

Clarion

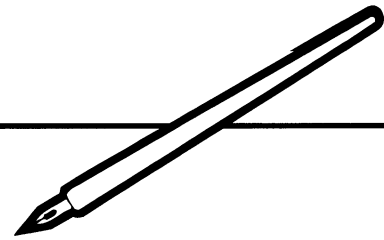
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
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New King James Version



King James I

By J. Geertsema



Canadian Aboriginals and the Church

Last summer a broadcasting company, TV Ontario, showed a series of evening programs about the Indians in their present situation. These programs were instructive and interesting, but also a cause for concern. At a certain moment, the viewers saw a gathering of quite a number of Haida Indians from the British Columbia coastal region. They had come together in what seemed to be their church building. Many young people were also present. At this gathering, the pulpit was removed from the auditorium and replaced by two totem poles. Whether this removal was permanent or temporary, or even just for the occasion of the documentary, I do not know. However, as a symbol it clearly underlined the message that permeated the programs. This message was that the aboriginals, in particular their youth, must be saved from their miserable present conditions. The church has failed to help the aboriginals. What christianity cannot do, however, the old native culture with its own spirituality can.

The present misery was also indicated in these programs. There is an intense social need in combination with a not less intense spiritual need. Behind the negative social attitude lies a spiritual emptiness. Expressed in practical terms, we have here the vicious circle of alcohol, drugs, broken homes, as well as a seemingly bleak future and lack of worthwhile goals for which to live and work, leading to yet more alcohol, more violence and more hopelessness. The percentage of aboriginal youth who step out of this vicious circle by way of suicide is comparatively large.

TV Ontario presented two basic causes of this present spiritual and social need. In the first place, the actions of federal and provincial governments received attention. The governments took land away from the natives, confining them to small reservations. In the past, they also often took the children away from their parents and from their Indian cultural and spiritual roots by placing them in public schools to give them an education that would make them fit in the society and culture of the white man. The second cause, according to the TV programs, was the teaching of christianity. The churches had worked together with the governments to oppress the Indian culture and spirituality. The church had considered the Indian spirituality pagan and, therefore, wrong. The message that came through strongly in these programs was that christianity should not have severed the Indians from their own roots. This severance is the basic cause of the present spiritual and social misery.

It is clear that within this framework of thinking the solution to the Indian problem is to help them to go back to

their own roots, to their own culture and their own typically Indian spirituality. This is why the pulpit with the preaching of the written Gospel of Christ Jesus must be replaced by the totem pole. The TV program also said that this return to Indian spirituality brought meaning back into the life of many young people. They now had a goal for which to live and could find the strength to break with drugs and alcohol. Native spirituality also restored to the youth a strong sense of community and social responsibility and caring.

TV Ontario is not the only institution promoting the benefits of a return to native culture and spirituality. The United Church has spoken in a similar vein. At the request of a number of aboriginal people, this church has formally apologized for denying the value of Indian spirituality. This apology was made at a meeting of the national General Council in 1986. In its statement, the United Church addresses Canada's first nations and recognizes that before the white people came to Canada the Indians received from their elders *"an understanding of creation, and of the Mystery that surrounds us all that was deep, and rich and to be treasured. We did not hear you when you shared your vision. In our zeal to tell you of the good news of Jesus Christ we were blind to the value of your spirituality."*

This United Church statement goes on to admit that the Christians who came from Europe confused their "Western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and height of the gospel of Christ." These words refer to Eph. 3:18 where we have a prayer of Paul. In verses 17-19, Paul prays that God may grant the believers in Ephesus *"that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."*

For Paul, comprehending the breadth and length and height and depth of the knowledge of our triune God pertains to the communion of saints. I have the impression that in this statement by the United Church the comprehension of the knowledge of God is a matter of Christians and Indians sharing their spirituality. The Christian faith must be combined with the belief in the Great Spirit-Creator of the Indians.

The statement goes on to say: *We tried to make you like us and in so doing we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were. As a result you and we are poorer and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred, and we*

are not what we are meant by the Great Spirit to be. We who represent the United Church of Canada ask you to forgive us and to walk together in the spirit of Christ so that our people may be blessed and God's creation healed."

Christian faith and Indian spirituality

Even though this article is not the place to go into environmental issues, we do need to be aware of the on-going pollution of land, water and air under which the earth is groaning. There is an urgent need for measures to halt this pollution, even if this will cost much money. The earth is the Lord's, and we are placed on it as stewards rather than exploiters.

While we acknowledge that modern man in his greed for money or power has caused pollution of God's creation, this does not mean that we have to combine Christian faith and native spirituality. We can appreciate the native's concern for the earth and learn from their regard for creation. As I understand it, however, Indian spirituality has more in common with New Age religiosity than with the truth about God as revealed in the Bible.

The quotations given above are taken from the book *Nation to Nation – Aboriginal Sovereignty and the Future of Canada*, of which Diane Engelstad and John Bird are the editors. It is a publication of House of Anansi Press Ltd, Concord, Ontario; its copyright is held by Citizens for Public Justice. The chapter from which the quotations come bears the title "Calling Creation into our family." It is written by Stan McKay, "a member of the Cree nation from the Fisher Reserve, Manitoba," who "became the first aboriginal moderator of the United Church of Canada" in 1992 (p. 235).

In the same chapter, this author writes that "Indigenous spirituality around the world is centered on the notion of our relationship to the whole of creation." This relationship is not that of being created by God, the Father of Christ Jesus. It is a kind of family relation with a "father" and a "mother." The "father" is the Great Spirit. The mother is "mother earth." The writer says, "We call the earth 'our mother.' The animals are 'our brothers and sisters.' Even what the biologists describe as inanimate, we call our relatives" (p. 29).

Speaking about God, he writes: "We understand that the Great Spirit moves through all of life, and is the 'Cosmic Order'. . . . We are a part of all life and have no need for dogmatic statements, since our spiritual pilgrimage allows for many truths from a variety of experiences and calls us to live in harmony with other communities" (p. 31). In McKay's essay, we find expressions like "no need for dogmatic statements." He speaks about the validity of "many truths." This is in opposition to the claim of God's Word that there is only one truth, namely, that scriptural truth. McKay's writing presents the language and ideas of the New Age philosophy rather than that of the Bible.

Also the expression "many truths from a variety of experiences" shows this New Age direction. The true Christian faith is taken from the written revelation of God and not from the spiritual experiences of human beings. It would be interesting to investigate whether there is a close connection between the rise of the New Age movement and the powerful movement among the aboriginal North Americans to return to their Indian spiritual roots.

Some consequences

This picture of the present situation of the North American aboriginals shows two things. In the first place there is



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still an intense need with both a social and a spiritual aspect. Both aspects need attention. In my opinion, it is undeniable that much of the present social need is the result of unfair and incorrect treatment by immigrants from Europe and other parts of the world.

I am glad, however, that I can present here also a positive judgment about the genuinely caring attitude of missionaries in Upper Canada around 1800. We do keep in mind that the situation in which they showed their care was caused by the coming of European people and their impact as this was accepted by many natives. In her book, *Medicine Man to Missionary* (a publication of Peter Martin Associates Ltd. in Toronto, 1975), Elizabeth Graham wrote:

It can be argued that the missionaries in Upper Canada did not destroy Indian culture, not because of any particular virtue possessed by these missionaries, but because much of Indian culture had already been destroyed, and what remained would not have been able to resist the general pressure from white settlement and preserve the remnants of their culture. Without missionary intervention, the Indians might, according to Sir Francis Bond Head's prediction, have died out from disease, alcoholism, and accidents, poverty and malnutrition resulting from drunkenness, or from breeding with whites. . . . The missionaries also helped the Indians to reestablish their sociological identity. Missionaries collected or attracted the Indians in communities, and in several cases reserved land for the Indians, and the established communities that grew up under missionary care were better able to withstand the considerable pressure from governments to sell the land and move to Manitoulin Island in the late 1830's. The missionaries protected the Indians from the (bad) elements of the white population, and tried to overcome the dependency of the Indians on the government.

As Christians, we should show to our aboriginal neighbors a dedicated, unconditional love and care. In the past and continuing to this day, Christian white people have had a tendency to look down upon the natives. Such an attitude is in blatant conflict with our faith in Christ. God tells us that the love of Christ has to rule us. "Put on . . . compassion, kindness, lowliness, meek-

ness, and patience, forbearing one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. . ." (Col. 3:12ff.). From us Christians the natives must receive enduring, consistent love which does not fade and disappear at obstacles of rejection and mistreatment and fall back into wrong doing. Such persistent love, with wisdom, can only have one source, namely, Christ.

The second thing which we owe to the natives is the gospel of the triune God, of Father, Son, and Spirit, the only true God and Saviour. To say it another way, we owe them the truths of the Bible. It is true that white people in North America have often treated the natives with injustice. It is also true that christianity cannot solve their problems and save the aboriginals. After all, christianity consists of sinful people. However, we should not identify Christ and christianity. Although christianity cannot save, Christ can. We do not preach ourselves. We preach Christ. Of course, we are called to live and act worthily of the gospel and not in conflict with it. Any treatment of others with contempt or injustice is miserably sinful and in conflict with the love of Christ.

Our confession, then, is that Christ alone is Saviour. Not Christians, nor Indian spirituality save people, but only Christ saves people. Therefore, the undefiled gospel must be brought to the natives. Only so can they find healing, meaning, a goal for life, together with hope and joy. Especially now when the Indians look for answers in their own roots, their old spirituality, their old experiences, the true gospel must continue to come to them. Bringing this gospel to the natives requires concentration, study, and a hard struggle. The old enmity between the serpent of paradise and Christ, between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman continues also on this battlefield.

The conclusion is evident. The aboriginals in North America very much need our love and care in the social aspect of life. Even more, they need this loving care just as much in the spiritual sphere.

What does this mean concretely? As churches of Christ Jesus, we have a sister church in our midst that does organized evangelistic work among the aboriginals. This sister church receives the support of all of us. At this moment, however, they do not have a minister for this work. Let us pray with



CHANGE OF ADDRESS
as of April 20th, 1995:

Rev. W.W.J. VanOene

96 - 31406 Upper MacLure Road
Abbotsford, BC V2T 5L8

ANNOUNCEMENT:

A prayer service will be held, the Lord willing, prior to the meeting of General Synod 1995.

Date: Monday, May 8

Time: 8:00 p.m.

Place: Canadian Reformed Church
of Abbotsford

Rev. J. Visscher will lead the service.

our sister church in Smithers that God will bless them and soon grant to them, besides a minister of their own, also a minister again for work among the Indian neighbors.

Finally, I would like to applaud the fact, as I have heard it, that our sister church in Smithers is working toward the appointment of a team of two workers, including besides a minister also a laborer in the field of social work. In the present situation a minister by himself will be faced with both the modern spiritual development and the intense social need. However, this spiritual development means even more than before that he has to be able to devote himself fully to the preaching and teaching of the gospel. If he has to pay attention to the social need as well, it will soon demand so much of his attention, time and energy that the first task of preaching and teaching will greatly suffer. Let us give our full support to our sister church in Smithers for this endeavor. May the LORD so bless this work that Smithers will be one of His centers for true biblical preaching and for helping our Canadian aboriginal neighbors.

This article has been written in cooperation with the Consistory and the Home Mission Board of the church at Smithers.



Meditation

By G.Ph. van Popta

Read Acts 6:8-15 and 7:51-60:

“But he . . . gazed into heaven and saw . . . Jesus standing at the right hand of God.”

DEFENDED AGAINST FALSE CHARGES

Stephen was one of the seven deacons chosen by the church. In addition to distributing food to the needy, he did work which we do not quickly associate with deacons. Full of grace and power, he did great wonders and signs among the people. Stephen spoke of salvation not through the keeping of the law but through faith in Jesus the Righteous One. He spoke of how they were to worship God in spirit and in truth. Since the sacrifice of Christ, the place of worship, namely, the temple, had become irrelevant.

Men from the Hellenist synagogues opposed Stephen. Stephen was winning converts for the Christian church at the expense of their synagogues. They disputed with Stephen, but did not stand a chance. They could not withstand Stephen’s wisdom. They could not combat the Holy Spirit who spoke through Stephen.

So they brought false charges against Stephen similar to the accusations false witnesses had brought against Christ (Matt. 26:61). They brought Stephen before the Jewish council and accused him of having spoken against the law of Moses and the temple.

Throughout chapter 7, Stephen defended himself. He rehearsed Old Testament history beginning with Abraham and ending with the Messiah. From this he showed that God had always been merciful to His people. He sent them saviours to deliver them when they were in trouble. He gave them a land in which to live. He gave them the law to live by. God fulfilled all His promises to His people. But the people consistently resisted God. They disobeyed the law. They persecuted and killed the prophets whom God sent to call the people to repentance. Finally, they betrayed and murdered the Righteous One.

They murdered the One who had kept the law perfectly. They killed the One who had come to bring the one sacrifice that would put an end to the endless routine at the altar of burnt offering. When Stephen the defendant accused the judges of resisting the Holy Spirit and murdering the Righteous One of God, they became so enraged they ground their teeth at him.

As they raged at him, Stephen saw another Judge. He saw heaven opened. He saw the Lord Jesus standing, not sitting, but standing, at the right hand of God.

Lord Jesus is the Judge. But the Judge stood up to serve as Advocate, as Counsel for the defense. That is the wonderful thing. The One who will judge us is also the One who defends us on the basis of His own righteousness. As well, He is the High Priest who brought the sacrifice for our sins.

A human court condemned and executed Stephen; however, another court passed a judgment as well – the court of heaven. The human judges declared him guilty of blasphemy and worthy of death. The divine court declared him innocent for the sake of Jesus Christ and worthy of eternal life. Christ defended Stephen against false charges and received his spirit.

As we confess in article 37 of the *Belgic Confession*, the cause of the church of Christ has often been “. . . condemned as heretical and evil by many judges and civil authorities. . . .” But on the day of judgment it “. . . will be recognized as the cause of the Son of God.” Today already, “. . . we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous” (1 John 2:1).

What’s inside?

The lives of the Native people of North America are rife with social problems. They are, in many instances, seeking answers in their old pagan religions. In several instances, churches are encouraging them in this. In the editorial, Prof. Geertsema maintains the old truth that only the gospel of Jesus Christ can save from any problem.

The name of Dr. Cornelius Van Til is probably familiar to most readers of *Clarion*. Dr. Van Til taught Apologetics at Westminster Seminary for many years. May 3, 1995, is the centennial of his birth. In commemoration of that, this issue features an article by the Rev. J.R. Beeke on the life and thought of Dr. C. Van Til.

This issue also includes the third and final part of the condensed version of the Committee on Bible Translations’ report to the upcoming General Synod. This installment deals with the New King James Version.

You will find a few other things in these pages. Pour yourself a coffee, and enjoy.

GvP

Van Til and Apologetics

The centennial of Cornelius Van Til's birth

By J.R. Beeke

The name of Cornelius Van Til is inseparable from Reformed, presuppositional apologetics. Due to the importance yet complexity of Van Til's thinking and of the discipline of apologetics in general, I aim to provide in this brief article a few sketchy notes on this Reformed apologist's background and basic thought, as well as a capsule summary of apologetics and its primary methodologies.

Cornelius ("Kees") Van Til was born one hundred years ago (May 3, 1895) at Grootegast, in the province of Groningen, the Netherlands, as the sixth son of godly, Bible-centered parents. Raised in a "lovingly strict" Calvinistic home, the Three Forms of Unity (i. e. , Belgic Confession, 1561; Heidelberg Catechism, 1563; Canons of Dordt, 1618-1619) served as formative influences on Van Til and his interpretation of Scripture. In 1905 the Van Til family immigrated to Highland, Indiana, to farm in a more prosperous area. They were devout members of a conservative Christian Reformed Church. As a teenager, young Van Til felt the weighty call of God to His service. Shortly thereafter, he attended Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he immersed himself in the treatises of philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer. After receiving an A.B. from Calvin, Van Til moved to Princeton, New Jersey for five additional years of study. In 1922 he matriculated at Princeton Theological Seminary where he earned a Th.M. degree. Subsequently, he acquired his Ph.D. from Princeton University in 1927. His doctoral dissertation was entitled, "God and the Absolute." Throughout his Princeton years Van Til studied under an impressive array of leading Reformed thinkers, including Geerhardus Vos, Caspar W. Hodge, William P. Armstrong, Robert D. Wilson, Oswald T. Allis, W.P. Greene, and J. Gresham Machen.

The 1920s proved to be a time of crisis for the once staunchly Reformed seminary at Princeton. The tradition of

Archibald Alexander, Charles and A.A. Hodge, and Benjamin B. Warfield was being challenged increasingly by the infiltration of more liberal-minded professors. After a brief pastorate at Spring Lake Church, Muskegon, Michigan (1927-1928), Van Til taught apologetics for one year at Princeton (1928-1929), and at its close was elected Professor of Apologetics in Princeton Theological Seminary by its Board of Directors, but was not confirmed by the 1929 General Assembly on account of the Assembly's authorization of Princeton's reorganization. Van Til returned to Spring Lake, determined to refuse teaching at either Princeton or the newly organized Westminster Seminary which aimed to carry on the tradition of "old" Princeton under the able leadership of Dr. Machen. Nevertheless, he was prevailed upon to join the Westminster faculty by Drs. Machen and Allis who traveled to Michigan to seek his and R.B. Kuiper's services. From the founding of Westminster Seminary in 1929 until his emeritation in 1975 at the age of eighty, Dr. Van Til taught Reformed apologetics and related courses from a uniquely biblical perspective and within the confines of traditional Reformed theology. His thinking on Reformed apologetics, philosophy, and theology exerted a steadily growing influence on many graduate students and conservative Reformed evangelicals throughout the world. Today, his views continue to be developed by some of his students and are still frequently debated among orthodox Reformed theologians and apologists.

Van Til wrote more than twenty books during his teaching career, in addition to thirty unpublished class syllabi which were widely circulated and are still valued. Even in his eighties Dr. Van Til continued to stay abreast of developments in Reformed apologetics and contributed as enabled. His passing away in 1987 at the ripe age of ninety-two signalled the end of an era for both Westminster Seminary and Reformed presuppositional apologetics. (For additional detail on Van Til's life, see the



Dr. Cornelius Van Til

authorized biography of William White, Jr., *Van Til: Defender of the Faith*, 1979.)

Theological roots

Two fields of study, distinguishable and yet closely related, have molded the person and work of Cornelius Van Til: theology and philosophy. Theologically, Van Til's contours always were unequivocally Reformed in principle and practice. First, John Calvin, upon whose spiritual manna Van Til was nurtured throughout his life, was his primary theological influence. Secondly, the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism via his Dutch Reformed upbringing and the theology of the Westminster Assembly, due to connections with conservative Presbyterianism at Old Princeton and Westminster seminaries, also cast their dye on the theological mind-set of Van Til. Moreover, in 1936 Van Til switched his church membership from the CRC to the newly organized Orthodox Presbyterian Church where he remained for the rest of his life. Thirdly, Van Til's theological convictions were self-admittedly influenced by the Dutch theologians, Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) and Herman Bavinck (1854-1921).

Though Van Til rejected Kuyperian presumptive regeneration, he did embrace a number of Kuyper's significant

theological principles, such as the centrality of the absolute sovereignty of God over all creation; the focus of all of life's strands drawn to the heart of man as the center of his existence and relationship to God; the conviction that all of life is consequently religious and is acted out in either a Godward or anti-Godward direction; and the necessary pursuit of Christian philosophy in every subject area by examining its created order, dysfunction through sin and fall, and post-lapsarian restoration in Christ. Though Van Til often sought to rework and go beyond Kuyper and Bavinck, the Kuyper-Bavinck line of thought which proposed the principal thesis that "the Christianity set forth in the Bible is the one God-revealed religion, and that Calvinism is the clearest and most consistent expression of that religion – both in content and in its life-and-world presentation," he accepted unmitigatingly all his life (White, p. 35).

Philosophical roots

Philosophically, Kuyper's Calvinistic principles made a major impact on the school of philosophic thought sometimes denominated "Amsterdam Philosophy" or "Calvinistic Philosophy," which in turn also influenced Van Til, particularly in his early Westminster years. Developed in the second quarter of this century, "Calvinistic Philosophy" grew out of the writings and teachings of Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) and Dirk Hendrik Theodore Vollenhoven (1892-1978), brothers-in-law who were simultaneously appointed to the chairs of jurisprudence and philosophy respectively at the Free University of Amsterdam in 1926. Dooyeweerd posited the following four ground-motives as functional throughout the course of history: first, the form-matter dualism in Greek philosophy; secondly, the nature-grace synthesis in medieval philosophy; thirdly, the nature-freedom dualism in modern philosophy; fourthly, the truly Christian ground-motive based on the radical, biblical motif of "creation, fall, and redemption through Jesus Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit" (cf. Herman Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought: Studies in the Pretended Autonomy of Philosophical Thought*, pp. 39-52). For Dooyeweerd, only this fourth ground-motive can function in Christian philosophy; consequently, he seeks to build his philosophical system, known as "The Philosophy of the Idea of Law" or "Cosmonomic Idea" after one of his early major works, *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*, on the ba-

sis of the creation-fall-redemption ground motive.

In the last decades of his life, however, Van Til became critical of several aspects of the "Amsterdam philosophy," despite indebtedness to it. For example, he criticized Dooyeweerd for moving away from a radically Christian and Calvinistic philosophy to an approach that allows more accommodation to, or at least more congenial dialogue with, non-Christian thinking (see Edward R. Geehan, *Jerusalem and Athens*, where Dooyeweerd and Van Til engage in a lengthy interchange relative to their differences).

Nevertheless, salient points of Kuyperian thought have directly affected Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven, and Van Til in greater or lesser measure. Among others, these include the following: to function rightly, science is dependent on philosophical considerations and underlying principles; to obtain a sense of totality in science or theology, a philosophical starting point is necessary, derived by spiraling down to the depths of any given; non-Christian philosophy can have no point of transcendence, but must essentially remain within the cosmos; faith and thought operate always as functions moving either in a right or wrong direction; logic must not be elevated in philosophical thinking.

The need for apologetics

Against this background, Van Til developed his "new apologetic," in which he defends "old truth." Though preeminently a preacher of the Word, Van Til has become known primarily through his pioneer work in the field of apologetics (cf. Dr. E. Clowney, *Westminster Theological Journal*, fall 1984; John H. Piersma, *Outlook*, 35, 5 [1985]:16-17). Rightly, he has been called "the old guardian of a new apologetics" (Paul C. H. Szto, *Outlook*, 35, 5 [1985]:12-13).

Apologetics has been defined as a branch of scientific theology which deals with the history and possibility of efforts to establish an effective defense of the Christian faith against any attack from those outside of that faith. As a subdivision of Christian theology, apologetics is a systematic, argumentative discourse in defense of the divine origin and authority of the Christian faith. Van Til himself has defined it as "the vindication of the Christian philosophy of life against the various forms of the non-Christian philosophy of life" (Apologetics, p. 1).

The English word, apologetics, is derived from a Greek root meaning "to defend, to make reply, to give an answer, to legally defend oneself." In New

Testament times, an apologia was a formal courtroom defense (2 Tim. 4:16). The Greek verb (apologeomai) occurs ten times in the New Testament, and the Greek noun (apologia) occurs eight times. In nearly every case, the key element involved is that of defense. This coincides with Van Til's major work on apologetics, aptly titled, *Defense of the Faith*, which also provides the best summary of his thought.

The notion of some well-intentioned Christians that they are under no obligation to propound and defend their faith before a hostile world is not supported by Scripture. Besides the obvious fact that both Jesus and Paul repeatedly defended their claims of being Messiah (Matt. 22) and apostle respectively (Gal. 1, 2; 1 Cor. 9; Acts 22-26), the classic Petrine admonition certainly implies that the Christian faith is capable of reasonable defense: "Be ready always to give an answer [i. e., a defense] to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15b).

Though the scriptural mandate is clear that the Christian faith must be defended, that is, that apologetics is a significant and necessary task, the method of apologetics has often been and still remains a matter of intense debate. At least three different major schools of thought have emerged in addressing the "how" of Christian apologetics.

Presuppositionalism

First, there is the school of revelation or presuppositionalism. This school has as its motto: *Credo ut intelligam* ("I believe in order that I may understand"). It presupposes the supernatural revelation of God's Word as providing the only basis for the entire theological enterprise. Dr. Robert Reymond succinctly states: "Group characteristics here are convictions that (1) faith in God precedes understanding everything else (cf. Hebrews 11:3), (2) elucidation of the system [of truth] follows faith, (3) religious experience must be grounded in the objective Word of God and the objective work of Christ, (4) human depravity has rendered autonomous reason incapable of satisfactorily anchoring its truth claims to anything objectively certain, and (5) a special regenerating act of the Holy Spirit is indispensable for Christian faith and enlightenment" (*The Justification of Knowledge: An Introductory Study in Christian Apologetic Methodology*, p. 8). This school is represented by the Augustinian and consistent Reformed tradition, including Van Til.

Van Til's role has been one of developing presuppositionalism along Reformed lines beyond any before him. Harvie Conn provides an excellent summary: "Van Til constructed a presuppositional apologetic based on two fundamental assertions: (1) the Creator-creature distinction that demands human beings presuppose the self-attesting triune God in all their thinking; (2) the reality that unbelievers will resist this obligation in every aspect of life and thought. Insisting that all thought is analogical and self-consciously dependent on the reality of the biblical God and the authority of his revelation, Van Til opposed autonomy, the attempt to think and live by some criterion of truth other than God's Word" (Daniel Reid, et al., *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, pp. 1211-1212).

Evidentialism

Secondly, there is the objective or evidentialist school, which may be represented by the motto, *Intelligo et credo* ("I understand and I believe"). The methodology of evidentialism stresses some form of natural theology as the point at which apologetics commences. As Reymond states in summary, "Group characteristics here are the following: (1) a genuine belief in the ability and trustworthiness of human reason in its search for religious knowledge, (2) the effort to ground faith upon empirical and/or historically verifiable facts, and (3) the conviction that religious propositions must be subjected to the same kind of verification – namely, demonstration – that scientific assertions must undergo. The Thomistic Roman Catholic tradition, the (inconsistent) Reformed evidentialist traditions, and the Arminian tradition are representative of this group" (*Justification of Knowledge*, p. 9).

Van Til has done much pioneer work in exposing the fallacies of this methodology. He has shown that this approach neglects the radical effects of the Adamic fall, for it advocates that reason was only weakened but not crippled by the fall. Van Til attacked two major proponents of evidentialism frequently: Thomas Aquinas, Roman Catholicism's primary medieval theologian, and Bishop Butler, an eighteenth-century Anglican. Aquinas sought a common ground between religion and philosophy by insisting that God's existence, revealed in the Scriptures, could also be demonstrated by reason. His aim was to synthesize natural and supernatural thought, Christian and pagan thought, Augustinianism and Aristotelianism. Van Til argued that the Thomistic approach of going part way

with the natural man and then leading him to supernatural truth, undermines the entire biblical structure of one system of truth. Similarly, Van Til exposed the fallacy of Bishop Butler's work, *Analogy of Religion* (1736), for arguing the truth of Christianity on the grounds of "mere probability."

Experientialism

Thirdly, there is an apologetic denominated as subjective methodology or experientialism. Its motto is: *Credo quia absurdum est* ("I believe because it is absurd"). Experientialism stresses inward religious experience as the foundation of all theology. Its tradition accents the paradoxical character of Christian teaching to the point that it asserts that Christian truth is not capable of rational analysis. Typical of this school is the Barthian tradition, which underscores the "otherness," the transcendence, and hiddenness of God at the expense of His concrete scriptural revelation of truth. Van Til has also done extensive work in exposing the fallacy of Barth, Barthians, and others who espouse experientialism as independent of, or superior to, the objective character and authority of Scripture for establishing truth.

Van Til has played a major role in uncovering non-presuppositional methods or attitudes in both non-Reformed and also in otherwise Reformed thinkers – particularly in the Old Princeton apologetic as advocated by Warfield, et al. He has even detected signs of inconsistency in this regard in Kuyper and Bavinck. In short, Van Til has done able work in presenting a thoroughly consistent and biblical Reformed apologetic, and in purging Reformed theology from non-Reformed apologetics. He has also provided a Reformed foundation for Christian ontology, epistemology, and ethics. There is much for us to learn from Dr. Van Til, and we cannot recommend too highly his *Defense of the Faith* and Introduction to *Systematic Theology* for those who are serious about understanding Scripture and advancing in the knowledge of Reformed truth.

Rev. J. R. Beeke is pastor of the First Netherlands Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, and editor of the periodical, Sovereign Grace Banner of Truth.

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NASB, NIV, or NKJV: Which Version Now? Report to Synod Abbotsford 1995

For Whom is the New King James Version?

Third of three parts

Two issues ago, we looked at the matter of "faithfulness in translation," and last time we examined the New American Standard Bible and the New International Version to some degree in light of the committee's recommendations to Synod 1995 about these two translations. Many readers will be wondering however: what about the New King James Version then? Especially our Australian sister churches, who "endorsed" this translation at their last synod, will be curious to know about our evaluation of its value. It is good to remember here that prior to Synod 1992, no Bible translation committee of our Canadian Reformed Churches was ever mandated by a synod to study the New King James Version. What follows here helps to clarify why that is so. Besides the comments made below, in our report we mention another negative factor about the NKJV, namely, that there are no plans for further revisions of this version, no executive committee with which to correspond, and hence no way for us to recommend future changes. It is a completed project as it is. As we reported, "It is the NASB that has been studied by us over the years and has come to be known among us as a reliable translation. There is very little that the NKJV offers us that the NASB does not offer, and there are some aspects of the NKJV which continue to concern us" (p. 33). What follows here

is the text of our appendix 10: "For whom is the NKJV?"

In concluding, we remind you that extra copies of the full report are still available. (They can be ordered from Rev. Paul Aasman, RR 2, Grand Valley, ON. L0N 1G0. The cost, including postage, is \$7.50 in Canada, \$9.50 elsewhere. Payment must include order; the cheque or money order should be made payable to the Canadian Reformed Church at Grand Valley.)

G. H. Visscher

The NKJV has been produced with a specific target group in mind. In the promotional literature for the NKJV, one will read several times that the KJV remains the most widely read version of the Scriptures in the English speaking world.¹ Of late, this claim can no longer be made, but at the outset of the NKJV project, this was certainly the case.

Despite the fact that many translations sought to be the successor to the King James legacy, beginning with the English Revised Version in 1881/85, the American Standard Version 1901, the Revised Standard Version in 1946/52 and finally the New American Standard Bible in 1963/71, the fact is, none succeeded. Most Christians still preferred the old KJV. By "old KJV" is not meant the version as it was originally published in 1611, but the revision of 1769.

Why did people stick to this version instead of accepting any of the

newer versions after 1769? The reason seems to be that beginning with the English Revised Version in 1881 a different text base for the New Testament was used based on the advances in the field of Textual Criticism, especially as they had been published by Westcott and Hort. The English Revised Version is exceptional since according to its rules for revision, they were to make as few alterations as possible, and those which were accepted were "to be in the style of the King James Versions; no change was to be made unless the evidence was 'decidedly prepondering'."² However, the ASV, RSV and NASB departed from the text of the KJV much more freely as the translators felt the original text demanded and as the editors felt the changing diction and syntax of the English language required.

Many people who cherished the old KJV were offended at the changes which were introduced to the text. Consequently, they clung to their beloved King James. The New King James Version wishes to avoid causing offense as much as possible. It attempts to be more sensitive to the attachment which people still today have to the KJV. It seeks, above all, to lay claim to the legacy of the KJV which none have successfully been able to do since the revision of 1769.

The manner in which the NKJV attempts to do this can be gathered from a few different sources. In a promotional brochure from Thomas Nelson Pub-

lishers, called *Statement of Purpose*, one learns about the NKJV that "the purpose of this project is to preserve the original intended purity of the King James Version." It identifies the NKJV as "this edition of the King James Version." Further,

This edition shall not add to, nor take from, nor alter the communication that was the intent of the original translators [of the King James Version]. (. . .) This edition shall not corrupt nor diminish the original translation . . . so that a reader of this edition may follow without confusion a reading of the original edition from the pulpit.

This last quotation is important for understanding whom the NKJV is especially intended for. It is expressly intended to claim the allegiance of those who cling to the 1769 KJV, such as the 1881 and subsequent versions have failed to do.

In his book, *The New King James Version: in the Great Tradition*, Arthur Farstad, who served as executive editor of the New King James Version, passes on the guidelines for the editors and translators. It begins,

The purpose of this project is to produce an updated English version that follows the sentence structure of the 1611 Authorized Version as closely as possible. (. . .) The intention is not to take from or alter the basic communication of the 1611 edition but to transfer the Elizabethan word forms into twentieth-century English. The traditional texts of the Greek and Hebrew will be used rather than modern critical texts based on the Westcott and Hort theory.³

Then Farstad supplies a 16 point set of guidelines from which a few relevant points are here quoted:

3. Correct all departures from the Textus Receptus.
4. Words that have changed their meaning since 1611 should be replaced by their modern equivalents.
5. Archaic idioms should be replaced by modern equivalents.
8. Change all Elizabethan pronouns, verb forms and other archaic words to their current equivalent.
9. Attempt to keep King James word order. However, when comprehension or readability is affected transpose or revise sentence structure.⁴

It is interesting to note that in the first edition of the NKJV - NT in 1979, there were no italics, but "the King James tradition of italicizing supplied words

was restored by popular demand of the readers."⁵

Most readers of the KJV will admit that the language needs to be updated. In this regard, the NKJV has gone very far, updating all verb forms, even the second person singular form in those texts which address God (there is no longer a separate verbal form in addressing God, with "thee" and "thou").

Of special interest is that the NKJV corrects all departures from the Textus Receptus. This has reference only to the NT since the Old Testament is based on the Hebrew Masoretic Text and this has remained relatively unchanged since the 1600's (Dead Seas Scrolls notwithstanding). But the position of the NKJV in regard to the NT is extraordinary. What has become known as the Textus Receptus was published in 1624/33. The KJV was published in 1611 and therefore used several NT Greek texts which were the basis for the Textus Receptus, but not identical to it (compare the third guideline for the NKJV translators and editors, quoted above). The publisher of the NKJV wanted to have an objective standard for the NT text. Since an objective text did not yet fully exist at the time which the KJV was published, and since the Textus Receptus is the closest to the underlying text to the KJV New Testament, it forms the basis for the NKJV. This is especially interesting since Farstad himself would prefer what is called the Majority Text, however, the Majority Text would bring the NKJV farther away from the KJV, therefore, the Textus Receptus was selected. Farstad justifies this compromise by asserting that the Textus Receptus and the Majority Text are virtually identical; however, this is a compromise, one which is very difficult to defend.⁶

It is clear that the controlling motivation for producing the NKJV was to serve those who still adhere to the KJV. Since there are many who, despite the presence of a multitude of other translations, still use the KJV in worship services, the NKJV has a valid place in the market today.

But for several reasons, it is unsuited to become the translation of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

First, we have no special attachment to the KJV. For more than 20 years, most of our churches have not been using the KJV so that not only is there a loss of attachment to the KJV, but there is now a whole generation which is unacquainted with it.

Secondly the NKJV is not a fresh translation but a revision. There are several negative consequences of this. The first consequence is that on occasion, the NKJV will follow the KJV rather than the original text. D.M. Howard observes, "Incredibly, the old KJV can occasionally take precedence over the MT and DSS (at Isaiah 10:16 [cf. v. 33!] and 38:14, for example)."⁷ A second consequence is that the new version is too limited in the extent of its changes. The common complaint about the NKJV is that it did not go far enough; it maintained antiquated terms which the translators and editors would surely have removed or changed if it had not been for their devotion to the KJV. After observing that "antiquated expressions are left intact, S.K. Soderlund comments that "This translation enterprise is inspired by a degree of respect of the original translation of 1611 which effectively limits the range of revision possibilities."⁸ Hebert F. Peacock says, "This is not a modern translation. To quote the King James Version, 'The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau'(Gen. 27. 22)."⁹ Peacock is quite correct in stating that this is not a modern translation, for on account of the translators' and editors' deference to the KJV, the NKJV does not fully enter the category of a modern translation.

There are some who go too far in their criticisms. W.W. Wessel criticizes the goals of the NKJV, saying,

The KJV was truly a great achievement – probably the greatest translation the English language will ever see. But it is well over 350 years old. It is not possible to make it into an adequate translation for our time without destroying its unique characteristics. So why not allow it to die an honourable death? It served its day well.¹⁰

The NKJV is designed for those who want the KJV to continue to serve the churches, but in an updated edition; therefore, what Wessel says is not for us to judge. That is up to those who adhere to the KJV.

The third reason why this is not suited for our churches is that the text which underlies the NKJV New Testament, although reasonable for the audience which Thomas Nelson has, is not suitable for us. While we may agree that both the Majority Text and the Eclectic Text are reliable, nobody will argue that we should adhere to the Textus Receptus, particularly with its problems in the Book of Revelation and in

other significant passages in the New Testament.

While we may respect the goals of the NKJV (with some reservation concerning the choice of NT text), we would not recommend this translation for our churches. Since the King James Version is not the primary Bible translation in our homes, churches or schools, we need a more thorough-going modern translation than the New King James Version.

¹Walter A. Elwell states that "34. 8 percent of American homes still use the KJV as the pri-

mary Bible" *Christianity Today*, November 2, 1979, p. 48 [1481].

²*A Concise History of the English Bible*, The American Bible Society: New York (n. d.), 32-33.

³*The New King James Version: In the Great Tradition*,² Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville, 1993, 33.

⁴ibid, 34.

⁵ibid, 35.

⁶Farstad notes that the Textus Receptus and the Majority Text are different especially in the Book of Revelation, *ibid*, 109. Farstad writes in typical fashion, "In three fine schools I strongly taught the critical theory, and only after graduating from seminary did I come to study textual criticism for myself. The culmination of all this was my conver-

sion to the majority text position and later to being asked to co-edit a Greek New Testament," *ibid*, 117 n 15. Arthur L. Farstad co-edited with Zane C. Hodges *The Greek New Testament according to the Majority Text* (Thomas Nelson, 1982). Dr. J. van Bruggen served as consulting editor along with Alfred Martin, Wilbur N. Pickering, and Harry A. Sturz.

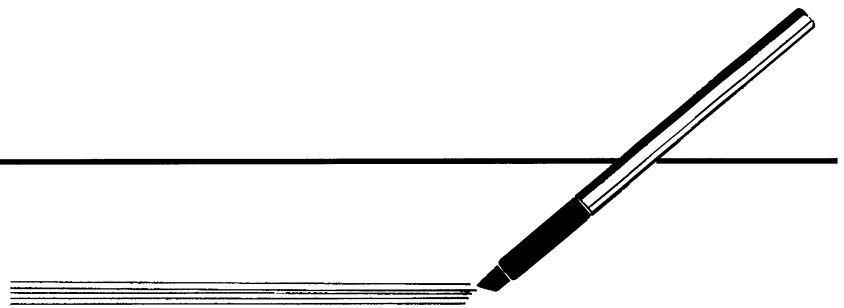
⁷David M. Howard in *Journal of Evangelical Theological Studies*, vol. 26 no. 3 (September 1983), 370. "MT" stands for Masoretic Text and "DSS" stands for Dead Sea Scrolls. ⁸*Crux*, vol. 16, no. 2 (June 1980), 31.

⁹*Bible Translator*, vol. 31 no. 3 (July 1980), 339.

¹⁰*Journal of Evangelical Theological Studies* 23, 1980, 348. **C**

THE HI-LITER

By C. Van Spronsen



Technology is effecting ecclesiastical life. At a Council meeting of the Providence Church in Edmonton a brother "gives additional information to his written presentation (report) on the possibility of conducting Classis meetings by conference call."

The Bethel Church of Toronto runs a "Saturday Morning Bible School" as part of their outreach. "It is going well. A new family with 3 students from the Summer VBS has started."

We are called to be the salt of the earth but not in the church. "All members are asked to wipe the salt off their footwear upon entering the church, because the carpets are getting damaged from the salt being walked in!"

The church of Rockway now uses the church building of Lincoln for its services at 11:00 a. m. and 16:00 p. m. This is meant to be a temporary solution. A Building Committee and a Fund Raising Committee were appointed!

In the "Bulkley Valley Echo" under Smithers the short report of the consistory meeting informs us that "an extensive report is made regarding a proposal to continue the mission work amongst the native population through a two men team; a missionary and a mission worker; this proposal is agreed upon in principle. This proposal will be presented to the congregation at the congregational meeting. The supporting churches will also be a heard on this."

In Neerlandia a meeting was held with the consistory of the Emmanuel Independent Church. The consistory of the church at Barrhead was invited as well. "A preliminary discussion was held about many things, and especially about the Biblical demand for unity. There are still many issues which have to be discussed."

In Albany, Australia "it was decided to double our contribution for mission work." This is "the result of a decision taken by the churches at a recent Co-operating Churches Meeting to work toward calling a second worker, who would preferably be a missionary."

The church at Coaldale installed mail boxes in the lobby. "The boxes have been installed to facilitate delivering communications from committees and agencies operating under council. . . and further from organizations approved by council. . . ." It is added that "the mail boxes are not meant to replace Canada Post, though admittedly more convenient and considerably faster!"

A number of churches in Ontario had the opportunity to become more familiar with "L'Église Réformée du Québec." Rev. Jean-Guy de Blois of the "Institut Farel" went on a speaking tour.

In Burlington West it was decided "that beginning in April the Lord's Supper will be celebrated in two afternoon services at 2 and 4 p. m. The morning worship service will be a regular service starting at the usual time." **C**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please mail, e-mail or fax letters for publication to the editorial address.
They should be 300 words or less. Those published may be edited for style or length.

Dear Editor:

When I read the announcements in the *Clarion* of the "new additions" to families, they all thank our heavenly Father for the precious gift they have received of His hand. I appreciate it that most of the parents leave it at that.

However, there are some, when they sign off, they write, "the proud parents are so and so." Now the words thankful and proud clash. When one is thankful one is not proud. When a person is proud he or she is not thankful. I am marking down a few passages from the Bible, 1 Peter 5:5 "for God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble," Proverbs 16:5 "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD," Ps. 138:6 "Though the LORD be high, yet has He respect unto the lowly, but the proud He knows afar off." And we read in 1 Cor. 4:7 "and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" All that we have, or are, or do, that is good, is owing to the free and rich grace of God. Those who receive all should be proud of nothing. There are many more passages in the Bible like these. But let this suffice.

In closing, I add,

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below,
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts,
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.*

Yours very truly,
Norman Terpsma
Box 71
Neerlandia, AB T0G 1R0

Dear Editors:

Re: Cults

Your issue on "Angels" and "Cults" certainly was interesting. The articles were both interesting and informative. I find it unfortunate, however, that in the context of "escapism" and "withdrawal" from the world, Rev. Van Rietschoten would include schizophrenia [*Cults*; Vol. 44. No. 5. p. 109]. He presents this mental disorder as a means by which someone might withdraw from their hard, dirty and sickening life. Rev. Van Rietschoten, however,

seems to put schizophrenia in parallel with the use of mind and consciousness altering drugs (like LSD and mescaline) and with membership in cults which promise divine bliss through withdrawal (like the Solar Temple).

Along with those who suffer from schizophrenia or have family members or friends who are burdened by this or other physiological mental disorders I would dare say that these illnesses stand on a different plane from the use of LSD or other mind altering drugs, as well being a world apart from cult membership. A schizophrenic does not choose to be one, nor can he simply decide to stop being one. One does not seek out the nearest chapter of schizophrenics wondering how to become one, nor does the local "Schizophrenic's Society" evangelize the neighbourhood seeking new recruits. Schizophrenia is a terrible mental scourge and along with other similar mental disorders should be recognized as such. Christians suffering from schizophrenia will not get much help from a community that considers their problems to be either self induced or voluntary. Rather, they will be helped by a church that supports them and their families as they learn to cope with "the voices" and the paranoia.

John Van Popta
Ottawa

Dear Editor:

I would like to respond to Rev. Van Rietschoten's article (*Clarion* of March 10, 1995) on "Cults." I am glad that someone is writing on this subject, and I am certainly not disagreeing with the main-thrust of the article. However, I have a question for Rev. Van Rietschoten, which he perhaps will answer. Where did he read that "some (people, G.D.) withdraw into schizophrenia" as "a desire to escape hard life experiences?" Or where did he read that "those who withdraw by any of these methods (including schizophrenia, see above D.G.) became escapist."

I belong to a Christian organization which has as one of its goals to "provide information relevant to the understanding of long-term mental illnesses, such

as manic depression and schizophrenia." And this is therefore the reason for this letter. SCHIZOPHRENIA IS A BIOLOGICAL BRAIN DISEASE THAT AFFECTS THINKING, PERCEPTION, MOOD AND BEHAVIOUR. ITS EXACT CAUSE IS UNKNOWN, BUT OVERWHELMING SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE POINTS TO FAULTY BRAIN CHEMISTRY OR STRUCTURAL ABNORMALITIES IN THE BRAIN. (For more detailed explanation see "Surviving Schizophrenia," by Dr. E. Fuller Torrey, 1988).

I am especially anxious to remove misconceptions, like the one created (or quoted?) by Rev. Van Rietschoten. Let me state it emphatically: Schizophrenia is NOT caused by a desire to escape. This is also not a "chicken or egg" type of question, so that it is debatable which comes first.

Some Christians have indeed made statements similar to Rev. Van Rietschoten's. Twenty-five years ago Dr. Jay Adams (not a medical doctor but a theologian!) popularized this misconception (see his "Competent to Counsel" page 40). But fortunately 12 years later Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (a medical doctor as well as a prominent theologian) set him straight by showing that Adams was actually doing nothing more than popularizing, and affirming what the secular Thomas Szass had written before him, namely, "that there is no such entity as mental illness" (see "Healing and the Scriptures, M.L. Jones, page 155). Fortunately, also, Rev. W. Pouwelse has made the same point in his "Like Living Stones" where he quotes Prof. Trimp as well as Prof. Van Bruggen.

The suggestion made by Rev. Van Rietschoten that someone suffering from a very serious mental illness such as schizophrenia is merely trying to escape life's hard experiences, are especially hurtful for families who have to struggle with a major mental illness for many years. For anyone wanting to read more about any of these long-term mental illnesses, I would suggest that you call or write: Christian Rainbows Fellowship of South-Western Ontario c/o 492 Beverley Dr. Burlington, Ontario L7R 3G6 ph. 905-639-1075.

Gerry Denbok

Dear Editor:

In response to the critical remarks offered by Rev. Hofford regarding Dr. Van Dam's article "OPC and Canadian Reformed," Dr. Van Dam argues that the OPC "should be judged by its confessional standards and any other official documents that deal with the issue at hand, in this case, the church." In connection with the particular issue of confessional membership, Van Dam refers to an official document of the OPC, its decision published by the Thirty-fourth General Assembly (1967). This deals with the question of whether or not to extend membership to "Reformed Baptists." The decision, in fact the majority report authored by John Murray, on the one hand seeks to uphold the biblical validity of the doctrine and practice of infant baptism. On the other hand, it states:

Nevertheless, it is to be recognized that, with regard to the admission to membership of those who cannot at that time in good conscience present their children for baptism, the session may judge in the special circumstances that such persons, having been informed of the position of the church, may be admitted if they are willing to answer sincerely and affirmatively the questions asked of those being admitted to communicant membership of the church.

In other words, although "it is a great sin to condemn or neglect this ordinance," there are "exceptional circumstances" in which the session may admit members who indeed to just that, condemn and/or neglect infant baptism.

Prof. Van Dam proceeds in his response to Rev. Hofford to argue that, surprising as it may seem to Rev. Hofford, such toleration "is in full accord with Reformed practice that goes all the way back to 1620." This statement is indeed quite surprising. But Prof. Van Dam sets forth two examples to illustrate his point that errors in a point of doctrine may be tolerated within the church, and secondly, that there resides an essential continuity between Reformed practice and this particular above-mentioned decision of the OPC. Thus, he refers to the "period following the decision against the Remonstrants in the Synod of Dordt in 1618. . . ." Van Dam states:

The Regional Synod of Gouda (1620) decided that those who were willing to be instructed in the Reformed doctrine could be received into the church. They were not to make propaganda for their un-biblical views and were to acknowl-

edge the correctness of the Reformed doctrine.

The implications are clear. They are to acknowledge not merely the correctness of the Reformed system of doctrine, but of the various articles of Reformed doctrine confessed and adopted by the Reformed churches. In 1620, that included the Canons of Dordt. In a word, they were to submit, with all that that word entails.

Likewise, Prof. Van Dam alludes to a certain decision of the Synod of The Hague (1914). Van Dam summarizes that decision:

Toleration can be exercised toward a brother who in good conscience errs in a point of doctrine (in this case, infant baptism). According to the Synod, this follows the example of the apostolic church. Again, such a person would be expected to submit to Reformed teaching on the subject.

There are a number of unanswered questions in connection with this allusion to a synodical decision of our Dutch sister churches. Did synod intend to establish a general rule for all consistories to adopt, or did synod deal particularly and only with the local church facing this particular problem? Did this synod indeed open membership in the church to those who in point of fact condemn the doctrine of infant baptism and refuse to baptize their children? Did the particular issue indeed involve a member with unbaptized infants or children? What in fact did synod mean by expecting such a person to "submit" to Reformed doctrine.

The question of submission to Reformed doctrine, it seems to me, is critical. Van Dam argues for an essential continuity between the decision of the Thirty-fourth General Assembly of the OPC and so-called "Reformed practice" with respect to the particular issue of the toleration of those who condemn and/or neglect infant baptism. To what then are members in the OPC required to submit? The first question under "Chapter V: Public Profession of Faith in Christ" asks:

Do you agree to submit in the Lord to the government of this church, and, in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life, to heed its discipline?

The decision of the Thirty-fourth General Assembly needs to be understood as a commentary upon this particular question, for it is evident that, at least as of 1967, condemning and/or neglecting infant baptism cannot be grounds for being charged with delinquency in doc-

trine or life, nor will any presbytery of the OPC bring charges against a member for condemning or neglecting infant baptism. If the OPC does not explicitly describe a distinction between essential and non-essential doctrines, at least its decision of 1967 clearly operates from this perspective. In other words, if the doctrine of infant baptism is not necessarily an integral and essential part of Reformed doctrine (because one may be admitted to the church while condemning and neglecting it), then what strictly is meant by being found delinquent in doctrine? If practicing Reformed baptists are tolerated in the OPC, what precisely is meant by being found delinquent in life? What indeed constitutes submission? What other particular points of doctrine found in the Westminster standards may be tolerated, as long as one "submits"?

In contrast to such practice of American presbyterianism as illustrated by the OPC, Reformed practice is essentially different. In the first place, the language of the "Form for the Public Profession of Faith" in the *Book of Praise* leaves little doubt as to the contents of Reformed doctrine, for the question is asked, "First, do you wholeheartedly believe the doctrine of the Word of God, summarized in the confessions and taught here in this Christian Church?" Obviously, at the public profession of one's faith, one publicly assents to the doctrine of God's Word, Reformed doctrine, which is summarized in the Three Forms of Unity, which are the doctrinal standards adopted by the Canadian Reformed churches. But is there room for mental reservations on any point of doctrine? May toleration be exercised toward any brother or sister who cannot assent to a particular point of doctrine? The remainder of this first question asked at the public profession of faith categorically denies such a possibility: "Do you promise by the grace of God steadfastly to continue in this doctrine in life and death, rejecting all heresies and errors conflicting with God's Word?" Article 34 of the Belgic Confession of Faith describes the particular error of those who condemn the baptism of little children of believers. Members of the Canadian Reformed churches vow to steadfastly continue in the Reformed doctrine, and thus, to reject this particular error. That's what is meant by submission. Thus, to be perfectly clear, a person who condemns or neglects infant baptism is simply incapable of honestly answering the first question in the "Form for the Public Profession of Faith" in the Canadian Reformed churches.

Such a person is incapable of submitting to Reformed doctrine, for no distinction may be made between essential and non-essential doctrine.

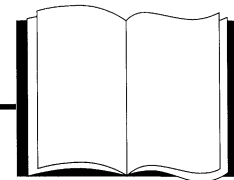
If indeed it can be proven that the decision of the Regional Synod of The Hague is essentially in line with the practice officially established by the OPC in 1967, then we also need to recognize that such a decision was mistaken, for there is clearly no provision for

admitting practicing Reformed baptists into the membership of the Canadian Reformed churches. One either submits to Reformed doctrine in all points as confessed in the confessions, and indeed steadfastly fights against all heresies and errors, or one does not take such a vow. It is not possible to relativize this language by alluding to the different theological, confessional, ecclesiastical, historical, or cultural tradi-

tions that may or may not stand between the Canadian Reformed churches and the OPC. Truth is truth. The issue of confessional membership remains a serious obstacle between "normalizing" relations with the OPC, and ought to remain so as long as the OPC continues to tolerate members who condemn and/or neglect the baptism of their children.

Wayne H. Chase,
Westminster, CO 

READER'S FORUM



The problems around "Denver"

The views expressed in Reader's Forum are not necessarily those of the editorial committee or the publisher. Submissions should not exceed 900 words. Those published may be edited for style or length.

Notwithstanding the "Reports" and several "Letters," written on this subject, it is amazing how people, with the best of intention, can confuse matters to such a degree that the real issue is lost in the debate. It is also sad to notice how in such a confusion even phrases as, e.g., "true" or "false" church becomes so dominant in one's mind, that they don't realize that this is not the issue at all in the dispute. What is then here the real issue?

To make this clear, it is necessary to look back in our latest church history. Then we see that it is not only "Denver," but that there was also a "Laurel" and a "Blue Bell." In other words we will see here that "Denver" problem is in fact the result of our mistakes in the past! Bringing in the question of Denver OPC being church or even "false" church is simply confusing the issue! It might seem impressive and, no doubt, I believe well-intended, but it obscures the real matter and, by diverting the attention, becomes a hindrance for a right judgment. We see this for example in what br. Van Assen writes in the "Clarion" of Jan. 13/95, where he says he is "perplexed" that the three churches in Alberta cannot agree with the acceptance of Denver into the federation and speaks there even about the "devastating results." It is therefore a prerequisite that we distinguish between

the differences or rather "divergencies," which still might exist with the OPC and the admittance of Denver (Amer. Ref. church) into our federation. These are two different matters which must not be confused. The admittance of Denver, and for that matter Laurel and Blue Bell as well, is a case by itself. The conflicting evaluations regarding the OPC should have been resolved first! To make this clear, two important questions must be asked here! Since we spoke about "mistakes in the past," the first question must be then: How could Laurel (and so Blue Bell and Denver) in good conscience want to come into our federation, while they clearly had indicated not to become co-responsible for our official stand on the OPC, when we declared them to be "true churches" (Synod 1977)? The second question is directed at our own churches: How could we at that point, accept them into our federation, since they declared the OPC as "false church?" Did they purposely ignore Synod 1977? This is then the "real issue"! Also in the "Denver" case. And it explains at the same time the stand of the churches of Coaldale, Taber and Barrhead, who honestly and positively drew a straight line from 1977 to today! We are warned in Scripture: "Let your yes be yes and your no be no" (James 5:12). I am sorry to say

it, but that was missing here with the "acceptance" into our federation.

Will that now say that we don't care about the American Reformed churches? Of course not! For without being in the federation, we still can show our concern to them, being a hand and a foot, by communicating, advice, etc. And let us not have the idea or assume that you first have to belong to the federation for that! This is in fact therefore the only and proper way to resolve the problems, which obviously still exists. True love and concern do not wait for official federation.

Considering the above, let us for the well-being of the churches not be fingerpointing at Coaldale, Taber and Barrhead, but put our hand into our own bosom and see that we as churches have left the right path ourselves by accepting these churches in our federation, while the basis for it was missing, and thus the time was not ripe! Let us remember in our prayers especially the brothers delegates to Synod '95, that objectivity may prevail with them and they under the Lord's blessing may truly serve the American Reformed churches and the OPC for the upbuilding of Christ's church and to His honour.

Bart Bikker
Cloverdale, BC
Phone 576-9837 

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

I hope you are all enjoying beautiful spring weather. Here are some puzzles to keep you busy on a rainy afternoon! Enjoy!

Quiz Time!

ADD WORDS!

To finish each biblical place name below, add a word for the number of letters shown by the dots. A clue is given in brackets. Answers at the end.

1. SUC ____ H (small bed)
2. AT _____ (chicks' mothers)
3. ____ A (what you drink pop from)
4. G ____ R (many years)
5. B _____ (girl's name)
6. JEZ_____ (what you use to wind fishing line)
7. _____ TUS (distance)
8. GIL _____ (snake)
9. ____ IOCH (insect)
10. GI _____ (a heavy metal)
11. ____ AH (a male sheep)
12. LAO _____ A (to cut very small)



WHO MADE IT?

1. They made the temple a den of thieves. (Mark 11:17)
2. They made a tumult on the day of Christ's trial. (Matt. 27:20-24)
3. He made a scourge of small cords. (John 2:13-17)
4. These parents made a little ark. (Ex. 2:1-4)
5. He made a beautiful coat for his favourite son. (Gen. 37:1-3)
6. He made a pool and conduit in Jerusalem. (2 Kings 20:20)
7. He made a brass serpent. (Num. 21:9)
8. He made the lavers for Solomon's temple. (I Kings 7:40)
9. This widow made many coats and garments. (Acts 9:39)
10. Me made tents. (Acts 18:3)

A BIBLE TEXT IN CODE!

By Busy Beaver Pamela Hulst

18 5 10 15 9 3 5 1 12 23 1 25 19

16 18 1 25 3 15 14 19 20 1 14 20 12 25

7 9 22 5 20 8 1 14 11 19

9 14 1 12 12

3 9 18 3 21 13 19 20 1 14 3 5 19

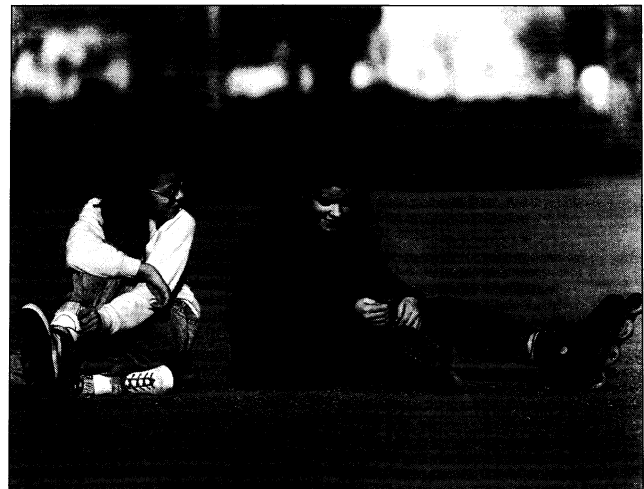
6 15 18 20 8 9 19 9 19 20 8 5

23 9 12 12 15 6 7 15 4

9 14 3 8 18 9 19 20 10 5 19 21 19

6 15 18 25 15 21!

A - 1	F - 6	K - 11	P - 16	U - 21
B - 2	G - 7	L - 12	Q - 17	V - 22
C - 3	H - 8	M - 13	R - 18	W - 23
D - 4	I - 9	N - 14	S - 19	X - 24
E - 5	J - 10	O - 15	T - 20	Y - 25
				Z - 26



SPRING FARM WORD SEARCH

By Busy Beaver *Sharalee VandenBos*

SWANBEHTKNKGQTWYBEHJMPSW
 TOPMULEXRBSRRFORAGEHARVE
 RCUAURCAMUIYEABHACKICKEN
 IAPNNUGOPQDOGTIAYLOWATED
 TDPUOMCRFARMERNNHORSPLOR
 IGIRTACOMBINEUSLWVSHEEPI
 CJEEINTNGOATSCOYIAEECCLE
 AMSSLUROTSGOEKATAOGDOLOR
 LSAPLRETREAYADUCKHFOROWF
 EVDRDEEIAERC MUBARNSENVHT
 PEFERSFLCDDTRACTORONEEEO
 FSIAIPOLTDELIOSKIAYELRAB
 IVLDLKITTENSOIPSTRAWHHTA
 EODELTOBACOFARMSTEBAAOSC
 LHARROWSBAGRAINWAGETRUC
 DBUCKWHEATBUCKWHEVAETQNO
 SSEEDDRILLKGCZXURONRLIFC

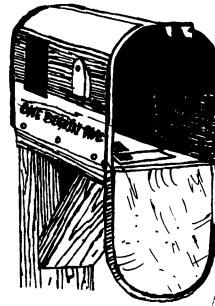
FIND THESE WORDS:

cow	manure spreader	tobacco
goat	forage harvester	treefoil
sheep	harrows	buckwheat
horse	house	oats
chicken	shed	triticale
dog	barn	hay
cat	drier	straw
duck	bins	water
geese	fields	puppies
swan	garden	kittens
combine	crops	farmer
plow	corn	mule
tractor	wheat	soil
disk	soyabean	truck
seed drill	barley	
no-till drill	clover	
grainwagon	rye	

MAY BIRTHDAYS!

Happy Birthday to all Busy Beavers who celebrate their birthdays in May! Hope you have a very good day and the Lord's blessing in the year ahead.

Ann-Marie Vanpopta	3	Erica Broekema	14
Andrea VanderHorst	3	Eritia Smit	14
Rebecca Scholten	3	Nicole Aasman	15
Miranda Barendregt	4	Rachel Broekema	15
Andrea DeHaas	4	Amanda Feenstra	16
Jodie Lodder	5	Deanna Wierenga	17
Jeremy Feenstra	5	Michelle Linde	18
Laura Rook	7	Rachelle VanVeen	20
Amanda DeBoer	7	Charlene Barendregt	21
Laura VandenBos	8	Jonathan Kingma	21
Caitlin Meints	9	Pauline TenBrinke	22
Tetsje Reidstra	11	Ruby Knol	23
Christopher DeBoer	12	Tesha Hopman	29
Robert Vandergaag	14	Timothy Bartels	29



FROM THE MAILBOX

Hello, *Miranda Barendregt*. Are you still busy reading? I see you're working hard at your school work. Thank you for the nice family picture. Bye, Miranda.

Hi, *Lorelle Barendregt*. You must have fun playing with your four sisters. It sounds like your youngest sister is pretty smart! Bye, Lorelle.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Lisa Bosscher*. Can your beagle do tricks? Do you like reading, or do you have any other hobbies? When is your birthday? Hope to hear from you soon. Bye, Lisa.

Hi, *Lynette Dehaas*. What have you chosen to do for the science fair? Why did you move to a different house? Bye, Lynette.

Hi, *Arnold Kanis*. Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club. Thank you for the pictures you sent in. I need your address so I can send you a membership card. And when is your birthday? Bye, Arnold.

Hello, *Jacqueline Post*. Good to hear from you again. So you would like to have a penpal, eh? Well, I hope you do! Bye.

Hi, *Sharalee Vandenbos*. You must be quite busy reading all those books! The mysteries must be pretty interesting to read about. Bye.

Hello, *Jonathan Vandenbos*. You like baseball, don't you? Do you play it at school, now that it's spring? Keep up the reading! Bye, Jonathan.

Hi, *Virginia Jager*. How was your visit to your grandparents? Did you go by yourself? Thanks for the puzzle. Bye, Virginia.

Busy Beaver *Jacqueline Post* (age 10) would like a penpal. Here is her address:

RR 2
Orton, ON L0N 1N0

Answers to Add-Words Puzzle

6. Jezreel	12. Laodicea
5. Bethel	11. Ramah
4. Cera	10. Gilead
3. Cana	9. Antioch
2. Athens	8. Gilboa
1. Succoth	7. Milietus

That's all for today!
Love, Aunt Betty

