

Walter van der Kamp (1913-1998): Windmill Tilter, with class

"Scientific theories come and go -- the clear and simple and trustworthy Word of God stands forever"

WvdK

I first read of Walter van der Kamp's work in Walter Lang's old *Bible-Science Newsletter*, which featured an article by Mr van der Kamp in the January 1976 issue titled "I Make Its Pillars Firm". Not long before that I had become aware of the geocentric/heliocentric controversy and to my utter amazement had discovered that the question of the earth's motion and place in the universe had never actually been settled scientifically in the 350 years since Galileo's time. It was beginning to dawn on me that this subject was very significant. WvdK's article came at just the right time to encourage me to investigate it further.

The article was an introduction to Tychonian geocentricity and it showed that the author not only had a captivating writing style but was able to defend his thesis capably, both philosophically and scientifically. Here was no crackpot, but a highly intelligent individual taking up an anti-establishment cause very much in the tradition of Don Quixote -- a windmill tilter with real class.

After reading the article, I wrote Mr. vdK asking for further information, and he replied with a hand written letter, thanking me for my interest and enclosing some back copies of his little Bulletin of the Tychonian Society. The bulletin was mimeographed and the "society" consisted at that time of probably no more than a hundred people scattered around the world who were interested in his work. Not very impressive, to be sure, but it was a well-focused effort to promote the idea that geocentricity was a fundamental physical and theological necessity in the formation of a truly Biblical world view, and I was impressed.

That began an association, mostly by letter, with this remarkable man that lasted to my considerable benefit for the next 20 years until his recent death. He published some of my own writings in his bulletin, being especially enamored of the Celestial Motion Illustrator, a device for illustrating the principle of relative motion, and as a result, I became sort of the resident mechanic in the Tychonian Society. We didn't always agree on everything, of course (windmill tilters have very independent souls), but he was always gracious, always appreciative, always encouraging, and always wrote out his letters in longhand. I am sure that he left this world with many international friends and admirers like myself.

In the Bible-Science Newsletter article to which I referred, Walter made this comment about Bradley's discovery of aberration, to point out the inability of any scientific observation made from within a system to make a distinction between moving and fixed in an absolute sense:

"Only after travelling beyond the furthest star, finding there an unmovable place, absolutely at rest, to stand on, and then looking back, Bradley would have been able to see which was racing around which, as seen from his viewpoint. This he could not do..."

I believe Walter van der Kamp now has the opportunity to do what Bradley could not. He has gone "beyond the furthest star" to the throne of God, the ultimate reference frame unavailable to living men, and now he knows that which we can only accept by faith in the trustworthiness of God's Word, that when God created the earth He "made its pillars firm" and did not cast it adrift in a then-empty void, to be a profoundly restless, unstable home for mankind.

I cannot do more to express my appreciation to Walter van der Kamp for his courageous, persistent, inspiring (and classy!) example of leadership in the geocentric/heliocentric controversy than to refer to Cervantes (a contemporary of Galileo) who put these words into the mouth of Don Quixote as an encouragement to windmill tilers everywhere:

IN SPITE OF ALL MANKIND, I WILL
PURSUE WHAT HEAVEN HAS FATED,
FORTUNE ORDAINED, WHAT REASON
REQUIRES, AND (WHICH IS MORE)
WHAT MY INCLINATION DEMANDS.
I AM SENSIBLE OF THE MANY TROUBLES
AND DANGERS THAT ATTEND
THE PROSECUTION OF KNIGHT-ERRANTRY,
BUT I ALSO KNOW WHAT INFINITE
HONOURS AND REWARDS ARE
THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE PERFORMANCE.

-- **Don Quixote**
Chapter VI
Part II

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**In this space
there was a photo
in color
of Walter van der Kamp,
taken in 1989**

Wolter van der Kamp (1913-1998)

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NOTE

**For purposes of an obituary for WvdK,
only the first three items in this
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are presented in the following pages**

EDITORIAL

Shortly after the Winter 1998 issue was finished, we were saddened by the news that Walter van der Kamp had passed away in his sleep. Walter was the founder of the Tychonian Society, the original name for the Association for Biblical Astronomy. The founding of the Tychonian Society happened as follows.

In 1967 Walter privately published and circulated a rough draft of a booklet called *The Heart of the Matter*. Walter sent it to about fifty people and institutions, from whom he garnered four encouraging responses. Among those was the late Harold Armstrong, one of the founders of the Creation Research Society, and first editor of its quarterly journal. The booklet was printed in January 1968. In Walter's own words, it "went nowhere fast." He composed a second short treatise en-titled *Airy Reconsidered* which he stenciled in 1%8 but not distributed until 1970. It was dubbed "thought provoking" by George Mulmger in the *Bible-Science Newsletter* of July-August 1971. Encouraged by this appraisal, and abetted by a few friends and relatives, Walter "founded" an informal organization called the Tychonian Society. Thus he began to publish the *Bulletins' of the Tychonian Society*, the first few of which were handwritten and copied on a Gestetner. These were done on a freewill offering basis, and when cash ran out in 1971, Walter burned most of an issue of which 200 copies had been photocopied, and called it quits.

In the summer of 1974, after an interval of two years, *Bulletins* No.6, was typed and stenciled and sent to "subscribers" in Canada, the U.S., England, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, and Australia. Walter produced all subsequent issues until March, 1984, when he produced No. 37 as his last. Other concerns, some pressing, led him to hand over the editorship of the then *Bulletin of the Tychonian Society* to your present editor.

Walter continued to contribute articles throughout the 1980s, but in 1990 disagreements about content, scope, and style led to an amicable agreement that the name of the Society would be changed to the Association for Biblical Astronomy, and that the *Bulletin of the Tychonian Society* would become the *Biblical Astronomer*. This would broaden the scope of the publication to cover other topics in astronomy besides geocentricity, while Walter would keep all rights to the artwork -- the

Fourth Day of Creation - which had graced all covers of the *Bulletin of the Tychonian Society* from issues 16 (May-June, 1977, which was the first issue to carry the singular, "Bulletin", in its title) through 53 (Spring, 1990). He subsequently used that as the cover to all the booklets he published over the past decade.

It was Harold Armstrong who first alerted me to Walter's existence when in 1976, in writing about the diversity of opinions and views in the Creationist movement, he mentioned Walter as an extreme case where a Creationist advocated the literality of Scripture to the point of a stationary earth. As an undergraduate at the University of Rochester in Rochester, New York, I'd taken enough relativity theory to know that neither heliocentrism nor geocentricity could be proven or disproven, and so I fired off a letter to Walter asking, in effect, "which Scriptures?" I'm afraid that Walter sent more philosophy than Scriptures, but he did mention Psalms 73 and 104:5. I found them rather weak so I set forth on a three-week, six-days-per-week, sixteen-hours-per-day study to determine the truth of the matter insofar as the Bible was concerned. Because at the time I didn't know where the Scriptures were to be found, (so I had to flounder around in the "original" Hebrew,) at the end of the three weeks I could only determine that the Scriptures were 'probably' geocentric. My analysis was printed in *Bulletins* No.13, in 1976. Since then the Scriptural case has been solidified,

In 1978 Walter and I met face-to-face at the conference on Absolutes, held at the Cleveland State University. Among the attendees at that conference were Hussein Yilmaz, then just on his own from M.I.T., and the late Stefan Marinov, whose suicide last year is taking on an increasingly ominous aura (see "Panorama" in this issue). Through Walter's pioneering work in pointing out the geocentric nature of Airy's failure and the Michelson-Morley experiments, Walter may truly be called the father of modern geocentricity; and he is the father of my geocentric zeal. I recall the void left in my life by the deaths of each of my parents, and Walter, too, left a void. He will be sorely missed here, in earth, by all who knew him.

Gerardus D. Bouw

WALTER VAN DER KAMP

(5 March 1913 -26 January 1998)

John Byl

My association with Walter -- or rather, his family -- goes back to 1965, when in my first year at the University of B.C., I car-pooled for a few months with his son Garth. I recall that once, in 1968 I attended a lecture Walter gave at the Calvin Study Club, a gathering for Christian students at the University of British Columbia. It was at about that time that he wrote his first papers on geocentricity. I received a copy of these at the time but it was not until January, 1977 that I actually took up contact with Walter. By that time he had retired and was living with his wife Deirdre about 20 miles out of town on a few pleasant acres surrounded by farms and mountains.

During the next 15 years I enjoyed many pleasant hours with Walter and Deirdre, two gracious hosts, visiting them every few months until they moved to Victoria (in 1992 I believe) to be closer to their children and grandchildren. Since then I met with Walter only a few times, partly due to the awkwardness of traveling to Victoria (requiring a 2 hour ferry ride each way), partly because Walter himself had by then considerably slowed down his geocentric activities (he never stopped completely but was always working on his "last" geocentric paper).

Walter always regretted not having had the opportunity for farther university studies, but living through the depression and then World War II, such opportunities were then very limited. Nevertheless, he was very well-read and articulate in a number of areas, excelling in history, philosophy, and theology. He was a sharp debater, not easily defeated. As editor of the Bulletin of the Tychoonian Society he was gracious and courteous in his interaction with many contributors and opponents from widely varied backgrounds.

I greatly enjoyed my intellectual dialogues with Walter and learned a lot from him. We shared many common views on philosophy of science and theology (but had some differences as well!). One main issue upon which we had many long discussions was aberration, which

Walter believed implied a small universe 60 light days in radius. I was never able to convince Walter that aberration, unlike parallax, could not be used to estimate distances. I urged him to rather concentrate on the philosophical issues involved, which to me seemed more important and in which he was highly proficient.

Above all I much appreciated Walter's, at bottom, simple faith in the Lord and his desire to serve Him. Walter was convinced that the Copernican Revolution was the kingpin upon which secular science rested and from which the present demise of Biblical authority could be traced. He thought that if geocentricity could be proven right, or at least shown to be highly plausible, the case for Biblical truth would be greatly strengthened. The last two decades of his life were devoted primarily to pursuing this apologetic quest.

Walter will be missed by many but we are comforted in the knowledge that he has merely gone before us to be with our Lord, the only Absolute in which all else finds meaning and purpose.

WOLTER van der KAMP: A REFLECTION*

Conrad van der Kamp

On behalf of my family I would like to take a few moments to reflect on my father's life with all of you who have come from near and far to express your sympathy and respect.

Recently we persuaded him to begin at least a brief memoir of his life. He did not get far beyond the first page because other matters of greater moment continued to preoccupy him. This week, for instance, I found a note on his desk that said "concert-cacophony-chaos." In fact his memoir, as far as I know, did not get beyond its beginning, in which he stands in the gate of his medieval town at dusk on a winter evening, looking out over dark and windy water, a little boy often with skinny knobby legs and too big a head, quite alone and miserable, not knowing where he belonged

My father lived as a young adult in the depression, which marked him, fell deeply in love for the rest of his life, married, and lived dangerously through the Second World War occupation of the Netherlands, although afterwards he dismissed much of the underground heroics as youthful foolery. At the Liberation he was a liaison officer with the Canadian troops. The civility and matter of fact courage of the Canadian army amazed him.

Although he became a successful public servant and politician in the Netherlands, a respected church member, a writer, a compiler of an innovative Concordance to the Scriptures, a caring father of a large and growing household, the Wolter of his memoir was restless, not quite at home. In 1955 the family emigrated to Canada, where he had accepted a position as principal of a newly-founded Christian independent school for a congregation of Dutch immigrants. This position he held for twenty years, in the process marking a generation of young people with his intellectual inquisitiveness, and his stern demands for good manners and good handwriting, and particularly for Scripture knowledge.

During this time, inevitably, he became involved again in politics of a sort, and for a time the birth and growth of the Federation of Independent

*Read at the funeral by Walter's son, Conrad.

Schools Associations provided him with exciting and useful argument, a wonderful cast of characters, and an intellectual home.

Increasingly, however, he was drawn to more abstract contemplation, a search for what is universal and enduring, in the face of a culture that seemed to him increasingly adrift. Cosmology drew him, as did ethics, epistemology, logic, astrophysics; but all of those disciplines were useful only insofar as they could serve the cause of apologetics, the defense of the faith.

In the ensuing process of reading, writing, publishing, experimenting, and reading some more, he did battle with everyone from Galileo to Einstein, corresponding constantly with like-minded people all over the world: cardinals, astronomers, theologians, mathematicians, the whole stubborn lot of them, going against the grain in all directions.

All the time he revised, condensed, discarded, until at the time of his death a dozen or so unfinished pages held the nucleus of a, to him, irrefutable argument for the preferred position of our created earth. Those of you who know something of this quest will understand the possible epitaph that we thought of this week:

Now Wolter van der Kamp is on a spot
Whence he can see what's moving, what is not.

My father was a complex and private man, but all who knew him experienced, along with this sternness, his intellectual rigour, a deep devotion to family, a childlike delight in the beauties and the mysteries of the creation, and an open dependence on God. All these, I dare say, have left their mark on family and friends. My siblings and I hardly dare to speak about our plans for tomorrow without adding *Deo Volente*, God willing.

None of us live autonomously, and I have given a brief account that hardly does justice to the role of my mother, and the role of countless others in my father's life. On behalf of my family I want to thank all you who have joined us today from various times and aspects of his life, and I want to honour all of you for the trust and support, the respect and forbearance you have shown him. In particular I want to thank the members of St. Luke's parish for providing him for a while with a resting place on

his spiritual pilgrimage.

My father was fond of quoting the apostle Paul, a kindred spirit. At one point Paul is berating the Corinthians for dividing into factions for Apollo and himself. Leave off arguing, he says. I laid the foundation and the Judgment will tell who built on it with gold and who with straw. My father's sentiments exactly, although, like the apostle Paul, I think he was fairly sure which of those two materials he was using himself. To the end of his life, however, he remained willing to be convinced that it was straw after all, to be discarded for better stuff, and I like to think that in the end that is the most significant mark he left on us, the understanding that on this pilgrimage there are always new horizons to draw us further along on our way to the place where finally we will belong.

Now he has stood again at a gate, alone before dark and windy water. And he would be the first to say that under the aspect of eternity he had no more to show for his life than the boy of ten, and was no more at home here, that even the fold of this life's work is little better than dross before Our Maker. But he was sure of the passage to the far side, sure of the Grace that kept him here and awaited him there, knowing in Whom his hope was founded.

End of the three obituaries for Walter van der Kamp

A copy of this compilation may be available
from origins@ev1.net if still functional

2001 A.D.