

JOIN US FOR AN 8-WEEK STUDY OF HTPC'S

# *First Principles*

A decorative flourish consisting of a horizontal line with a central dot and two pointed ends extending outwards.

**SUNDAYS**

**5:45 - 7:00 PM**

**SEPTEMBER 13 - NOVEMBER 8**

in the fellowship hall

# God My King Thy Might Confessing

1. God, my King, thy might confessing,  
ever will I bless thy name;  
day by day thy throne addressing,  
still will I thy praise proclaim.
2. Honor great our God befitteth;  
who his majesty can reach?  
Age to age his work transmitteth;  
age to age his pow'r shall teach.

3. They shall talk of all thy glory,  
on thy might and greatness dwell,  
speak of thy dread acts the story,  
and thy deeds of wonder tell.

4. Nor shall fail from mem'ry's treasure  
works by love and mercy wrought;  
works of love surpassing measure,  
works of mercy passing thought.

5. Full of kindness and compassion,  
slow to anger, vast in love,  
God is good to all creation;  
all his works his goodness prove.

6. All thy works, O Lord, shall bless thee;  
thee shall all thy saints adore.  
King supreme shall they confess thee,  
and proclaim thy sovereign pow'r.

# **Give Praise to God Who Reigns Above**

- 1. Give praise to God who reigns above  
for perfect knowledge, wisdom, love;  
His judgments are divine, devout,  
His paths beyond all tracing out.**

**Refrain:**

**Come, lift our voice to heav'n's high throne,  
and glory give to God alone!**

# **Give Praise to God Who Reigns Above**

**2. No one can counsel God all-wise  
or truths unveil to His sharp eyes;  
He marks our paths behind, before;  
He is our steadfast Counselor.**

**Refrain:**

**Come, lift our voice to heav'n's high throne,  
and glory give to God alone!**

# **Give Praise to God Who Reigns Above**

**3. Nothing exists that God might need,  
for all things good from Him proceed.**

**We praise Him as our Lord, and yet  
we never place God in our debt.**

**Refrain:**

**Come, lift our voice to heav'n's high throne,  
and glory give to God alone!**

# **Give Praise to God Who Reigns Above**

**4. Creation, life, salvation too,  
and all things else both good and true,  
come from and through our God always,  
and fill our hearts with grateful praise.**

**Refrain:**

**Come, lift our voice to heav'n's high throne,  
and glory give to God alone!**

# Review of Last Week

**Reformed Theology:** Formative Principle of Calvinism not the doctrine of predestination, but glory of the Lord God Almighty! [of which predestination is an indispensable part] Fundamental question posed by Calvinism is not “How can I be saved?” but “How shall God be glorified?”

“I believe...”

Herman Bavinck: One generation confesses its faith; the next generation often simply believes its confessions. Dead Orthodoxy.

Our goal: Warm, vibrant orthodoxy. [Not dead orthodoxy or heterodoxy.]

God-centered, Christ-centered, warmly relational and outward-facing.

# Cornelius Van Til Biography

## Biography and Significance

- Born, 1895 in Netherlands
- Son of godly Dutch Reformed parents/farmers; raised on Scriptures and Three Forms of Unity (Canons of Dordt, Heidelberg Catechism and Belgic Catechism) See a common thread with Warfield?? Atmosphere of their childhoods was GOD-CENTERED.
- Matthew 11:25!!

# Childhood

“There was much ado about making hay in the summer and about caring for the cows and sheep in the winter, but round about it all there was a deep conditioning atmosphere. Though there were no tropical showers of revivals, the relative humidity was always very high. At every meal the whole family was present. There was a closing as well as an opening prayer, and a chapter of the Bible was read each time.” *(para 11)*

Did you grow up in this atmosphere? Are you cultivating it in your home today?

# Van Til

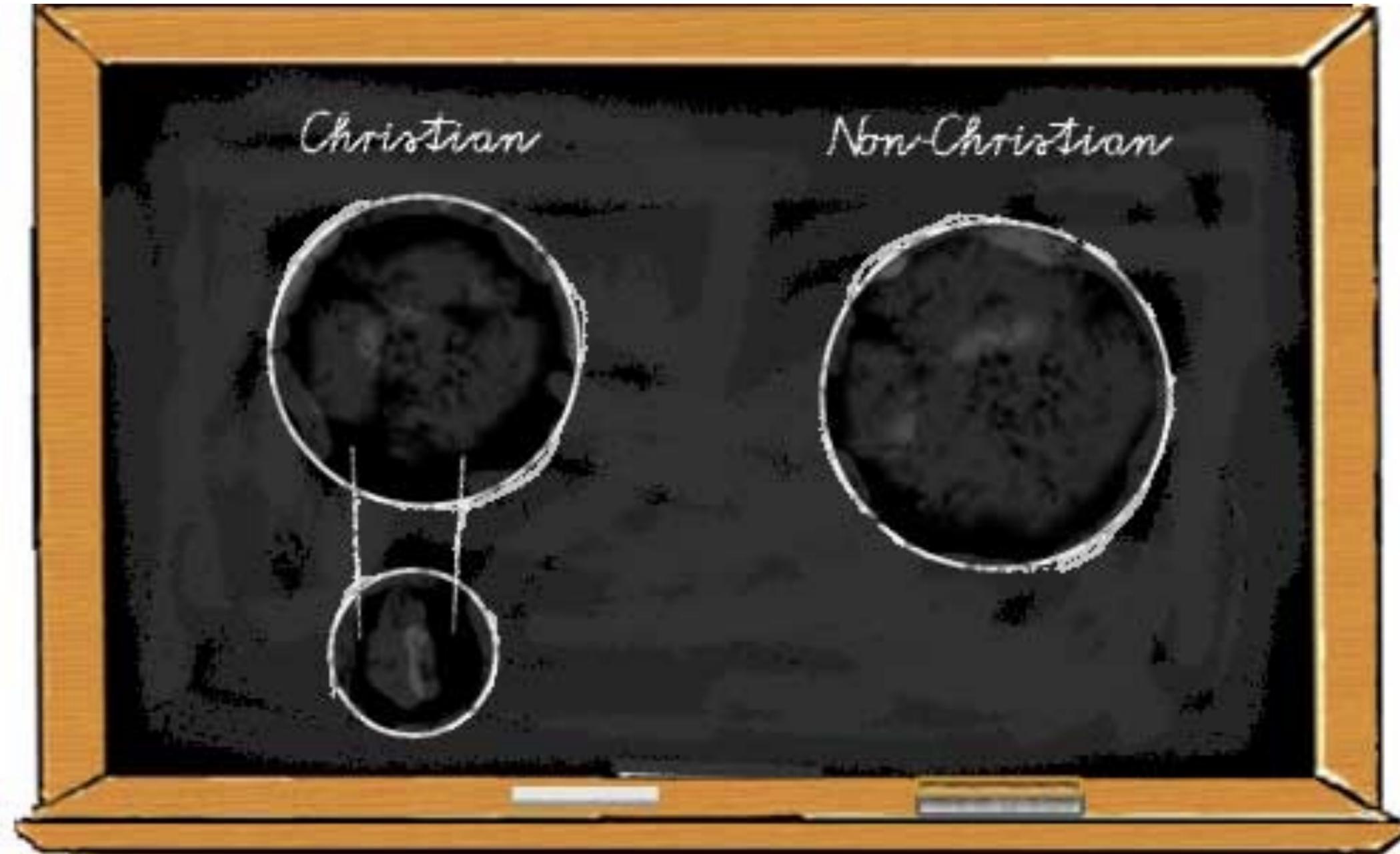
## Churchly/Theological Significance

- "Apologetics/Defense of the Faith": Presuppositional Apologetics
- We must take insights of Reformed Faith; consistently apply them to area of apologetics. Otherwise, we have God-centered theology with man-centered means of defending and knowing him.
- **Revelational epistemology!** Epistemology = theory of knowledge; how we know what we know. Revelation = God's making himself known. We know what we know about anything because it has been revealed to us by God of everything.
- If we accept God on the basis of some other standard/exam which we have forced him to pass, then what is our ultimate authority? Do you detect the subtle, but profound implications here?

# Implications

- **EVERYTHING!** Education, counseling, economics, politics, art, etc.
- **All of Life** under the sovereign God who created it.

# Creator-Creature Distinction



# Why I Believe in God

*by Cornelius Van Til*

# Main Point

To call the church and the world to start with the eternal, triune God in whose image we have been created and whose knowledge we have sought, in our sin, to avoid/suppress.

See Calvin, Book 1 of *Institutes*

# Six Summary Points

- 1) Everything, even the ability to have an academic argument(!), hinges upon God.
- 2) The unbeliever's claim of "neutrality" as a self-deceptive claim at best.
- 3) The totality claims of God and of the Christian faith; there is no part of the believer's life untouched by Christ (just as there is no part of the unbeliever's life untouched by his unbelief).
- 4) Not content to argue for a bare notion of God, but God as defined clearly in the Bible. Any other "god" is someone who can be approached on our terms because he is a "god" of our own construction.
- 5) The unbeliever deep down knows the God of the Bible and wants to avoid this God.
- 6) The unbeliever in this essay needs CHRIST—the God whom we know by virtue of creation and whom we seek to suppress is the only one who can solve the problem we have created—and he willingly solved our dilemma in the sacrifice of his Son.

# 1. Everything hinges upon God

Paragraph 4:

1) Now, in fact, I feel that the whole of history and civilization would be unintelligible to me if it were not for my belief in God. So true is this, that I propose to argue that unless God is back of everything, you cannot find meaning in anything. I cannot even argue for belief in Him, without already having taken Him for granted. And similarly I contend that you cannot argue against belief in Him unless you also first take Him for granted. Arguing about God's existence, I hold, is like arguing about air. You may affirm that air exists, and I that it does not. But as we debate the point, we are both breathing air all the time.

# 1. Everything hinges upon God (cont.)

God is the embankment upon which one places the guns with which to shoot God out of the air. **THINK ABOUT THAT.** Romans 1:18-32 (esp. vv. 18-21)

## 2. The unbeliever's claim of "neutrality" as a self-deceptive claim at best.

Paragraph 11: There was much ado about making hay in the summer and about caring for the cows and sheep in the winter, but round about it all there was a **deep conditioning atmosphere**.

Paragraph 14: You were as thoroughly conditioned **not to believe** in God as I was to believe in God. So let us not call each other names. If you want to say that belief was poured down my throat, I shall retort by saying that unbelief was poured down your throat. - *the "open minded" are just as indoctrinated*

## 2. The unbeliever's claim of "neutrality" as a self-deceptive claim at best. (cont.)

Paragraph 19: To be "without bias" is only to have a particular *kind* of bias. **The idea of "neutrality" is simply a colorless suit** that covers a negative attitude toward God.

Example of Eve in the Garden—the claim to neutrality was already rebellion against God. God's ownership signs.  
Washington monument.

"Neutral" science, etc. Yes, there are "sincere" atheists, but only as suppressive layer on top of "deeper knowledge."

### **3. The totality claims of God and of the Christian faith**

Paragraph 16:

In short, the whole wide world that gradually opened up for me through my schooling was regarded as operating in its every aspect under the direction of the all-powerful and all-wise God whose child I was through Christ. I was to learn to think God's thoughts after him in every field of endeavor. **PRO REGE!**

Paragraph 22:

We were told that all facts in all their relations, numerical as well as others, are what they are because of God's all comprehensive plan with respect to them. *Unbeliever can count but cannot account for his counting!*

### **3. The totality claims of God and of the Christian faith (cont.)**

- Do you detect the seamlessness of Van Til's youth with his later advanced thought (as with Warfield)? What is true is what is practical and what is practical is what is true, whether we are children or later as adults.
- One of highest calls we have is to train these covenant children in life and doctrine!!

## 4. No Bare Notion of God

Van Til's goal was not assent to a general, undefined notion of "God." He argued for the existence of Triune God of Bible (the only true God!). This is the God who has made himself known even to unbelievers, the knowledge of whom unbelievers seek to suppress.

Paragraph 8:

We have not really agreed on what we mean by God more than in a general and formal way. So also we need not at this point agree on the standard or test in more than a general or formal way.

## 4. No Bare Notion of God

Paragraph 24: You know pretty clearly now what sort of God it is of which I am speaking to you. If my God exists it was He who was back of my parents and teachers. It was He who conditioned all that conditioned me in my early life. But then it was He also who conditioned everything that conditioned you in your early life. God, the God of Christianity, is the All-Conditioner.

Why do we often settle for less than proof for this God when we speak with unbelievers? Because we fear man instead God and so offend God while pleasing man. The God of the Bible offends our pride. He calls everything about us into question for our moral, intellectual rebellion against him. It is not “popular” to say these things to unbelievers. So we have sought alleged “neutral common ground.” We have not been true to our Reformed principles.

## **5. The unbeliever deep down knows the God of the Bible and wants to avoid this God.**

Rom 1:18-20 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness **suppress the truth.** (19) For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. (20) For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are **without excuse.**

## 5. The unbeliever deep down knows the God of the Bible and wants to avoid this God. (cont.)

Paragraph 19: Every fact in this world, the God of the Bible claims, has His stamp indelibly engraved upon it. How then could you be neutral with respect to such a God? Do you walk about leisurely on a Fourth of July in Washington wondering whether the Lincoln Memorial belongs to anyone? Do you look at "Old Glory" waving from a high flagpole and wonder whether she stands for anything? Does she require anything of you, born an American citizen as you are? You would deserve to suffer the fate of the "man without a country" if as an American you were **neutral** to America. Well, in a much deeper sense you deserve to live forever without God if you do not own and glorify Him as your Creator.

## **5. The unbeliever deep down knows the God of the Bible and wants to avoid this God. (cont.)**

Paragraph 20: the “blind valley”

Paragraph 30 – Key (summary of noetic effect) - Now if you actually are God’s creature, then your present attitude is very unfair to Him. In that case it is even an insult to Him. And having insulted God, His displeasure rests upon you. God and you are not on “speaking terms.” And you have very good reasons for trying to prove that He does not exist.

Unbeliever’s definitions of things not merely incomplete, but basically wrong because God is left out of picture. See par. 31

## **5. The unbeliever deep down knows the God of the Bible and wants to avoid this God. (cont.)**

Objections: Creation (Kant), Providence (biology, etc.), prophecy, miracle

Not a reason to reduce to probabilistic evidentialism

Not a reasons to reduce to irrational “blind leap of faith”

These objections reveal the fundamental problem (drilling down to the nerve)...

## 5. The unbeliever deep down knows the God of the Bible and wants to avoid this God. (cont.)

The NERVE: Paragraph 46: For what you have really done in your handling of the evidence for belief in God, **is to set yourself up as God.** You have made **the reach of your intellect, the standard** of what is possible or not possible. You have thereby virtually determined that you intend never to meet a fact that points to God. Facts, to be facts at all — facts, that is, with decent scientific and philosophic standing — must have your stamp instead of that of God upon them as their virtual creator.

## **6. The unbeliever in this essay needs CHRIST**

Paragraph 48: You have cemented your colored glasses to your face so firmly that you cannot even take them off when you sleep. Freud has not even had a glimpse of the sinfulness of sin as it controls the human heart. Only the great Physician through His blood atonement on the Cross and by the gift of His Spirit can take those colored glasses off and make you see facts as they are, facts as evidence, as inherently compelling evidence, for the existence of God.

## **6. The unbeliever in this essay needs CHRIST**

Recognize the need for our apologetics

Recognize the limitations of our apologetic

Paragraph 54

# Implications for Us