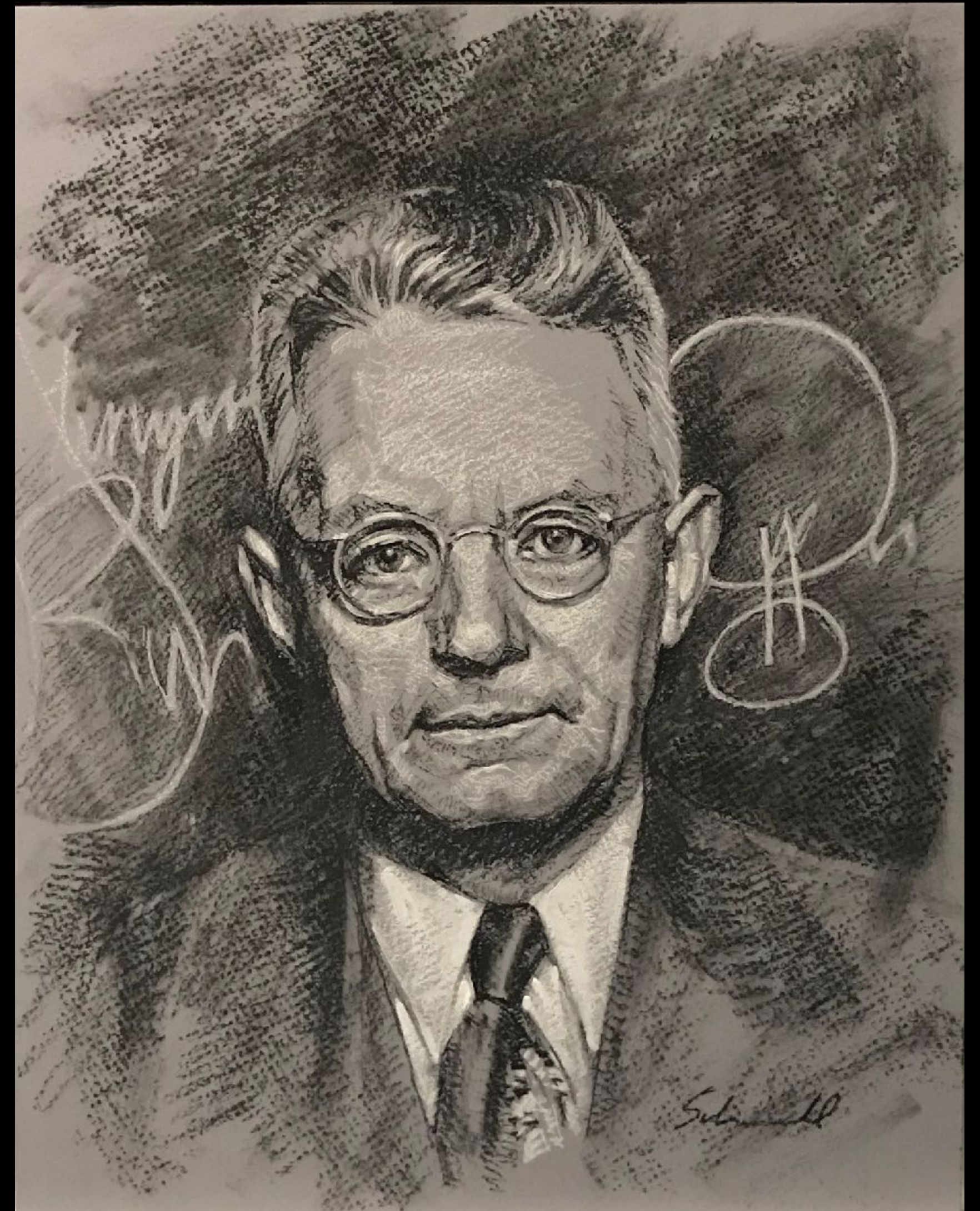




“common faith.” From what we have said above, however, it ought to appear that we cannot take this attitude. . . . We shall not make much progress against the common enemy if we ignore such differences between ourselves.

Cornelius Van Til

The Defense of the Faith, 40-41





A1

Bible  $\vdash$  all people know with certainty that God created the world.

A2

Bible  $\vdash$  people who know with certainty that God created the world know with certainty that the world is orderly.

A3

Bible  $\vdash$  the Bible is the inerrant word of God.

A4

No one can demonstrate that Bible  $\vdash$  falsehood.

A5

Bible  $\vdash$  all anti-Christian worldviews are insufficient foundations for knowledge.

A6

If Christianity is a sufficient foundation for knowledge and no one can demonstrate that an anti-Christian worldview is a sufficient foundation for knowledge, then Christianity is the only sufficient foundation for knowledge.

A7

There is a person who has knowledge.



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