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Some mocked

By G.Ph. van Popta

The teaching of the resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday is a teaching often mocked. Dead is dead! How can someone rise from the dead? The resurrection is an impossibility!

Brilliant theologians scoff at the New Testament's proclamation of the literal, historical, physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. One of this century's most influential New Testament scholars, Rudolf Bultmann, denied that the tomb was empty on that first day of the week because "a corpse cannot become alive again." We are to understand the story of the empty tomb as myth rather than as literal history. It belongs, we are told, to the legend interwoven with the historical facts of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. The early church is said to have created the story about the resurrection of their dead leader. The proclamation of the resurrection is written off as the product of hero worship. The darkened minds of enlightened people just cannot believe in a resurrection from the dead. And so the fifth article of our catholic and undoubted Christian faith, "On the third day He arose from the dead," is, at best, highly doubtful.

These skeptics are not the first to mock the resurrection. In Acts 17:32 we read that when Paul proclaimed the resurrection of Christ, some of his listeners mocked.

Paul was in Athens. He spoke in the synagogue and in the market place with whomever he could about the Christ. He met some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers.

Stoics wanted to live in harmony with nature. They subscribed to a pantheistic theology. God was the soul of the world. They identified the creator and the creature. Stoicism also promoted "death with dignity." It commended suicide as an honourable escape from a life which could no longer be lived with dignity.

The Epicurean school of thought said that pleasure was the main goal in life. The Epicureans said that our lives are subject to luck and chance. The best you can hope and strive for is some pleasure in life.

Stoicism and Epicureanism were two pre-Christian pagan attempts to make some sense of life. *Post-Christian* paganism has not come up with anything better. The contemporary pagans of the Green Movement endorse the pantheistic theology of the Stoics. They believe that all is god and god is all. As well, the "death with dignity" movement of today goes back to Stoicism. Other modern pagans are concerned only with pleasure and enjoyment. To get some pleasure out of this rotten life is their Epicurean goal.

The philosophers heard Paul speaking about Jesus and the resurrection. Some thought he was just a babbling peddler of second-hand scraps of philosophy. Others said that he was promoting foreign divinities – Jesus and *Anastasis* (the Greek word for "resurrection" – Acts 17:18).

This caught their interest. Athenians loved to hear something new. The philosophers took Paul to the Areopagus to

have him explain somewhat this talk about these foreign gods, Jesus and Anastasis. The Areopagus was a court which had jurisdiction over things to do with religion and morals.

Paul held forth in the Court of the Areopagus. He proclaimed God the Creator who made all things and sustains all things. He called his listeners to repentance and to faith in the one true God, because the day in which all people will be summoned to appear in the *supreme* court, the Court of God, is coming. God will judge the world by a man whom He has raised from the dead.

The Stoics and Epicureans listened up to this point. They realized that Paul was not speaking about some foreign gods, Jesus and Anastasis. He was warning them about impending world judgment by the only true God. This God who created all things is no foreigner in Athens. He is the God with whom all must reckon whether they live in Athens, Jerusalem, or Rome. He will judge the world by Jesus whom He raised from the dead.

Many lost interest when Paul began to speak about the resurrection. Some said they would like to hear more about this topic at a later date. Others mocked.

If Paul had spoken of *noble* things, like the immortality of the soul, they would have kept listening. But the idea of the resurrection of a dead body was repugnant. The ultimate goal, in their opinion, was for the human soul eventually to *escape* the body, like a bird escapes its cage.

Today, as well, many mock the resurrection. The bones of Jesus of Nazareth are supposed to be lying somewhere in Palestine. Dead is dead. They deride the teaching of the resurrection of all people. They scorn the notion of the great and final judgment. If there is no judgment, then there is no need for repentance. If dead is dead and there is no resurrection, we need not worry about how we live. We can make our pleasure the main goal of life rather than obedient service of God.

Modern day Epicureans

If we live in a closed universe where all is god and god is all, then when we die we enter into a new relationship with the Divine All which is creator and creature at the same time. We need not concern ourselves with making ready to meet our Maker and be judged by Jesus Christ.

Contemporary Stoics

Let us, people who hold to each of the articles of our undoubted and Christian faith, continue to confess that "on the third day He arose from the dead." Let us continue to confess that "He will come to judge the living and the dead." And let us make ready.

Some will mock. But the Word proclaims the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The true Church of Christ confesses it. 

Theonomy and Christian Reconstructionism₂

By R. Aasman

III CRITIQUE

1. Relationship of Old and New Covenant

Greg Bahnsen makes the relationship between the Old and New Covenants seem simple: presume continuity, keep the Old Testament laws exhaustively except for certain parts such as the ceremonial law, and see to it that the civil government exercises the Old Testament law along with its penal sanctions. Granted, he admits this will take a lot of work, especially with a view to cross-cultural differences for the judicial law. He also admits there is not a law for each and every situation in life. Furthermore, there will have to be massive evangelization to convince the world of adopting the law. But in reality, this simple approach does not work and what it does is deprive us of some of the real depth and meaning of the Old Covenant in relation to the New.

One of the problems in theonomy, specifically in Bahnsen, is the infeasibility of his own methodology: presume continuity except in cases where the New Testament specifically informs us there is no continuity. He repeatedly warns against methodologies and theologies which presume discontinuity because the Old Testament is fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Now Bahnsen recognizes the redemptive-historical development in Scripture, and he recognizes certain discontinuities. He sees, for instance, that according to Scripture, the ceremonial law is inoperative in the New Testament era. He also points out that the judicial laws must be cross-culturally applied, and many other parts of Old Testament law which deal specifically with Israel's physical presence in Palestine, such as cities of refuge and the matter of levirate, are no longer applicable. The problem is, if one takes such a methodology

then he has to stick to it. For instance, when we read Deut. 17:2-17 that a man or woman who worships other gods is to be put to death, then based on theonomy's methodology, the state today must execute idolaters. There are some theonomists who will say this is so. But others start to make qualifications why certain judicial laws do not need to be kept any more. It has been said by a number of critics of theonomy: it dies the death of a thousand qualifications. Either theonomy sticks to its methodology or it begins to presume discontinuity on the basis of another methodology, namely, that with the coming of Christ there is a significant redemptive historical change! I think that some theono-

mists who are recognizing the non-workability of their own methodology are moving more in the direction of recognizing the discontinuity or the fulfillment brought about by Jesus Christ.

It should be pointed out, at least briefly, that Bahnsen's use of general equity is different from the way that John Calvin and the Westminster Confession use it. Calvin and the Westminster Confession maintain that both the ceremonial and judicial law have been abrogated in use because they are shadows fulfilled in Jesus Christ. For Calvin, even the punishments of the Old Testament law belonged to the shadows fulfilled in Christ, and therefore they do not require strict adherence by civil



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governments today (*Institutes*, IV xx 16). Basically what is meant by general equity is wonderfully summarized by our Belgic Confession, article 25 (which contains the thoughts of Calvin and is critical to our whole understanding of the relationship of the Old Testament and New Testament): *the ceremonies and symbols of the law have ceased with the coming of Christ, and . . . all shadows have been fulfilled, so that the use of them ought to be abolished among Christians. Yet their truth and substance remain for us in Jesus Christ, in whom they have been fulfilled. We should be cautious of being drawn in by Bahnsen's explanation where he makes it sound as if he is in complete agreement with the confessions and Calvin, when in actual fact he is maintaining the use of Old Testament laws which have been fulfilled in Christ. Neither the Belgic Confession nor the Westminster Confession are speaking of a simple cross-cultural change. At the same time we must appreciate that the truth and substance of the Old Testament law do remain for us today: seen Christologically they teach us about how to love God and our neighbour, how to remain separate and holy from an unbelieving world, etc. Bahnsen is certainly not completely off tract with his emphasis of the Old Testament laws, even though we have some concerns about his methodology.*

As we have seen, Bahnsen's classic text is Mt. 5:17-20. He has no argument from us as to his assertion that in this passage Jesus Christ is not aborting the law. However Bahnsen's exegesis and translation is unsound when he affirms that Christ is saying that he is confirming or ratifying the Old Testament law for New Testament use and that therefore not one part of the Old Testament law is abrogated till the end of the world. Instead what Christ is saying is that not one part of the Old Testament is abrogated or rendered useless because it all finds its perfect fulfillment and validity in Him. In this passage the Lord Jesus anticipates the charge of being a revolutionary who is overthrowing the law and prophets because of the beatitudes which he has just delivered. He says: I did not come to abolish them but to fulfil. To fulfil means to fill something to the fullest, to the very brim. It means to bring something to its complete realization. Think of this in the light of what Christ is saying: I have come to fulfil the law and prophets. That means: I have come with the spe-

cific messianic purpose to complete what was incomplete, to realize what was unrealized, in short, to bring all that was promised, predicted and foreshadowed in the whole Old Testament to its intended purpose. Therefore the entire Old Testament points to and is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It must be read Christologically or it just does not make any sense. What our Lord Jesus Christ is doing here is explaining that Scripture must be read and understood redemptive-historically.¹

The Gospel according to Matthew often uses the word "fulfil" in the way we have just interpreted it. Think of Mt. 2:13-15 where we read that Joseph and Mary had to flee with their baby Jesus to Egypt for fear of Herod. Matthew concludes: *This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my son."* What this reference to Hosea 11:1 shows is that Israel's stay and deliverance from Egypt is unrealized and remains in shadow until Christ himself goes into the exile, the Egypt, of his people, taking their sins, condemnation and punishment on himself, and so bringing about the true and eternal deliverance from sin and death for them. There are more examples like this in Matthew. Think also of what Jesus Christ taught the two men on the road to Emmaus after his resurrection in Lk. 24:27: *And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.* Absolutely everything in

OUR COVER



the Old Testament is a prophecy of Christ and his work. The Old Testament is Christological, finding its fulfillment in Christ.

Obviously there is continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament: one cannot even read or understand the New Testament apart from the Old Testament. But at the same time there is also discontinuity. There is a significant change with the life and work of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament was a time of types, shadows and ceremonies which did a wonderful job of keeping Israel on the right tract – equipping Israel to prepare and wait for the coming of the Messiah. Paul elaborates on this in Gal. 3 and 4 where he speaks about the law restraining Israel and being a custodian until Christ came. He also distinguishes the church in the Old Testament as a child in comparison to the church of the New Testament which is an adult. In other words, the child Israel was held in custody by the law, he was corralled by the law along with all its types, shadows and ceremonies to stay focused on the coming Christ and so be led to Christ. Bahnsen says that Paul is only speaking about the ceremonial law here, but Paul does not say that: he refers to the entire law. The purpose of the Old Testament law was to hold and lead the church to Christ also showing the church the salvation which would be accomplished by the Christ. It did that admirably.

However it is also clear that the law given through Moses was a temporary arrangement, something to be set aside when its divine purpose was accomplished. As Paul writes in Gal 3:24,25: *So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian.* When Jesus Christ fulfilled the law and the prophets, the church came of age, reaching adulthood. Therefore an adult in Christ, the church does not need the custodianship of those things which temporarily kept the church in his infancy to stay focused on Christ. In fact the New Testament church is not allowed to return to a time of pedagogical tutelary bondage as if Christ has not come yet.² Rather the church is to read and understand the Old Testament Christologically. Bahnsen says you are changing God's Word when you do this. But it must be understood that this change is integral to God's plan and progress in the history of redemption. John Calvin, John Murray, Herman Rid-

derbos and Klaas Schilder all emphasized the continuity between the old and new covenants, but at the same time they also emphasized a change, a discontinuity. Schilder speaks of God revealing, His never changing will, but in the light of changing economies or dispensations.³ Ridderbos⁴ and Murray⁵ speak of the validity of the Old Testament law placed under the condition of its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The law is Christological, finding its permanent and final embodiment of truth in Jesus Christ. He is the end of the law as Paul writes in Rom. 10:4. To act as if the law is continued in the same way it was upheld in the Old Testament is to make it independent of its redemptive-historical character in pointing to Christ, and thus undermine the work of Christ. In fact, the law has no meaning or efficacy apart from Christ. Its value rests in working for the day that it would be fulfilled in Christ. Therefore to insist that the Old Testament law continues in use in the New Testament as Theonomists desire is to introduce a fundamental and dangerous change to God's whole purpose in regards to the law and his plan of redemption.

Perhaps you might feel that we are headed for antinomianism if we speak about this difference in the old and new covenants. But that completely misses the point. We are not now in the New Testament without the law. On the contrary as Paul writes in 1 Cor. 9:21: *not*

being without law toward God but under the law of Christ. We may also think of Jesus Christ's Sermon on the Mount where he was concerned with the minute points of the law and showed the law in glorious depth. Think also of Jer. 31:34 and Heb 8:10 which speak of the law written on the heart. Someone who has embraced Jesus Christ as Saviour will not externalize the law but internalize it so that it is daily his delight and he applies it concretely from the heart in thought, word and deed. He will daily meditate on God's Old Testament law, in the light of its fulfillment in Christ, and he will apply it assiduously to his life. Moreover, contrary to what Bahnsen writes, the teaching of Jesus Christ and the apostles contains many directives for righteous living in the kingdom of heaven. In fact the ten words of the covenant are found back in the New Testament. Generally speaking, as far as Old Testament law is concerned – and here is the hermeneutical approach to the relationship of the Old Testament and New Testament as described by Herman Ridderbos – only that part is to be suspended in literal, everyday usage whose contents are no longer compatible with the meaning of the administration of salvation inaugurated by Christ's coming.⁶ That is to say, the shadows which obscured the heavenly realities, and that which was designed to hold people until Christ came are no longer in use

today. This is not mobility in revelation as Bahnsen would charge but it is a right understanding of the history of redemption, in which the validity of the Old Testament law is placed under the condition of its fulfillment in Christ.

What should be clear is that with the greater blessing of the new covenant also comes greater responsibility to keep God's law. In so far we are to be true theonomists. It should also be clear, as Bahnsen points out as well, that God's Word is not a legal code book which has a law for each and every situation in life. Thus He has granted us the Spirit of Christ who writes the law on our hearts and He has made us sons – not slaves – who from the heart will carefully discern God's will and apply it in every aspect of life. We also naturally turn to the Old Testament which has truth and validity still for today. That is true theonomy. **C**

(to be continued)

¹I follow the exegesis of Dr. Jakob van Bruggen in his *Matteus* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1990).

²See article by Robert Knudsen. William S. Barker and W. Robert Godfrey, eds., *Theonomy: A Reformed Critique* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), p. 20.

³Found in Schilder's *Dictaat Compendium der ethiek*.

⁴Ridderbos, *Kingdom*, p. 311.

⁵John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), pp. 190.

⁶Ridderbos, *Kingdom*, p. 311.

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By R. Schouten

Call Upon God³

[In previous articles, we discussed prayer as responsive communication with the kingly Creator-Redeemer who has revealed Himself in His Word and we examined the various parts of Christian prayer]

Praying for Promised Good

For what may we pray? In the first place, for everything that God has promised to us. In his exposition of prayer, Calvin describes prayer as a

mining of the treasures that were promised to us in the Gospel. His words are "Therefore we see that to us nothing is promised to be expected from the Lord, which we are not also bidden to ask of him in prayer. So true is it that we dig up by prayer the treasures that were pointed out by the Lord's gospel, and which our faith has gazed upon."¹

In the Scriptures, the Lord promises His people a great deal: forgiveness of sins, peace beyond understanding, the

indwelling of the Holy Spirit, strength against temptation, protection against the evil one, eternal life and eternal life. If we made a list of the promises of God, it would be very long indeed.

If God has bestowed such rich promises on His people which all find their yes and Amen in Christ (2 Cor. 1:18), how is that we find ourselves often spiritually down and out, impoverished or even penniless? The answer is: we do not have because we do not ask.

We are poor because we do not go to the fountain of all riches. As Lord's Day 45 teaches us: "God will give His grace and the Holy Spirit only to those who constantly and with heartfelt longing ask Him for these gifts and thank Him for them."

For what then must we pray? If we examine the prayers in the Psalms and elsewhere in Scripture, we will find that these prayers do not focus on personal needs. Instead they focus on God's glory, on the coming of His Kingdom, on the hallowing of His Name and the doing of His will. Even when personal needs are brought forward they are made subordinate to these greater goals. For example, if someone lacks a job, they may pray for a job. Why? Only to have money to spend on their passions? No, but so that they may use their job and its income for seeking God's Kingdom and its righteousness.

Thus, we may and must pray for all things necessary for us to be living members of Christ's church. Wisdom, insight into Scripture, growth in love and faith and knowledge, maturity, courage, steadfastness, patience in suffering, thankfulness in well-being, food

and drink, and likewise many other Christian virtues are to be sought diligently of God in prayer.

In the prayers of the apostle Paul, of which we find many in his epistles, there is a constant stress on the progress of the Gospel in the world. He often calls upon the churches to be his co-workers in mission. How are they to do so? The answer is: by lifting up the cause of the Gospel to the throne of God (e.g. 2 Thess. 3:1; Col. 4:13). Also today, the missionary work of the church must be at the epicenter of our prayers. It must be our heartfelt desire to see every knee bow at King Jesus and every sinner reconciled to God.

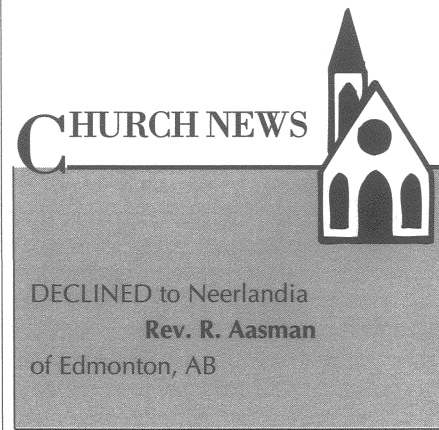
As did Paul, all Christians are to pray for the well-being of the church, especially their own congregation. They are to ask the Lord to equip the elders and ministers of the Word for their crucial task so that the local church may be faithful to God. Furthermore, there are many encouragements in Scripture for believers to intercede for each other. They are to pray for the sick, the poor, the wayward, the lonely, the handicapped, the orphans and widows. In this intercessory prayer is found God's cure for egoism and self-centeredness. In their prayers, Christians also remember those who face persecution, asking God to grant liberty and in the meantime steadfastness. In their prayers, they must seek the destruction of the evil one and of all false religion.

For all these matters, the Lord has given instruction and example to pray and He has bound Himself to hear our prayers. He promises to use our prayers for the advancement of His Kingdom. He says: ask and you will receive. Seek and you will find.

Self-Denial in Prayer

There is another class of prayers, which while certainly permissible, have no guarantee of a positive divine answer. For example, a desire for a job, for a boyfriend or girlfriend, for success in school is legitimate. Indeed, the Bible encourages us to bring all our human needs before the Lord. If someone has a heartfelt desire for something but does not seek God's help and blessing, we can hardly take that person seriously as a Christian.

However, if we come to God with our human desires, we must also be willing to accept His will. If a Christian is in jail because of his faith, he may



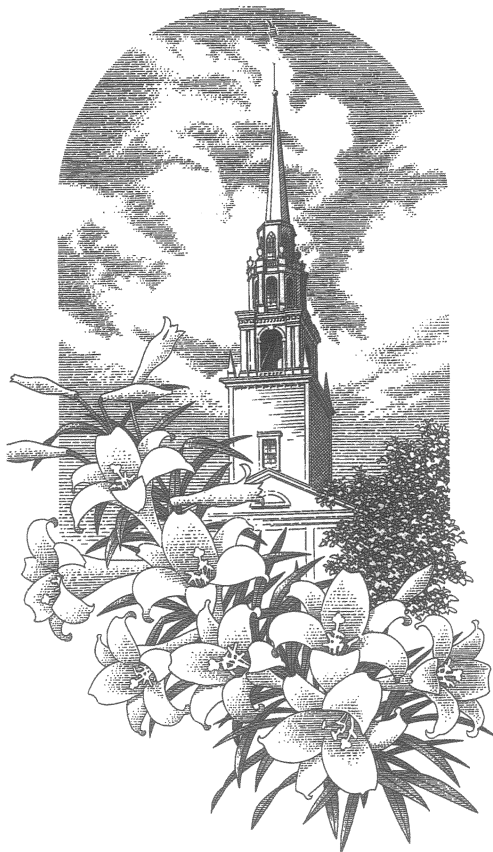
pray for freedom. If a Christian is lonely, she may pray for a husband. If our job has become unbearable, we may ask God to lead in a new direction. However, in all such prayers, there ought to be the element of surrender to God's purposes.

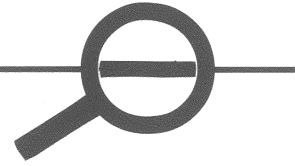
In other words, the cross of self-denial must find its place in every prayer. After all, prayer is not a matter of going with demands to the Lord. Instead, true prayer represents a complete surrender to the will and purposes of God. Instead of saying, "My will be done," we confess, "Not my will, but thine, be done." For these reasons, our personal needs and desires must not become an obsessive marathon of prayer before the Lord. After all, by the very act of prayer, we are confessing that God is a wise and good Father. His answer must be superior to our desire.

In summary, we see that Biblical prayer does not rise primarily from a person's own "felt needs." Prayer has a much broader scope than our own personal comfort and pleasure. It is not a tool for increasing our conveniences. Instead, prayer is the cry of a soldier on the cross for strength in battle and for the ultimate victory of God's Kingdom. Our personal needs and desires have a place in prayer only when we subject them to the higher cause of God's glory. Otherwise we would pray wrongly, to spend things on our passions – to use and enjoy them outside of fellowship with God (see James 4:4). It goes without saying that God does not hear such self-centered prayers. C

(to be continued)

¹Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977). Book III.20.2 Calvin's discussion goes on for 70 pages and is very practical and stimulating – worth the price of many contemporary volumes on prayer.





Get a Life: Throw out your Television

Television has received a more or less expected place in all but relatively few Canadian Reformed households. Things like television that become widely accepted are often not subjected to ongoing careful scrutiny that is sometimes warranted. Recently an article under the above heading appeared in The Banner (January 31), written by James A. Herrick, associate professor and chair of the Department of Communication at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. Ponder the points he raises carefully. Your use of the television may never be the same. Perhaps you'll get rid of it.

The article is reprinted here in its entirety with the kind permission of The Banner.

People sometimes ask why I, a professor of communication, do not have a television in my home. When I explain my reasons, the usual response is something like, "I admire that decision, but I don't think it would work for my family."

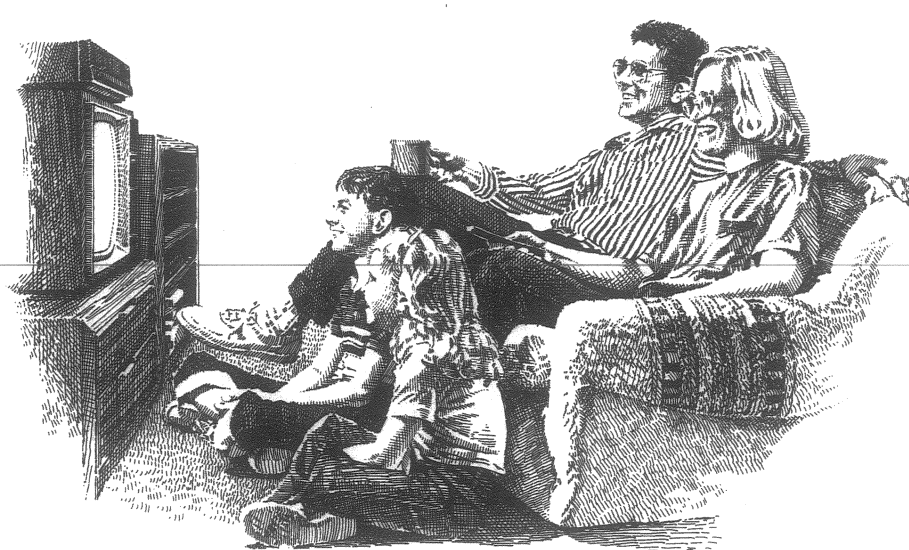
Each person and each family must decide how to respond to the television dilemma. Why do I call it a dilemma? Because virtually every Christian recognizes that American commercial television is *not* a vehicle for elevating the human spirit and honoring God. In fact, most of us recognize that television usually works against those two goals. Nevertheless, we find television attractive as a source of entertainment and information, and as a window on a rapidly changing world.

So, why should a thoroughly modern American or Canadian choose to get rid of the tube and risk committing cultural and maybe even intellectual suicide?

I think that Christians *can* make a perfectly reasonable and spiritually informed decision to eliminate television from their lives and choose the cultural path less traveled. At the same time, I want to say that throwing out television is not a Christian's obligation. My wife's and my choice not to have a television in our home is a personal decision. We have five reasons for turning off the set and leaving it off:

TV's premise is corrupt

I object to the system that drives television. Modern television in North America is not simply a medium for de-



livering entertainment and information. It is actually an enormous industry centered on garnering viewers of commercials. Entertainment and information: if that's what they really are – are simply bait in television's great fishing expedition for audiences. Television seeks audiences for only one reason: to sell those audiences to advertisers.

Television viewers are aware of the commercials that break up their favorite shows, but they are often less aware that commercials are the *whole point* of television as we know it and that programming is simply a means of securing attention to those commercials.

You might think, So what? Here's my point: to watch television means that I am investing uncompensated time

(unless the programs are my compensation) as a commercial viewer and that my time is being sold to an advertiser by a programmer. No thanks.

This whole system's disregard for its viewers as human beings is particularly evident in so-called children's programming and its accompanying advertisements. The television industry simply cannot muster any understanding of people other than as members of a market, and it honors no ethical constraint other than the bottom line. The products and programs it directs at children prove this point.

TV viewing wastes time

Television viewing is a gigantic waste of time. The typical North Amer-

ican family has the television on for five or six hours each day, and in many households it's on for considerably more time than that. The only other activities to which most of us devote that much time (assuming someone is actually watching during those hours) are work and sleep. In other words, when we have time to ourselves, the only time we can spend as we please, many of us choose to watch television.

How much of a reward do we get for that investment of time? Painfully little – we get a heavily edited and radically skewed view of world events through news programming, and the shallow comedies and tragedies of prime time. Given the choice, I would rather spend my free time reading, playing with my children, talking with my wife, doing something with a friend, working, or serving in ministry. We have precious little time as it is, without the television being on, for the important relationships that make life worth living.

Television harms relationships

Television robs those relationships of time. Marriage, for example, needs communication, and communication takes time – lots of time, regular time. Television steals the time it takes to build a marriage worthy of being called a marriage. Television also affects the parent-child relationship, for the same reason. And watching television together doesn't build relationships. It does not encourage communication, either while people are watching it or afterward.

Finally, television affects the relationship between the believer and God. Television distracts us, redirects our attention, advocates debased ideas, and

imports extra noise into our lives. All of these factors diminish the focused and reflective time we need to nurture a relationship with Christ – which suggests my fourth reason for reconsidering how we relate to television.

Television is junk

Let's fact it – typically, television is anything but edifying. Need I elaborate? Does television programming call me closer to God, encourage me to do what is right, humble me for service, prepare me mentally to face a world that needs and yet rejects Christ? Even at its best, television seldom accomplishes any of these ends. And even when it inadvertently does do something edifying, there are any number of surer paths to spiritual vigor and insight – like prayer, Bible study, worship, fellowship, letter writing, reading, even (and maybe especially) silence. Most of us need more, not less, incentive to live our lives in ways that will please our Lord.

You just don't need it

My final reason for turning off the tube is that we often watch it with an unexamined concept of entertainment. We usually justify television as a means of entertaining ourselves, of relaxing from the demands of work. Perhaps we need to rethink our idea of entertainment and ask ourselves whose idea of entertainment we have adopted. Many Christians have accepted the Hollywood notion that entertainment is amusement without boundaries, whether those boundaries are of time or subject matter.

I am not arguing here about the tired duo of sex and violence. Rather, I

am asking that Christians think about what leisure time should accomplish, about which activities are appropriate for rest and relaxation, and about how much of our time should go to such activities. God has ordained time and activities that refresh the body and the spirit – for example, physical exertion, music, conversation, silence, sleep, worship, prayer, friendship, and play. What's more, the Bible even suggests the proper balance of such activities with the other normal activities of life – particularly work.

Where does television fit into the Biblical balance? In my way of thinking, nowhere. As a means of refreshment or even of amusement, it is meager at best and fatiguing at worst. Television is a deadening and draining activity for most people, especially for children. It refreshes neither the body nor the spirit. Rather, it anesthetizes those uniquely human qualities rejuvenated through rest: reason, joy, humor, creativity, relationship, love.

These are some of my reasons for a voiding the tube. And, by the way, finding other and better sources of entertainment and information is not at all difficult – the challenge is an enjoyable one to tackle! Families freed from television will find a lot of imaginative and satisfying ways to fill newly discovered time; doing without television is *not* difficult.

I don't want people who do watch television to feel guilty about doing so. But I think Christians need to remember that each of us has precious little time on this earth and that there are many great ways to employ that gift of time. Television isn't one of them. **C**

NEWS MEDLEY

By W.W.J. VanOene

"Are you not writing any more newsmedleys?" more than one brother or sister asked me. And one of the faithful suppliers of bulletins wrote, among other things, the following: "Even though you have "retired" from regular *Clarion* writing, I hope it is not the end of the "news medley." It sure binds a tie together for all the churches. In this day of "independentism" it is good to be kept together."

Thank you all for this encouragement. Here we are, then, with another installment.

For the longest time, I think, we started from another region than from the Fraser Valley. That's why we start there this time.

When Aldergrove separated from Langley, they received a certain amount to help them on their way. But what is money in the bank? The interest rate is very low and the price of land is going up all the time. Thus it is understandable that the consistory reported: "The recommendation of the Committee of Administration to investigate purchasing



real estate with the money received from Langley Church was approved."

In nearby Langley the "Langley Christian Youth Association is planning to open a youth drop-in center. The organizational work is progressing well. We have received several offers of goods and services but still need more. We are still in need of a few 'big ticket' items such as the following: pool table and VCR. In order to operate such a youth center we are also in need of funds."

Already more than thirty years ago we had a meeting in New Westminster where the establishing of such a youth center was discussed. Nothing came of it at that time. Personally I still have fond memories of such a center in the town where we then lived. Every Saturday evening we went there and played checkers or chess or just were reading magazines and books. Those evenings were closed at a decent time and in an appropriate manner.

Port Kells appears to be coming closer to the execution of their plans for a church building. The consistory was discussing the building plans with the Committee of Administration. "The function of the building, outside appearance, roof construction, possibility of expansion, placement on the property, and noise factors were some of the main points considered."

The brothers and sisters experienced a setback when the barn of one of the members burned down from the contents of which little could be salvaged. There was also a pipe organ in it that had been purchased and was being thoroughly overhauled.

Going to Cloverdale, we mention that preparations are under way to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of Cloverdale's institution. The consistory also discussed the topic "Should a ministry for youth be set up?" "Further study of this matter will be done at future meetings."

I do not know what today's youth thinks about such an institution. From my own teen years I remember that there were special "youth elders" but we never noticed much more of their activities than that they attended some of our meetings once in a while. Moreover, we preferred to be treated the same way in which other church members were treated and more or less resented our "special position." But perhaps things have changed in this respect too.

Coming to Chilliwack we read that the consistory decided that "a suggestion will be forwarded to have the Subscription Form added to the forms in the *Book of Praise*." The only "problem" I see here is that there is no generally adopted subscription form. What is usually being utilized is a translation of the old form of Dort. It has served well and there is no reason why it should not be included in a future printing of the *Book of Praise*.

A quick trip to Australia brings us the happy news that "the city of Rockingham has already passed our concept plan for the new property, thereby permitting us to allocate the land for church and school use."

It is only one step from Rockingham in Western Australia to Smithers in British Columbia isn't it?

Not only does Smithers not have a minister of its own, there is also a vacancy for the mission work. The activities are continued and this with the help of volunteers. The Mission Board does try to bring some more "order" in the work. It presented a proposal to the consistory "for a temporary Home Mission Worker to continue work full time in the time of vacancy. The proposal is discussed at length and with some adjustments is accepted."

From Smithers we move to Alberta.

The bulletin of the Providence Church in Edmonton has undergone a facelift. In general, the bulletins present a much neater picture than they did in the past. The use of bubble jet printers or laser printers enables the editors and publishers to come with a much more pleasant product. The availability of photocopiers make for a far less messy appearance than the old stencil machines did.

I found a very worthwhile reminder in the Providence Church's bulletin and I pass it on with full agreement. This reminder deals with the sometimes scant information contained in consistory reports.

No, I do not refer now to the non-sensical sentence "Letter from a brother. Will be answered." If you cannot say more than that, say nothing. Or state that "incoming correspondence was dealt with." But what I am referring to now will be clear from the following quotation.

"The short report of the Consistory meetings usually contains the sentence 'Matters of discipline were discussed.' You realize that is all that can be said unless official announcements are made. That statement is to inform you that these matters indeed have the attention of the Consistory on a continuing basis. Brothers and sisters, you know what is involved and many of you also know who is involved. May I ask, do you make these matters matters of personal prayer? These prayers should not be limited to those of the immediate families, Consistory and congregation in the Sunday services."

Via Calgary (that reported that their rent was increased by \$3,600.00 per year!) we reach Taber. In the previous medley a typing mistake was seen: I stated that they could use the former facilities till the end of March 1944! This should, of course, have been 1994. In the meantime, other facilities have been found.

"We have been worshiping in the Elks Hall now for a couple of weeks. It is not perfect, but it seems to meet our needs reasonably well." In a subsequent bulletin we were told that "It is decided to continue the use of the Elks Hall for worship services. Some additional chairs will have to be purchased."

This latter "problem" was solved when fifty chairs were purchased by the Ladies Aid. O those sisters with their multiple ways of gathering funds for all sorts of purposes!

Happy and encouraging news was passed on about a brother who received exemption from membership in the International Union of Operating Engineers. "The Alberta Labour Code is very clear: If the Board is satisfied that an employee, because of his religious convictions and beliefs, objects to joining a trade union *or to continuing as a member*, he is to be exempted."

We join in the expression of gratitude for the room that the Lord still leaves us to use our talents in the field for which we have received them without having to become disobedient to Him, if we want to continue in that field.

Carman (bulletin writers, the name is still CarmAn and not CarmEn!) is faced with the happy difficulty (pardon the seeming contradiction in terms) that the auditorium sometimes proves too small for the gathering worshipers. The Committee of Administration therefore proposed to install "a moveable wall between meeting hall and auditorium to handle the large crowds that we have experienced during the past year due to continued church growth and the many visitors to Carman."

It was decided to go along with this advice.

Expansion is also on the program of the Winnipeg church. "Church Development. Proposal for the congregation is discussed. This proposal will be given to the congregation and discussed at the congregational meeting." Although to the uninitiated this is a somewhat cryptic piece of "information," we trust that in due time also outsiders will be able to learn more about it.

Above we passed on a necessary reminder found in the Providence bulletin. An equally necessary reminder was contained in the Winnipeg bulletin.

"The members are reminded that the first \$350 of their contributions will have to be paid towards our commitments outside of our local church life (as Mission, Theological College, needy churches and needy students, Classis and Synod costs)."

This means that the first \$700 of a married couple's voluntary contribution to the church goes to "outside" causes, that is: outside of the local church. Although they who contribute regularly and in accordance with what the Lord gives them every week or every month do not need this reminder, and although those who are slack and negligent in this respect may not take this reminder to heart, it seemed good to insert it nevertheless. It may make some people think.

The old problem still exists in the Burlington region: the problem of "borderlines." Again "A letter of invitation will be sent to the consistories of Burlington South and Burlington West to send representatives to attend a meeting regarding proposed borderline policy." As the readers will

understand, this letter was sent by Burlington East. Success, brothers!

Quite a few years ago, when thousands of Vietnamese and Laotians fled their native countries, we read about much activity in the midst of the churches regarding the sponsoring of refugees. Lately this activity has diminished considerably. It was good, therefore, to read in the Burlington West bulletin that "the matter of the Iraqi refugee family is being followed up and a committee was appointed to aid in this matter." I consider such a committee far more useful than a "borderline committee."

Although, generally and humanly speaking, we are not likely to experience an emergency such as an earthquake or a tornado when being assembled for worship, yet it is good when the possibility is taken into account and the congregations are prepared for them.

I was reminded of this again when reading that in Brampton guidelines were published for emergency evacuation. It is necessary that the congregation knows how to exit safely in case of an emergency.

And I should know, too, when to exit safely. That moment is there now, for there is no more news to communicated to our readers.

Thus I wish you a very fond good afternoon.

VO

P.S. Thank you for the congratulatory messages written on blank back pages of bulletins. Greatly appreciated. 

A Question of Article 31 C.O.?

By W.W.J. VanOene

In the January 14, 1994 issue of *Clarion* our readers could find an article by the Rev. J.D. Wielenga in which he reacted to what I wrote about the presence of deputies ad Art. 48 C.O. with the admission of a church into the federation. It can be found in *Clarion* No 23 of November 19, 1993.

Actually, I did not feel like reacting to what my colleague wrote. The reason for this is not that he disagreed with me. A disagreement does not bother me at all. What does bother me and made me decide at first not to come back to the matter is the not-so-veiled accusation that I "misrepresented" the relevant general-synodical decision and that I "withheld" material from my readers. This implies insincerity on my part; and since one can never defend oneself against distrust and doubt of one's sincerity, I decided not to write about it again. That at last I do so nevertheless is upon the urging by others.

A Letter

In this connection I would refer to a letter from a brother regarding the same issue. It may be good to insert most of this letter here. I leave out a few personal references.

"There were two glaring omissions in your article 'To be or not to be.' Here is (=are,VO) the data concerning what I mentioned:

1. The Church at Lower Sackville was admitted with the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod;
2. Regional Synod Lincoln 1987 condemned Classis Ontario South, March 1987, for ignoring Art. 85 of General Synod 1986.

I am looking forward to more comment from you in *Clarion* about this.

If I may, on a personal note, I would encourage you to stick to the issue and not try to ridicule the person. I only say this because 'the man in the pew' no longer appreciates that style of writing. Perhaps it once was in vogue, but it no longer is. One brother told me that he throws his *Clarion* across the room when he sees older ministers taking cheap shots at people instead of addressing the question at hand."

I appreciate the frankness of this letter. It was this letter I was referring to in a note added to the newsmedley of Jan.14,1994, when stating that "It appeared that I goofed

on one point." This applied to overlooking the procedures mentioned in the above letter. I'll come back to that, but first a few remarks about something else.

I have been contributing to our magazine for more than forty-one years and have been writing newsmedleys from January 1973 on. *Never*, to my knowledge, have I ridiculed any *person*; never have I attacked a person, never have I cast doubt on anyone's character or integrity. Have I ever I accused anyone of purposely "withholding" material (as the Rev. J.D. Wielenga accuses me of)? Have I ever accused anyone of misrepresenting anything (as this carries the connotation of falsely).

I did ridicule statements and actions, but if anyone can prove that I ever ridiculed a *person*, or cast doubt on anyone's *character*, I shall apologize publicly.

Once again I read the attacked article, and I could not find any trace of ridiculing in it. The only possibility I could vaguely associate with it was the word "clairvoyant." But is this ridiculing a person? It simply denotes a person who sees (or claims to see) what others don't see. In this case, this was "seeing" that something had always been the procedure whereas, in reality, no such procedure existed.

Overlooked

What I appear to have overlooked was that at the Classis Ontario North of March 12, 1987, the Church at Lower Sackville was received into the federation "with the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod." This classis apparently understood the disputed decision of General Synod 1986, Acts Art. 85, as demanding such concurring advice.

And when Classis Ontario South of March 26,27, 1987, admitted the Tri-County Reformed Church at Laurel MD into the federation without asking Deputies of Regional Synod for concurring advice, the Regional Synod East of Oct. 15,16,22, 1987, had to deal with "the appeal of Burlington West 'We request Regional Synod to judge that the procedure followed by Classis Ontario South of March 26,27,1987, in admitting the Tri-County Reformed Church into the federation of Churches was improper, since in conflict with the procedure adopted by General Synod 1986 (Acts, article 85).'"

By the way, can anyone explain to me how the church at Burlington West (in Classis Ontario *North*) can have been wronged (Art.31 C.O.) by the decision of a Classis Ontario *South* referred to above?

This Regional Synod "having read the letter of Burlington West, considers point 2 (second part) of its decision re the report of Deputies ad art. 48 C.O., namely that 'a procedure has been formulated by General Synod 1986 (Acts article 85, III, A,B,C),' decides to answer the church at Burlington West that this procedure should have been followed by Classis Ontario South of March 26, 27,1987."

These are the two items that I overlooked and should have mentioned in my article.

But both events took place well *after* the General Synod of 1986, and therefore do not have the least effect on our understanding of Art.85 of Synod 1989's Acts. They only show how some ecclesiastical assemblies understood this article, but were no actions or practices that led to and formed the basis of 1986's decision. Thus they have no bearing on our understanding of this decision either, and the "withholding" of this information, as Rev. J.D. Wielenga called it, does not make one bit of difference.

To that decision we come now.

Once more: the decision

Although Rev. J.D. Wielenga admitted that I quoted "the decision correctly," yet he stated that I "misrepresented that decision." How can these two things be reconciled to one another?

He also stated that I read "it incorrectly," since I wrote that Synod decided not to *make* rules, whereas in reality it decided not to *revise* existing rules.

To some extent it comforts me that then I am not the only one with my "incorrect reading," for in its letter to the Regional Synod of Lincoln 1987, the consistory of Burlington West wrote of "the procedure decided upon by General Synod 1986." It also wrote "Since this procedure is rather straightforward, Synod did not deem it necessary to formulate other rules or to set up a committee to study the recommendation of such rules." The consistory also spoke of "the procedure adopted by General Synod 1986." In fact, General Synod 1989 did *not* "adopt a procedure," but decided not to revise something.

No one has as yet shown any proof that the assumption that "the procedure for admitting other churches to the federation has always been a matter of local churches with the judgment of classis and the concurring advice of deputies of Regional Synod" has any solid foundation.

Synod only *assumed* that there were rules, whereas there were none.

And a decision based on an assumption which lacks any basis hangs in the air and is just as light. Synod decided not to revise non-existing rules.

Surely, Rev. J.D. Wielenga is correct when he says that "Synod, by its decision, judges that those are the rules it wanted in place, and which Synod would have put in place if they were not already in place according to Synod," but the simple truth is that in ecclesiastical life we are not to go by what we think a certain ecclesiastical assembly *wanted*, but by its decisions, and that's what we are bound by. The rules were not in place, and Synod did not put them in place either.

It is extremely dangerous to reason in the line of "this was the intention of this ecclesiastical assembly." Then anything will be possible. We have to go by *what* has been decided. Leave intentions out of the picture!

To speak of "legalistic opportunism" is bringing in a poisonous element. It is, in fact, an insinuation.

I still deny that we are bound by all sorts of considerations that brought an ecclesiastical assembly to its decision. The decisions are binding, and if a member is convinced that a decision is wrong and that it should be changed, his way to the consistory to enlist its help in changing it is open to him.

But if we should be required to consider ourselves bound by observations and considerations, and consequently under obligation to undertake steps to have them changed or rescinded, even though we agree with the decision itself, we can foresee the following: the ecclesiastical assemblies would practically become permanent bodies because of the avalanches of papers and proposals; and secondly, the virus of *appealeritis*, which is already rampant in the churches, would cause an epidemic.

I agree with Rev. J.D. Wielenga that receiving a newly instituted church, formed by part of the membership of a "mother-church," (e.g. Aldergrove splitting off Langley) is on a totally different level than receiving a church that had no place within the federation as yet. I, for one, have never

mentioned such a case in my argumentation. Why, then, bring it in?

And I do not understand what the introduction of Article 31 C.O. means in the present discussion. Have I not always upheld the obligation to accept decisions by broader assemblies and loyally to execute them?

The point was *not at all* whether we are bound by the 1986 decision in question but *what* was decided? Bringing in Art. 31 C.O. is beating the air in this context. And the veiled accusation of independentism and of defending an action that goes into the direction of the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken I throw far from me.

As for the rest: the water is equally deep on the right and on the left side of the ship indeed, and Art. 31 C.O. applies to *all* the decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies!

Opposed to such a provision?

Would I be opposed to a general-synodical decision by which it is stipulated that deputies ad art.48 C.O. have to be present and give concurring advice as a condition for admitting a church into the federation?

No, I would not, although I would not consider it wise if such a stipulation were added to Art. 48 C.O. Then the Church Order would tend to become a sort of regulation with all sorts of rules and directives.

But when, all of a sudden, at the Classis Alberta/Manitoba of Oct.12-14,1993, the decision of General Synod 1986 was raised and when it was deemed necessary to call the deputies, the question came up: "Why is the presence of these deputies considered necessary *now*, whereas the Classis Alberta/Manitoba of March 17-19,1992, did not ask the deputies to come down but, on its own, decided 'not to grant the request of the Denver church to be admitted as sister church to Classis Alberta/Manitoba of the Canadian Reformed Churches'?" Was Classis March 1992 right or was Classis October 1993 correct? I presume that in neither case it was a foregone conclusion what the result of the discussions and vote (if a vote were necessary) would be.

Examining what Synod 1986 *decided*, I came to the conclusion that Classis March 1992 was entitled to decide about Denver's request without inviting deputies ad Art.48 C.O.

I equally came to the conclusion that calling the deputies on the basis of Art. 85 of the Acts of Synod 1986 was incorrect, as this Synod only decided not to review non-existing rules.

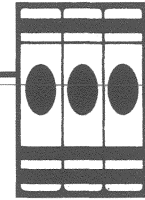
This has nothing to do with Article 31 C.O.

It has everything to do with the obligation of ecclesiastical assemblies to say precisely what they want to say and not to make blanket statements which lack any ground.

VO 

BOOK REVIEWS

By G. Nederveen



Sermons by Thomas Manton

Three volumes of sermons by Thomas Manton were sent to me for review. Each volume is beautifully finished in hard cover and is about 500 pages in length. Price: \$25.95 US per volume; \$71.95 US for volumes 1,2 & 3. The total set consists of 22 volumes and carries the title *The Works of Thomas Manton*. It is a reprint of the 1870 edition. Published by The Banner of Truth Trust, 1993.

The set up of these sermons seems to be typical of the time period. If you are familiar with John Owen's works you will discover a similarity in set up and maybe even in style. No wonder; they were contemporaries.

Volume one gives a memoir of the life and character of Thomas Manton. It is a glowing account about the man but

certainly a "must read" before you get into the sermons themselves. The memoir helps you understand what sort of man he was and the way he preached God's Word.

Thomas Manton was born in 1620 and belonged to the Puritan tradition. A gifted man, he was ordained at the age of nineteen. He became a celebrated preacher who regularly preached before the king and the Westminster Assembly. Dr. Manton had opposed the execution of King Charles I and was instrumental in restoring his son, Charles II, to the throne. Manton served as chaplain to Oliver Cromwell. In due time he fell out of favour with the king and Westminster because he refused to sign the Oxford Oath which stated,

That it is not lawful, upon any pretence whatsoever, to take up arms against the king; and, that we will not at any time endeavour any alteration of the government in Church and State (vol. 1, p. xviii).

Since he did not want to conform to the wishes of parliament he belonged to the Nonconformist Party. In 1662 he was ousted, together with some 2,000 other ministers, in what is known as the Great Ejection. Since that time he preached in his house to small gatherings until his death in 1677.

The second volume begins with "An estimate of Manton" by the Rev. J.C. Ryle, written in 1871. Ryle, who is not of the Puritan tradition, defends the Puritans over against those who look on them with disdain. He comments that

this disdain is due to a lack of knowledge of who the Puritans were. To set the record straight he makes the following statements: the Puritans were not enemies to the monarchy; they were not enemies of the Church of England; they were not unlearned and ignorant men, rather, the great majority of them were Oxford and Cambridge graduates; and, as a body, the Puritans have done more to elevate the national character than any class of Englishmen that ever lived (vol. 2, pp. x, xi). Ryle's view on Manton as a theologian is that he is "a Calvinist in his theology" and "of singularly well-balanced, well-proportioned, and scriptural views" (vol. 2, p. xvi).

As to the main contents of the books I have read several sermons to get a feel for Manton's style. Nearly all the sermons contained in this series were compiled from his notes. Maybe that has some bearing on the fact that the sermons come across more in a lecture format than a sermon style. One thing is

for sure, his audience must have had studious concentration to follow him along. For us who can read this material at our own pace this is no problem. In fact, it is beneficial. Each sermon is divided into a doctrinal part followed by an application. A far cry from what most people today want. The trend is toward application (what does it mean for me, what's in it for me) without digging down to the roots of the matter.

Each sermon is jam packed. By our standards they are lengthy, and very detailed. Interesting is Ryle's view on the matter. He writes, "I hold it to be a prime excellence on Manton's expository sermons that, while they are very full, they are never too long" (vol.2 p. xviii). Be that as it may, sometimes the sermons are more like a commentary than the kind of sermons we usually hear. Manton goes in depth and demands studious concentration in order to benefit from what he dishes up. If you say to yourself, "I'm going to sit

down and read this book", then you are biting off too big of a chunk. This is heavy reading. On the other hand, if you don't bother reading these books, you will miss a lot of beautiful and mind sharpening insights. Ryle is right when he says that there is always something in these sermons from which you will profit. The point is: read it, but take your time to digest what is dished up. After each sermon you've had a meal. And in that way you have many meals to enjoy.

Volume one contains "A practical Exposition of the Lord's Prayer (250 pages); 8 sermons on the Temptation of Christ; 7 sermons on the Transfiguration of Christ; and 8 sermons on Colossians 1.

Volume two contains a mixture of 34 sermons.

Volume three contains 18 sermons on 2 Thessalonians 2 as well as "A practical Exposition upon the Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah" (about 300 pages). **C**

The Sinfulness of Sin

Ralph Venning, *The Sinfulness of Sin*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1993. (paperback, 284 pages; \$6.95 US)

The Banner of Truth Trust has favoured us with another reprint of a 17th century book by a Puritan author. Ralph Venning was born in about 1621 and lived until 1674. He was one of the many ministers that were dispelled during the Great Ejection in 1662 (see review on Thomas Manton).

This is a book of substance and not of the kind you read in one sitting. Its contents is such that you must let it sink in and reflect on it in order to appreciate its value. And valuable it is! I highly recommend this book. Venning gives much food for thought and many things to contemplate.

Perhaps one's first inclination is to shun a book of this nature. It does not sound very appealing to read 284 pages about sin, its causes and its effects. But do not let the title scare you off. Venning writes clearly and has managed to fill these many pages on the topic of

sin without falling into repetition. And it certainly is not tedious reading!

He takes his starting point in Romans 7:13 which in the KJV reads, "Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceedingly sinful." From that last part you can see why the title of the book was chosen, although the original title was *Sin, the Plague of Plagues*.

Based on Romans 7:13 Venning looks at sin from every conceivable angle. This is a thorough study. No wonder that at the end of the book Venning remarks "I would wish with my soul that there might never be an occasion for me or any other to preach on this subject again" (p. 281). Why, then, did he treat this subject so in depth? Because, he says in his customary succinct way, "None can speak well of it (sin [GN]), but they who speak ill of it, for they speak best who speak the worst of sin" (p. 21).

The book is set up in four main sections. It begins with defining sin as transgression of God's law, either in doing what is evil or in omitting to do what is good (p. 25). The next section traces what constitutes the sinfulness of sin. It is perhaps best summarized with these words, "Man's sin is expressed by this, that he turns his back to God and not his face. His punishment is expressed by God turning his back to him and not his face. God behaves not like a friend but a stranger" (p. 68). Section three covers the witness against sin, while the last part gives the application and usefulness of the doctrine of sin's sinfulness.

Enlightening is his treatment of how sin is contrary to God (pp. 29-36) and contrary to man (pp. 37-69). The latter section is again sub-divided into how sin is contrary to man in (a) the natural sense and (b) the moral sense.

Scripture shows how in the moral sense sinful humanity has become like fools. Writes Venning, "Man has become so sottish and brutish that he lives by sense. Now sense will never look to

God who is invisible – that is for faith – but to creatures, which are visible, and the objects of sense . . . what folly is it! To mind the less, and neglect the greater” (p. 52).


The author also spends several pages on how Scripture compares sinful man to beasts. He observes that the Bible does not liken sinners to harmless creatures, but to evil and hurtful beasts. The beasts do not transgress the law of their nature, but men transgress the law of their nature when they act like beasts. Sinful man is worse than the beasts (p. 63). This ties in with his earlier observation that “It would be better to be a beast than to be like a beast. . . . It would be better to be Balaam’s ass

than such an ass as Balaam himself was” (p. 61).

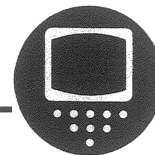
If you like one-liners, you will have plenty of it, both humorous as the one above, and penetrating ones. The book is filled with pithy sayings. A few examples will bear this out.

Concerning the core of our sinfulness Venning observes: “Even the Flood, which washed away so many sinners, could not wash away sin; the same heart remains after the Flood as before” (p. 46). Regarding worship and service to God he comments: “Sin has made men worship either (1) a false God, which is idolatry; or (2) God falsely, which is superstition” (p. 55). With a view to our suffering for Christ’s sake he writes: “when we suffer for

God, God suffers *with* us; but when we sin, God suffers *by* us” (p. 182, italics mine [GN]). About God’s righteous judgments he remarks: “God often punishes less than iniquity deserves, but never more. . . . The worst on this side of Hell is mercy, and the worst of and in Hell is but justice” (p.193).

From the above sampling I think that you have a fair picture of what you can expect in this book. One thing is certain, once you have read this book and contemplated on its many insights, you will not likely ever think lightly about sin again. It is truly an eye opener in many respects. A meditative study with plenty of food for thought. A good investment of time and worth every penny. 

PRESS RELEASES



Classis Ontario South of March 9, 1994

1. On behalf of the convening church of Watford, the Rev. J. VanWoudenberg called the meeting to order and requested that we sing Psalm 1. He then read Jer. 23:1-6 and lead in prayer.

2. The credentials were examined and found to be in good order. All the churches were duly represented. The church at Grand Rapids had instructions.

3. Items of memorabilia:

a. Rev. C. Stam declined the call from Kelmscott, Australia.

b. Congratulations extended to Rev. B. Hofford and Grand Rapids congregation.

c. Rev. D. Agema declined the call from Edmonton Immanuel.

d. Congratulations to the Van Essen’s with the addition of another child (son) to their family.

4. Classis was constituted and the following moderamen took their seats: Chairman – Rev. H. Van Essen; vice-chairman – Rev. J. Ludwig; clerk – Rev. G. Snip.

5. After a few revisions and additions the agenda was adopted.

6. The question period ad Art. 44 CO was held. With reference to this article the church at Attercliffe asked advice on a matter of discipline as did the church at Smithville. The church at Blue Bell asked advice concerning the

celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Advice was given on all three matters, those of discipline being dealt with in closed session.

7. After receiving and examining the pertinent documents Classis proceeded to the approbation of the call to the Rev. B. Hofford from the church at Grand Rapids.

8. In closed session Classis dealt with two appeals. One of the instructions from the church at Grand Rapids pertained to these appeals, namely, the availability of documents for classis’ use. Classis decided to appoint a committee to deal with these appeals and to report back in September of this year.

9. Concerning the “appeal” from the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic of the OPC against Rev. B. Hofford: The consistory of the church at London submitted a request for revision of the previous classis’ decision (Acts, Art. 11B) about the admissibility of this “appeal.” The request was put forward as a proposal which, after amendments, was adopted with the result that the “appeal” was declared inadmissible.

10. Appointments:

a. convening church for next classis: Ancaster

b. suggested officers: chairman – Rev. J. VanWoudenberg; vice-chairman – Rev. G. Snip; clerk – Rev. H. VanEssen

c. place: Lincoln

d. date: June 8, 1994

e. appointed to the ad hoc committee to deal with the appeals (see #8 above): Rev. D. Agema (convenor) Rev. J. DeGelder; Rev. C. Wieske.

f. church at Chatham was appointed to send a representative to the installation of Rev. B. Hofford in Grand Rapids

g. Rev. K. Kok as councillor to the church at Laurel.

11. A personal question period was held.

12. Censure ad art. 44 CO was not needed.

13. The acts were read and adopted; the press release read and approved.

14. Rev. J. Ludwig closed the meeting with prayer after the singing of Psalm 81:14.

For Classis Ontario South of March 9, 1994
J. Ludwig, vice-chairman e.t

Classis Alberta/Manitoba held on March 8-9, 1994 at Edmonton, Alberta

1. Opening: The chairman of the convening Church, Rev. E.J. Tiggelaa calls the delegates to order. Upon his request the assembly sings Psalm 25:1,5. He reads Ephesians 1 and lead in prayer. The delegates and guests are welcomed. A special welcome is extended to the brothers from the Church at Denver. He notes that the Church a

Neerlandia called the Rev. L. Hoogendoorn from the Netherlands and the Rev. R. Aasman from the Providence Church at Edmonton. Both declined these calls. The Immanuel Church at Edmonton was disappointed that the Rev. R. Schouten declined the call extended to him and also that Rev. D.G.J. Agema declined the call to him.

2. The delegates of the convening Church check the credentials. They note that all the Churches have sent delegates. They also report that a credential of the American Reformed Church of Denver is present but that they left it to classis to decide on its status. They report that all the primi-delegates, except from the Church at Neerlandia are present. Both of the Neerlandia delegates are alternates. The Immanuel Church at Edmonton and the Church at Neerlandia have an instruction on their credentials.

There is no objection to the moderamen as proposed by previous classis, namely the Rev. R. Schouten, chairman, Rev. P.K.A. de Boer vice-chairman, and Rev. G.Ph. Van Popta, clerk. The moderamen take their place and the chairman speaks a word of welcome. He also thanks the convening church for the preparations that have been made.

3. Agenda: Upon the suggestion of the chair it is decided to deal first with a letter from Regional Synod W., December 1993 giving its decision made upon the request of Classis Alberta/Manitoba of October 1993 to decide about the non-concurring advice of deputies in the matter of the request of the Church at Denver to receive admission into the federation as well as a letter from the Church at Coaldale and also a letter from the Church at Taber regarding this same matter. At this time the Church at Carman and the Immanuel Church at Edmonton voice objections that the convening Church did not receive the delegates from the Church at Denver and request permission to include this matter in the discussion of the letter from Regional Synod.

4. A proposal to declare the letter from Regional Synod W. December 1993 inadmissible because the Churches have already received its answer in the Acts is defeated and thereby this letter is declared admissible.

5. A proposal to declare the letter from the Church at Coaldale and the letter from the Church at Taber admissible because it addresses Regional Synod W. December 1993 is defeated and thereby these letters are declared inadmissible.

6. Classis continues to deal with the letter from Regional Synod W..

Classis having heard the objections of some delegates to the answer received from Regional Synod W. considers that the objections do not bring forward new points not already decided upon by Classis Alberta/Manitoba of October 1993 and Regional Synod W. 1993 decides that it has received concurring advice to admit the Church at Denver into the federation.

7. The delegates of the Churches at Barrhead, Coaldale and Taber object to the implementation of the classical decision which was supported by Regional Synod W. to admit the American Reformed Church at Denver because of the warning expressed by Regional Synod W. that admitting the American Reformed Church at Denver may well cause the Canadian Reformed Churches to compromise their official stand vis-à-vis the OPC. The Churches at Barrhead, Coaldale and Taber have decided to appeal article 11 of Regional Synod W. December 1993 to General Synod 1995. In the mean time the Churches at Barrhead, Coaldale and Taber may well not be able to recognize the American Reformed Church at Denver.

8. Upon the decision to receive the concurring advice of Regional Synod, the chairman reads the credentials for the delegates of the Church at Denver and welcomes them.

The Rev. M. Pollock is given the opportunity to speak a few words. He expresses gratitude and the hope that we may live together in true unity faithful to the Lord.

9. The request from the Church at Denver for the examination of their minister is dealt with. Since the examination committee was divided regarding the preparation for this examination and not all the examiners are prepared for it, it is decided to postpone it till next classis.

10. Having observed the concern re, the matter whether "its an open question as to whether Rev. Pollock's vows within the OPC obliged him to follow a process of appeal", Classis is satisfied by the explanation that Presbyterian Church polity does not require such a process. On Rev. Pollock's request the Presbytery of the OPC released him from his vows and did not charge him of breaking his vows or accused him of being a schismatic.

11. The Immanuel Church at Edmonton reports that the archives of classis were checked and found to be in good order.

12. Classis treasurer's report is given and received with gratitude expressed to the treasurer for his work.

13. In closed session a report of a church visit made to the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church is read and received.

14. An Ad hoc Committee appointed by previous classis, Re Committee for Financial Aid to Students for the Ministry gives its report including a proposed mandate and application form. This report is provisionally adopted.

15. Question period, ad Article 44 C.O. is held. Classis goes into closed session to give advice in a discipline matter.

16. An appeal from a brother and sister of the Church at Neerlandia is declared inadmissible because it was submitted too late and it does not appear from the material that the matter has been finished at the local level (Article 30 C.O.).

17. A request from Classis Ontario S. for assistance for their needy churches fund is declared admissible. It is decided not to grant this request because our obligation for needy churches is uncertain and it is our understanding that a minister of one of the needy churches in classis district, Ontario S. has accepted a call elsewhere.

18. In an instruction the Immanuel Church requests pulpit supply once a month. This request is granted. The Church at Neerlandia request pulpit supply for once every three weeks which is granted.

19. Appointments: The Church at Calgary is appointed as convening Church for next classis. The date is set for May 17, 1994 at 9:00 AM and is to be held in Coaldale. The proposed moderamen are: Chairman, Rev. R. Aasman, Vice-chairman, Rev. R. Schouten and Clerk, Rev. P.K.A. de Boer. Examiners are also appointed.

20. Personal question period is made use of.

21. The Chairman expresses gratitude that brother censure is not necessary.

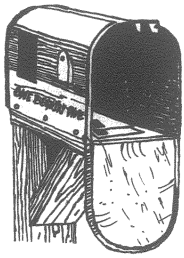
22. The Acts are adopted.

23. The Press release is approved.

24. Closing: The Chairman speaks a word of gratitude for the brotherly manner of classis even though there were strong differences of opinion. He thanks the ladies who served classis with refreshments. The vice-chairman thanks the chairman for the competent way he led classis. The Chairman requests the assembly to sing Psalm 72:5,6 whereafter he leads in closing prayer.

On behalf of Classis

P.K.A. de Boer 



From the Mailbox

Hello, *Heidi dehaan*. Thank you for the thoughtful Valentine card. I like getting cards you made yourself. Hope to hear from you soon! Bye, Heidi.

Hi, *Tarissa Koopmans*. Thank you for the code and letter you sent in. I'm glad you told me your birthday. Next

time it will go in the Clarion for you! If you look in the Clarions from November and December you will find some Busy Beaver's addresses. You could write to one of them. Bye, Tarissa.

Welcome to the Club, *Tetsje Riedstra*! I like your drawing about winter. We'll put it in Clarion next winter. Bye, Tetsje.

Hi, *Rachelle VanVeen*. If you would like to have a pen pal, why don't you try to find a Busy Beaver's address in a Clarion from last fall? There are some Busy Beavers who also want a pen pal.

Bye, Rachelle, happy writing!

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Rosie Krabbendam*! When is your birthday, Rosie, and how old are you? Thank you for the riddle and code. Bye.

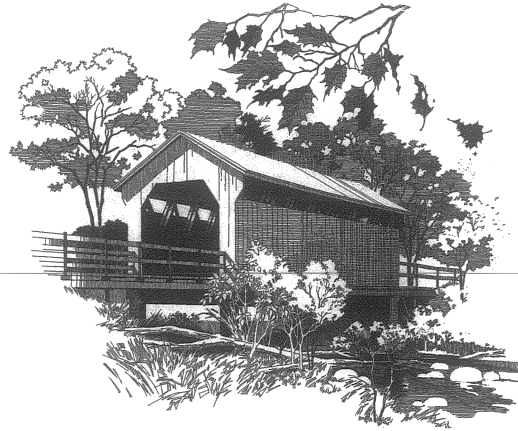
Hi, *Deanna Wierenga*. It must be wonderful to have a new cousin. Does he live close to you? I hope you had a good time at your Aunt Frieda's. Thanks for the puzzle. Bye, Deanna.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Kimberly VanderVelde*. Thank you for the code. The other Busy Beavers will enjoy it for sure. How old are you, Kimberly? Bye.

Hi, *Jessica Linde*. It was a good idea to send in the code you made with your friend. How old are you, Jessica? Bye.

Hello, *Alisha Dokter*! I was glad to hear from you again. A winter storm is sure exciting, isn't it? Thanks for the tongue twister, Alisha. Bye!

Hi, *Alicia Koolsbergen*. Thank you for your letter and the picture of the bird on it. Bye!



TONGUE TWISTER

by Busy Beaver *Alisha Dokter*

THE BIG BLACK BUG
BIT THE BIG BLACK BEAR,
AND THE BIG BLACK BEAR
BLED BLOOD.

Answers to the *Bible quiz*.

1. Philip
2. Paul and Silas
3. Stephen
4. Paul
5. Daniel
6. Dorcas
7. Andrew
8. John the Baptist
9. Matthias and Barsabbas
10. Peter
11. Philip
12. Barnabas and Saul
13. Priscilla and Aquila

Love to you all,
Aunt Betty

