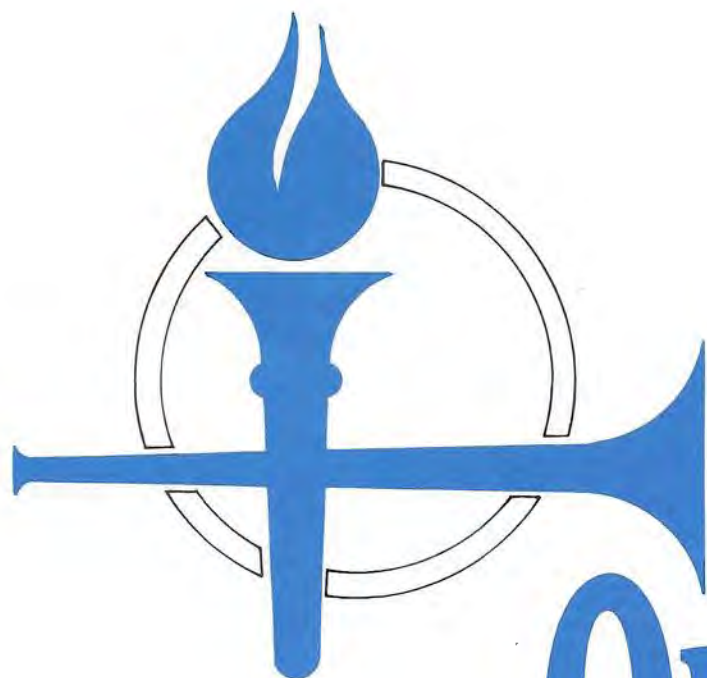




Outlook

*devoted to the exposition
and defense of the
reformed faith*

Militant Feminism

General Revelation?

Recovering Missions

DECEMBER 1988

THE PRINCE OF PEACE

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).



History repeats itself, again and again. This is true of history, of people, of Christians.

In the times of the judges the people of Israel turned away from the Lord and served idols. As punishment, God sent other nations to oppress them. When the oppression became too great, they called to God for deliverance and He raised up judges to deliver them. Then they served the Lord, usually only as long as the judge lived. Their record was no better during the period of the kings. Much depended upon the kind of king Israel had. During David's reign, for example, the nation was richly blessed. But even kings like David, one of the best, failed. And he, too, finally died. There is no hope in man, not even with the best leaders.

That was true of Israel. The ten tribes were finally taken captive by Assyria and never returned. Judah fared a little better, but also was finally taken into captivity by the Babylonians. There seemed to be no hope for the nation. By Babel's streams they sat and wept, hanging their harps on the branches of the willow trees. True believers then must have been deeply concerned about the future of the "church" and of their children.

Isaiah 8 and 9 speak to Judah in one of the periods of spiritual decline before the captivity. The prophet Isaiah warned them and king Ahaz about coming judgments. The outlook was bleak. In chapter 9 the prophet

brings a different message, a jubilant word of hope. A child is going to be born, a special child, to be given of God. The government will be upon his shoulders. And He will be wonderful, a counselor, mighty God Himself, the everlasting Father and because of all these characteristics and virtues, He will be the Prince of peace.

God will come to the rescue, once and for all. Out of His amazing love and faithfulness will come Christmas, the gift of His Son. Being of the house of David He will establish a kingdom like there had never been before. And it will last forever.



The government will be upon His shoulders. In other words, He will be a king, clothed as it were with a royal robe hanging from His shoulders. Some commentators think that this might refer first of all to king Hezekiah, son of Ahaz. Perhaps it does in some way, but it fully and ultimately speaks of Jesus Christ, the son of David. Only He, as the Son of God, could be the fulfillment of such sublime prophecies.

Several names are given to Him. These are not necessarily titles for the coming king, but surely are descriptions of His person and the work He will do, redeeming His people from a world of sin, the curse, corruption, despair and death. He will be so great in His person and work that one title couldn't possibly describe His kingship and work.

His name will be Wonderful. He will far excel everything that is of man's world and that man can produce. This reminds us of the question of Manoaah, the father of Samson. When the angel announced the birth of Samson he asked the angel: "What

John Blankespoor

is your name?" The angel replied: "Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding." What a beautiful answer! Don't we see this fulfilled later in the life and teachings of Jesus? The multitudes marveled at Him, His words and works. "Who can perform miracles like this man? Who can speak like He does?" And remember, He is still the exalted King today. With His power and His promises for His people, He is still the King whose name is Wonderful.

He is also called the Counselor. All kings and rulers have counselors. They need advice, help and counsel. But this king doesn't need that kind of help. His wisdom will far exceed anything that any or all men can give. "The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power" (Ch. 11:2). What a comfort that is for us. Jesus as our exalted Lord rules over us in His infinite wisdom. He assures us again and again, that there is no searching of His understanding. We must trust in Him who directs and controls our lives.

This Baby to be born will also be the mighty God. He will be more than a mighty or god-like hero. He will be God. He will have a divine nature as well as be human. The same thought is later expressed in the name Immanuel, *God with us*. Connected with the previous description of wisdom, it means that He will be all-wise and have almighty power, as God. He will have power over the devil, death and the grave. Nothing can hinder His work to save His people.

A fourth name is Everlasting Father. Some commentators interpret this to mean that as the everlasting One He will be like a father to the saints. The characteristics of a father

are protection, care and love. As king He will have almighty power, but also the love of a father, taking a keen interest in and having a deep personal concern for all of His people in every need they may have. With God the Father working through Him, He will be a Priest who will make payment for their sins on the cross, and will also utter constant, interceding prayers for all His people in all of their needs throughout their lives.

Finally, He will be the Prince of Peace. This is the culminating title. The complete result of His work described in the previous names will be that He will be the Prince of Peace.

He will establish and give peace. The Bible often speaks of peace. Angels sang about it already at the birth of the Savior. Peacemakers are called blessed in the Sermon on the Mount. In the memorable night before His arrest, Jesus, in the upper room, assured the disciples that He would leave them and give them peace. "Peace" was the greeting of the epistles, "Grace, mercy and peace." And Paul speaks of a peace that surpasses all understanding. We can have peace through justification by faith in the work of Jesus (Rom. 5:1). Peace with God means that all things are well between God and us. There is harmony, unity and an inner and outward feeling of restfulness. Negatively, it means a life without *any* fear, and, positively, a full enjoyment of all the spiritual powers and blessing of the Lord, who is the God of peace. Peace with God and our neighbor will finally be a life free from all disharmony, trouble and strife, and, positively, a perfect harmony of love and an inner calmness and enjoyment of rest in Christ, that will surpass all of our present ability to understand.

The government will be upon the shoulders of this child to be born. As such He will be prince who rules. All the work of this wonderful Counselor, mighty God and everlasting Father will culminate in this everlasting kingdom of peace in the new heaven and earth with all the saints of God.

What a Savior He will be, and already is!

• • • • •

This child of whom Isaiah speaks has already been born. He has been here in our world. While on earth He laid the ground-work of the everlasting kingdom of peace. What a blessing



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"And the three companies blew the trumpets...and held THE TORCHES in their left hands, and THE TRUMPETS in their right hands...and they cried, The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon" (Judges 7:20).

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this is for believers living in this world where there is so much of the very opposite of peace, fear, war, tears, hatred, enmity, unrest and death. The ground-work has been laid for peace, in the payment for our sins on the cross. Where there is sin there can be no peace with God or with one another. As a result of His payment Jesus has begun establishing the marvelous kingdom of peace through His Spirit and Word.

In the Old Testament the best of men failed. Moses, the meekest man on earth, failed. David, the man after God's heart, failed. No man, even the best saints and leaders in the church could have saved the cause of the Lord. Only Jesus Christ could and would do it.

Do not fail to notice the words: "To us a son is *given*." He is given to us. No

one merits the blessings of the great coming Son. No one makes himself worthy of them. We have deserved to live in a world of sin, strife, hatred and unrest and then to die in our sins. But He is given to us.

Man's work faileth, Christ availeth
He is all our righteousness
He, our Savior has forever
Set us free from dire distress
Through His merit, we inherit
Light and peace and happiness.

Christ, the Prince of Peace, is Lord today. He's coming again. Then His own will be raised into the kingdom of glory and peace, while the wicked will be condemned forever.

May our Christmas be a time when we try to see anew, although we still live in the world of strife, disharmony, hatred and death, that in Him we can

find peace, because His name is Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace.

May our Christmas be a time when we see that although in present history men's plans and efforts still fail, in Christ our hopes will be fulfilled.

Let's realize the sin and folly of the massive Christmas commercialization.

May we see, in celebrating Christmas, that all we may have in the coming of the Prince of Peace is the gift of God's free grace. He is the great Christmas present.

May our celebration of Christmas deepen our faith in this Wonderful Savior King. May we be ready to meet Him on His return, which may be soon.

HUGEN'S BEST SHOT: A BLANK OR "PROCRUSTEAN HERMENEUTICS"

Steve M. Schlissel

If there is anyone who still doubts the militancy with which "our" seminary advocates feminism, he should listen to Dr. Melvin Hugen. The professor is at the forefront of a small but powerful legion within the Christian Reformed Church, a battle-ready group of men and women whose self-appointed task is to change the way the CRC folk read their Bibles. Even more seriously, he and his hermeneutical clones are training the future crop of ministers for our denomination. This article is a critique of Hugen's speech, sponsored by the Committee "for" Women in the CRC and delivered on the hallowed seminary grounds last April.

He is direct and refreshingly forthright about his beliefs. He pulls no punches, setting forth his position very clearly from the outset:

"I am in favor of having the CRC open all its offices to females as well as males, the office of elder, deacon, evangelist, pastor, teacher, preacher - all the offices. I am personally *convinced* that the Bible not only permits this, but that closely examined it actually teaches that we *ought* so to do. To be faithful to the teaching of Scripture we *ought* to open the offices regardless of gender. It is *required* of us. It is really our *obligation* and, eventually, as a church, we shall *have to* go that way."

So much for the myth of open-mindedness. It is tragic that his theology doesn't share the quality of his dogged zeal.

Hugen's descent to his current convictions was gradual. He traces his

musings on this issue back to August, 1958 when, as a student in Amsterdam doing his dissertation, he began to wonder why marriage seemed to have a different significance for women than for men. The authors he read seemed to account for it on the basis of intrinsic differences in male/female personalities. When he looked into their sources and footnotes for substantiation of their hypothesis he found that the authors referenced each other, or offered no substantiation at all.

He was also troubled by the seeming inability of his sources to define which characteristics were distinctively male or female, and their acknowledgment that there were, in fact, exceptions to the rules within each gender. This led him to wonder, "What if it isn't so? What if there is no

such thing as gender-based personality...but only *human* personality?"

In 1958 he gave no thought to some of the implications of his questions. At that point he was curious only about why marriage was claimed to be more important for women. He was not then concerned with "women's role in society in general or even in the church."

But that would not remain the case. Without describing his journey in detail, Dr. H. insisted "I got from where I was then to where I am today with no new hermeneutic." His four-point hermeneutic he summarized as

- 1) taking the words and statements of the Bible with utmost seriousness. One may ask what they mean, but not if they are true;
- 2) consider the context;
- 3) compare Scripture with Scripture;
- 4) consider "how a given passage fits into the unfolding revelation of

God and the developing kingdom."¹

When he continued to ask questions about men and women he discovered one text that became a turning point for him: Acts 2. It "seems to lay the groundwork for the regulation of the church and the role of many peoples within the church," Hugen said, "Peter stood up in the crowd to interpret and explain to them [what the outpouring of the Holy Spirit] meant. The very first thing he said was, 'Youths, slaves and women have a different role in God's Kingdom because of what happened here.'" Hugen emphasizes, "According to the Scriptures the very first meaning of Pentecost itself that the Scriptures tell us about is this: That prophecy will now come from young men, women, servants, slaves as well as from elderly men."

"As we read on in the New Testament that is what we find: young people, slaves, daughters of Phillip, Priscilla and others, all prophets of Jehovah." Hugen is struck by what he perceives to be a recurring theme, the new kingdom roles of these four groups: Youths, women, slaves and Gentiles. The significance of these four groups, however, only began to "strike" him when he noticed the treatment they were afforded in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Paul is then (astonishingly!) enlisted by him as his ally in advocating the opening of all offices to women.

I was surprised to hear that many who heard this speech were nearly or

fully persuaded by it. After hearing the speech myself, I'm dumbfounded. The only way to be a feminist, as I've suggested, is to reject the *finality and sufficiency* of Scripture. Was it Hugen's charm, smile, or manner that hoodwinked these dear folks? I'm lost. It could not have been his argument. Though, of course, if you grant each of his unproved premises, it is a very short step to feminism:

- 1) There is no justification for believing in intrinsic differences in male/female personalities.
- 2) Pentecost means the equalization of access to all ecclesiastical functions by all individuals in all groups.
- 3) Such eradication is the ultimate purpose of God in order to unite the cosmos in Christ.
- 4) The "barriers" to be eradicated are analogous to those in the master/slave role which, in time, has been abolished in Christian countries (i.e., all subordination is equivalent to bondage and calls for liberation).
- 5) The inequality of women must and will give way, in time, to their "full participation" in Christ, which specifically means their entitlement to office.

The only problem with this "best case" is that every single position is wrong - contrary to Scripture, contrary to three of his own hermeneutical principles. I am sorry that space does not permit a detailed refutation of Hugen's abominable handling of the Holy Word of God. Let the following considerations suffice for now.

His most serious problem has followed him from the beginning of his feminist journey: his methodology. When seeking to answer the question of why marriage seemed to be more important for women than for men, *Dr. Hugen did not go to the Bible for answers.* Instead he foot-noted and cross-referenced himself into the land of confusion. Why he did not go to Genesis 1-3 I am unable to say. Did he believe, in 1958, that it was "primeval history" which corresponded to no factual actual historical reality? I don't know. I do know that if he had, he would have found the solution to his problem.

In Genesis God teaches as plainly as it could be taught that man, i.e., the male of the species, was created to have his identity in terms of his labor in the world, and woman was created

by God to have her identity in terms of her husband and children. Period. That this is unpopular does not make it unbiblical nor does it make it untrue. I wonder if the Professor of *Pastoral* Studies simply encourages our new wave of ministers to tell single women in their late thirties and early forties, e.g., that they are *not* experiencing *peculiar* stresses?²

Two indisputable proofs confirm the truth of the proposition that marriage and family have a vastly different significance for women than for men. Firstly, the custom tailored curse visited by God upon our first parents for the original transgression was qualitatively different for each.

The man was cursed in terms of *his* calling: labor, working the ground. The woman was cursed in terms of *her* calling: husband and children (Gen. 3:16-19). This is so amazingly plain, only seminary professors could fail to see it!

But inspired apostles saw it. Therefore, our second confirmation is the bald statement of GOD through Paul in Corinthians 11:8, 9, "The man is not of the women; but the woman of the man. *Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.*"

You can rant and rave and hold seminars and conferences, you can stand on your head and stand synod on its ear, but you can't change history, you can't change reality. If you try, you find yourself fighting against the Lord of both. Hugen, apparently, is unafraid.

According to him, Pentecost means that women may "speak God's Word with authority, power, reliability, accuracy, faithfully, expecting to be heard and obeyed." What part of that is "Pentecostal?" Anytime any being spoke the Word of the Lord accurately they ought to have been heeded for the Word's sake. Witness Balaam's donkey. But what bearing has that on the question of ordaining women to ecclesiastical office? **Absolutely none.** Might we not, on this basis, expect a "Committee for Jackasses in the CRC?" (I will resist the temptation to make reference to the composition of the committee under discussion.)

His treatment of Acts 2 suffers from serious problems. *Dr. Hugen seems unable to grasp just what is presented in Scriptures to be normative and what is presented to be exceptional.* A problem like that is exacerbated by neglect of

the Genesis creation record and compounded by what he *doesn't see* (or doesn't mention) in Acts 2.

Why did he fail to mention that Jesus Christ, the head of the church, appointed 12 male apostles, and not one apostle-ette? Are we to imagine that Almighty Christ was afraid of the repercussions, or that he was accommodating his program to culturally accepted mores? Jesus explodes that hypothesis on every page of every gospel narrative!

Why did the professor neglect to point out that it was *an apostle who preached the authoritative interpretation* of the wind and the fire and the languages? If Hugen were correct, it would have been more artistic and perfectly effective if a woman had preached the Pentecost sermon.

Again, Peter spoke as a representative, **not of the 120 but of the Apostles**. There's one of those hateful, hierarchical distinctions again. "Then Peter stood up *with the Eleven*, raised his voice and addressed the crowd" (Acts 2:14). None of the church officers at Pentecost were female and none were ever to be. This is consistent exegesis, taking into account words, context and the whole of revelation, presupposing no contradictions.³

Why doesn't Hugen explain verse 22, in which Peter apparently lapses into pre-pentecostal sexism by narrowing the audience to whom he appeals: "*Men of Israel*," he says. And again in verse 29: "*Brothers*." After his sermon, when the Spirit convicted the hearts of the hearers, they asked *Peter and the Apostles*, "*Brothers*, what shall we do?" (v. 37). What? Not "*Persons*?" Not "*Humans*, what shall we do?" And why does Hugen fail to point out that after conversion the thousands of believers "devoted themselves to the *Apostles' teaching*" (v. 42). The teachings, wonders and signs belonged in all authoritative interpretation to 12 male apostles. Hugen's "authoritative women expecting to be obeyed" is a product of his agenda and imagination, not Scripture.⁴

Furthermore, some 30 years later, this same Apostle of Pentecost (expecting to be heard and obeyed) commands women to "be *submissive* to your husbands...like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master." This is incapable of being reconciled with the fanciful egalitarian

interpretations of our seminary professors.

Moving past Pentecost, Hugen sees the central mystery revealed in Ephesians as God's plan to unite all things in Christ. This eternal plan requires that "Christ [come] into the world for the very purpose of breaking down the dividing walls of hostility and to unite all persons in Himself. He does this for Jew and Gentile, parents and children, masters and slaves."⁵ The "*central*" idea of Ephesians, for Hugen, is the way in which relationships within the Kingdom have been "fundamentally changed." These new relationships were a mystery until the New Testament, but now these new relationships have been made known by the Holy Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets, and after centuries, finally interpreted for us by the faculty of Calvin Seminary and the Committee "for" Women.

All prior divisions "which gave certain rights to some people and denied them to others...need to be overcome."⁶ Karl Marx himself never envisioned such radical egalitarianism as that which Hugen advocates. "**All the divisions of humankind that have separated humans with dividing walls of hostility need to be overcome.**" The devilish part of his Scripture handling is here most evident. Of course no one is in favor of escalating hostility (except antithetical hostility) in the Name of the Gospel. But the question is, *how is hostility to be removed?*"

The speaker's answer is *the elimination of distinctions*. This kind of socialistic utopianism is the polar opposite of our Calvinistic faith. Our God is Three Persons yet One God, ontologically the same in substance, equal in power and glory. But the "economic Trinity" reveals *functional* subordination among the Persons of the Godhead! (1 Cor. 11:3 and many other passages). Ours is a faith that marvels at the *distinctions* in reality, that seeks to understand the mutual interrelatedness of all that is created, and worships with profound reverence the Author of these distinctions. Above all, we adore our God as the Ultimate Discriminator in sovereignly determining to save His elect by grace through Christ alone. It is *not* true that God doesn't discriminate. He sovereignly discriminates everywhere, but always on the sole basis of His

mere good pleasure and in accordance with His infinite wisdom.

Communism is built upon a worldview which sees distinctions as hindrances to unity. Differences between classes and genders must give way to something savingly new and *one* in time. Salvation is not sought in a new creation but a new class structure. Thesis and antithesis meet in synthesis. The blurrier the better. A distinguishing God such as the One revealed in Scripture and Whose dealings are recounted in the Canons of Dordt is anathema to that worldview. All this is to say that behind egalitarianism, both political and ecclesiastical, is theological heresy. And heresy ordinarily begins with the mishandling of Scripture.

Hugen sees Ephesians as teaching that God's plan is the *destruction* of all barriers. He recognizes that the wall of hostility that existed between Jew and Gentile, though so directed by God before Christ, is broken down in Christ. He then *wrongly* extends this, making anti-hierarchicalism the governing context of Paul's letter. *All* authority becomes suspect. Instead of masters and slaves, "here comes a new revelation through Paul that says each of you has to be subject to each and every other one of you...*Masters, serve [your slaves] with fear and trembling.*" The Bible does not say that.

Hugen's greatest offenses in that awful speech lie in his horrendous treatment of this most divine Book of Ephesians. When I was a new Christian I merrily memorized the whole book, word for word. Ah! What a letter! What glory flows from the pen of St. Paul, that holy man of God. Jehovah's thoughts and will are unfolded line after sublime line.

But no sooner are they unfolded than Hugen & Co. *enfold* them in cryptic, ridiculous interpretations that fit the passage like a procrustean bed⁷. In fact, we ought to call the hermeneutic of the seminary, "**Procrustean Hermeneutics.**" If the bed's too large, stretch the sleeper; if the Scriptures don't support your pet doctrine, stretch them until they do.

Ephesians falls naturally, like most of Paul's letters, into two main divisions, doctrinal development (chapters 1-3) and practical implications/applications (chapters 4-6). This letter has rightly been called "The Epistle of the Church." Paul labors to

impress upon us the church's great blessedness, her eternal origin, her infinitely high and holy calling, her inheritance and power (chapter 1). He then develops her composition: sinners saved by grace (2:1-10). These sinners are Jews and Gentiles who together now form one body, the New Israel, the rising holy temple of God! (2:11-22). In chapter 3 Paul informs us with all apostolical authority that the intent of God in forming the church was that through her, the manifold wisdom of God might be cosmically displayed. He concludes the section with a heavenly prayer and doxology.

How Dr. Hugen manages to miss the fact that a major section has been concluded at this point is beyond my understanding. Without acknowledging the transition inherent in the text, the professor fabricates his own: "Paul's sermon is not over. He doesn't stop with Jew and Gentile. All divisions...need to be overcome. Walls between masters and slaves, parents and children, husbands and wives." In other words, Hugen has enlisted Paul as a comrade in his equalitarian dream world.

In fact, what God says through Paul in these letters is far more beautiful and far more covenantal than Hugen even begins to glimpse. For Hugen the letter is horizontal in its central theme. In fact, every word is *Christ-centered*, revolving around God's covenant with us through Him. Covenant means relationship. Paul begins his letter by telling us of our eternal relationship to God through Christ, how that relationship found us in time, and what the effect of Christ's coming had on the character (make-up) of the people of God (Jews and Gentiles). Paul defines her relation to Christ her head, her relation to non-Israel (in which relation Christ is again central), each member's filial relations (where Christ continues to be central), her relations of commerce (Christ still central), and finally her place under Christ in the gigantic cosmic war for Truth and Righteousness (6:10ff).

In chapter 4 Paul is not dealing with "dividing walls of hostility," as he was in chapter 2. Rather, he very simply and beautifully works out for us the character of the relationships we must have in all spheres in order for the church to be the vehicle through which God will make known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly

realms His eternal purpose which He accomplished in Messiah Jesus our Lord. He rejoices in distinctions, affirms them on every page and paragraph, and is as far from Hugen's ideology as East is from West.

Paul begins by pointing out that *within the body of Christ* there will be unity (4:1-6) and diversity (7-11), which harmonize in bringing the body to maturity (12-16). Please note that Paul recognizes a distinction between "officers of the church" (v. 11) and the people of God generally considered (v. 12). Unity does not obliterate diversity.

Having covered our relationships with each other as members of the same body, he then treats our relations with members outside the body but on the same planet, i.e., Gentiles, unbelievers. How should we relate to their values and practices? Here Paul is very emphatic about the division that must remain. We must be the "day" to their "night." He says this distinction (we call it "the Antithesis") is part of the very Gospel which we received (4:17-5:20). He gives the distinction a great deal of attention.

The next set of relationships God treats through Paul are domestic and commercial: our everyday relationships. Paul moves from where he was to where he's going in 5:21, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." The NIV Study Bible rightly notes that this is "basic to the following paragraphs" (emphasis mine). He is certainly not calling for mutual submission of everyone to each other. Not only is the idea ludicrous and anarchic; it is altogether absent from the text. Submit "to those to whom ye ought to be subject in natural, civil or church relations...either for fear of offending God, the Author of all power, who commands this subjection; or so far as is consistent with the fear of God, and so in those things which are not forbidden of Him" (Mt. Poole).

That this interpretation is correct is supported by the fact that the word "submit" in verse 22 is supplied by our translators. The Greek reads (starting in v. 21), "being subject to one another in the fear of Christ - wives to the(ir) own husbands as to the Lord." First the general command, then the specific application/explanation. "Submit." ("Who to whom?" the church asks.) "Wives to husbands, etc." Nowhere are husbands commanded to be *subject* to their own wives. This mutual

submission is one of the feminists' most successful lies. The submission required of wives to husbands is the first in a series. There follows the duty of children to obey parents and servants (employees) to obey masters (employers).

Of course Paul deals with complimentary responsibilities of husbands (love your wives), parents (note: *Fathers*, do not exasperate but train) and employers (do not threaten). **Thus we learn how hostility is removed by Christ in all relationships: by each Christian's joyfully accepting his or her respective role and obeying its accompanying laws (as here) for Christ's sake.** God knows best. He has ordained functional differences. Blessed is the "person" who walks in those ordained ways.

Compare this to Hugen's jejune prating: "Each of you has to be subject to each and every other one of you." Do Father Hugen's children command him to do the dishes? Is anyone "over him" at the seminary?

Be that as it may, Dr. Hugen is absolutely correct when he observes these Ephesian ordinances governing relationships are "clear already in the Old Testament." That apparently bores him and so he looks for some new mystery here. But the mystery had already been dealt with and Paul is now working out the implications. Why, then, does Paul reiterate these things? Because he is instructing the *New Israel* in the one eternal law of God, a law which has not changed, because its Author hasn't. The church must obey God's law (see 6:2). In so doing she will have blessedness, prosperity and peace.

Hugen and company counsel rebellion. This article did not touch on his contemptuous treatment of 1 Timothy 2, 1 Corinthians 14 and other clear passages which forbid what he and his feminist friends want. Their hermeneutic has exactly perverted the letter of God's Word. They are determined, don't you see? This is *not* unclear. Are you equally determined? The visionaries would have us obliterate the Antithesis, the church's hostility with unbelief. And they have clearly succeeded in fomenting hostility within. This the Lord hates (Prov. 6:16-19).

Anyone who would abuse Scripture in their fashion, twisting it, wrenching it in a desperate attempt to make it say what they wish it would say, and

presenting this as Reformed(!), necessary, obligatory and inevitable must be incompetent or dishonest. There is no pretty alternative.

Hugen and company, if you don't believe what the Bible plainly teaches, come right out like men and say, "The Bible is wrong." As it is, you deserve more pity than respect.

Christian Reformers, how long will we tolerate these divisive ones who deny that these are confessional matters, a denial that thus far has allowed them to keep their choice seats in the synagogue? Let us rise with one voice and show them the door. They've made their procrustean bed. Let them lie in it.

* Procrustes in Greek mythology was a giant who seized travelers, tied them to a bedstead, and either stretched them or cut off their legs to make them fit.

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1. This 4th point is the critical matter in the visionaries' thinking, one which they use as a substitute for the sound principle of progressive revelation, a revelation that has long been finalized and canonized. With their liq-

uid view of revelation *and the ethics thereof*, feminists are enabled to jettison "old" laws and norms to make room for new ones as time and cultures go by. Please note that this is not the same as making *new applications* of one eternal law. Their process is not capable of being *bound and/or finalized* by a completed book, i.e., it continues *beyond* the close of the canon. Thus, post-biblical history becomes in itself an ever-unfolding and ever-new (albeit contradictory) canon. Another way to put it is this: *history is the 67th book*, for "the new exegetes."

2. This would be the denial method of counseling, precisely analogous with the way visionaries deal with disturbing commands of Holy Writ.

3. I used Hugen's first three hermeneutical principles above. Note how the use of his fourth principle ("developing kingdom") is able to negate at will whatever is disagreeable to the interpreter, even though ascertained by the legitimate use of sound rules. Thus Kuyvenhoven acknowledges that Paul in fact forbade what he and Hugen urge us to permit. Rationale? "That was then. This is now."

4. Note also Acts 4:4—"the number of *men* (literally "males") grew to about 5,000." How can this "sexist reporting" be explained in harmony with his imagination? It is however perfectly consistent with the extant view of the Christian Reformed

Church and its membership regarding covenant and headship. Mel and friends are outside the mainstream. If they don't repent of this wicked folly, they should be put out altogether.

5. PLEASE note that this presupposes that these relationships are, all alike, fundamentally adversarial and hostile, a presupposition neither proved nor articulated by Hugen. Surely we saw a form of hostility between Jew and Gentile, *necessarity*. But there was never any necessary hostility in these other relations. He fights against a chimera. In order for feminism, like its cousin communism, to take hold, you must first convince people through the crafty art of covetousness implantation that they are miserable, deprived and oppressed. Why do all the bright women of my church and beyond fail to note their need for the medicine that this doctor prescribes?

6. Parents had rights which were denied to youths. Has that changed? Hugen doesn't say. But while he avoids speaking of "kid's lib," he does include "youths" among the groups who were, in his view, pre-pentecostal disenfranchise-ees. "Committee for Children in Office," here we come!

7. "something (as a system, policy, doctrine) into conformity with which or subservience to which someone or something is arbitrarily and often ruthlessly or violently forced"

CREEPING UNIVERSALISM

Jelle Tuininga

The biblical teaching about the eternal damnation of the lost is not a pleasant one, and no one should relish such a teaching. It is indeed a frightening and awesome fact to contemplate. We must therefore treat this doctrine with trepidation and respect. We are

all saved by grace and none of us deserve that any more than those who are lost. What the fathers of Dort said about the teaching of election and reprobation applies here too: we must "conduct (ourselves) piously and religiously in handling this doctrine."

Having said that, we need to say something else too: We must not allow sentiment to contradict the Word of God. The wish may not become the father of the thought. Much as we might wish that no one was lost, or that those without the gospel are lost,

we may not allow this wish to govern our thinking on the subject and to over-ride the clear teaching of God's Word. That danger always exists not only in liberal circles, but also among evangelicals. Lately some evangelicals (also of the Reformed stripe) are no longer as certain as they used to be about the biblical teaching regarding the lost. The door appears to be opening toward the idea that God can and does save people apart from the gospel of Christ. That an organization like the World Council of Churches calls into question the uniqueness of Christ and exclusivity of the Christian gospel, and that theologians like Hans Küng, Karl Rahner, John Hick, Paul Tillich and others do the same, is one thing. The Bible for them is not the final court of appeal. But that evangelicals who claim to hold firmly to the biblical faith begin to utter similar sentiments is disturbing. I mention Robert D. Brinsmead, Norman Anderson and Clark Pinnock, all of whom call into question in one way or another the lostness of people who lived "beyond the reach of the gospel."

Closer to home, there are voices in the CRC that appear to take a similar view. In the June 3rd issue of the *RES News Exchange*, Dr. Paul Schrotenboer expresses sympathy and approval for Anderson when the latter says he does not want "dogmatically to exclude from salvation all those who have never heard the gospel." Neal Punt, well-known for his theory of "biblical universalism," advocates a similar position. Though he adamantly rejects absolute universalism and holds to the position that Christ died to save a definite number of people, and though he asserts that "we may not establish our own criteria for accepting scriptural teaching," he nevertheless leaves open the possibility that "persons living beyond the reach of the gospel may be saved" and goes on to say "that there are rather strong indications in the Word of God" that this is indeed the case (in a speech given to the Calvin Seminary students).

Let me say a moment that Punt's two "exceptions" which he uses as evidence for the above-mentioned position are untenable. He first mentions the Old Testament saints who could not have what we call "Christian faith." But that is a mere technicality. Those saints were saved by faith in the Coming One, the Messiah (John 8:56; Heb. 11:13, 26, 27). As the Canons put

it: God, through the ministry of reconciliation, which is the glad tidings concerning the Messiah, saves such as believe, both under the Old and the New Testament (III/IV, 6). Old Testament saints are clearly not saved apart from the gospel.

Secondly, Punt mentions covenant children who die in infancy. But once again, it is through the instrumentality of the gospel (by way of parents, etc.) that these children are regenerated. That happens, says Peter, through the living and abiding Word of God. So again, it is not apart from the gospel. Christ died for them as well as for adults.

I mention one more example: In a *Banner* that dealt with the issue of "universalism," Prof. Cornelius Plantinga of Calvin Seminary made some ambivalent statements in the editorial he wrote. He began by saying that the problem is a difficult one, and that there were differing views on the matter. And though at the end of the article he granted that universal salvation was not a tenable option, he nevertheless made the ambivalent, not to say confusing, statement: When we turn to the Bible, we are not helped a great deal for the Bible seems to speak with more than one voice.

Now I don't know if this statement was meant to be "cute" or provocative, but I do know it leaves a lot to be desired. The Bible's overall message on the subject is anything but obscure and leads to only one conclusion: there are many who travel the broad way to destruction.

From all of this it appears that the theological spirit of the age is affecting us more than we care to admit. Years ago, in connection with the "love of God" controversy, Prof. Marten Woudstra made the statement that against the raging flood waters of universalism we must unitedly man the dikes, and not waste our time repairing shingles on the roof. That advice is apropos today. The kind of theology coming from the circles of the World Council of Churches is anything but encouraging. Yet some among us wish to lend a listening and sympathetic ear.

We must speak clearly today, also on this subject. The Bible speaks with utmost clarity about the *only* Name under heaven by which men must be saved, and apart from which there is no salvation. God is a loving and compassionate God, but He is also "a consuming fire," and "it is a fearful thing

to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31; 12:29). Cf. also John 3:18, 36; Acts 4:12; 17:30, 31; Rom. 3:22-24; II Cor. 5:18, 19; II Thess. 1:7-10; I John 5:10-12; Rev. 21:27; 22:14. Cf. also Q. & A. 20 of the H. Catechism and the Canons I, 4. In view of the above, I could appreciate the Back to God Hour ad that appeared in *The Banner*: "The simple, unforgettable fact about those who do not know Jesus is that they will perish everlastingly." That is the kind of clear, unequivocal language we need. I wish to conclude by quoting from the first chapter of the book, *Evangelism on the Cutting Edge*. We can learn from the clear language of Dr. Kenneth Kantzer, author of this first chapter: Responding to the claim of the Vancouver World Council of Churches Assembly that it is an *unlikely* option that "only those calling upon Jesus as their personal Savior can be saved," and to the claim of Karl Rahner that there are "anonymous Christians," Kantzer concludes:

If anyone is ever saved, therefore, it can only be on the basis of the atoning work of Christ and on condition of faith in Christ (Romans 3:25-6).

....

No one questions what God could do. In mysterious matters of the human soul, however, we can only be guided by His Word of revelation. And that divine Word seems to tie what the Bible means by salvation very tightly to the preaching of the gospel....

Conversely, the Bible holds out little hope of human salvation for those who have never heard the gospel....

This dreadful truth of the lostness of humankind without Christ is the dark side of the biblical message. But the good news is that God is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9)....And this in turn lays an immense responsibility on all who love God...to share this good news with all people everywhere.

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A FRESH LOOK AT GENERAL REVELATION

Theodore Plantinga
(1)

The debate over creation and evolution now underway in the Christian Reformed Church was unleashed by the controversy over the writings and teachings of Professors Howard Van Till, Davis Young and Clarence Menninga of Calvin College. In the background of that debate stands the doctrine of general revelation. It is my conviction that this doctrine is often misunderstood in a way that leaves us vulnerable in the face of evolutionism. Therefore I propose to take a fresh look at it. In doing so, I will first step outside our Reformed circles to listen to what an outsider has to say.

General Revelation: Its Limits

The doctrine of general revelation gets praised much more than it gets explained. Prof. Bruce Demarest, a conservative Baptist who teaches theology at Denver Seminary, is one of the very few theologians who has dared to write a full-length book on this topic. (His book is entitled *General Revelation: Historical Views and Contemporary Issues* and was published by Zondervan in 1982.) More recently he has addressed this theme again in a book entitled *Integrative Theology*, which he has co-authored with his colleague Prof. Gordon R. Lewis. (Volume I of this work was published by Zondervan in 1987.) In both books Demarest supports what I call an expansive (probably also expensive) understanding of general revelation: there is quite a bit that can be known about God apart from special revelation, he maintains. He also comments on the Reformed understanding of general revelation, in the following words: "Most Dutch Reformed theologians postulate the reality of general revelation and a knowledge of God implanted within the sinner's moral and psychological constitution. But because sin has blinded the mind, natural human beings attain no knowledge of God by reflection on the *indicia* of the space-time universe. Abraham Kuyper argues that sin has bolted shut the door to general knowledge of God; only those who ap-

proach nature and history with regenerate eyes and minds find the cosmos to be a legible book" (p. 65).

Demarest could just as well have quoted Herman Bavinck here. In his discussion of general revelation in the *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, Bavinck observes: "The Reformers did accept a revelation of God in nature. But because of sin, man was so darkened in his understanding that he could not come to a proper knowledge and understanding of this revelation. Thus two things were necessary. The first was that God had to take those truths which in themselves were available through nature and include them in his special revelation. The second was that man would first have to be enlightened by God's Spirit if he was to perceive God in nature again. In order to understand the general revelation of God in nature, special revelation in Scripture was objectively necessary. (Calvin had compared this special revelation to a pair of spectacles.) And on the subjective side, man needed the eye of faith if he was to be able to see God in the works of his hand" (Vol. I, 1928 printing, p. 275). Thus the Reformers did not allow for an independent natural theology (p. 275). (By "natural theology" I mean a body of knowledge about God which has been gleaned from givens other than special revelation.)

Yet Bavinck found it necessary to criticize John Calvin on this point, for in Calvin we still find a distinction or contrast between natural and supernatural revelation. (Bavinck points to *Institutes* 2.2.12-13.) The independence which this distinction allowed for reason and science had some unfortunate consequences: "Reason thereby received some authority of its own alongside faith. It appeared that reason did not always have to be led by faith but could be free and independent, even if only in a small, neutral (*onverschillig*) territory." Once reason had established an independent foothold, it began to expand its territory, says Bavinck. "First in

civil (*burgerlijk*) matters, then in science, in philosophy, and ultimately also in theology, it rose up alongside faith and even came to stand over against faith" (p. 276).

I promised you a fresh look at general revelation. We need that fresh look because there is, at the moment, confusion in our ranks — confusion about the relation of the doctrine of general revelation to the Van Till controversy.

You are probably expecting me to say that Van Till uses an expansive conception of general revelation to defend scientific conclusions which — to most of us — seem to conflict with the creeds. But that's not quite what is going on. The picture is somewhat murkier than most of us have so far discerned. To get clarity, we must first distinguish between Van Till's own position (which seems largely to be shared by his two Calvin College colleagues mentioned earlier) and the official defense of Van Till by denominational leaders and agencies.

Two Contradictory Views: Science Reveals God or Science Does Not Reveal God.

Another way to get at the confusion is to recognize that there are at least *two markedly different views of the relation between science and faith at work in the debate*. One is Van Till's own view, which is that science is religiously neutral. The other is a view held by prominent defenders of Van Till.

Some of those defenders (including Dr. Anthony Diekema, President of Calvin College) work from what I would call the natural theology approach to science. This way of thinking and talking is popular among people involved in Christian education because it provides a quick and simple rationale for Christians to do science: *we investigate nature (and its lawfulness) to find out what God is like*.

Picking up a single metaphor used in Article 2 of the Belgic Confession, Diekema and others (including various ministers I have talked with) defend Van Till by declaring that free,

unfettered study of nature within a scientific framework will yield knowledge of God. See, for example, the letter of March 25, 1988, which President Diekema and Rev. Charles De Ridder (President of the Calvin Board of Trustees) sent out to many Calvin alumni and supporters. The three professors, we read "accept the challenge of learning more about our God from the revelation of himself through his creation." When you read the *Banner's* report on the Van Till decision at this summer's synod, the heading was "Creation: That 'Elegant Book.'" The limitations on general revelation that we noted earlier as characteristic of Reformed thinking were nowhere to be seen. Science functions on its own as natural theology. In other words, science can be regarded as theology that is based on the study of nature (rather than on Scripture). Kuyper and Bavinck would be surprised to hear this.

People who use the natural theology approach to science like to tell us that God wrote two books—the Bible and nature. (And since nature is not composed of language and therefore is not readable in any literal sense, it turns out in practice that *God's second book is science*, which is a body of writings about nature.) If science is indeed a second book which God has sent our way, we certainly have no reason to fear it.

Where did President Diekema and company ever get such an idea? Well, to begin with, such talk has floated around in Christian circles for generations. Many a science teacher or professor begins his course in Christian high school or college with some half-hearted remark about how *the study of nature makes God known to us*. More pointedly, I would argue that Diekema probably got that impression from Van Till himself, for Van Till gave his controversial book the following title: *The Fourth Day: What the Bible and the Heavens are Telling Us About Creation*.

Such a title would lead the reader to expect that the book takes the six creation days very seriously and wishes to make much of Genesis 1:14-19, where we read about the creation of "two great lights" on a "fourth day." When we get into the book, however, it turns out that its author is not interested in detailed exegesis at all; the theological sections of the book are devoted instead to encouraging readers *not* to

look to Genesis for details and specifics. What we find in Genesis is "pictorial, figurative, anthropomorphic language" (see *The Fourth Day*, pp. 59-60; see also his discussion of Genesis 1:14-19 on pp. 88-89). For the most part, Van Till is telling us what *not* to think and conclude from Genesis. "The stories serve as 'packaging' that contains the message-content conveyed by the vehicle of primeval history" (p. 82). We must distinguish "between the story elements and the message being conveyed by the story" (p. 92). Moreover, the creation week is a literary device (see pp. 84-85 and 90-92). If it is indeed a literary device, why emphasize "the fourth day" and use it as the title of the book?

And then there is the subtitle: "What the Bible and the heavens are telling us about creation." Now, this certainly sounds like the sort of expansive general revelation talk that I have long feared. But the view of science which the book vigorously defends indicates that Van Till is not essentially a general revelation and natural theology thinker at all. In other words, Van Till talks a different line than his general revelation defenders—hence the confusion.

This becomes especially clear from his latest book *Science Held Hostage* (published by InterVarsity Press in 1988), which he has coauthored with Professors Clarence Menninga and Davis Young. The neutrality of science was already defended by Van Till in *The Fourth Day*; in the new book the three professors stick to this line. We read: "The scientific community seeks to gain knowledge in a manner that honors the religious diversity of its membership...when working within the restricted domain of natural science, scientists are able to function as a community united in the search for authentic knowledge concerning the inherent intelligibility of the physical world. The results of professional natural science belong to everyone..." (p. 42).

What we see in Van Till himself, then, is the view that *science*, properly understood *is religiously neutral*. It is *not about God* but limits itself strictly to physical reality. He writes: "When operating within its proper domain, science does not compete with philosophical or religious considerations, because, unlike philosophy or religion, natural science is limited to

the study of the corporeal world alone" (*The Fourth Day*, p. 107). The natural sciences "...choose to restrict their attention to the physical realm alone" (*Science Held Hostage*, p. 12). Thus *the heavens, as physical reality, can tell us nothing about God as Creator*. Van Till is not true to his own title!

A strictly Vantillian defense of Van Till would, then, take a rather different form from the defense which President Diekema offers. And here, so that I do Diekema no injustice, I should note in passing that his defense of Van Till flows from a proper concern for academic freedom: after all, Calvin College is not just a denominational agency but also a distinguished institution of higher learning with a reputation to protect. I believe Diekema's reasoning (which, it appears, has been endorsed by the Board of Trustees) goes something like this. Just as the interpreter of Scripture enjoys a certain freedom of exegesis in listening to what God is telling us about Himself in Scripture (and perhaps understanding and applying it in a novel way), the interpreter of the "book of nature" enjoys a freedom of exegesis in construing what God is telling us about Himself via this second medium of His self-disclosure. Thus, in the *Banner's* report on Van Till at synod, we find a delegate talking about exegizing monkey bones! (See page 9 of the June 27 issue.) This delegate should have been handed a copy of Van Till's book and told that monkey bones, as bits of physical reality, *give us no knowledge* of non-physical processes, such as creation.

The Diekema defense, according to which Van Till must be allowed some freedom of exegesis in interpreting the "book of nature" does enjoy some plausibility—provided that the expansive conception of general revelation is correct. But this is precisely what I wish to contest.

An abridged version of a speech presented at a meeting of the Reformed Fellowship held in Grandville, Michigan, on September 29, 1988. Dr. Plantinga is a Professor of Philosophy at Redeemer College at Ancaster (near Hamilton), Ontario.

AS IRON SHARPENS IRON....

"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17). The following items, collected from various periodicals and news sources both secular and religious, "sharpened" me when I first read them. Perhaps they will also "sharpen" you.

From Hollywood star Eddie Murphy (if you don't know who he is, ask your children or grandchildren!): "I feel a void. There's not a total emptiness, but I feel something's missing. No matter how much you accomplish, how much money you make, or how many cars or houses you have, or how many people you make happy, life isn't perfect for anybody" (quoted in a recent issue of *People* magazine).

From Christian author and speaker Elisabeth Elliott: "My father's strong counsel to my four brothers: Never tell a woman you love her until you are ready to follow that immediately with, 'Will you marry me?' In other words, a man's love for a woman, if deep and abiding, leads to a lifetime commitment to her. Heartaches would be avoided if he held back any expressions of love until he is ready to make that commitment" (in *World*, the bimonthly publication of the Presbyterian Church in America, August 1, 1988, p. 3).

From the July 8, 1988, issue of *National Review*, under the editorship of conservative William Buckley: "If you think the American Catholic Church has gone ape, check out those Episcopalians. They have their first transsexual nun (a father, though we don't know if his son still calls him 'dad'), although they stopped short of giving him permission to found a new order. And they have an unmarried lady priest in Washington, D.C., who has given birth by artificial insemination, two of her three sperm donors being priests (still male as we go to press)."

Concerning the appalling conditions of the public education system in Chicago, *Newsweek* magazine cites the

following statistics: Average teacher salary = \$33,000. Drop-out rate = 45%. High school students failing at least two courses a year = 40%. Money (mostly tax dollars) spent per pupil = \$4,373. Students absent on the average school day = 11%. Teachers absent on the average school day = 5%. Number of teacher strikes = 9 in 19 years. Obviously, in Chicago public education is not working (July 4, 1988, pp. 60, 61).

"New Age" philosophies are not just found among actors like Shirley MacLaine. *Insight*, a new national news magazine, reports that employers are forcing their employees to enroll in "training programs" containing explicit New Age beliefs. The article quotes one Christian employee who objected to mandatory attendance at such classes. "The course taught that you can create your own destiny through the powers of your own mind....The course also smacked of Eastern mysticism and the occult. And he resented what he perceived as attempts to reprogram the subconscious and to change a person's view of reality and religious beliefs." According to some authors, New Age religion approves of decisions to withhold food and fluids from chronically ill patients and legitimizes suicide as an option (July 11, 1988, pp. 53-55).

On the more local scene, although no less disturbing, are recent promotional materials sent out by the Grand Rapids Area Center for Ecumenism (G.R.A.C.E.). This local ecumenical organization, headed by a pastor in the Reformed Church of America, includes representatives of most denominations in the greater Grand Rapids area. Many area churches, some CRC, contribute membership fees and/or collect an offering for GRACE. Recently, GRACE has welcomed the local Metropolitan Community Church to join its activities. The M.C.C., if you don't know, is a church dedicated to practicing homosexual

Randal S. Lankheet

men and women. The MCC considers both the condition and the practice of homosexuality to be an acceptable one for the Christian. Through their financial contributions, it seems that some Christian Reformed congregations in our area see nothing wrong with joining themselves to a false church. And we sometimes think that those Dutch churches in the Netherlands have gone so far downhill so fast! Maybe we should be looking more closely at the congregations within our own denomination instead of those across the seas.

Since we began with Hollywood, let's end with Hollywood. A perceptive analysis of modern films was recently published by the Rockford Institute in their monthly journal, *Chronicles*. The author, Richard Hobby, notes that the movies of the 1930's through the 1950's show the relationship of men and women to be one founded in "a world of moral rules, of right and wrong, good and evil, thou-shalt-nots....Actions have weight." Though not always acting morally upright, nevertheless, the characters in the older films are "adult men and women." But, comments the author, in recent times such movie characters "have all but disappeared from the screen. What we find instead are children or half-formed adults....they inevitably act like insecure children." In the films of the past 50 years, he concludes, we "have witnessed an increase in male/female confrontation and the fading of the adult world. There would seem to be symptoms of a deep spiritual malaise" (July, 1988, pp. 42-45). To all this, the Christian can surely say "Amen."

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Andrew Sandlin

THE ECLIPSE OF BIBLICAL PREACHING

"Don't open your Bibles," began the eminent evangelistic preacher, as I listened attentively, "I'll just quote our text for you." He then proceeded to deliver a message which, though helpful and containing a lot of truth, nonetheless related only superficially to the text he cited. In any case, he did not give his audience the meaning of the text and subsequently show how that meaning applied to their various needs and situations. Yet this preacher is noted as a "preacher's preacher," a powerful minister of God. And this illustration is not isolated, but is merely a single case of a pervasive epidemic of a diluted form of preaching found in "conservative," Bible-believing ranks, the very places that should serve as bulwarks *against* such dangerous tendencies.

Often called "topical" preaching, this specious form of sermon often has more in common with an emotionally charged political speech than with the fervent, Biblical preaching illustrated in the Bible. It is characterized by a lack of exegesis and careful interpretation of the text; a misguided attempt at "relevance," a quality, it appears, its advocates feel that Scripture alone does not possess; and, too frequently, a twisting of the actual meaning of Scripture in an effort to prove a certain teaching or convince the hearers of a certain point.

Interestingly enough, this sort of "topical" preaching (though there is a valid form of topical preaching) has largely been the province of "liberal" clergymen over the past century. Because of their lack of commitment to the plenary, verbal inspiration of the Bible, it is only natural that they have abandoned any serious attempt to correctly exegete, interpret, and apply it in their "sermons." On their own theological premise, it is perfectly un-

derstandable to set forth one's own ideas in a sermon and then somehow add a few Bible terms to the content to give it a religious flavor. This option, however logical for "liberals," is not open to Bible-believing ministers. Unfortunately, it is often they who are almost equally guilty of this travesty of preaching. The antidote to this illegitimate style of preaching is Biblical, expositional preaching.

It must be understood that Biblical preaching is expositional preaching; and while there are different forms of expositional preaching (e.g., verse-by-verse, sectional, topical, textual), all forms have this in common: they impart to the hearers *what the Scriptures are actually saying* and apply those Scriptures to a present situation. A workable definition of Biblical (expositional) preaching follows: A clear explanation of the meaning of Scripture applied to a specific situation, problem, or need channeled through a man anointed by the Holy Spirit. Although expository preaching may involve more than this, it certainly cannot involve *less*.

First, the expositor must give the actual meaning of the text. He who avers verbal inspiration must reverently consider *every word* of the Bible. He must, beyond determining the meaning of every word, discover the correct interpretation of the phrase, verse or passage. He will consult primarily the Holy Spirit and, secondarily, any helps he needs to ascertain the meaning and give it to his listeners as simply and clearly as possible.

Second, the expositor must apply that Scripture and its specific meaning to his hearers. A.W. Tozer once warned of the danger of exposition without application: exposition is initial and foundational; but apart from application, it will be largely ineffec-

tual. The preacher must walk with God, sense the needs of his hearers, discover the words of the Lord for that need, and apply the words to that need. He should preach fearlessly and forcefully.

Third, the expositor must be infused by the Holy Spirit. Exegesis, interpretation, and application without power will be a "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal." All the study in the world—absolutely essential though study is—is no substitute for the direct and passionate prayer that so often elicits the power of God. The deadness of many modern churches can often be attributed back to a lack of that power.

How perfectly Peter's Pentecostal message illustrates expositional preaching. Peter, empowered by the Holy Spirit, indicted his Jewish hearers by appealing to the very Old Testament they so adamantly professed to embrace. He told them what the Scripture meant and showed how it convicted them of their rejection of Christ. The message was demanding, but not hard, for it was warmed by the sweet breath of the Holy Spirit. And it is this sort of preaching, the sort Paul had in mind when he exhorted Timothy to "preach the word," that must replace the hollow sermonic sounds emitted from too many of our pulpits today.

A revival of Biblical preaching is an essential ingredient of the spiritual renewal so desperately needed in these days of doctrinal ignorance and its resultant spiritual laxity.

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PETER BEYERHAUS AT CALVIN

(I)

Lectures on Conversion

Dr. Peter Beyerhaus occupies the chair for the Science of Mission and Ecumenical Theology at the University of Tübingen in West Germany. An evangelical scholar of world repute, he became available for three lectures at Calvin Theological Seminary in connection with engagements at Pittsburgh and Chicago. Although he teaches in the field of ecumenical theology at a school that was early associated with Liberal Biblical critics, his name has been emerging over the years as an outstanding evangelical voice seeking to alert the Christian world to the Liberal threat to the existence of genuine Christian missions. His profound and thoroughly documented observations, not as a relatively unfamiliar outsider, but as a long-time intimate participant in ecumenical discussions, promised to be worth hearing first-hand.

The speaker's thesis was that *conversion must be at the heart of Christian missions*. John the Baptist and the Lord preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 3:2; 4:17). Paul was sent to the Gentiles "to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in" Christ (Acts 27:18). Throughout its history the church has faced this commission, but has not always pursued it. The speaker had seen this call to all men to conversion obscured or replaced by other missionary aims such as the humanization of social structures and the mutual enrichment of various religions, aims which blunt the gospel call and threaten to swallow up the Christian faith in relativism.

The three lectures focussed attention on the theme of conversion (1) in the 19th Century American and German awakenings and (2) in missions to the non-Christians of the third world, and (3) on how the conversion concept had changed missions and how it must be renewed. The American awakenings saw multitudes responding to gospel preaching by conversion amid the lawlessness and immorality of an advancing frontier, but there have been tendencies to psychologize the movements and they were threatened by superficiality and emotionalism. In Germany too there were genuine revivals in response to God-centered law and gospel preaching. The missionary movements into the third world stressed these same methods of seeking conversions through the preaching of the gospel. In the missions however a trend developed toward trying to civilize the colonized peoples, seeking to Christianize nations instead of converting individuals. The gospel did "turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God," liberating them from demonic fears, but people must turn to Christ as the only Lord — nothing less will do. Older missions, though no longer experiencing the same dramatic change from paganism, needed to seek the same kind of repentance from sin and revival of personal faith in Christ crucified. This missionary message is threatened by a shift of emphasis to sociological changes and influences, and even by a suggestion of a "moratorium" on missions.

The evangelical aim of seeking to convert people through gospel preaching, which was a major influence in the beginning of the ecumenical movement, has become only one voice among others, as its influence on the

whole movement diminishes. The "Fundamentalists" emphasis on conversion was opposed by Modernists, who captured the churches and their missions. Their "new" movement would replace "conversion" by an aim to merely "influence" other systems. Concern about deliverance from sin against God was replaced by concern about alleviating social alienation of people from one another. This shift developed into a *liberation theology* adopted from Marxism — the political theology favored by the World Council. "Gone with the wind" was the sense of sin and concern about salvation of the soul, "social justice" replaced "justification by faith," and salvation gave way to humanization. The WCC sought *dialogue* with rather than *conversion* of adherents to other religions. This radically secular shift of missionary direction in the Conciliar movement, provoked a new evangelical counter-movement and series of conferences to recover the Biblical call to conversion through preaching of the Gospel in dependence on the Holy Spirit. That call to repentance and faith in Christ, the only redeeming and sanctifying Savior, through whom people are born again, is an indispensable part of the Bible's message and it must be restored to the center of missionary effort, not in human arrogance, but in obedience to God's command. This, briefly, was the theme that ran through the three lectures. The detailed development was not always easy to follow and the number who came to hear the world-renowned speaker, despite a press announcement, were disappointingly few — a mere two dozen or so.

Beyerhaus' Writings

Memories of some of Beyerhaus' writings and the relevance of his mes-

sage to our situation suggested some further reading of his out of print books. I had one, the Library stacks had little, but Kregel's bookstore had two. In 1971 he published *Missions: Which Way? Humanization or Redemption*. A Preface by Harold Lindsell recalled how the 1968 World Council meeting at Uppsala, Sweden had shifted the aim of evangelism toward changing social, political and economic structures in a movement toward universalism, wiping out differences between religions. This ominous development drove Beyerhaus to spearhead an evangelical reaction. Asked about the unpopularity such a stance might bring him in Council circles, Beyerhaus replied "that conscience demanded that he be faithful to the biblical revelation in the Scriptures" (p. 12). "He felt that perhaps the time would shortly come when European evangelicals might be forced to dissociate themselves from the ecumenical movement to guarantee the purity of the message of the Gospel" (p. 11). Beyerhaus shows how in missions "today two contradictory points of view, the 'evangelical' and the 'ecumenical,' stand over against each other" (p. 14). The writer traces briefly the shift in missions from religious to political and social aims. It is a movement to wipe out the differences between saved and unsaved, church and world, making Mission to be "the total responsibility of the Church for the world" (p. 38). This Liberal ecumenical change of direction has inevitably brought increasing conflict with evangelicals, who see the movement as a sell-out of the gospel to the spirit of our age. The Gospel of reconciliation to God through Christ does have implications for living in the present world and for relations of man to man, but we may not let the world rewrite the Christian missionary mandate. If evangelicals are tempted to separate salvation history from world history, ecumenicals are in danger of losing it in evolutionary world history (p. 61). Thus the missionary ambassadorship of 2 Cor. 5:18-20 is blurred into a universalism. The theology of secularization does not really want or attempt to ground itself in the Bible, and in references to it, the Bible's original meaning is distorted. "The world's agenda is being allowed to take precedence over the Bible's message" (p. 77). Marxist revolution dis-

places Christ (p. 83), as man puts himself in the place of God (p. 87). In opposition to this whole graphically illustrated movement, Beyerhaus calls for a return to the Biblical gospel of salvation by faith in Christ.

This book was followed the next year by another, entitled, *Shaken Foundations, Theological Foundations for Mission*. The critical attack upon the Bible, pursued with missionary zeal by Liberal theologians, drove evangelicals (like Martin Luther, their forerunner) to return to the "Bible Only" as our bed rock of evangelical faith and action. The critical theology has now developed into a *theology of Revolution*, no less hostile to the gospel of Christ. In response to these academic and social misuses of the Bible, we, relying on the interpreting power of the Holy Spirit who inspired it, "are called...to ask the Lord to speak His living Word through it directly to us" and to hear in it "the voice of the living Lord" (pp. 13 ff.; cf. John 10).

"...The future advance or the downfall of our churches is dependent on our readiness to say a clear 'yes' to the inspiration of the Scripture. Only in this way will our minds regain that unity and authority lost to us by our misdirected hermeneutical approaches." "God's Word does not need to be rewritten or reshaped in every cultural change." "That which needs to be changed is not the text but rather the inner attitude of men which causes their difficulty in understanding."

"The unspiritual man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned," but "we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that comes from God, in order that we may know the things which God has freely given us" (1 Cor. 2:14, 12). Theologians "must humbly join the chain of witnesses, not so much as historical critics, but rather as the faithful stewards of God's mysteries."

"Mission does not mean to get aligned as partners with...all men of good will who are desirous to help others" (p. 37), but to have a part in the continuing ministry of the risen

and reigning Christ who came to save men from sin and eternal death by His expiatory sacrifice. Beyerhaus sees this change of missions from calling people to be reconciled to God, into merely joining common efforts to "help" other people, as amounting to nothing less than rejecting Christ and His unique claims. "There is no bridge which spans the gap between a social concept of humanization and the biblical mystery that by Christ's sacrifice not only were we restored to our true humanity, but we also were made children of God and partakers of His divine life. Because of this rejection of the unique claim of Christ, all post-Christian movements betray...an anti-Christian character.... to prepare for the final dramatic conflict with the community of Christ, where the dominating figure will be the Antichrist. He will personify a Christless humanization program by appearing to be Christ himself. He will unite the whole of humanity under his rule, a rule which will superficially appear to be a paradise of social justice. But this paradise will end up in terror, blood, and tears" (p. 61). Beyerhaus sees the basic error of this theology of mission as its minimizing of sin since the fall, and therefore having no appreciation of the need for and role of the Savior and His cross. "This cross is the power of Salvation for those who believe, but an odor of death among those who are perishing (2 Cor. 2:15, 16)."

This clear statement of issues in the ecumenical conflict about missions found official expression in the March 4, 1970 Frankford Declaration, in the formulation of which, Beyerhaus took a leading part. Frankford's "all-out attack on the ecumenical program of humanization," which Beyerhaus showed really displaced Christ's saving work and the church of saints which He is saving, provoked hostile reaction. Out of the resulting conflict came the resurgence of a distinctly evangelical effort to again put the Gospel and its call to repentance and faith in Christ in the center of missions.

Dr. Beyerhaus' fascinating account of the growing conflict and of the massive new orthodox effort to restore real Christian evangelism, and the bearing of all of this on our present church and mission programs, we hope to consider next month. PDJ

THEONOMY

Dear Friends:

I am following with interest David Watson's series on theonomy and the reconstructionist movement. Mr. Watson was in contact with me briefly a couple of years ago while gathering information, and I am interested in what he will present on your pages.

In order to add some helpful comments for the benefit of all those who will follow his series with interest, I am writing to clarify the present state of affairs in Gulf Coast Presbytery (PCA) in relation to the theonomy issue.

Gulf Coast Presbytery is described by Mr. Watson as one of the PCA presbyteries which have "vigorously sought to exclude them [theonomists]" (Oct. '88 *Outlook*, p. 12). Gulf Coast Presbytery has been the center of dissension over theonomy in the not-too-far-distant past, as theonomic ministerial candidates were frustrated in their pursuit of ordination.

However, the General Assembly of the PCA overruled in the case of a theonomic candidate who had been denied ordination, and issued a rebuke to those who had engineered the controversy (1982). (Subsequently, this very same candidate was elected to the Theological Examinations Committee of the Presbytery, and has been the chairman of that Committee for the past 3 years; and, he has just been chosen by the Presbytery to be the Moderator at its meetings for the upcoming year).

In the past year or so, those dominating personalities who had been successful in orchestrating the opposition against theonomists have accepted calls outside of Gulf Coast Presbytery. In the same time period, a couple of men (myself being one of them) who are theonomists, and one

or two who do not personally embrace the theonomic viewpoint but understand it to be clearly acceptable under the constitution of the Presbyterian church, have been received into the Presbytery.

There are a handful of ministers and elders who are holding out against theonomy in the Presbytery, and almost every examination of candidates elicits questions from them. Occasionally a small dispute is engendered; but when the final votes are taken, theonomic candidates emerge as qualified men. While several members of the Presbytery openly express discomfort over the issue, examinations are conducted fairly. In recent years, at least, there have been no attempts to "bend the rules" in opposition to theonomists, nor to exclude them from positions of responsibility and leadership in the Presbytery.

There are perhaps a few with us who would prefer that Gulf Coast Presbytery vigorously seek to exclude theonomists; but it is clear, at this point in time, that the members of the Presbytery, collectively, do not believe that that is their calling. Some prominent men were once able to persuade the Presbytery to rule against theonomists; but in the wake of General Assembly rulings, and the departure of these men, Gulf Coast Presbytery has become probably no more anti-theonomic than any other Presbytery in the PCA.

Thank you for accepting my comments, and for publishing Mr. Watson's series. May the Lord of the Church aid you in your efforts to promote loyalty to the truth among Reformed Christians.

Met vriendelijke groeten,
Charles E. Armstrong, Jr.
(Assistant Pastor,
Faith Presbyterian Church
Robertsdale, Alabama)

Dear Editor:

I wish to correct a statement by Mr. David K. Watson in his article, "The Christian Reconstruction/Theonomy Movement (Part 2)," published in the July-August, 1988 issue of *Outlook*. He states on page 12, "The OPC foreign mission board is also supplying personnel for a Reconstructionist work in Surinam."

The Committee on Foreign Missions of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has not taken a position as to the validity of the Reconstructionist movement. It has in the case of Surinam decided to cooperate with Caribbean Christian Ministries in the establishment of a Reformed witness in that South American nation. In so doing it agreed to take on oversight of a small congregation originally begun by CCM. This church is now officially an OPC mission work and has only fraternal ties to its previous sponsor.

OPC missionaries in Surinam are not employed by CCM, though they have assisted in some ministries and maintain cordial relations with the personnel of CCM. The presence of the OPC in Surinam should not be construed as an endorsement of Theonomy or the Reconstructionist movement. We are not "supplying personnel" for any work there but our own.

Sincerely,
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